

GOD WHO IS RICH IN MERCY



Essays presented to
Dr. D. B. Knox

edited by

Peter T. O'Brien
*Vice Principal,
Moore Theological College,
Sydney, Australia*

and

David G. Peterson
*Head of the Department of Ministry,
Moore Theological College,
Sydney, Australia*

© Lancer Books, 1986

LANCER BOOKS are published by
ANZEA PUBLISHERS
3-5 Richmond Road
Homebush West NSW
Australia

ISBN 0 85892 277 0

Distributed in North America by
BAKER BOOK HOUSE
P.O. Box 6287
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506
U.S.A.

*All rights reserved. No part of this
publication may be reproduced in any
form or by any means without prior
permission in writing from the publisher.*

Typeset and Printed in Singapore
by Singapore National Printers (Pte) Ltd

Chapter 11

THE CONFERENCE IN JERUSALEM

Galatians 2:1-10

FREDERICK F. BRUCE

The conference held in Jerusalem between Paul and Barnabas on the one side and the three 'pillars' of the Jerusalem church on the other, of which Paul gives an account in Gal 2:1-10, was fraught with high importance for the progress of the gospel in the middle years of the first Christian century. If the participants' agreement on their respective spheres of responsibility for propagating the gospel proved difficult to work out in practice, it was preceded by the more fundamental agreement on the content of the gospel itself. There might be many ways of presenting the message; the message itself was one and the same, whether proclaimed by Paul or the Jerusalem apostles, whether presented to Jews or to Gentiles.

The Background of the Conference

The conference, Paul says, was held during the second visit he paid to Jerusalem after his conversion. The first visit took place three years — that is, most probably, in the third year — after his conversion; he went to Jerusalem (from Damascus) on that occasion to make the acquaintance of Cephas, and spent two weeks with him (Gal 1:18).

'Then after fourteen years,' he goes on, 'I went up again to Jerusalem' (Gal 2:1). Like the three years of Gal 1:18, the fourteen years of 2:1 are probably to be reckoned inclusively. But from what point are they reckoned? From Paul's conversion, or from his first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem? No certain answer can be given. It may be of relevance to the question that two different prepositional phrases are used to indicate the intervals — *meta etē tria* (after three years) in 1:18 and *dia dekatessarōn etōn* (after fourteen years) in 2:1 — but the relevance of these phrases to the question is hard to assess. Happily, while the question is important for the detailed chronology of Paul's career, it is of no importance for the course of his present argument. He is concerned to maintain that his contacts with Jerusalem between his conversion and the writing of the present letter have been too few

and brief for him to be given either his gospel or his commission to preach it by the leaders of the mother church.

What was Paul doing in the interval between the two visits? He was preaching the gospel, and preaching it to Gentiles, in accordance with the divine call which came to him on the Damascus road (Gal 1:16). Where was he preaching it? Again he tells us himself: in the regions of Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21). These two regions formed one united province at this time. Tarsus, the chief city of Cilicia, was Paul's birthplace, and Antioch, the principal city of Syria and seat of government of the united province, was the cradle of Gentile Christianity. It was from here that news kept going back to the churches of Judaea that the former persecutor was now proclaiming the faith which he had once tried to destroy.

No one would be so foolish as to argue, on the basis of Paul's reference to Syria and Cilicia, that at no time during those years did he ever go beyond the frontier of the united province. But it has been contended more recently that he went far beyond their frontier; that, in fact, his first evangelization of Macedonia and Achaia is to be dated at that time.¹ One argument in support of this contention is found in Phil 4:15, where Paul speaks of his departure from Macedonia 'in the beginning of the gospel', understood as a reference to 'the initial period of his evangelistic activity'.² But if 'the beginning of the gospel' were the beginning of Paul's preaching of it rather than the beginning of the Macedonians' reception of it, then it should be located not in Macedonia or Greece but in Arabia (Gal 1:17). And if in fact Paul had gone as far afield as Macedonia in the interval between his two Jerusalem visits, he would have emphasized that as further evidence of the impossibility of the Jerusalem leaders exercising any control over him.

For throughout the personal narrative of Gal 1:10-2:14 Paul is insisting on his freedom from the authority of the apostles and their colleagues in Jerusalem. If this is recognized, then it will be clear that the two visits he mentions were the only visits he paid to Jerusalem between his conversion and the time of writing. Some people maintained that Paul's commission, whatever it was, must have been conferred on him by the leaders of the Jerusalem church — the implication being that, if he deviated from their teaching or policy, he was going beyond the terms of his commission and need not be listened to.

