MORE than any other of Paul’s letters the Epistle to the Galatians has been interpreted in terms of the doctrine of Justification by Faith: more than any other it has been regarded as the scriptural basis of the doctrine. It is no accident that one of the key documents among Luther’s writings is his Commentary on Galatians; and his treatment of the Epistle is significant. At the outset he sets out briefly what he conceives to be the purport of Galatians:

‘First of all it behoveth that we speak of the argument of this Epistle: that is to say, what matter St. Paul here chiefly treateth of. The argument, therefore, is this.

‘St. Paul goeth about to establish the doctrine of faith, grace, forgiveness of sins, or Christian righteousness, to the end that we may have a perfect knowledge and difference between Christian righteousness and all other kinds of righteousness.’

There follow some seven closely packed pages of further explanation of this theme, and then at the end:

‘Thus far concerning the argument of this Epistle, whereof Paul entreateth, taking occasion of false teachers who had darkened this righteousness of faith among the Galatians, against whom he setteth himself in defending and commending his authority and office.’

1 An expansion of the lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library, on the 11th of January, 1940.
2 Luther, A Commentary on Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians (London, 1838), pp. xxxiii and xxxix.
Who, reading this argument as a whole, would ever suspect that almost half (about two-fifths to be more precise) of the letter is taken up with Paul’s defence of himself and his apostolic status?

Moreover, it is desirable to make clear to ourselves the central point in Paul’s argument in this letter. If it is true to say that two-fifths are defence of Paul’s status, it is equally true to say that at least another two-fifths are counter-attack. The nature of this counter-attack can be briefly indicated.

It is said to the Gentile Christians by Paul’s rivals: ‘You must be circumcised if you are to be true Christians’.

The logical contradictory of this is: ‘You need not be circumcised in order to be true Christians.’

But Paul says: ‘You must not be circumcised, if you are to be true Christians’. This is the contrary of the original contention. It carries the war into the enemy’s camp. And it prepares us for the central argument of Galatians, which is not designed to prove the Law unnecessary for Gentile Christians, but to prove it obsolete, superseded. To go back to it is to be a traitor to the Gospel, to apostatise from Christianity. The violence of this opposition is in part to be explained by the fact that Paul is also facing a violent personal attack.

This gives the first indication for the dating of the Epistle. The only time when Paul appears to have had to face an attack of this kind and of this gravity is in the Ephesian period; and the situation revealed in the Philippian and Corinthian letters is, I think, substantially that presupposed by Galatians. Only preoccupation with Justification sola fide obscures this fact for us. I shall therefore begin this investigation with the working hypothesis that Galatians belongs to the Ephesian period. I shall assume one other thing: that the persons addressed are those whom Paul and Barnabas evangelized on the First Missionary Journey, the Christians of South Galatia.¹

¹ Note that Galatians is a circular letter. It is addressed ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας. Presumably the copy sent was to circulate through the group of congregations and be read in each. It is most unlikely that “the Galatians” could ever have been together as a single unit. This makes it probable that any action which they seem to take as a united group, is suggested and engineered by the anti-Pauline agitators. This would apply especially to the composition and despatch of the hypothetical letter from “the Galatians” to Paul, for which I argue below.
So much by way of preface. We turn now to see what can be learned from Galatians about Paul and his missionary work. The reader of our English versions, and still more the student of the Greek text, must be struck by the extraordinary jerkiness and abruptness of the style—extraordinary even for Paul. This is usually explained as being due to the strong emotion under which the Apostle was labouring when he composed the letter; and this is no doubt a true explanation up to a point. But it is possible that there is another factor, which would help to account for this phenomenon. It may be that Paul is replying to a communication, oral or written, received from the Galatians (or about them). I should suggest that there are indications of the existence of such a communication in Gal. i. 6-9, 10; iii. 1-5; iv. 8-20; v. 7-12. And I should make a tentative reconstruction of its contents in this fashion.

The Galatians are receiving another account of Christianity (ἐπερον εὐαγγέλιον) from missionaries who claim to be accredited from the Mother-Church in Jerusalem. They point out that Paul lacks these credentials. The revised version of the Gospel (ἐπερον εὐαγγ.) involves, of course, circumcision and the adoption of other wholesome Jewish practices, including the ritual calendar (iv. 10). When the Galatians ask—as well they may—why they were not told about all these obligations when they were first converted by Paul, the answer given by their new ministers is that Paul is a somewhat easy-going missionary who accommodates his preaching to the tastes of his hearers, making himself and his Gospel agreeable to them (i. 10). True, the preaching of Christ crucified is good and the gift of the Holy Spirit is a very great blessing; but these things are not the whole story. The Galatians must complete the good work, and

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1 Paul’s claim that his Apostleship is not ἀπὸ ἁθροφόρων, οὐδὲ δι’ ἁθροφότου, and that his Gospel is not κατὰ ἁθροφοτου, is double-edged. It means to say: (a) My opponents in Galatia claim to have Apostolic credentials and the authentic complete Jerusalem version of the Gospel. They say I lack these things. I don’t want them, for (b) my authority and my Gospel are both derived from another (and a better) source.

