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THE ETHNIC CONFLICT IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY: AN APPRAISAL OF BAUCKHAM'S PROPOSAL ON THE ANTIOCH CRISIS AND THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

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I. INTRODUCTION

The topic of this study is the ethnic conflict in early Christianity. Early Christianity developed from a messianic sect within the matrix of late Second Temple Judaism into a religion distinct from Judaism by the second century AD.[1] However, far from being smooth, this development was marked by conflicts within the emerging movement itself, of which the ethnic conflict was the most poignant. I will examine how the early church dealt with the crucial issue of admitting Gentiles into the people of God, with specific reference to the Antioch crisis (Galatians 2) and the Jerusalem council (Acts 15).[2] The study will address the following questions: Do the events in Gal 2:1–10 refer to those in Acts 11:27–30 or Acts 15? Did the Antioch crisis recorded in Gal 2:11–14 occur before or after the Jerusalem council in Acts 15? Did Paul and the Jerusalem church differ and grow apart or were they in entire agreement with each other?

The majority view holds that Gal 2:1–10 relates to Acts 15 and that, therefore, the Antioch crisis occurred after the Jerusalem council. Moreover, despite the liberal ruling on circumcision in favor of Paul's position in Acts 15:19, the Jerusalem decree by James also favored Jewish conservatism, because to abstain "from what is strangled and from blood" in Acts 15:20 probably referred to the kosher laws, effectively regulating table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians on

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[1] For the various views on the parting of Christianity and Judaism, see Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); Adam H. Becker and Annette Y. Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (TSAJ 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (2d ed.; London: SCM, 2006); Giorgo Jossa, *Jews or Christians? The Followers of Jesus in Search of Their Own Identity* (WUNT I/202; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); Marius Heemstra, *The* Fiscus Judaicus *and the Parting of the Ways* (WUNT II/277; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

[2] For the possibility of using Acts for the historical reconstruction of early Christianity, see the discussions in David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987) 77–157; the essays by Darryl W. Palmer, Loveday C. A. Alexander, and Brian S. Rosner in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 1: *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting* (ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 1–82; the various essays in Ben Witherington (ed.), *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Loveday Alexander, "Mapping Early Christianity: Acts and the Shape of Early Church History," *Int* 57 (2003) 163–73; Clare K. Rothschild, *Luke–Acts and the Rhetoric of History* (WUNT II/175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

Jewish terms.[3] Contra the majority view, I seek to support Richard Bauckham's proposal that the Antioch crisis was the lead-up to the Jerusalem council and that the Jerusalem church remained central by providing authoritative direction for the entire Christian mission. While the Jerusalem church supported Paul's "law-free" (i.e. non-Torah-based) program to admit Gentiles *as Gentiles* into the church, Paul was in total agreement with the outcome of the Jerusalem council and remained on good terms with the Jerusalem church. Although the label "Christian/ity" is arguably anachronistic for the Christ groups of the first two centuries AD, I use the term without reading the developed Christianity of the fourth century AD into it.

II. THE CONTOURS OF THE ETHNIC CONFLICT

Many scholars who engage in the historical reconstruction of early Christianity either modify or oppose the nineteenth-century views of Ferdinand Christian Baur, founder of the Tübingen school. He proposed that earliest Christianity was marked by a conflict and schism between Jewish (Petrine) Christianity and Gentile (Pauline) Christianity.[4] As illustrative of each position, James Dunn upholds the main thrust of Baur's thesis that substantial tensions and conflicts characterized early Christianity, while Richard Bauckham and Eckhard Schnabel oppose Baur's position, claiming more unity and homogeneity in early Christianity.[5] Nevertheless, the influential work of Walter Bauer, James Robinson and Helmut Koester, and James Dunn, stressing the diversity of early Christianity, shows that Christianity did not develop as a homogeneous movement.[6] Almost from its inception, early Christianity faced disagreements or factions. The dispute in Acts 6:1–6, just a few months after Pentecost, reveals a tension or rift in the early Christian community between the "Hebrews" (Aramaic-speaking Jewish believers) and the "Hellenists" (Greek-speaking Diaspora Jews who had settled in Jerusalem and become believ-

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[3] James D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, vol. 2: *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 462–68. Cf. Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000) 79–83.

[4] See esp. Ferdinand Christian Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1878–1879; German original *Das Christentum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* [Tübingen: Fues, 1853]).

[5] Richard Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 4: *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 415–80; Richard Bauckham, "James, Peter, and the Gentiles," in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity* (ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig Evans; NovTSup 115; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 91–142; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (2 vols.; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004); Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*.

