

PAUL IN JERUSALEM: A COMPARISON OF HIS VISITS IN ACTS AND GALATIANS

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I. INTRODUCTION

In an article written in 1968 W. C. Van Unnik described the position of Luke-Acts studies as "a storm center in contemporary scholarship."¹ Today, approximately two and a half decades later, the situation is basically the same, although new ideas and assessments have entered into the picture.² The present paper is an attempt to weather the storm and discuss the relationship of the Jerusalem visits of Paul as recorded in Acts and Galatians.

1. *Two presuppositions.* At the outset two presuppositions must be mentioned. First, it is assumed that Luke is an accurate recorder of history. This was what he intended and accomplished. It is common in the contemporary arena of Lukan scholarship to denounce Luke's historical ability, portraying him as one who has altered and created historical events in order to provide a better framework in which to present his theology. Thus he is generally seen as a theologian rather than an historian. But I. Howard Marshall³ convincingly argues that Luke's use of the sources that lie behind his writings shows his desire to accurately report historical facts about the life of Jesus and the early Church. Although Luke subjects all his sources to a stylistic revision he remains faithful to content, this being confirmed by the comparison between how he used Mark and *Q* within his gospel and how Matthew used the same. "He is not the slave of his sources and does not scruple to alter them when he thinks fit, but in general he appears to base himself fairly closely upon them. The resultant picture of Jesus is different from that in his sources, but it is unmistakably the same Jesus."⁴ By analogy it may be concluded that if he is faithful to the sources and traditions

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¹ W C Van Unnik, "Luke-Acts, A Storm Center in Contemporary Scholarship," *Studies in Luke-Acts Essays Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert* (ed L E Keck and J L Martyn, London SPCK, 1968) 15-32

² For a summary of the present state of Luke-Acts studies since 1979 see I H Marshall, *Luke, Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids Zondervan, 1989) 223-235

³ *Ibid* 57-68

⁴ *Ibid* 67 But note the comment of W W Gasque "It is interesting to note that, while those who are concerned to demonstrate the unreliable nature of the narrative of Acts point out the author's allegedly arbitrary use of his sources in the Gospel, those who are concerned to demonstrate

that lie behind his gospel (sources that we possess), in all likelihood he is faithful to the sources and traditions that lie behind Acts (sources that we do not possess with the possible exception of the epistles, as will be shown below). And if Luke gives a different perspective of the same Jesus of his sources it may also be concluded that he gives a different perspective of the same Paul of the Pauline epistles.

The second presupposition follows from the first: It is assumed that Acts is a valuable source for the history of Paul and that Luke's Paul is essentially the same as the Paul in the epistles. A. J. Mattill describes four schools of thought concerning the relationship between the Paul of Acts and the epistles.⁵ Two in particular are held by a majority of scholars: (1) the one-Paul view, the general view in conservative scholarship, which states that the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the epistles are basically consistent with one another and that the epistles and Acts mutually illuminate each other as sources for the life of Paul; (2) the two-Paul view, the general view in liberal scholarship, which states that the Paul of the epistles is historical while the Paul of Acts is legendary. Any attempt at reconciliation between the two views is futile, for they are basically inconsistent with one another. My paper assumes that the one-Paul view is correct in its evaluation of the data of Paul in Acts and the epistles.

2. *The nature and purpose of the literature.* In comparing the Paul of Acts with the epistles, an understanding of the nature and purpose of the literature is an essential prerequisite for proper interpretation of the data it contains. The epistles of Paul are occasional letters. They were specifically written to address particular needs or issues that had arisen in the churches associated with Paul. Thus we cannot expect Paul to give a complete autobiographical account of himself or a complete, systematic representation of his theology. Such matters were not Paul's purpose in the composition of the epistles. He only gives biographical and theological data that are relevant to the problems of the churches he writes to. In other words, he only reveals things about his life and thought that apply to the purpose of each letter.

Essentially the same can be said of Acts. Luke "wrote for another public and purpose than Paul had in writing his letters."⁶ Luke is concerned to portray the spread of early Christianity, the development of its worldwide mission. "In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning, until the day when he was taken up to heaven"

the trustworthy nature of the history of Acts make the observation that the author's careful use of his sources in the Gospel is a sign of his essential trustworthiness as a historian! Many examples could be given, however, it is sufficient to suggest that the data are ambiguous and can be used according to the presuppositions of the individual critic" (*A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975] 79)

⁵ A. J. Mattill, Jr., "The Value of Acts as a Source for the Study of Paul," *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (ed. C. H. Talbert, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978) 76-98