2 The foundation in fact on which this libel was based may be found in I Cor. ix. 20 ff.
the new missionaries are showing them the way (iii. 1-5). They do Paul no injustice by trying to improve themselves and adding to what he taught them (iv. 13). And if Paul chooses to take offence at this, it is he who is picking the quarrel, not the Galatians (iv. 16). But anyhow Paul is somewhat temperamental and liable to behave in quite in-calculable ways. The new missionaries suggest that perhaps it is to be explained by his physical disabilities. If that is so, the Galatians will quite understand (iv. 13-15).

Something of this sort seems to lie behind Galatians as we know it; and bits of this communication flash before Paul's mind as he tries to produce something that will meet the emergency. That would explain why the composition is so jerky and disconnected. There is consequently no need to force logical cohesion all through the letter; and, indeed, it is probably a mistake to try.

It is the fact that his whole life's work is at stake that prompts the long autobiographical section in chapters i and ii. It bristles with difficulties, mostly (not all) arising from the necessity of fitting Paul's account into the narrative of Acts. In this matter three canons may be proposed:

(a) Where Acts and Galatians conflict, the preference should generally be given to Galatians.

(b) Any reconstruction of the events which involves tampering with the order in Gal. i, ii is to be regarded with suspicion. And, on the other hand, a reconstruction which allows us to preserve the Galatian order should have that fact accounted to it for righteousness.

(c) Never to forget Paul's purpose in writing the whole letter, and the first two chapters in particular. Galatians is Paul's *apologia pro vita sua*.

The autobiographical section opens with a picture of Saul of Tarsus persecuting the Church, a picture which has its counterpart in Acts (vii. 54-viii. 3; ix. 1 f.). It is not irrelevant to inquire how long this period in the Apostle's life lasted. I am inclined to think that it was very short, and, indeed, that the whole period covered by Acts i-ix was quite short too. The first five chapters of Acts speak in the main of the progress and popularity
of the Christian community in Jerusalem. There is a certain amount of police action by the high officials of the Temple, but nothing that could be called systematic persecution. Acts vi. 1-6 describes the appointment of the Seven and vi. 7 mentions further progress. With vi. 8-viii 1 a troubles begin with the case of Stephen; and, following upon the death of Stephen, we have (viii. 1 b-40) an account of the dispersal of the persecuted Jerusalem Christians and the consequent spread of the Gospel. 1 Meanwhile Saul is persecuting the Jerusalem Church (viii. 3) and in chapter ix, we come to his expedition to Damascus and his conversion.

The inferences to be drawn from the narrative of Acts i-ix are these. (a) The Jerusalem Church begins, on the whole, prosperously. Serious trouble does not arise until the community has already grown too large for its affairs to be managed by the Twelve. Moreover, it is one of the Seven who awakes the spirit of persecution, and that among Diaspora Jews. Indeed the first serious persecution looks like a feud between Diaspora Jews and Diaspora Jewish-Christians. (b) Events move rapidly. Chapters i-v seem to me to be meant to give the impression of swift growth. And when persecution begins it, too, moves swiftly and fiercely. Consequently, when we are considering the time occupied by the events of Acts i-ix, we should think in terms of weeks rather than months and months rather than years. If, with Fotheringham, we date the Crucifixion at the Passover of A.D. 33, I should be inclined to place all the events described in Acts up to Paul's conversion before the end of A.D. 34.

(c) With regard to Saul's persecutions it is to be noted that in Acts he is shown as active in connexion with two places and two only, Jerusalem and Damascus. (This is a characteristic which reappears in Paul the Apostle: he goes for the strategic points every time.) That Saul's persecuting activity was thus restricted is confirmed by Gal. i. 22 where Paul says that after his conversion he was still unknown by face to the Churches of Judaea. Hence we may infer that his activity was neither widespread nor prolonged. It is probable that it amounts to a lightning campaign in Jerusalem, which was about to be

1 This section is largely devoted to the missionary work of Philip.
followed by another in Damascus, when his conversion intervened.

Three years after his conversion Paul paid his first visit to the leaders of the Jerusalem community (Gal. i. 18-24). He says that the purpose of his visit was to get acquainted with Peter, presumably since Peter was the leader of the Twelve. He also saw James the Lord’s brother. And that was all that happened in a stay of fifteen days. (Presumably Peter and James were the only leaders in residence at the time.) There is a parallel to this in Acts ix. 26-30. There are difficulties in reconciling the two stories: enough to cast doubt on some particulars in the Acts account, but not enough to bring in question the substantial identity of the two visits (G1 = A1).