[6] Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971; German original *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* [2d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1964]); James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (2d ed.; London: SCM, 1990). For a critical appraisal of Bauer's thesis, see Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

ers).[7] Besides, as Dunn points out, the "Hellenist" Stephen's critique of the temple, rooted as it was in Jesus' teaching, may not have been directed only at his fellow non-Christian Greek-speaking Jews (Acts 6:9–14). It may have also been aimed at the Aramaic-speaking Jewish believers (the "Hebrews" of Acts 6:1), whose regular temple attendance possibly betrayed a displaced loyalty towards the temple cult.[8] Early Christianity was also often threatened by false teachings (e.g. Acts 20:30; 2 Cor 11:1–15; 1 Tim 1:6–7; 4:1–5; 2 Tim 4:3–4; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 2:18–28; Rev 2:6, 14–15, 20). The most significant dispute in early Christianity, however, ran along ethnic lines.

Ethnic expansion or Gentile inclusion caused early Christianity to become a trans-ethnic movement. By the term "trans-ethnic" I mean that the Christian identity transcends ethnic identities. This does not imply that Christianity abrogates or opposes ethnicity, but that one need not reject an existing ethnic identity or adopt another identity in order to join it. The seeds for this were sown by Philip in his mission to the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), and by Peter in the incident with the God-fearer Cornelius (Acts 10).[9] More substantially, the church in Antioch saw a large influx of Gentile believers in the mid-30s (probably former God-fearers attached to the Jewish synagogue) due to the evangelism by some Greek-speaking Jewish believers (Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19–26).[10] But it was primarily Paul's programmatic mission to the Gentiles that abolished the Jewish ethnic boundary.[11] A critical reevaluation of the soteriological and sociological dimensions of the law caused Paul to question its salvific efficacy and its ethnic disposition to separate Jews from Gentiles (Galatians 2–5; Romans 2–7; cf. Eph 2:11–21). Consequently, he envisaged a life of freedom in Christ, led by the Spirit and apart from the law (Galatians 5; Romans 8), and redefined the categories "Jew" (Rom 2:28–29) and "Israel" (Rom 9:6) in non-ethno-national terms. Judaism allowed Gentiles to join *as Jews* through proselytizing, that is, adopting the Jewish ethnic identity. However, for Paul, Christianity was equally open to Gentile and Jew; a Gentile could (even should) join Christianity *as a Gentile* rather than as a proselyte. In AD 48/49, the Jerusalem council settled the ethnic dispute about the admission of Gentiles by

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[7] Schnabel, *Mission* 1.653–55; Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 246–54. While Dunn contends that there was already some suspicion, perhaps even hostility, between the two groups, Schnabel upholds the basic unity of the Jerusalem church. Nevertheless, both Dunn and Schnabel agree that we cannot speak of a "schism."

[8] Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 260–63. Cf. Schnabel, *Mission* 1.661–65.

[9] After having brought Philip's initial mission to Samaria under the supervision of the Jerusalem church, Peter and John carried through the Samaritan mission (Acts 8:14–25). Similarly, Philip later evangelized the Judean coastal plain (Acts 8:26, 40), after which Peter revisited the area (Acts 9:32–43) (Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 278–92, 380–83).

[10] Although Acts 11:20 presents two equally valid readings—Ἑλληνιστάς ("Greek-speakers") and Ἕλληνας ("Gentiles")—the contrast with the non-believing Jews in 11:19 suggests Greeks/Gentiles (Schnabel, *Mission* 1.790; Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 298–99).

[11] For the chronology of Paul's life and mission, see Schnabel, *Mission* 1.45–52; Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 497–512. The Gentiles most likely to be open to the gospel were those attracted to Judaism and attending the local synagogue as God-fearers (e.g. Acts 13:16, 26, 43, 50; Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 420–21, 562–63).

including the Gentile identity beside the Jewish one. Thus, early Christianity officially took on a trans-ethnic identity. With the backing of the Jerusalem decree, Paul carried through this program of a trans-ethnic Christianity effectively (Acts 16–20; Rom 15:18–19).

III. THE ANTIOCH CRISIS AND THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

I will illustrate the complexity and significance of the above ethnic conflict in early Christianity by examining the Antioch crisis and the Jerusalem council. At the beginning of the run-up to these events is Peter's encounter with the God-fearer Cornelius (Acts 10), which caused Jewish (ethnocentric) believers (οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς or "those of the circumcision") to criticize him for his table fellowship with Gentiles (Acts 11:1–3). Although Peter's explanation was accepted (Acts 11:4–18), the issue of how Gentiles should be admitted into the people of God resurfaced in Acts 15:1, 5.[12] The outcome of this ethnic conflict was to determine the nature of the Christian identity.