To this misrepresentation Paul has a twofold reply, positive and negative. Positively, he says, he received his apostolic commission without mediation on the Damascus road from Jesus Christ, who was

revealed to him there and then as the Son of God.³ Negatively, he did not receive it from the Jerusalem apostles or from any other human beings. On only two occasions since his conversion had he met any of the Jerusalem leaders. On the former occasion they could not have conferred any authority on him, since they had no opportunity; on the latter occasion they did not confer any authority on him, rather, they acknowledged the authority which was already his, in virtue of which he had been engaged in his apostolic ministry among Gentiles for many years.

On the former occasion the opportunity to confer any authority on Paul was lacking because it was a short visit (fifteen days), an informal visit (to get to know Cephas) and a visit during which the only apostle he met (apart from Cephas himself) was James the Lord's brother. On the latter occasion the opportunity was certainly present, but no one took advantage of it. Paul went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas (presumably from Antioch on the Orontes) and, whatever informal contacts they may have had with the other members of the church, they had a rather formal meeting with the three principal leaders at which an important agreement was reached.

"I Set Before Them the Gospel"

The visit was undertaken 'by revelation', so far as Paul himself was concerned. The nature of this revelation is not specified. Paul had considerable experience of 'visions and revelations of the Lord' (2 Cor 12:1), especially at crucial moments in his career, and this was probably one of these.

On coming to Jerusalem, Paul set before the leaders of the church — the 'men of repute', as he calls them — the gospel as he preached it among the Gentiles. He may have done this at a private meeting with them, in advance of the conference proper; this may be the force of *kat' idian* ('privately') in Gal 2:2.

But why did he do it? It might be thought that the validity of his message, or his authority to preach it, depended on the recognition of those men of repute. But this is certainly not Paul's meaning. He was persuaded that both the validity of his message and his authority to preach it were derived from the risen Christ, who called him and commissioned him on the Damascus road; neither the one nor the other could have been affected by the recognition or non-recognition of the Jerusalem leaders. So convinced was he of the validity of this message that he anathematized any one — even himself, even an angel from heaven — who preached a different message.

Nevertheless it was important to Paul that his gospel and his apostleship should be recognized by the church of Jerusalem,

because otherwise he could not discharge his commission effectively. It was from Jerusalem, he believed, that the word of the Lord went forth; indeed, when at a later date he summarized the course of his ministry on the eve of his projected visit to Rome, he described it as having been accomplished 'from Jerusalem round about as far as Illyricum' (Rom 15:19). It was not from Jerusalem but from Damascus and Arabia that his personal ministry started; but for him as much as for Luke Jerusalem was the place where the gospel began (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:4, 8).

If the Jerusalem leaders had refused to acknowledge the validity of his gospel or the genuineness of his apostleship, it is not to be supposed that Paul would have modified his gospel or abandoned his apostolic claims. But his ministry would have been unspeakably handicapped if Jerusalem had disowned him. This is why he says that he set his gospel before the men of repute 'lest I should run, or should prove to have run, in vain' (Gal 2:2). This use of 'running' as a metaphor for his apostolic endeavours reappears in Phil 2:16, where he tells his converts in Philippi that if they lead lives worthy of the gospel he will be able to boast of them on 'the day of Christ' when his service will be reviewed knowing that he has not 'run in vain or toiled in vain'. Paul's apostolic ministry would turn out to be labour in vain if his converts proved to be unworthy of the gospel which they had received. And it would equally be labour in vain if it had to be discharged out of fellowship with Jerusalem.

As it was, all went well. The men of repute, he says, 'added nothing to me' (Gal 2:6); they added nothing to his gospel, as though it were in any way defective, and they added nothing to his authority to preach it, as though there were any defect in that. How could there be any defect in the one or the other? Paul had already been preaching the gospel for anything up to twelve or fifteen years, and preaching it effectively. When he set his gospel before the Jerusalem leaders, he no doubt included some account of its reception by the Gentiles. If its reception by other Gentiles was at all like its reception by the Galatians, then the 'hearing of faith' was attended and confirmed by the entrance of the Spirit into their lives, with the 'mighty works' which attested his coming (3:2-5). The 'signs of an apostle' were unmistakably in evidence, and the Jerusalem leaders appear to have recognized this.

Titus and the False Brothers

As those leaders listened to Paul, they did not have to rely on his words alone to be assured of the effectiveness of his Gentile mission. He had brought one of his Gentile converts with him. We know from

Paul's later correspondence how trusty a helper he found Titus to be, and no doubt something of Titus's quality was already evident, so that the Jerusalem leaders could appraise it for themselves. To the question why Paul thought fit to take Titus with him to Jerusalem, it might be a sufficient answer to say that he wished to let the church of Jerusalem see a genuine Gentile Christian. (He makes it plain that it was he personally, and not he in concert with Barnabas, who was responsible for bringing Titus.)

Others have suggested, like Luther, that Paul brought the uncircumcised Titus along as a test case, to show that divine grace was as effective in an uncircumcised Gentile as in a circumcised Jew.⁴ Would the Jerusalem believers recognize this, and welcome Titus nonetheless as a brother in Christ?