Then after a lapse of fourteen years comes the second visit (G2) made by Paul, Barnabas, and Titus ¹ (Gal. ii. 1-10). Since Barnabas is of the party it is most unlikely that the visit took place later than the commencement of the Second Missionary Journey. For at that point Paul and Barnabas parted company and do not seem to have joined forces again. Now Acts tells of two visits to Jerusalem by Paul and Barnabas before they fell out: one (A2) in Acts xi (the so-called Famine visit), the other (A3) in Acts xv (the Council visit). Supposing that the second visit described by Paul has a counterpart in Acts, the possibilities may be shown thus:

(i) G2 = A2 (A3 not described in Gal).
(ii) G2 = A3 (A2 not described in Gal).
(iii) G2 = A2 = A3 (all being different accounts of one and the same visit; G2 being Paul’s, A2 that of the Church at Antioch, A3 that of the Jerusalem community). All three equations have been defended: (i) by Ramsay and by Lake (Earlier Epistles of St. Paul), (ii) by Lightfoot in his Commentary on Galatians, (iii) by Lake following Weizsäcker, McGiffert, and

¹ Titus does not appear at all in Acts. From the Pauline Epistles it appears that he was Paul’s trusted lieutenant during the period covered by the Corinthian correspondence. Whence he came we do not know. He was a Gentile Christian, probably one of Paul’s converts, and so presumably from one of the provinces in which Paul had worked—Syria, Cilicia, or even—if we put the second visit after the First Missionary Journey—Galatia. I am inclined to think that he was a member of the Church at Antioch.
It is in connexion with these identifications that the difficulties arise. To appreciate them it is necessary to examine somewhat carefully Paul’s own account of the visit.

'Then, after a lapse of fourteen years, I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. And I went up in accordance with a revelation, and I laid before them the Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles (but privately before the men of repute) lest possibly I should run or had run in vain. But not even Titus, who was with me, Greek though he was, was compelled to be circumcised—but because of the interloping bogus Christians, who sneaked in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ, that they may reduce us to slavery—to whom not for a moment did we yield in submission. And from those who were accounted to be something—what they once were matters nothing to me: God has no favourites—for to me the men of repute added nothing. But, on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the mission to the uncircumcised, as Peter with that to the circumcised—for he who empowered Peter for an apostleship to the circumcised empowered me also to the Gentiles—and realising the grace conferred upon me, James and Cephas and John, who were regarded as pillars, gave to me and Barnabas right hands of fellowship (agreeing) that we should go to the Gentiles, they to the circumcised. (The) only (other point settled was) that we should remember the poor, which very thing I have been zealous to do.'

This passage is very jerky and disconnected, and full of difficulties of interpretation; but we can get some things reasonably clear.

(1) The purpose of the visit. To make sure that Paul and Barnabas on the one side and the Jerusalem leaders on the other

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1 The authors and works cited will give the English reader a clear statement of the case for each view.
2 Stated most trenchantly by F. C. Baur, Paulus (2nd ed., 1866), i. 119-165. The main points in his argument against the identification of G2 and A3 seem to me to be unanswered and unanswerable.
were at one with regard to the fundamentals of the Gospel, so that Paul's converts would be recognised by the authorities in Jerusalem as genuine Christians and real members of the Church. This was vitally important for Paul just because he held such strong convictions about the unity of the Church as the Body of Christ. If, after a missionary campaign, his converts were refused the name of Christian and denied the status of members of Christ's Body, his work would be crippled and made ineffective. Such a calamity must not be allowed to happen and need not happen if there could be agreement on essentials.

(2) The result of the visit. (a) Paul tells us that he saw the Jerusalem leaders privately and that after a frank discussion they found that they were in agreement with him and had nothing to add to his Gospel. (b) The Jerusalem leaders recognised that Paul's status and appointment were from God in the same sense as their own. (c) Spheres of action were agreed upon. Paul and Barnabas, themselves Christians whose origin was from the Diaspora, were to go to the 'Foreign field', the Twelve (or 'the Pillars')—Palestinian Jews—were to take charge of the 'Home mission'. This was obvious common sense. (d) Paul undertook to raise funds for the aid of the impoverished Jerusalem community.

This takes no account of Gal. ii. 3-5. These verses are usually taken as describing something that happened during the course of the conference. It is supposed that the issue of circumcision of Gentile Christians was raised in the case of Titus, thus providing a test case and a precedent for the future. The difficulty is that if Titus was a test case, Paul's account of it is utterly inept. Either Titus was circumcised or he was not. If he was not, it should have been simple to say so outright: 'Certain false brethren wanted to have Titus circumcised, but I put my foot down'. If he was circumcised, the fact would be well advertised in Galatia by Paul's opponents, and the involved and stumbling

1 It is noteworthy that even now, at least fifteen years after the Crucifixion, the Jerusalem Apostles do not seem to have an idea beyond Home Mission work. (See Baur, *Paulus*, i. 142 ff.) I cannot accept Wrede's account (*Paul*, 68 f.): 'The most that was attained was an agreement to differ. The union meant at the same time separation: Paul was to go to the Gentiles, Peter to the Jews.' It does not appear that there was any such feeling in Paul's mind at the time.
ST. PAUL IN EPHESUS

verbiage of these verses would be worse than useless as camouflage for that nasty fact.\(^1\)

I believe there is a way of dealing with this passage that makes sense and allows us to keep our respect for Paul’s intelligence. I venture to think that v. 3 belongs to the time of the conference, and that vv. 4 and 5 describe something that happened later. This later happening still rankles in Paul’s mind, and the mere mention of circumcision brings it all back in awkward parentheses. The sense of the whole passage will then be something like this:

‘The issue of compulsory circumcision did not arise on this occasion, though Titus who was with me was an obvious case being a Greek. When at a later date it was brought up it was through certain interlopers and bogus Christians . . . and in your interest we refused absolutely to make any concessions.’