⁶ F. F. Bruce, "Is the Paul of Acts the Real Paul?", *BJRL* 58 (1976) 305

(Acts 1:1-2a). If in his first book, the gospel, Luke desired to show the work of Jesus on earth until the ascension, the implication is that in his second book, Acts, he will continue to show the work of Jesus as carried on by his Spirit through the Church. The Church then, possessed by the Spirit of Christ and thus being the body of Christ, continues to do his work and bear witness of him "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Just as no enemy or opposition could stand in the way of Christ in the fulfilling of his mission (in the gospel), neither can the Church be prevented from accomplishing its purpose (in Acts), though opposition abounds. It is one of Luke's purposes to show that the Church triumphs over all opposition in order to carry out the will of God in spreading the gospel throughout the world. Thus it should not surprise us that although internal and external opposition is present (Acts 5:1-11; 8:1-3) Luke chooses to emphasize the overcoming and resulting unity of the Church rather than the conflicts within and without. Luke at times tends to play down or merely hint at the conflicts that are clearly addressed in Paul's epistles. But this is not for the purpose of distorting or creating history. Rather, it is to draw attention away from opposition and focus the attention of his readers on the triumph of Christ through his body, the Church. To show the fulfillment of its calling and mission seems to be foremost in Luke's mind. Conflicts and problems only serve as footnotes and appendices.

In contrast to Luke, Paul is often polemical in his letters, especially Galatians. Since the very purpose of his letters is to address problems and conflicts within his churches it is to be expected that he will focus more upon such conflicts than Luke. In fact he attacks opposition with a vengeance. But, similar to Luke, he only does this to resolve conflict and promote the unity and ultimate triumph of the Church.⁷ In light of the above, then, we should understand why parallel accounts of events in the life of Paul in Acts and the epistles differ at times from one another and why some events are left out altogether in one while present in the other. D. S. Huffman has adequately summarized the difference between Acts and Galatians:

In looking at the two records of Galatians and Acts, it is understandable that they might appear to differ in their presentation of the facts while not disturbing the facts themselves. Acts and Galatians are two very different genres of writing. The first is a historical/theological thesis and the latter a rhetorical letter of defense. Naturally, the presentation of the factual data will be consistent with the mode used by each author. We ought to expect a broad, universal view in Acts and a more detailed, defensive manner in Galatians.⁸

It is the intent of the author that determines what is included and the details of description.

⁷ Some see Luke's theology primarily as *theologia gloria*, while Paul's theology is seen primarily as *theologia crucis*. But both elements can be found in Paul and Luke. The only difference is the amount of emphasis that is given. They are not mutually exclusive theologies.

⁸ D. S. Huffman, *Galatians Reconciled with Acts: How Do They Do It? The Attempts of Hans Dieter Betz, F. F. Bruce, and George Howard* (unpublished thesis; Wheaton: Wheaton College, 1985).

3. *The epistles as a source for Acts.* One final thing should be said about the relationship between Acts and the epistles. Did Luke know of the existence of Paul's letters? If so, did he use Paul's letters as sources of information for his account of the life of Paul? In answer to the first question, it is impossible for Luke not to have had knowledge that Paul's letters existed, if indeed he was Paul's traveling companion at times (as the "we"-sections seem to imply). In addition Paul's letter-writing abilities were well known (2 Cor 10:10; 2 Pet 3:15-16). Even if Luke was not the first-century companion of Paul that tradition declares him to be but was in fact a Christian of another generation writing in the second century, it is impossible that Paul's letter-writing reputation could have dropped out of common knowledge by that time.⁹ "Can we believe that such letters, thus noted and appreciated even among his critics, should have dropped entirely from sight a generation after his time?"¹⁰

It is thus generally agreed that Luke had knowledge of Paul's letters.¹¹ This leads to our second question of whether Luke made use of them as a source for the writing of Acts. John Knox thinks that Luke did not, in order to avoid being associated with the Pauline epistles' abuse by Marcion, who capitalized on their polemical nature in order to advance his heretical doctrines.¹² Perhaps a better answer would be that Luke probably did make limited use of Paul's epistles as sources, supplementing the wealth of knowledge he had gained from Paul himself, his personal observations as Paul's travel companion, and the testimony and tradition possessed by various church centers that were associated with Paul. The many similarities between the Pauline and Lukan accounts of the same events may point to this fact.¹³

One question is still quite nagging, however: If Luke knew of Paul's epistles and made use of them, why does he not mention the writing of them as part of his Pauline history in Acts? A tenuous answer may be implied from what has been mentioned above—that is, that the mention of the letters lies outside of the Lukan purpose. Paul's letters are polemical, addressing and confronting controversy and opposition, while Acts plays down controversy and conflict. It may be that Luke omits mention of the letters for that very reason.