Elsewhere, the church in Antioch, established in the mid-30s by the scattered "Hellenists" from Jerusalem, consisted of a mix of Jewish and Gentile Christians (Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19–21). However, this mixture did not appear to have upset the Jerusalem church, at least not its representative Barnabas (Acts 11:22–24). Since the events in Acts 11:19–26 most likely took place prior to those in Acts 10:1–11:18 (the recurring phrase οἱ μὲν οὖν διασπαρέντες in 8:4 and 11:19 probably indicates the start of simultaneous accounts), it is baffling that the Jerusalem church did not react to the Antioch church as they did to Peter in Acts 11:2–3. While Schnabel does not raise the issue, Dunn suggests that the "grace of God" (Acts 11:23) parallels the falling of the Spirit upon Cornelius in Acts 11:15–18, implying God's approval of uncircumcised Gentiles.[13]

Paul worked in the Antioch church for at least a year (Acts 11:26), after which he and Barnabas went to Jerusalem around AD 44 for a famine-relief visit (Acts 11:27–30). This visit probably corresponds to the account in Gal 2:1–10, which describes that Paul sought the recognition of his gospel and missionary work to admit Gentiles *as Gentiles* from the Jerusalem leaders (Gal 2:2, 7–9), especially in view of his upcoming mission to southern Galatia (Acts 13–14).[14] On Paul and Barnabas's return from Jerusalem, the Antioch church launched them into mission (Acts 12:25–13:3).[15] Acts 13–14 then describes Paul's mission from Antioch to

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[12] While Schnabel calls the agreement in 11:18 "paradigmatic for all conversions of Gentiles" (*Mission* 2.992), Dunn is more cautious, stating that the Jerusalem church might have accepted Cornelius as an exception (*Beginning from Jerusalem* 401–2, 446).

[13] Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 301–2. Dunn notes that although Luke gives credit to Peter for the breakthrough to the Gentiles, chronologically it first happened at Antioch—in substantial numbers. It was also in Antioch that believers were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26)—a term derived from the Latin *Christiani* and probably coined by the Roman authorities to designate members of the Christ party, albeit still viewed within the Jewish matrix (*Beginning from Jerusalem* 301–8, 383–85).

[14] Schnabel, *Mission* 2.996–99.

[15] Acts 12:25 has a textual problem, whether it should read that Barnabas and Paul returned "to" (εἰς) or "from" (ἀπό and ἐκ) Jerusalem. Acknowledging that "to" is the best-attested reading but that the

southern Galatia in the mid-40s and his report of "all that God had done" on his return to Antioch.

There is much dispute as to whether the events in Gal 2:1–10 refer to those in Acts 11 or in Acts 15, and thus whether Gal 2:11–14 occurred before or after Acts 15. While scholars like Richard Bauckham, Ben Witherington, and Eckhard Schnabel support the first position,[16] a majority of scholars, such as Markus Bockmuehl, Magnus Zetterholm, and James Dunn uphold the latter view.[17] Although the majority view (Galatians 2 = Acts 15) is attractive, a few discrepancies cause me to favor the minority view. First, Gal 2:2 indicates a private meeting with the Jerusalem leaders whereas Acts 15 is a public meeting of the entire church. Second, the agreements in Galatians 2 and Acts 15 differ in form (handshake versus letter) and requests (remembrance of the poor versus abstention from certain foods and fornication). Paul's explanation that his meeting with James, Peter, and John was private (Gal 2:2), may explain why it has not been recorded in Acts 11—Luke did not know of it. Alternatively, Bauckham suggests that Luke may have considered the agreement of Gal 2:1–10 to be of relatively little significance, given that the epoch-making decision of Acts 15 included and superseded the former.[18]

It was probably during Paul's trip to southern Galatia that Peter had come to Antioch and had begun participating in mixed table fellowship regularly (Gal 2:11–12). Considering his imprisonment, miraculous release and flight to Caesarea during the persecution by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1–19), Peter had perhaps moved to Antioch for further refuge. Peter's habit of eating with Gentiles can be readily explained in view of his "conversion" in Acts 10. When the "men from James" or circumcision faction came, they pressurized Peter not to live like a Gentile (Gal 2:12, 14; cf. Acts 15:1). I remain agnostic about what exactly happened in Antioch, except that these "men from James" reprimanded Peter, saying something like, "You are a Jew but live like a Gentile" (Paul probably echoed their language in Gal 2:14), and Peter subsequently withdrew from (at least) table fellowship. Bockmuehl reminds us that there was a broad spectrum of halakic opinion and practice in Palestine and the Diaspora, and many Jews in Antioch must have eaten with Gentiles without ceasing to be Jews.[19]

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context requires "from," most scholars resolve the issue by translating it something like "Barnabas and Paul returned [to Antioch], having fulfilled their mission in Jerusalem" (e.g. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* [AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998] 493; Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998] 374–75; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* [BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007] 434–35; David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* [PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009] 370–71).