The fact that stress is laid on Paul’s refusal being in the interest of the Galatians (\(\text{ἵνα ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου διαμείνῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς}\)) suggests that vv. 4 and 5 describe something posterior to the evangelization of the Galatians. As will appear presently, I think that the rest of the section describes a conference which took place before the First Missionary Journey.

(3) The time of the visit. The whole account seems to imply a private conference between leading men in the Churches of Antioch and Jerusalem, conducted in a friendly spirit, without any contentious matters arising, and ending in a friendly and sensible allocation of missionary tasks. This does not seem to me to resemble what is described either in Acts xi or in Acts xv.

\(^1\) Against Burkitt, Christian Beginnings, 118: ‘Who can doubt that it was the knife that really did circumcise Titus that has cut the syntax of Gal. ii. 3-5 to pieces?’ A. D. Nock’s suggestion (St. Paul, 109) that ‘Paul firmly refused to circumcise Titus, or to recommend him to be circumcised, but that . . . Titus, under pressure, but on his own initiative and without consulting Paul, had himself circumcised in the hope of easing a difficult situation’ is ingenious; but it is open to the objection that if that is what actually happened, it would have been easy for Paul to say so: ‘Titus was circumcised, I admit, but without my knowledge or consent. He did it with the best intentions; and while I fully approve the motive that prompted the act I must repudiate the act itself.’ But Paul does not say this or anything like it.
Further, the visit described here in Gal. ii does not fit the circumstances which occasioned either of the visits described in Acts. If we ask ourselves when such a visit as G2 might have been expected to take place, the obvious answer is: on the eve of some big new missionary enterprise. With that the place of the visit in the history of the Primitive Church is at once suggested: the period immediately before Paul and Barnabas set out for Cyprus and Asia Minor on the first deliberately planned piece of aggressive mission work of the Church. In that case it is possible to give a really satisfying meaning to the phrase ἀνέβην δὲ κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν, for in Acts xiii. i f. we read: ‘And there were in Antioch prophets and teachers. . . . And when they were engaged in service to the Lord and fasting the Holy Spirit said to them, “Come, separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” ’ (Lake and Cadbury’s translation). It is true that Acts does not record a visit by Paul and Barnabas in connexion with the First Missionary Journey; but there are many other things that must have happened which are not recorded in Acts.

Supposing for the moment that this identification is correct, what is the probable date of the second Galatian visit (G2)? It can be calculated to within a year or so by back-reckoning from the date of Paul’s departure from Corinth. This should most probably be placed in the early summer of A.D. 51 or 52, which gives midwinter 49/50 or 50/51 for his arrival in the city. At the other end the date of the Famine visit (Acts xi) can also be determined with fair certainty. Evidence from Egypt shows that there was scarcity there—in one of the greatest grain-producing centres of the Roman Empire—from autumn 45 to spring 46.¹ There is evidence for a famine in Judaea during the procuratorship of Tiberius Alexander, i.e. in 46 or 47.² The sabbatical year fell to be observed in the twelve months beginning in the autumn (1 Tishri) of 47. Its effects would be felt most acutely from about Passover 48 to Passover 49. All these facts together suggest that there would be scarcity in greater or less degree from autumn 45 to spring 49 in Palestine.

¹ See the article on the Universal Famine under Claudius, by K. S. Gapp, in Harvard Theological Review, xxviii. 258-265.
² See Lake in Beginnings of Christianity, v. 452-455.
The Famine visit may well fall in 46 or early 47. In that case the events described in Acts xii. 25-xviii. I will fall in the years 47 to 49 or 50. They may be distributed thus:

First Missionary Journey 47 or 48.
Intervening events including Jerusalem Council 48 or 49.
Second Missionary Journey 49 or 50.

The second Galatian visit will then be placed in 47 or early in 48, about fourteen years after Paul's conversion.

Our theory is that this second Galatian visit was followed by the First Missionary Journey during which the Galatian Churches were founded. This journey was followed by a stay in Antioch during which we most probably should place the next incident recorded in Galatians (ii. 11-14).

'And when Cephas came to Antioch I resisted him to his face because he stood condemned. For before someone came from James he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when (this person) came he backed down and separated himself, fearing those of the circumcision. And there joined him in this hypocrisy the rest of the Jews, so that even Barnabas was carried along with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not advancing towards the truth of the Gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of everybody, "If you, though a Jew, live Gentile fashion and not as a Jew, how is it that you constrain the Gentiles to live as Jews?"

On this important passage there are some remarks to be made.

First about the text. In v. 12 the best of the MS. authority is on the side of the singular verb ἔλθεν 'he came' against ἔλθον 'they came'. ἡλθεν is the reading of KBD*G and the Old Latin authorities d e g. It was certainly known to Origen who understood it to mean that James came down to Antioch in person. The difficulty is that in the preceding clause the accepted text speaks of 'certain persons' (plural) as having come down from James, and one naturally expects a plural verb to follow. Alternatively, of course, one might have a singular subject in the first clause, and this reading was in fact presupposed by the Old Latin

1 On the translation of ὄρθοποδοῦασι see the note by C. H. Roberts in J.T.S., xl (1939), 55 f.
texts d e g* r*. But this evidence by itself seemed insufficient to justify reading a singular subject in the first clause and a singular verb in the second. The textual question is, however, reopened by the fact that the Chester Beatty codex of the Pauline Epistles (P46) supports both readings: in 12a it has TINA with d e g* r*, and in 12b it has HAOEN with ΞBD*G and the Old Latin. We may also add Irenaeus' testimony: 'cum tamen aduenisset quidam ab jacobō'.¹ I think that P46 gives the true text of Galatians in v. 12 for the following reasons:

(a) The weight of evidence in favour of ἕλθεν is very great—almost overwhelming: and if ἕλθεν be accepted, it automatically creates a presumption in favour of τινά.