It is unlikely that Paul had any thought of putting the church or its leaders on the spot by bringing Titus to Jerusalem. Too much hung on the outcome of the conference for Paul to do anything deliberately provocative. In any case, no pressure was exerted by the 'men of repute' for Titus to be circumcised.

But was such pressure exerted by others? Who were the 'false brothers secretly brought in' and what part did they play? When Paul says that they 'slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus' (Gal 2:4), when and where did they slip in? Did they infiltrate the conference, and insist (against the judgment of the men of repute) that all Gentile converts, and particularly the one who had been brought to Jerusalem, should be circumcised? If so, we could compare them (many indeed would identify them) with those 'believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees' who, in Acts 15:5, are said to have insisted at Jerusalem on the necessity of circumcising Gentile converts.

There are difficulties both in the text and in the construction of the sentences about Titus (Gal 2:3-5). The interpretation favoured here can be brought out by means of an expanded paraphrase:

Even Titus, Greek though he was, was not compelled to be circumcised. *The question of circumcision was not even raised then; it was raised at a later stage, when some false brothers, imported by stealth, infiltrated our ranks in order to spy out the liberty which we enjoy in Christ Jesus and bring us into bondage instead. But when they tried to force the issue, we did not give way to them, even for an hour; our purpose was that the truth of the gospel should be preserved unimpaired among you Gentile believers.*

The italicized words and phrases have been added to the text in an attempt to bring out its meaning.

One important question is this: *where* did the false brothers insinuate themselves into the company of Paul and his associates in order to spy out their Christian liberty and bring them into bondage? At the conference which was being held between him and Barnabas on the one side and the three Jerusalem leaders on the other? Possibly. But much more probably Paul is describing something that happened in the church of Antioch. This is the same occasion, in fact, as is referred to by Luke in Acts 15:1: "some men came down from Judaea and were teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' " This was a much more suitable situation for the activity of 'spies' than the Jerusalem conference was.

But if this is so, then Gal 2:4-5 must be treated as a digression in the narrative, prompted by the remark in verse 3 that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised when he was taken by Paul to Jerusalem.⁹ At a later date, the digression says, the necessity of circumcision was urged, not by responsible leaders but by some 'false brothers', and we gave them not the slightest countenance: we refused to compromise the true gospel with its message of liberty from all legal works.

The textual problem is presented by the 'western' witnesses which, instead of reading 'we did not give way to them even for an hour' (Gal 2:5), read 'we gave way to them for an hour' — i.e. for the time being (on the principle, presumably, of *reculer pour mieux sauter*). But it passes all understanding how giving way, even temporarily, to those false brothers, would help to preserve the truth of the gospel unimpaired among Gentile believers. This (according to Paul's account) was something like Cephas's (Peter's) policy at Antioch on the occasion when pressure was brought to bear on him by visitors from Jerusalem to desist from table fellowship with Gentile Christians (vv.11-14). Cephas went along with those visitors, not because he thought that table fellowship with Gentiles was wrong (he knew better) but because it seemed to him that a temporary concession on this issue would promote the cause of liberty and not weaken it. Paul disagreed: he denounced Cephas's concession as so much play-acting. If, then, Paul had given way to the false brothers in the matter of circumcision, he would himself have been guilty of play-acting, on a more serious scale than Cephas. Cephas could cry a halt to his concession and resume table fellowship with Gentiles any time he chose, but once Titus or any other Gentile Christian had been circumcised, it would not have been so easy to reverse that operation.

It has been argued that the statement of Gal 2:3 should be construed to mean that Titus was not *compelled* to be circumcised; he was indeed circumcised, but voluntarily — whether on his own initiative or on Paul's. But if Titus, a prominent Gentile convert, had been circumcised (voluntarily or otherwise), the pass was sold: the agitators' case in the Galatian churches had already been conceded. The only interpretation that makes sense in the context of Paul's argument is that Titus, Gentile though he was, was not circumcised: Paul did not give way, either during the conference visit to Jerusalem or at any other time. Only so could the law-free integrity of the gospel be maintained.

Conference with the Pillars

Paul's private meeting with the leaders of the Jerusalem church, when he set before them the gospel as he preached it, may have taken place in the absence of Barnabas. Now he goes on to speak of a meeting at which Barnabas was present — the conference at which he and Barnabas discussed an important question of policy with James, Cephas and John.