⁹ Especially since the letters of Paul were collected into a corpus during the first half of the second century, in part as a reaction to Marcion's construction of a canon

¹⁰ J. Knox, "Acts and the Pauline Corpus," *Studies* (ed. Van Unnik) 283

¹¹ But see C. K. Barrett, "Acts and the Pauline Corpus," *ExpTim* 88 (1976-77) 2-5

¹² Knox, "Acts" 279-287

¹³ M. Enslin affirms that Luke made use of Paul's letters in the composition of Acts but created events and details to fill up information that was lacking in Paul's autobiographical accounts ("Luke, the Literary Physician," *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature Essays in Honor of A. P. Wikgren* [ed. D. E. Aune, Leiden: Brill, 1972] 135-143). R. B. Rackham thinks Luke made no use of Paul's letters, for "while he had access to the living apostle, there was no need of his letters. The Acts in itself suggests living intercourse with the apostle" (*The Oxford Commentaries on the Revised Version The Acts of the Apostles* [London: Oxford, 1901] lii-lm).

II. THE JERUSALEM VISITS IN ACTS AND GALATIANS

At this point the Jerusalem visits of Paul as enumerated in Acts and Galatians will be compared and contrasted. Five visits are mentioned in Acts (9:26–30; 11:30/12:25; 15:1–29; 18:22; 21:17).¹⁴ Only two are mentioned in Galatians (1:18–24; 2:1–10). The problem encountered with the Jerusalem visits is not the fact that Luke records more visits than Paul does. As was stated earlier, if we accept Paul's letters as occasional documents written to meet specific needs and address particular issues in the churches we cannot expect them to contain a complete autobiographical account of all the events of Paul's life. The epistles only mention events of Paul's life that come to bear on the topic at hand. They are not exhaustive reconstructions of Paul's ministry. Rather, the problem lies in identifying which of the five visits of Acts correspond with the two in Galatians. The following is an attempt to identify and synthesize the Jerusalem visits.

III. ACTS 9:26–30 = GAL 1:18–24?

1. *Similarities.* Both Acts and Galatians mention this trip to Jerusalem as Paul's first (notice the absence of *palin* in Gal 1:18 in contrast to its presence in 2:1, implying that 1:18 is his first time in the city since his conversion). The visit occurs immediately after Paul leaves Damascus. Upon entering Jerusalem he meets with some of the apostles. Galatians mentions that Paul only saw Peter and James (1:18–19). When he leaves Jerusalem he goes into the regions of Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21), specifically to his homeland of Tarsus (Acts 9:30).

2. *Differences.* In Acts Paul attempts to associate with the Jerusalem Christians, but they fear him, not believing that he had become a disciple (9:26). Galatians does not include this incident, unless it is somehow implied in 1:22–23 (but this seems to occur after Paul had already left Jerusalem).

In Acts Barnabas is the mediator between Paul and the apostles, introducing him and defending his conversion and testimony that occurred in Damascus (9:27). Galatians does not mention Barnabas at all and implies that the motive of Paul's visit was to get acquainted with Cephas (1:18). The only other apostle he sees is James (1:19). Luke's use of the word "apostles" should not be played against Paul's mention of seeing only Cephas and James, as though Luke is in error by assuming that Paul met with all twelve apostles. Although Luke's account in this instance may be misleading,¹⁵ it should not be seen as contradicting Paul's account since

¹⁴ The NRSV states in Acts 18:22 that Paul visited Jerusalem: "When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch." The phrase "to Jerusalem" is not reflected in the Greek text, however.

¹⁵ So M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 86.

"apostles" only refers to more than one apostle (in this case two). "Where Luke generalizes, Paul is specific."¹⁶

Since Barnabas is mentioned as accompanying Paul on his visit to Jerusalem in Gal 2:1, it is peculiar that Paul does not mention him in the visit of 1:18, if indeed Barnabas was with him. But since the prepositional phrase *meta Barnaba* modifies *anebēn* (as does *eis Hierosolyma*) in 2:1, it may be implied that *palin* not only refers to Paul going to Jerusalem "again" but to Barnabas "again" being with him, just as in the first visit of 1:18.

After Paul meets with the apostles, Luke shows him preaching in Jerusalem (Acts 9:28–29). The rejection and threats that resulted from the preaching to the Hellenistic Jews is the impetus for his departure to Tarsus (9:20). Though Galatians only mentions the fact of Paul's departure, not his reason (1:21), Paul may not have seen the inclusion of it as relevant to his argument.

In light of the evidence it seems that the journey to Jerusalem in Acts 9:26–30 is identical to the visit in Gal 1:18–24. Comparison with the other journeys in Acts produces no solid evidence for identification with Gal 1:18–24. Both accounts indeed portray Paul's first visit to Jerusalem.