(b) The supporters of τινά are now the very respectable company: P46 d e g* r* Irenaeus.

(c) The substitution of τινάς for τινά may be explained as a confused reminiscence of Acts xv. 1: καὶ τινὲς κατέλθοντες ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίας ἐδίδασκον τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὑπὲρ ἐὰν μὴ περιμεθῆτε τῷ ἔθει τῷ Μωσσέως, οὐ δύνασθε σωθῆναι.

(d) The subsequent developments tell against the view that either James or a deputation of right-wing Jewish Christians arrived in Antioch. For if such persons had been present, Paul could not have ignored their presence. Yet in his own account of the matter he says that he tackled Peter (and apparently Peter only) in the presence of all. If this was a public protest—and it clearly was—Paul must have attacked those who had stirred up the trouble as well as Peter. That he did not do so indicates that they never existed except in the imagination of some scribe. Paul concentrates his attack on Peter because Peter is the leader, on the spot, of what is, from Paul's point of view, a retrograde movement which has swept away Barnabas and the rest of the Jews.

That being so, we accept the singular readings and understand that the 'somebody' of 12a was a messenger (Paul describes him in this vague way most probably because he did not know or had forgotten the man's name). He brought the message

¹ On the reading of Irenaeus at this point see Sanday and Turner, Novum Testamentum S. Irenaei, p. 154, where the O.L. evidence is also given in a convenient form.
from James to Peter which broke up the happy relations till then subsisting between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Antioch. What was the purport of this message? We do not know. Perhaps Paul himself did not know. We can only conjecture what it was from its results. Paul mentions two. First it had the effect of throwing Peter into a panic—not for the first time. He feared ‘those of the circumcision’. This phrase is used by Paul in Rom. iv. 12; Col. iv. 11, and it also appears in Acts x. 45; xi. 2. It means ‘the circumcised’, ‘the Jews’. This does not exclude the possibility that oí ἐκ περιτομῆς are converts to Christianity; but it is not necessarily implied and it is certainly not stated by Paul. The most natural interpretation would be that oí ἐκ περιτομῆς were the occasion of James’s message to Peter, and that they were either Jewish Christian members of the Jerusalem community (cf. Acts x. 45; xxii. 20 ff.) or Jews outside who could find in Peter’s behaviour a new ground of complaint against the Church, namely that its leaders were apostatising from Judaism. And the alternatives are not mutually exclusive: both factors could well have been operative, and the language of Galatians excludes neither. In this connexion it must be borne in mind that Peter as head of the ‘Home Mission’ work of the Church had to consider the feelings of those whom he was evangelising.

The second result of James’s communication is that Peter ‘backed down and withdrew’ (or perhaps ‘played the Pharisee’). This doubtless means that he discontinued his practice of table-fellowship with Gentile Christians. Why? The only really probable answer is that the Gentile Christians were suspected—no doubt rightly—of not observing the Jewish dietary laws in the selection and preparation of the food which was set before the mixed company of Jewish and Gentile Christians. There is abundant evidence, before as well as after the Christian Era, to show how suspicious was the devout Jew of partaking of Gentile

1 The fact that the objections were apparently being made at Jerusalem and to James may be regarded as an indication of his position in the community there.
2 See my Teaching of Jesus, 241 f.
3 On these laws see Moore, Judaism, ii. 74 f.; Schürer, Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im ZA. Jesu Christi, ii. 91-94; L. Finkelstein, The Pharisees, 534 f.; S. R. Driver, Commentary on Daniel (Cambridge Bible), note on Dan. i. 8-10.
hospitality because of the danger of consuming food that had been offered on heathen altars or that had not been slaughtered in the proper way. It would be a great mistake to regard this as a mere superstitious fad. The truth is that, whatever the origins of the dietary customs, they had been clothed with a special sanctity in the second century B.C. Then, in the attempt to hellenize the Jews, unclean foods had been forced upon them and the Maccabaean martyrs had resisted unto death.

All that has to be added is that as a result of Peter’s abstention Barnabas and the other Christians of Jewish origin also withdrew from table-fellowship with their Gentile brethren. And with that Peter destroyed something valuable—a spirit born of the Gospel, which had made Jews and Gentiles (Aryans and non-Aryans) forget their mutual prejudices and suspicions and sit down together as brethren. What was worse, in all probability he destroyed something that he had not himself created, something that was already in existence before he came to Antioch.

Taking all these facts into account we may suppose that the message from James was to this effect:

‘News has come to Jerusalem that you are eating Gentile food at Gentile tables, and this is causing great scandal to many devout brethren besides laying us open to serious criticism from the Scribes and Pharisees. Pray discontinue this practice, which will surely do great harm to our work among our fellow-countrymen.’