These three men, named (significantly) in this order, are described by Paul as 'pillars' — 'men of repute as pillars' (Gal 2:9). This figure of speech is perhaps related to the concept of the church (more particularly the church of Jerusalem, the mother church) as the new temple of 'living stones' in which these three men functioned as foundation pillars.⁶ Most prominent among the three was now James — 'the Lord's brother', as Paul called him in 1:19. Cephas, as Paul habitually calls him, was Peter, the leader of the Twelve, and John was almost certainly the son of Zebedee. The other son of Zebedee, James, had been executed by Herod Agrippa I not long before. Possibly during his lifetime he had been reckoned as one of the pillars. If so, there may have been four in all; alternatively, James the Lord's brother replaced James the son of Zebedee after the latter's death. James the Lord's brother had not been one of the Twelve — indeed, he was not even a disciple of Jesus before his death and resurrection. But the risen Lord appeared to him (1 Cor 15:7) and he rapidly advanced to a position of eventual primacy in the church of Jerusalem. Successive stages in his advance can be traced in the three references made to him in the letter to the Galatians.

We may get the impression that the authority of the pillars had been invoked against Paul's in parts of Paul's mission field, including the churches of Galatia. This would explain Paul's dismissive remark about them in Gal 2:6: 'Those men of some repute — it makes no difference to me what sort of people they once were, for God has no

favourites — those men of repute, I say, added nothing to me.' The interpolated remark probably reflects an argument that Paul's authority was necessarily inferior to theirs, since he was a relative latecomer whereas two of the pillars were members of the Twelve, Jesus' closest associates, while James was a member of the holy family and, with the Twelve, a foundation-member of the church. Whatever advantages they derived from those antecedents, Paul implies, their present authority was in no way superior to his, for his authority was derived directly from the exalted Lord, and there could be no higher authority than that. The pillars, in fact, conferred nothing on Paul, but even if they had wished to do so, they could have conferred no authority additional to that which he had received on the Damascus road.

So far as Paul's record goes, the talks which he and Barnabas held with the pillars were not concerned with circumcision or dietary prescriptions, nor yet with conditions of fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers. They were concerned with the demarcation of areas of missionary activity. Paul's message was recognized as being the authentic gospel; presumably there had never been any question raised about the authenticity of Barnabas's message. But it was evident that both Paul and Barnabas's preaching had been specially fruitful in Gentile communities, and this was taken as confirmation of their divine call to evangelize Gentiles. So, says Paul:

seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcision, just as Peter had been entrusted with that for the circumcision — for he who had empowered Peter for his apostleship to the circumcision had also empowered me for mine to the Gentiles — so then, James, Cephas and John, the men of repute as pillars, recognizing the grace that had been given to me, gave the right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabas, (on the understanding) that we should go to the Gentiles and they themselves to the circumcision (Gal 2:7-9).

There is something repetitious about this statement: in particular, the clause introduced by 'recognizing' (*gnontes*) recapitulates that introduced by 'seeing' (*idontes*) — but over and above that it is surprising to find the leader of the Twelve twice spoken of as 'Peter', whereas Paul's practice elsewhere (and in the present context) is to call him 'Cephas'.

The twofold use of 'Peter' here has been variously explained, but none of the suggested explanations is free from difficulty. One popular and plausible view is that the passage containing the form 'Peter' has been extracted from a more or less official record of the proceedings of the conference, accommodated by Paul to the

contextual construction (e.g. he changes the third-personal reference to himself which would have stood in the record to the pronoun of the first person, 'I', 'me'). The extract would have run: "Paul has been entrusted with the apostleship to the uncircumcision, just as Peter has been entrusted with that to the circumcision, for he who has empowered Peter for his apostleship to the circumcision has also empowered Paul for his to the Gentiles."⁷ But it is more likely that the official record of proceedings mentioned Paul and Barnabas on the one side and the three pillars on the other, not Paul and Peter only. Besides, was it in Greek that the record was kept (since it uses the Greek *Petros* rather than the Aramaic *Kēphā*)?

The simplification of the division of apostolic spheres of action to leave Paul on the one side and Peter on the other is more likely to belong to Paul's own account. For this reason J. Munck argued that Gal 2:9, with its mention of Paul and Barnabas on the one side and James, Cephas and John on the other, was more likely to represent the official transcript.⁸ This, however, leaves Paul's unusual use of 'Peter' in verses 7 and 8 unexplained.

More recently G. Lüdemann has proposed that the aorists *idontes* ('having seen') and *gnontes* ('having recognized') refer to the situation preceding the conference: the clauses which mention Paul and Peter only could reflect some 'regulatory agreement' between the two men during the brief period of their first personal contact mentioned in Gal 1:18.⁹ If such an agreement, however informal, was reached then might Paul not have been expected to mention it in its chronological context? And again, Paul's use of 'Peter' remains unexplained (although Lüdemann suggests that the account of the agreement given here is that which was preserved among Paul's Greek-speaking followers).

Other suggestions about the use of 'Peter' are that this was the apostle's personal name and Cephas his official name,¹⁰ or that Peter was the title (not yet the personal name) which Cephas bore "as God's apostolic mandatory for the world of Israel".¹¹ These are not fully satisfactory; even less satisfactory are arguments that Gal 2:7 and 8, or even the whole of verses 3-8, should be treated as a gloss or an interpolation.¹² It is best to acknowledge that we have a problem here which still awaits a universally convincing solution.