Paul's second visit to Jerusalem causes a considerably grater amount of problems and disagreement between scholars than does the first visit. The two major choices are that Acts 15 = Gal 2:1–10 and that Acts 11:30/12:25 = Gal 2:1–10.

IV. ACTS 15 = GAL 2:1–10?

1. *Similarities.* The majority of scholars hold the view (held as early as Ireneaus) that Acts 15 and Gal 2:1–10 describe the same event: the council at Jerusalem. Both accounts show Paul and Barnabas coming into Jerusalem and holding an official meeting with the apostles (Acts 15:6; Gal 2:2). They encountered problems with a Judaizing faction of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:5; Gal 2:4). But "similarity need not mean sameness,"¹⁷ and there are many problems with the assumption that these two Jerusalem visits are one and the same.

2. *Differences.* Galatians lists the account of 2:1–10 as Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, the first visit being 1:18–24. Paul seems to be giving the events coming after his conversion in chronological order, using *epeita* to mark the orderly succession of his trips to Jerusalem.¹⁸ He went to Arabia, returned to Damascus, "then" (*epeita*) he went to Jerusalem after

¹⁶ F F Bruce, *Paul Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1980) In agreement with Bruce is C J Hemer's comment "Luke is giving a generalized account of this visit Only in Paul do we sense the underlying tension in his personal relations with the Jerusalem apostles And here he is at pains to specify the precise limits of his contact with them at this time Peter and James were representative of the apostles" ("Acts and Galatians Reconsidered," *Themelios* 2 [1977] 81)

¹⁷ Huffman, *Galatians* 99

¹⁸ F F Bruce, "Galatian Problems 1 Autobiographical Data," *BJRL* 51 (1969) 302

three years, "then" (*epeita*) he went into Syria/Cilicia, "then" (*epeita*) he went back to Jerusalem after fourteen years (1:17–2:1).¹⁹ In contrast, Acts mentions the visit in chap. 15 to be Paul's third visit to Jerusalem, 11:30/12:25 being the second.

Paul's use of the word *palin* in Gal 2:1 also gives evidence that it is his second visit. In 1:17 Paul uses *palin* to describe his second visit to Damascus (the first visit being the conversion visit) after his sojourn in Arabia: *palin hystrepsa eis Damaskon*. We find a close parallel with 2:1: *palin anebēn eis Hierosolyma*. The similarity is obvious and implies that Paul uses *palin* to describe his second visit to Jerusalem (his first being 1:18) just as it is used to describe his second visit to Damascus.

According to the nature of Paul's argument in Galatians 1–2 it is highly unlikely that Paul would leave out a visit to Jerusalem, mentioning the first visit, omitting the second and going directly to the third. Paul is defending himself against accusations that he obtained his gospel and apostolic commission from the apostles at Jerusalem rather than receiving it through a direct revelation of God (Gal 1:11–12, 15–16; 2:6). He is careful to note that in each of his two visits to Jerusalem neither was conferred upon him. Thus if Paul had omitted a visit to Jerusalem between 1:18 and 2:1 this would have caused great suspicion among his opponents and they would have had good cause to label Paul as a deceiver. He would be working against himself if he had left out a visit to Jerusalem. As Catchpole notes:

This point stands and cannot effectively be demolished. It is essential to Paul's argument that all his visits to Jerusalem should be listed. To omit any reference to a public visit to Jerusalem between those in Gal. i.18–24 and ii.1–10 would play into the hands of the opposition. . . . Paul, therefore, gives a complete list of his visits to Jerusalem and indeed does more than that, for in Gal. i.17,21 he includes what must be regarded gratuitous information if his purpose is only to detail his visits to Jerusalem as such. This information is not, however, gratuitous if he is aiming to give a total and complete report of his movements. . . . Hence, as accounts of the second visit to Jerusalem in each narrative, Gal. ii.1–10 and Acts xi.27–30 do indeed correspond.²⁰

Therefore Gal 2:1–10 should be understood as Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, which disqualifies it as being identified with the visit of Acts 15. The only other way around this is to assume that Luke invented the visit of 11:30 or inserted it into the wrong place in the narrative, chap. 15 recording in reality the second visit. But the first option is unacceptable, while the second is very unlikely.

The impetus for Paul's visit in Gal 2:1 is a "revelation" (2:2). In Acts 15 he goes to Jerusalem to resolve a conflict with the Judaizers who had come to Antioch previously and were attempting to impose Jewish restrictions on the Gentile Christians there (15:1–2). In fact, the overall nature of the accounts seems to differ. In Galatians 2 Paul goes to Jerusalem with the

¹⁹ I understand the three- and fourteen-year intervals to take their start from the conversion of Paul rather than from the events that immediately precede them.