If we now turn to Acts and ask ourselves where is the most natural setting for all this, the obvious answer is that the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv) seem to contemplate just such a situation as that which had arisen at Antioch. At least that is so on what appears to me to be the most reasonable interpretation of the Council’s decisions. However, as there is difference of opinion among scholars, it is necessary to examine the proceedings of the Council. It will be convenient to begin at

1 Dan. i. 8-10; Esther, LXX, iv. 17; (ed. Rahlfs, i. p. 961); Judith, xii. 1, 2; Tobit, i. 10, 11; Jub. xxi. 16; Josephus, Life, ch. 3 (§ § 13 f.); Ant. iv. 137; Posidonius, cited by Th. Reinach, Textes d’auteurs grecs et romains relatifs au Judaisme (1895). p. 57.

2 I Macc. i. 47-49, 62-64; II Macc. vi. 18-vii. 41.
the end and work backwards. The business of the Council terminated with the dispatch of two official delegates bearing a letter containing the findings of the Council. The crux of the matter lies in Acts xv. 28 f.:

'It was decided by the Holy Spirit and by us to put no further burden on you than these essentials—to abstain from things offered to idols and blood and that which is strangled and fornication. And if you keep yourselves from them you will be doing right.'

This embodies a proposal which had already been put forward in the speech of James the Lord's brother (xv. 19 f.). The terms are later repeated in a conversation between Paul and the Jerusalem authorities recorded in Acts xxi. 20-25.

There are two well-worn problems here. The first concerns the text, the second the interpretation, of the decrees: and the two hang together.¹

First the text. In the translation given above four things are forbidden. These four appear in all three places (Acts xv. 20; xv. 29; xxi. 25) in the MSS. of the B family, in the Peshitta, and (for xv. 29) in Clement of Alexandria. The so-called Western text differs in two respects: (a) it has only three forbidden things, omitting 'that which is strangled'; (b) all the authorities for this type of text, except Tertullian, add a form of the Golden Rule at the end of the list, and three of them (Codex Bezae, Irenaeus, and Tertullian) add a reference to the Holy Spirit after the words 'you will be doing right' in xv. 29. A smaller group of authorities comprising Origen (C. Cels. viii. 29), the Harris MS. of the Syriac Didascalia (cited by Preuschen in his commentary on Acts), and (for xv. 20)² the Chester Beatty codex P⁴⁵, omit 'fornication' from the list. There is a further point. In the three places in Acts the order of the items in the

¹ For the text see the discussions by Ropes, Beginnings of Christianity, iii. 265-269; Clark, The Acts of the Apostles, 360 f. (earlier literature cited by Ropes, op. cit., p. 269). For the exegesis of the decree see especially Lake, Beginnings of Christianity, v, 204-212; Harnack, Die Apostelgeschichte (1908), pp. 188-198.

²α]λ επιστευλαι αυτοις του απεξεσθαι των αλι[ογηματων των ειδω]λων· και του πυκτου· και του αιματος μωση[ς γαρ εκ. The papyrus is unfortunately not extant for the other two places.
list is different: in xv. 20 it is 'idol offerings, fornication, things
strangled, blood'; in xv. 29 and xxi. 25 it is 'idol-offerings,
blood, things strangled, fornication'. The undisputed members
of the list are 'idol-offerings' and 'blood'; the other two
appear now before 'blood', now after it.

It will be observed that the effect of the peculiar 'Western'
readings is to exclude any food-law explanation, and virtually
to compel the reading of the decrees as a compendium of moral
requirements. That in itself makes these readings suspect.
Consequently, if we judge that the Western authorities are wrong
in adding the Golden Rule and the reference to the Holy Spirit,
we are bound to ask whether they are not also wrong in omitting
'the thing that is strangled'. Nor can we stop there. In the
light of the reading of P45 and Origen we must ask whether the
appearance of the word 'fornication' in the list is not one of the
first steps in the process of moralisation. For it is well known
that the Western text can be interpreted in a sense which makes
it practically equivalent to the decisions of the Jewish Council
of Lydda held after the rebellion under Hadrian (A.D. 132-135).
There it was decided that, if his life were at stake, a Jew might
break any commandment of the Law except those prohibiting
idolatry (Ἑλληνικὸς ὁρισμός), sexual immorality (Ľαλία), and murder
(Σφήκα δέμος). It is simple and tempting to equate ἀλογήματα
τῶν εἴδωλων with Ἑβραία ὁρισμός, πορνεία with Ὑερεία, and αἵμα
with Θεοκρίτεα. But it cannot be done without reducing
the findings of the Jerusalem Council to absurdity.