The Agreement on Demarcation

The account of the agreement on separate areas of apostolic service gives rise to various questions. Paul and Barnabas were to concentrate on the evangelization of Gentiles, in which they had made a

promising start. The pillars were to concentrate on the evangelization of their fellow-Jews — a work in which Peter's efforts especially had been attended by clear signs of God's enablement and blessing.

What relation does this delimitation of the pillars' area of service bear to the rival tradition which views the Twelve as commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (cf. Matt 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8)? This question does not affect the straight exegesis of Galatians, but it has some bearing on the Pauline mission. When Paul's mission-field was invaded from time to time by men who planned to bring his converts under the authority of the Jerusalem church and its leaders, those interlopers (as they were in Paul's eyes) may have reckoned that the Jerusalem leaders' voluntary limitation of the sphere of their commission did not abrogate the commission itself (which embraced 'all the Gentiles' within its scope), and if the leaders would not insist on their worldwide authority, they themselves would maintain it for them. If Peter, for reasons of policy, forebore to use the keys of the kingdom of heaven (or the authority which they be-tokened) in the Gentile world, they themselves would do it on his behalf.¹³

It may be that the Jerusalem leaders, conscious that their apostolic commission was universal in its scope, were prepared nevertheless to see the Gentile side of their ministry carried out by Paul and Barnabas, who had been so obviously called to it, while they devoted themselves the more energetically to the evangelization of Israel. They perhaps said, and believed, that they were delegating part of their responsibility to Paul and Barnabas, that Paul and Barnabas were their commissioners (*apostoloi*). Whatever truth might be in this so far as Barnabas was concerned, Paul would unhesitatingly have repudiated the idea that he discharged his ministry by delegation from the Jerusalem authorities. If his was a delegated ministry, it was delegated to him by the Lord: to the Lord alone Paul was responsible. In this respect, as in others, the agreement reached between the two parties concealed ambiguities.

For example, after reading Paul's account of the conference, his friends in Galatia might have said, 'So the Jerusalem leaders did give you their recognition and thus validated your apostleship.' Paul's reply would have been: 'They did recognize my apostleship in the sense that they recognized that Christ had already bestowed it on me and enabled me to discharge it; they did *not* recognize it in the sense of investing it with any authority or validity that it did not previously possess.' But the distinction between the two senses of recognition (fundamental as it is) might have been felt to be a fine one, especially by those who were unable or unwilling to see it.

How was the demarcation to work out in practice? Not on a geographical basis: the Jerusalem leaders did not intend to confine their activities to Judaea. Not long after this agreement, Peter (on Paul's own testimony) embarked on a wider ministry. There was no reason why he should not: the Jews of the dispersion, by the terms of the agreement, fell within his sphere of responsibility. A mission to them might carry him far afield: in Rome itself, where by tradition he ended his days, there were nearly as many Jews as there normally were in Jerusalem.¹⁴

The missionaries to the Jews and to the Gentiles, then, would constantly be crossing one another's paths, and this probably was especially so where Paul and Peter were concerned. It would have been very difficult to adhere to a strictly legalistic interpretation of the letter of the agreement. Flexibility, common sense, goodwill and Christian courtesy were plainly called for if the spirit of the agreement was to be maintained.

Was Paul debarred by the agreement from ever entering a synagogue to preach the gospel? Had that been intended, it would have cut him off from the fringe of Gentile adherents of the synagogue — the 'God-fearers', as they are commonly called — in whom he could find a bridgehead to the general Gentile population of one city after another, and who formed the nucleus of many of his congregations. Again, was Peter debarred from taking a practical interest in converts from Judaism who were members of Pauline churches? Most probably not. But if Peter did take a practical interest in such people, he could hardly minister to them without at the same time ministering to the Gentile members of those same churches.

Paul and Peter might have worked out a mutually acceptable way of dealing with these delicate issues, but difficulties were raised by the action of others. They were raised, for example, when some members of a Pauline church (like that in Corinth) invoked Peter as their party-leader ('I am of Cephas'), provoking others to counter with 'I am of Paul' (1 Cor 1:12). They were raised even more acutely when interlopers in Paul's mission field tried to undermine his authority in the eyes of his own churches by appealing to the higher authority (as they claimed) of the 'super-apostles', among whom Peter must have been pre-eminent (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11). Peter may well have disapproved of the way in which his authority was being misused to undermine Paul's, but this did little to ease Paul's situation. We can see (especially in the Corinthian correspondence) how carefully he avoids criticizing Peter when he denounces the interlopers, but Paul probably felt that the spirit of the Jerusalem agreement was not being kept.