²⁰ D. R. Catchpole, "Paul, James and the Apostolic Decree," *NTS* 23 (1977) 433–434.

express intention of presenting his gospel before the apostles (2:2). Paul had already cultivated a successful ministry among the Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 11:25–26). The motive of his visit seems to be a practical one, hoping to further the cause of the gospel, for

in the default of the approval or fellowship of the Jerusalem leaders, Paul's apostolic ministry would be futile. . . . While he did not receive his commission from Jerusalem, it could not be effectively discharged apart from Jerusalem. A cleavage between the Jerusalem church and the Gentile mission would be disastrous for the cause of the gospel. . . . His apostleship to the Gentiles would be frustrated.²¹

In Acts 15 the nature of the meeting is totally different. Paul goes to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles in order to decide the requirements for Gentiles who become Christians. The issue in particular is circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic Law (15:1, 5). The concern here is in essence theological, not practical as in Galatians 2. In the meeting in Galatians 2 there was no conflict whatever about the issue of circumcision. Paul emphasizes this when he mentions that Titus, a Gentile disciple from Antioch who accompanied him, was not compelled to be circumcised (2:3). The situation in Galatians 2 would better fit the historical context of Acts 11:30. Immediately before, in 11:1–18, the issue of circumcision of Gentile converts does not arise when the apostles questioned Peter upon his return to Jerusalem after the conversion of Cornelius. The problem seems to be that Peter ate with uncircumcised Gentiles, not that he did not circumcise them (11:3). Moreover the apostles do not insist that Cornelius be circumcised to be accepted by God. They recognize that God accepted Cornelius and his household without circumcision, for they had received the Spirit as confirmation of this acceptance (11:17–18). The issue of the circumcision of Gentiles did not seem to become a serious threat until some from the Jerusalem church began to preach this idea, unauthorized by the apostles or the Jerusalem church, to the church in Antioch (15:1).

Why then does Paul mention the incident with the false brethren in Gal 2:4–5 who sought to bring them “into bondage” and to whom Paul did not yield? Should they be identified with those who taught circumcision in Acts 15:1, 5? This one incident in Galatians 2 is perhaps the most compelling reason that many associate Galatians 2 with Acts 15. But if it is to be equated with the visit in Acts 15, then Paul directly contradicts himself in Galatians. First he says that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised (2:3). Then, mentioning the “false brethren,” he says that they “did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour” (2:5). This implies that the false brethren were compelling Paul to circumcise the Gentiles converted under his ministry. How could Titus not have been urged to be circumcised under these circumstances?

F. F. Bruce,²² citing the work of T. W. Manson, provides a solution to the seemingly undeniable problem of contradiction by suggesting that Gal 2:4–5 is parenthetical, “referring to a later development, and introduced

²¹ Bruce, “Galatian Problems” 303.

²² Bruce, *Heart* 158.

here because Paul is reminded of this subsequent occasion by his reference to Titus." Bruce interprets Paul to say in Gal 2:3-5:

But not even Titus, who was with me, Greek though he was, was compelled to be circumcised. (It was because of the false brethren who had been smuggled in [that this question later arose]. They infiltrated into our company to spy out the freedom which we have in Christ, in order to bring us into bondage. But to them we never submitted for a moment; our purpose was that the truth of the gospel should remain steadfast with you.)²³

In fact 2:4-5 fits well as a parenthesis, since the thought in 2:2-3 breaks off with Paul in session with those of "high reputation" and resumes in 2:6 with those of "high reputation." Thus 2:4-5 should be seen as an anachronism, probably to be identified with Acts 15:1, occurring on the eve of the Jerusalem council. This of course would date the writing of Galatians just before the council.

The meeting of Galatians 2 occurs in private, with those of reputation (2:2), apparently meaning the apostles only (2:9). But the meeting in Acts 15 seems to have been conducted on a much larger scale, before many people—hardly a private occasion. This "multitude" (15:12) apparently consisted of the apostles, elders, and the whole church (15:4, 22). Still it must be conceded that at such a public conference there would have been some private discussion before or after the general assembly.²⁴

The council of Acts 15 concludes with the "apostolic decree," while Galatians 2 includes no mention of such. It is indeed strange that Galatians 2 contains no mention of the decree if it is a parallel to Acts 15, especially since it would be of so much benefit to Paul's argument against the Judaizers who had visited Galatia.²⁵ Even though mention of the decree might not fit the immediate context of the argument in 1:11-2:10, where Paul is arguing for his divine apostolic commission and revelation of the gospel, it would still be appropriate to the argument and purpose of the whole letter: to show the Galatians that salvation is not through circumcision and the keeping of the Law but by grace through faith.