For the situations are not parallel. The Jewish Council of
Lydda was legislating for Jews in peril of their lives in a time of
fierce and relentless persecution, and the three things mentioned
are things which a Jew must not do even to save his life. But
no such dreadful dilemma faces the Gentile convert to Chris-
tianity. The Council of Jerusalem is not legislating for Gentile
Christians confronted with the alternatives: eat idol-offerings or
be slain. And for a gathering of Apostles and elders to lay down
in solemn form that well-behaved Christians will abstain from
idolatry, fornication, and murder is simply to make fools of
themselves. Ecclesiastical gatherings have before now achieved

1 On this see the article by Dr. J. W. Hunkin in J.T.S., xxvii (1926), 272-283.
remarkable results in the way of pompous platitude; but it is asking too much to expect us to believe that the Fathers at Jerusalem (who were presumably in possession of those ‘sayings of Jesus’ which went to make up such a document as Q) perpetrated this, or that the Paul, who wrote I Cor. xiii and Rom. xii, could ever have allowed it to pass. For it would fix for the Gentile Christian a lower minimum standard of conduct than the Jewish Law normally required from the resident alien. And, in its context, the finding could only mean: ‘We Jewish Christians have, of course, to maintain a somewhat high standard to which you converts from heathenism cannot be expected to attain. Consequently we must overlook such peccadilloes as lying, thieving, fraud, bullying, and backbiting, but we do draw the line at idolatry, fornication, and murder.’ Neither the legalistic Jewish Christians nor the anti-legalist Paul could ever have supposed that you solve the problems created by the existence of the Mosaic Law by the whittling down of moral standards. It is too much like the imaginary examination paper which consisted of the Ten Commandments together with the rubric: ‘Candidates are advised not to attempt more than six of these’—except that in this case the requirement for a pass is reduced to three. It is too ridiculous to be credible.

But if the ‘ethical’ interpretation breaks down, the only real alternative is that which understands the prohibitions in connexion with Jewish dietary practice. And in that case ‘fornication’ is quite out of place in the list and should be removed from the text. This leaves us with idol-offerings, that which is strangled, and blood. The only textual evidence against πυκτός (τῶν πυκτῶν) is its absence from the Western authorities. (Perhaps we should add here its variable position in the lists.) But its absence from the Western text is somewhat discounted by the consideration that it was absolutely necessary if the decree was to be understood in a purely ‘ethical’ sense. It may, therefore, have been ejected in the process of moralisation which produced the Western text. On the other hand it may be argued that if it was absent from the original form of the decree, anyone who was bent on an ethical interpretation would find no obstacle

1 See Moore, Judaism, i. 338 f., for these requirements.
in his path, since the remaining two items might be taken in either way.

There is one other objection to the genuineness of τοῦ πνικτοῦ. It was raised by Wellhausen and relied upon by Harnack. It is that πνικτόν is included under ἀλμα, so that if ἀλμα, in the sense of ‘eating meat with blood in it’ is forbidden, πνικτόν is automatically forbidden at the same time. In strict logic no doubt this is so. It would seem that πνικτόν is a comprehensive term for meat from animals not slaughtered in accordance with Jewish rules. But one might obtain meat that conformed to all the Jewish rules in regard to slaughtering, and still be guilty of the ἀλμα by failing to prepare it properly before cooking. It is perhaps possible that πνικτόν is meant to cover the slaughter of the animal, and ἀλμα the preparation of the meat for the table. This would be the more plausible if the order πνικτόν ἀλμα, as in xv. 20, were the original. But all this is highly conjectural, and we cannot exclude the possibility that πνικτόν is an early gloss on ἀλμα. I do not attempt to decide the question here, and am content with the conclusion that, whether the decree covered idol-offerings, things strangled, and blood, or idol-offerings and blood only, it was a provision regulating the dinner tables of the Gentile Christians.

The difficulties begin when we attempt to relate this result to what has gone before in the Acts account of the Council. The essence of the matter is that the Council was ostensibly convened to deal with the question of the circumcision of Gentile Christians and that it ended by issuing regulations about the common table of Jewish and Gentile Christians. The decrees are

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1 Die Apostelgeschichte, 191.
2 See Krauss, Talmudische Archäologie, i. 120, 502; Billerbeck, Kommentar, ii. 735 ff.
3 There is a good deal of evidence to show that the decrees regarded as a food law continued to be observed in the Church in post-apostolic times. In particular, abstinence from blood appears as the rule in Gaul (Eusebius, H.E., v. 1, 26) and Africa (Tertullian, Apol., ix. 13). In the Eastern Church the ‘eating of blood’ was regarded as a serious ecclesiastical offence punishable in the case of clergy by deposition, and in the case of a layman by excommunication (Conc. in Trullo, Canon 67; see Hefele-Leclercq, Histoire des Conciles, iii. 571). See further, Suicer, Thesaurus Ecclesiasticus (1682), i. 113 (s.v. ἀλμα); Grotius, Annotationes in Novum Testamentum, ii (1646), 80 ff.
the answer to the question raised in Gal. ii. 11-14: they are not, and cannot be, the answer to the issue raised in Acts xv. 1. That is the fundamental internal difficulty in Acts xv. We have also to face the following facts.

(a) If \( G_2 = A_3 \) we have to explain the inexplicable behaviour of Peter at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11 ff.), which can only be done by supposing that Paul has told his story out of order.

(b) In I Thess. ii. 13-16 Paul speaks very kindly and appreciatively of 'the Churches of God which are in Judaea in Jesus Christ'; and there is no word of any demand for circumcision. The only difficulty is the opposition of the Jews (not Jewish Christians) to any mission work at all among the Gentiles.