This may have been the first occasion in church history when a well-meant agreement proved in the event to contain hidden ambiguities which led to misunderstanding and resentment, but it was certainly not the last. At the moment, however, when the parties to the agreement shook hands with each other, the outlook was promising: the work of evangelization could go forward among both Jews and Gentiles in a spirit of fellowship and goodwill.

"Remember the Poor"

The Jerusalem leaders, says Paul, imposed no conditions on Barnabas and me; they only requested us to 'remember the poor' and, he adds, 'I undertook eagerly to do this very thing' (Gal 2:10). By the poor they meant the poorer members of the mother church — 'the poor among the saints at Jerusalem', as Paul says in a later reference to this matter (Rom 15:26). Perhaps most of the rank and file among the church members were included among 'the poor'; but that is not relevant to our present concern. This request caused no problems to Paul — at least, not at this stage — he gladly acceded to it. How eagerly he undertook this service may be gauged from the energy with which he organized 'the collection for the saints' (1 Cor 16:1), the relief fund for the Jerusalem church, among his Gentile churches in the next phase of his ministry.

Even here, however, an ambiguity might lie concealed. I have spoken of the Jerusalem leaders as 'requesting' that Paul and Barnabas should remember the poor. If it was a request, then Paul's very positive response to it was a voluntary gesture on his part, and he makes it clear to his Gentile converts that their contribution to the fund is a voluntary gesture on their part: there would be no virtue if they participated in it under a sense of compulsion (2 Cor 9:5). But was the relief fund viewed as a voluntary response to a request at Jerusalem? Even if the pillars at the conference framed their words about remembering the poor as a request, was that the light in which the matter was seen by the church of Jerusalem at large? Was there a tendency to look on the collection as a tribute due to the mother church, a condition on which Paul and Barnabas had been given the go-ahead at the conference? Jerusalem was the matrix of the whole Christian mission, and her rights ought to be recognized by all churches, whether Jewish, Gentile or mixed, within the area of that mission.

To deal adequately with these questions would involve a close study of later references to the relief fund, and that would take us too far beyond the limits of this essay. But the verbal forms used in Paul's report of the request and of his report should be considered. 'They

requested us', he says, 'only to remember the poor, and I undertook eagerly to do this very thing.' The present subjunctive of 'remember' (*mnēmoneuōmen*) may denote the embarking for the first time on a continuous course of action, or it may denote the continuation of a course already begun: 'please go on remembering the poor.' The aorist indicative of 'undertook eagerly' (*espoudasa*) may denote the response made by Paul to the request, or it may have pluperfect force and denote a policy which he had already initiated: 'and in fact I had taken the initiative in attending to this very matter.'

Where the tenses can be understood in more senses than one, the context must be allowed the determinant voice; but it should not be dogmatically affirmed that one of the possible senses alone is permissible and that the other is to be excluded. The continuous sense of 'remember' and the pluperfect sense of 'undertook eagerly' have been accepted notably by exegetes who equate the Jerusalem visit of Gal 2:1-10 with that of Acts 11:30.¹⁵ The Jerusalem visit of Acts 11:30 was undertaken by Paul and Barnabas when they were charged by the church of Antioch to take a monetary gift to their fellow-believers in Jerusalem in time of famine. If this situation forms the background to Gal 2:1-10, then the pillars might be expected to say, 'Please go on remembering the poor'; and Paul might well say that he 'had taken the initiative in attending to this very matter'. But with this we have touched the question of the relation between Paul's narrative in Galatians and Luke's narrative in Acts; and to this attention must now be paid.

Comparison with Luke's Narrative

Paul's autobiographical outline in Gal 1:11-2:14 invites comparison with Luke's account of his career between his persecuting campaign immediately before his conversion and his breach with Barnabas after the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-15:40). We shall bear in mind the different purposes for which the two narratives were written: in particular, we are dealing in Galatians with a very personal document, marked (especially in this autobiographical outline) by a strongly apologetic note. The nature of Paul's argument, as we have seen already, demanded a reference to all the visits he had paid to Jerusalem between his conversion and the time of composition of this letter. The visit during which the conference took place was the second of these visits.

Acts mentions several visits paid by Paul to Jerusalem after his conversion. The first, in Acts 9:26-30, must be equated (for all the differences in detail) with that of Gal 1:18-20. After that visit, says Luke, Paul was sent off to Tarsus; according to Paul himself, he 'went

into the regions of Syria and Cilicia' (v.21). Since Tarsus lay in the united province of Syria-Cilicia, the two accounts agree on this point.