The Judaizers at Galatia had probably claimed that they had been given authority from the Jerusalem church and apostles to preach circumcision to the Gentiles.²⁶ J. B. Lightfoot has argued that had Paul mentioned the decree it would have been a definite concession to the arguments

²³ Bruce, "Galatian Problems" 302.

²⁴ As D. Guthrie points out (*New Testament Introduction* [4th ed.; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990] 475-476).

²⁵ J. B. Lightfoot (*The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976 (1890)] 128) argues that mention of the decree would not have been beneficial to the Galatians, for "the object of the decree was to relieve the Gentile Christians from the burden of the Jewish observances. It said 'Concede so much and we will protect you from any further extractions.' The Galatians sought no such protection. They were willing recipients of Judaic rights; and St. Paul's object was to show them, not that they need not submit to these burdens against their will, but that they were wrong and sinful in submitting to them." Even so, mention of the decree would still have given weight to Paul's argument.

²⁶ This may be evident from the disclaimer in the apostolic decree itself, stating that those who preached such requirements to the Gentile churches had received no sanction or authority from the Jerusalem church to do so (Acts 15:24).

of his Judaizing enemies at Galatia.²⁷ But it is unlikely that this would have been so, for a great amount of weight would have been given to Paul's argument if he could claim that the whole Jerusalem church was behind his gospel of grace and against the imposition of circumcision upon the Gentiles, evidenced by citing the decree of the council. Imagine how appropriate and decisive a statement like this would have been: "Even the apostles and the whole Jerusalem church recognize your right to freedom from circumcision and the keeping of the Law. They said so in the decree!" Or, "Even the Jerusalem church, which my enemies claim to have their sanction and authority from, denies what they are teaching, as shown in this decree!"

It could be argued that Paul does not mention the decree because "to him the enunciation of theological principles was of a much greater value than ecclesiastical pronouncements."²⁸ This is definitely true in such cases as in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8, where the citing of the decrees would have been helpful (and since both books were definitely written after the council of Acts 15). But the nature of the problem in Galatians is considerably more serious than those in the above texts, and omitting of the decree would have been highly unlikely.²⁹

It is strange that if Gal 2:1-10 does not correspond with the council of Acts 15 Paul makes no mention of the council or decrees anywhere else in his epistles. It may have been that the decree was only local in force, since the document itself is only addressed to churches in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:23). Paul does carry the decree to the churches in the southern Galatian region of Asia Minor (Derbe, Lystra, Iconium; Acts 16:1-4), apparently giving those churches the results of the council, which had not been held at the time that the epistle to the Galatians was sent to them. If the decrees were only local in force, applying only to the churches near in proximity to Jerusalem or to those that contained a large Jewish constituency or to those that were specifically influenced by the Judaizers in Acts 15, this might explain why the decree is not mentioned in the letters to the churches in Macedonia, Achaia or Rome. It is certain, however, that the essence of the decree is mentioned in principle, rather than concrete recitation (cf. 1 Corinthians 8; 9:19-29; 10:14-33; Romans 14). As Huffman notes:

We ought to give Paul credit for being consistent in his teaching without mentioning to the Corinthians [or Romans] the decree of the Council. He tells them to operate out of love and concern for their fellow Christians and if abstinence is the loving thing to do, then by all means, they ought to abstain from eating meat. In the case of the Jerusalem Council decree, abstinence was such a loving decision for the Antiochene Gentiles to comply with.³⁰

²⁷ Lightfoot, *St. Paul* 128

²⁸ Guthrie, *Introduction* 476

²⁹ Not only so, but the writing of Galatians is in a much closer proximity to the council (probably being written just before it occurred) while Romans and 1 Corinthians were written during Paul's third missionary journey

³⁰ Huffman, *Galatians* 96

Omission of the council decrees in Gal 2:1–10, given as evidence for a reconciliation with Acts 11, is an “argument from silence that screams rather loudly.”³¹

If Gal 2:1–10 is to be identified with Acts 15 it is difficult to see how Paul’s confrontation of Peter’s hypocrisy in 2:11–14 could have followed, especially since Peter publicly opposes imposing the Law on Gentile converts during the council meeting (Acts 15:7–11). If 2:1–10 is the council and 2:11–14 follows it, why does not Paul remind Peter of the liberal ideas of his speech that defended Gentile freedom from the Law in Acts 15, or remind him of the council decree itself?