(c) The demand for circumcision of Gentile Christians is being made insistently at the time when Galatians is written, and it appears as a live question in I Corinthians, Philippians, and Romans. That is to say, the question which, in Acts, is supposed to have been settled for ever before the Second Missionary Journey appears as a live issue for the first time in the Pauline letters in documents which we may assign to the time of the Third Missionary Journey.

When all these data are considered together they at least suggest the possibility that the narrative of Acts xv is composite, and that the demand for circumcision of Gentile Christians reported in Acts xv. 1 and 5 may have been first made at a later time, perhaps on the visit recorded in Acts xviii. 22. But it is not possible to enter into the detailed consideration of these possibilities here. All that can be done is to reconstruct the probable course of events, taking Paul's narrative as the foundation. On that basis it may be said that the incident at Antioch as described by Paul furnished the occasion for the Council meeting whose decisions are given in Acts xv. I think it probable that Paul and Barnabas were present at that meeting. Whether or not the issue of circumcision was raised on this occasion, as related in Acts xv, we cannot say. If it was, it was a side issue and was ignored.\(^1\) The matter of table-fellowship

\(^1\) It is to be noted that circumcision is not even mentioned in the Apostolic letter. This is very remarkable if the Council had been summoned expressly to deal with this very question.
was settled by the decree. In this way table-fellowship was restored, which was what Paul wanted; but it was a kosher table, which was what James wanted.

There remains one difficulty. If the decree is the answer to the question raised in Gal. ii. 11-14 why does not Paul state the Jerusalem decision, which we may presume that he accepted as a fair settlement of the difficulty? It seems to me that there are two possible answers to this question. Either Paul does not quote the decree because there is as yet no decree to quote, which would, of course, mean that Galatians was written before the Council of Jerusalem; or he does not quote the decree because he no longer regards it as binding, in which case we may date Galatians at any time after (but not too soon after) the Council. There are reasons which incline one to prefer the second alternative.

We call the outcome of the Council a decree; but in fact it was a working compromise. The end to be served by the observance of the prohibitions was the restoration of the table-fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians which had been interrupted at Antioch. It was a reasonable request that where Jewish Christian Apostles were the guests of Gentile Christians, they should not be—so to speak—unjewed, and their work among their Jewish brethren thus jeopardised. Further, it could be represented that it would be an act of Christian courtesy on the part of the Gentile converts to make this concession to the needs of the Jewish Christian members of the Church. There is no reason why Paul and Barnabas should not have accepted an agreement of this kind and have done their best to get it observed by the Gentile Christians. It involved no sacrifice of principle.

A few years pass and the situation is changed. The agreement described in Gal. ii. 9 is broken, and Paul's mission field is invaded by emissaries from the Jewish Christian side. This appears clearly not only in Galatians, but also in Philippians and in the Corinthian letters. Secondly the apostolic authority of Paul is questioned. This also appears clearly in these same documents. It seems fairly certain that part of the propaganda against Paul consisted in asserting that his Gospel was based on instruction received from Jewish Christian sources, and that his
missionary work had always been under the supervision and orders of the Jerusalem Apostles. In particular it could be urged that Paul had submitted to the authority of Jerusalem in the matter of the common table for Jewish and Gentile Christians. For, admittedly, the practice in Antioch had been very free and easy until James intervened to restore order; and the Council of Jerusalem had in fact upheld James (and Peter) against Paul by imposing the dietary requirements on the Gentile Christians. So it could be represented.

Moreover, it seems likely that the acceptance by Paul of the dietary regulations had been made—as concessions so often are—the basis for new and more far-reaching demands. The Galatians are now asked to observe the Jewish calendar with all its high days and holidays (Gal. iv. 8-11) and to be circumcised (Gal. vi. 11-13).

Paul's response to this is two-fold. The radical retort is made here in Galatians. In effect it is this: 'So far from submitting to Jewish Christian requirements, I deny their right to exist. They are based upon the Jewish Law, and that Law is now obsolete, its place having been taken by the Gospel.' This is the central argument of the Epistle, announced in unmistakable and uncompromising terms in ii. 15 f.: 'I though a Jew by birth and not a "Gentile sinner", yet knowing that a man is not justified by works of the Law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ, even I believed in Christ Jesus that I might be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law; because by works of Law "shall no flesh be justified".'

It follows that circumcision, fasts and feasts, clean and unclean meats, are, all of them, irrelevant to Christianity.

But—and this is Paul's second point—it is still true that large numbers of sincere Christians, who have been brought up under the Law, have a sentimental attachment to these traditional customs. What should the Gentile Christian do about it? Paul's answer to that question is that the Jewish Christian may observe Jewish customs; but that the Gentile Christian must not accept any positive obligation that limits his liberty as a Christian. On the other hand, he may, and should, abstain from exercising his undoubted rights in order to avoid wounding the suscepti-
The genuine Pauline position is stated briefly in Gal. v. 1 and 13-15 (and the two passages must be held together):

‘Christ set us free: stand, therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage . . .

‘Ye were called for freedom brethren. Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. For the whole Law (about which you have heard so much of late) is fulfilled in a single “word” [“One word” not “Ten words”; a µονόλογος rather than a δεκάλογος], namely, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”.']