Is the visit of Gal 2:1 mentioned in Acts? Most probably it is, but with which of the Jerusalem visits recorded in Acts should it be identified? The commonest view is that it should be identified with the occasion mentioned in Acts 15:2, when Paul and Barnabas and some other members of the church of Antioch were appointed by that church to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about the problem raised by those Judaeen visitors to Antioch who were insisting that circumcision was necessary to salvation. On their arrival in Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas gave the church and its leaders a report of their recent mission in Cyprus and South Galatia. While they did so, they could no doubt have set before their audience the gospel which they preached among the Gentiles, in the sense of Gal 2:2; but nothing is said in Luke's account of a private meeting. "We have no reason for supposing", said W. Knox, "that the Church had by this date reached that stage of democracy in which the public meeting registers its assent to a decision reached in advance by its leading members."¹⁶

When Paul and Barnabas had given their report, says Luke, some members of the church who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said that the Gentile converts won in the recent mission should be circumcised and charged to keep the law of Moses. In response to their insistence the meeting usually called the Council of Jerusalem was convened (Acts 15:6-29). But the Council of Jerusalem — unless Luke, or his source, has altered the historical facts beyond all recognition — cannot be identified with the conference described by Paul. The Council of Jerusalem was a meeting of the apostles and elders of the mother church. Paul and Barnabas were present as observers; they were invited to tell 'what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles' (v.12), but had no part in the debate. The conference described by Paul dealt with the allocation of spheres of missionary activity. The Council of Jerusalem dealt with two things. First, the demand that Gentile converts should be circumcised and charged to keep the Mosaic law was considered and rejected, mainly under the influence of a plea from Peter. Second, approval was given to a motion put forward by James, that Gentile converts should have imposed on them 'no greater burden than these necessary things' — abstention from sexual irregularity, from the flesh of animals sacrificed to idols, and from flesh from which the blood had not been completely drained. These terms (which were probably calculated to ease social intercourse between Jewish and Gentile believers) were embodied in the 'apostolic decree' and

conveyed by letter to 'the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia' (Acts 15:23).

Neither of these two subjects is mentioned by Paul in the account of the conference which he and Barnabas had with the pillars. The circumcision issue is referred to in the context — in the statement that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised and in the further statement that, when the issue was raised by 'false brothers', Paul yielded not an inch to their insistence. Nor is anything said about food regulations in Paul's account. When questions about food arise in other parts of his correspondence, he answers them along lines markedly different from those laid down in the apostolic decree.¹⁷ The facilitating of table fellowship and other forms of social intercourse plays no part in the context of the conference; it does play a part in Gal 2:11-14, where a visit to Antioch of some people who 'came from James' leads to a suspension of table fellowship with Gentile converts on the part of Peter, Barnabas and other Jewish believers. This crisis, which evidently followed the conference, could well have led to a consideration of the issues involved and to the promulgation of such a compromise as is recommended in the apostolic decree issued by the apostles and elders in consequence of the Council of Jerusalem.

But if that is so, the Council of Jerusalem was not only later than the conference described by Paul; in view of the apologetic necessity lying on Paul to account for *all* his visits to Jerusalem up to the time of writing, it took place after the letter to the Galatians was sent. This conclusion seems to be inevitable if Luke is allowed any historical credibility.

Luke relates an earlier visit paid by Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem — the visit on which they brought money for famine relief from Antioch. This has been held to be a duplicate of the visit of Acts 15 (Luke derived it from another source without realizing that he was dealing with one and the same visit, not two separate ones).¹⁸ It has even been held to be a total invention (Luke wanted to have the 'collection for the saints' delivered at some point in his narrative but, for reasons of his own, did not wish to mention it in the context of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem).¹⁹ But if Luke, as a serious historian, knew what he was about, he placed the famine-relief visit where he did because that was when it took place; and such a visit would have provided a suitable opportunity for the conference described in Gal 2:7-9. There is no need to link Paul's 'revelation' (v.2) with the prophecy of Agabus (Acts 11:28); and there is no need to construe the last clause of Gal 2:10 so that it contains an allusion to the famine relief which had just been handed over. It may indeed contain such an

allusion, but we cannot be sure. It is unwarranted, on the other hand, to insist that the clause in question is exclusively forward-looking and cannot refer, even distantly, to any antecedent contribution.²⁰

If the visit of Acts 11:30 is an earlier one than that of Acts 15:2 then it must be identified with the visit of Gal 2:1; Paul cannot be supposed to have omitted all mention of it in his Galatians narrative. To have omitted it would invite the objection: 'You have left one visit out; why won't you tell us what happened that time?'