Some have suggested that Paul chronologically inverted 2:11–14 after 2:1–10 and that the confrontation with Peter occurred before the visit of 2:1–10. This reversal of the narrative sections would do away with the problem of Peter’s inconsistency after the council. But the transition between 2:10 and 2:11 seems to imply that 2:11–14 chronologically followed 2:1–10. The incident would appear to fit better at a time shortly before the council.

R. H. Stein has offered what he calls a neglected argument that defends the identification of Acts 15 with Galatians 2.³² He notes that up until the first missionary journey of Paul, Barnabas is evidently the leader of the team, for his name is always mentioned first in order before Paul (cf. Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:1; etc.). During and after the first missionary journey Paul apparently becomes the head of the team, for afterwards his name always appears before that of Barnabas. At the time of the Jerusalem visit of Acts 11:30 the name order is “Barnabas and Saul.” But in the visit of Acts 15 it is “Paul and Barnabas.” Stein notes that Paul gives proof of his leadership role in the visit of Galatians 2 by the plethora of first-person singular pronouns he uses. Thus because Barnabas is still in a leadership position in Acts 11:30, Galatians 2 must refer to the visit of Acts 15. But Stein’s argument will not hold, because there are at least four instances during and after the first missionary journey in which the name order reads “Barnabas and Paul”—two of which are included in the council account of Acts 15 (14:12, 14; 15:12, 25).

In conclusion, it can be said that in the light of the above evidence it is highly improbable that Acts 15 and Gal 2:1–10 can be identified as the same visit to Jerusalem. A much better parallel to Galatians 2 is the famine relief visit of Acts 11:30/12:25.

V. ACTS 11:30/12:25 = GAL 2:1–10

Although it may be thought that this solution of reconciliation is relatively new, the identification of the famine visit of Acts 11:30 with Galatians 2 has been held as early as John Calvin.³³

³¹ Ibid. 97.

³² R. H. Stein, “The Relationship of Galatians 2:1–10 and Acts 15:1–35: Two Neglected Arguments,” *JETS* 17 (1974) 239–242.

³³ H. N. Ribberdos, *New London Commentary: The Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Newberry, 1976) 32.

1. *Similarities.* The famine visit is chronologically Paul's second visit to Jerusalem in Acts, corresponding to the order of Gal 2:1–10 as the second visit in Galatians. This eliminates the problem of the omission of a Jerusalem visit when one attempts to identify Galatians 2 with Acts 15.

The famine visit is immediately preceded by the prediction of a certain prophet (Agabus) that there would be a famine (Acts 11:28). His prophecy led the Christians in Antioch to send a relief contribution to the church in Jerusalem, which would be hit hard by such a famine (11:29). It may be this very prophecy that Paul refers to in Gal 2:2 as an *apokalypsis*. In both Acts and Galatians it is the impetus behind Paul's visit to Jerusalem.³⁴

Gal 2:10 may specifically refer to the famine contribution made by Paul and Barnabas: "They asked only that we might remember the poor, the very thing which I was eager to do." The present force of the subjunctive *mnēmoneuōmen* denotes continual action, which possibly implies that the apostles were urging Paul to continually bring contributions for famine relief, as he had just done. The possible pluperfect force of *epoudas* may also lend force to the argument.³⁵

Identifying Acts 11:30 with Gal 2:1–10 "obviates any problem over the omission of the Council decrees from the epistle. It further lessens considerably the charge of inconsistency against Peter if the Antioch incident preceded the Council."³⁶ There are problems with this identification, however.

2. *Differences.* The whole account of Paul's meeting with the apostles in Galatians 2 is missing from Acts 11:30. But Luke might not have deemed it important for his purpose to mention that particular meeting. He is not bound to a detailed biography of Paul but has the freedom to include or omit those events he feels have relevance to his literary endeavor. No contradiction between the accounts should be imagined, for Luke does not state that there was no such meeting held.

He does in fact mention that Paul and Barnabas will take the famine contribution to the "elders" (Acts 11:30). Although "elders" generally refers to a distinct group apart from the "apostles" in Acts (cf. 15:2, 4, 6, 22), Luke may be using the term inclusively in order to include the apostles in 11:30.³⁷ If he is not, there is still no reason to doubt that Paul came into contact with the apostles while delivering the contribution to the elders in Jerusalem. If so, there is the distinct possibility that he took advantage of the situation and met with the apostles, presenting his gospel to them (Gal 2:2).

The end of the meeting in Galatians 2 shows the apostles recognizing that Paul had been granted a unique and successful ministry among the

³⁴ Bruce doubts this identification ("Real Paul?" 209 n. 1). But Hemer feels it is "plausible" ("Reconsidered" 87).

³⁵ "Galatian Problems" 305. For criticism of Bruce on this point see Stein, "Neglected Arguments" 240.