There are some who refuse all independent existence to the visit of Acts 11:30 and deny that Paul was present at the meeting where the apostolic decree was promulgated; if they are asked with which, if any, of the Jerusalem visits recorded in Acts the visit of Gal 2:1 should be equated, they suggest the visit of Acts 18:22, after Paul's Corinthian ministry and before his Ephesian ministry.²¹ It is odd that they should grant the historicity of this visit: Luke is so reticent about the visit of Acts 18:22 that some commentators have questioned if he implies a Jerusalem visit at all at that point.²²

The exegesis of Galatians does not require that the information given in that letter must be correlated with the date of Acts, but since Acts covers the same period, an inquiry into the possibility of such correlation should be interesting and could be fruitful. Dr Broughton Knox's earliest published contribution to theological scholarship was an article on "The Date of the Epistle to the Galatians" in *The Evangelical Quarterly* for October 1941.²³ In that article he argued for an early date and defended the identification of the conference visit of Gal 2:1-10 with the famine-relief visit of Acts 11:30. His arguments commanded my eager assent then; they still do. Forty years on and more, it is a great pleasure to join in this tribute of honour to him as theologian, churchman and friend.

Notes

1. Cf. J. Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul* (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury, 1950) 58-9; G. Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (ET; London: SCM, 1984) 59-61, 100-8.

2. Lüdemann, *Paul*, 106.

3. Cf. G. Bornkamm, "The Revelation of Christ to Paul on the Damascus Road and Paul's Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation" in *Reconciliation and Hope* (ed. R. Banks; Exeter: Paternoster, 1974) 90-103.

4. M. Luther (*Vorlesung über den Galaterbrief*[1516/17]) quoted in H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1971) 65, n. 5.

5. For the parenthetic character of vv.4 and 5 see T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (Manchester: University Press, 1962) 175-6; a case for regarding vv.3-5 as parenthetic is presented by B. Orchard, "A New Solution of the Galatians Problem", *BJRL* 28 (1944) 154-74; "The Ellipsis between Galatians 2,3 and 2,4", *Bib* 54 (1973) 469-81.

6. Cf. C. K. Barrett, "Paul and the 'Pillar' Apostles", in *Studia Paulina in honorem J. de Zwaan* (ed. J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik; Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn N.V., 1953) 1-19.

7. Cf. E. Dinkler, "Der Brief an die Galater", *VF* 1-3 (1953-55) 182.

8. J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (E.T.; London: SCM, 1959) 62, n. 2.

9. G. Lüdemann, *Paul*, 69-71.

10. P. Gaechter, *Petrus und seine Zeit* (Innsbruck-Wien-München: Tyrolia Verlag, 1958) 385.

11. P. Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium: I. Vorgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1968) 94.

12. Cf. E. Barnikol, *Der Nichtpaulinische Ursprung des Parallelismus der Apostel Paulus und Petrus* (Kiel: Mührlau, 1931). D. Warner, "Galatians ii. 3-8: As an Interpolation", *ExpT* 62 (1951) 380.

13. Cf. W. R. Farmer, *Jesus and the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 84.

14. For the population of Jerusalem see J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (E.T.; London: SCM, 1969) 77-84; for the Jewish population of Rome see H. J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publ. of America, 1960) 135-6.

15. Cf. C. W. Emmet, "The Case for the Tradition", in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake; London: MacMillan, 1922) I:279.

16. W. L. Knox, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: University Press, 1948) 42.

17. Cf. 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:14-30; Rom 14:1-15:6. See C. K. Barrett, "Things Sacrificed to Idols", *NTS* 11 (1964) 138-53.

18. This view appears to have been first published by J. Wellhausen, "Noten zur Apostelgeschichte", *Nachrichten von der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, philolo-*

gisch-historische Klasse (1907) 1-21, and E. Schwartz, "Zur Chronologie des Paulus", *ibid.*, 263-99.

19. So Knox, *Chapters*, 69-70. Luke's only reference to an offering for Jerusalem in the context of Paul's last visit is in Acts 24:17, where Paul speaks of himself as coming "to bring to my nation alms and offerings". See K. Berger, "Almosen für Israel: Zum historischen Kontext der paulinischen Kollekte", *NTS* 23 (1976-77) 180-204.

20. Cf. J. Knox, *Chapters*, 54-58.

21. *ibid.*, 68, G. Lüdemann, *Paul*, 149-56. The equation of the visit of Gal 2:1 with that of Acts 18:22 is maintained also by J. van Bruggen, *Na Veertien Jaren* (Kampen: J. H. Kok N.V., 1973) 40-43, 223-25, but without questioning his historicity of the other visits recorded in Acts. T. W. Manson (*Studies*, 177) thought the visit of Gal 2:1 was paid by Paul and Barnabas before they set out from Antioch on their mission in Cyprus and Asia Minor, the "revelation" of Gal 2:2 being the Spirit's utterance of Acts 13:2; similarly W. Schmithals, *Paul and James* (E.T.; London: SCM, 1965) 52.

22. So K. Lake and H. J. Cadbury, *The Acts of the Apostles: English Translation and Commentary = The Beginnings of Christianity* (ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake; London: MacMillan, 1933) 4:230-1.

23. D. B. Knox, "The Date of the Epistle to the Galatians", *EvQ* 13 (1941) 262-8.