³⁶ Guthrie, *Introduction* 477–478.

³⁷ "It is not, of course, certain that Acts xi 30 does intend to exclude the apostles" (Catchpole, "Paul, James" 434 n. 2).

Gentiles (2:7–8). Some have argued that Paul's successful ministry among the Gentiles did not begin until his first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–14:28). Thus, the visit of Acts 11:30 cannot correspond to Galatians 2, for it occurs before the first missionary journey, giving Paul no real time to establish his role as apostle to the Gentiles. "On the other hand, such a recognition would have been quite in order after the first missionary journey when Paul's ability and role had become evident."³⁸ Therefore since the visit in Acts 15 occurs after Paul's excursion into Asia Minor it seems to better identify with the visit of Galatians 2 than would Acts 11:30.

This argument, however, overlooks the fact that Paul spent a considerable amount of time in Arabia, Tarsus and Antioch. It is doubtful that Paul remained idle during his silent years in Arabia. Why else would Aretas desire to kill him (2 Cor 11:32–33) if he was not stirring up the characteristic trouble caused by his preaching? Nor is it likely that Paul was idle during his stay in the area of Syria/Cilicia (Gal 1:21). It is a good possibility that he carried on evangelistic efforts in those areas before being brought to Antioch by Barnabas (Acts 11:25–26). Why would Barnabas have chosen Paul to assist him in ministering to the newly-found Gentile mission if he did not know that Paul had previous experience and ability in evangelizing Gentiles?

The mission in Antioch was large (11:21, 24). Paul was involved in teaching and ministering to "considerable numbers" of Gentiles (11:26). All of this evidence points to the fact that Paul had evangelized and ministered to large numbers of Gentiles before his first missionary journey. He certainly had adequate time to distinguish himself uniquely as an apostle to the Gentiles. Thus there is no problem in the fact that he is recognized as such during his second visit to Jerusalem in Acts 11:30 and Gal 2:1–10.

A final argument against the identification of Galatians 2 with the famine visit of Acts 11:30 is that Luke seems to imply that during the famine visit the persecution of Herod Agrippa I broke out against the church of Jerusalem (Acts 12:1–24). It could be said that there was not adequate time or opportunity for Paul to meet with the apostles, since it seems that they bore the brunt of the persecution (especially James and Peter). But if Herod's death is dated at AD 44 and the famine at AD 46, it is likely that the famine visit occurred after the persecution had ended. Between the prophecy and decision to send relief in Acts 11:30 and the actual famine journey itself there may have been a period of preparation. Time would have been needed for collections. If the prophecy occurred shortly before the persecution and death of Herod in AD 44, and if the preparation for famine relief extended to AD 46, then Paul and Barnabas would have arrived in Jerusalem at the time of the famine and after the persecution had ended. It is obvious that the apostles were back in Jerusalem after the period of persecution had ended (cf. Acts 15), making a meeting with Paul and Barnabas possible.

³⁸ Stein, "Neglected Arguments" 242. This is what Stein calls his second neglected argument.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the evidence I have provided seems to show that Paul's Jerusalem visits in Acts 9:26–30 and 11:30/12:25 can be identified respectively with his visits in Gal 1:18–24 and 2:1–10. Luke records three more visits of Paul to Jerusalem: (1) Acts 15, the council visit; (2) 18:22, where Paul visits the church after his second missionary journey; and (3) 21:17, where Paul brings an offering to the church after his third missionary journey and is arrested and imprisoned in Caesarea. None of these three correspond to the visits in Galatians. Acts 15 has already been dealt with. Acts 18:22 is too late to be identified with Gal 2:1–10, for Paul and Barnabas have already split by this time.³⁹ The events and results of 21:17 make it impossible to identify with the Galatians accounts. But Paul does mention his impending last visit to Jerusalem in 1 Cor 16:3–4 and in Rom 15:25, 31. Both letters were written during his third missionary journey, so the passages testify consistently with the last Jerusalem visit at the end of Paul's third missionary journey in Acts 21:17.

Although I can say that this paper might contain a few shreds of new evidence that I have not observed in other literature dealing with the subject of Paul's Jerusalem visits in Acts and Galatians, my concluding position on the issue is not new or creative in any way. Perhaps I can relate to Colin Hemer when he says of his own conclusion that

there is nothing novel in this position, but the correct solution to a puzzle of this kind is not likely to be novel: the ground has been too often explored. It is more likely to be a matter of judgment between acknowledged alternatives than any radically new combination of the data.⁴⁰

³⁹ So Lightfoot, *St. Paul* 125.

⁴⁰ Hemer, "Reconsidered" 81.