[16] Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church" 468–70; Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 13–20; Schnabel, *Mission* 2.987–92.

[17] Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law* 72–73; Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation Between Judaism and Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2003) 129–77; Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 446–50.

[18] Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church" 470.

[19] Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law* 58–61.

But why had this conservative faction from the Jerusalem church come to Antioch—and why not earlier? It is reasonable to assume that, in time, Paul's report about his mission in southern Galatia (Acts 14:27) had reached Jerusalem. Jewish (ethnocentric) believers in Jerusalem might have been concerned about the influx of numerous Gentiles *as Gentiles* into the church—first in Antioch, then in Asia Minor. Therefore, they may have sent representatives to Antioch to object to this new program (Acts 15:1).[20] In fact, this conservative faction within the Jerusalem church might even have sent a delegation—the "false brothers"—to Antioch some years earlier, to spy on what was going on there (Gal 2:4).[21] Although I concede that the "false brothers" and the "men from James" may not have been identical, both groups probably represented the conservative faction within the Jerusalem church, and its (Judaizing) views. All the same, Acts 15:24 clarifies that the Jerusalem church had not sanctioned these Jewish ethnocentric believers and their views. Bockmuehl objects, arguing that "the men from James" in Gal 2:12a do represent James's views and must be distinguished from "those of the circumcision" (non-Christian Jews) in Gal 2:12b.[22] Admittedly, Galatians 2 and Acts 15 appear to present different groups: the circumcision faction in Acts 15:1–2a, unauthorized by James (Acts 15:24), targeted the *Gentile* believers in Antioch *while* Paul was there, whereas "the men from James" in Gal 2:12 targeted the *Jewish* believers *before* Paul arrived. However, although the phrase "those of the circumcision" can simply denote Jews, it probably refers to Jewish Christians in Gal 2:12 (cf. Acts 11:2; Gal 5–6). Besides, as in Acts 15, the issue that emerges in Gal 2:11–14 is the broader pressure for Gentile believers to Judaize.[23]

Fearing the "men from James," Peter withdrew from (table) fellowship with Gentile believers. The other Jewish believers, including Barnabas, followed suit. This created two separate groups of Christians, effectively forcing Gentile believers to adopt a Jewish way of life (Ἰουδαΐθειν) if they wanted (table) fellowship with Jewish believers. This was unacceptable to Paul. In a public face-off, Paul rebuked Peter (and the other Jewish believers) for acting contrary to "the truth of the gospel," i.e. for yielding to a conservative Jewish ethnocentrism that, in Paul's view, infringed the gospel (Gal 2:11–14). He viewed Peter's behavior vis-à-vis his convictions as hypocrisy and a violation of the gospel. For Paul, Gentile believers were not to be burdened with "works of the law" (Gal 2:16)—whether circumcision (Gal 2:3–5) or food laws (Gal 2:11–14).

Although the main issue in Antioch was mixed (table) fellowship, circumcision was probably part of the conflict: (1) Gal 2:12 and Acts 15:1 identify Paul's opponents as the circumcision faction; (2) Gal 2:14 refers to the entire Jewish lifestyle (to "Judaize"); (3) Paul recalls the Antioch incident for his Galatian audience

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[20] Cf. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 445–46.

[21] Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church" 471, n. 168; cf. Schnabel, *Mission* 2.996–97. Others think Gal 2:4 refers to the private meeting in Jerusalem (Witherington, *Grace* 135–36; Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 442, 454–55).

[22] Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law* 71–72.

[23] Cf. Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church" 469, n. 161.

to resist similar pressure (Gal 5:1–12; 6:12–13). Schnabel, who claims that circumcision was not the issue in Antioch but only in Jerusalem, thus misses the logical connection between the Antioch crisis and the Jerusalem council.[24]

After a heated dispute with the circumcision faction, the Antioch church sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to discuss the issue (Acts 15:2). On their arrival, they repeated their report of "all that God had done" to the Jerusalem leaders (Acts 15:4 echoes Acts 14:27). While the conservative Jewish faction, now identified as Pharisaic believers, advocated a Jewish Torah-observant Christianity (Acts 15:5), Peter defended Paul's position by recalling his Cornelius experience (Acts 15:7–11).[25] The Jerusalem council then formally settled the ethnic dispute of how Gentile believers should be admitted into the people of God. Based on Amos 9:11–12, James ruled that Gentile believers were not obliged to be circumcised or to keep the (whole) Mosaic law (Acts 15:13–19).

While scholars agree on Acts 15:19, opinions diverge when it comes to Acts 15:20 and its logical connection with Acts 15:19. For Richard Bauckham, the issue of the Jerusalem council is a matter of halakah (a legal ruling for conduct) and thus can only be decided by Scripture.[26] He makes a convincing case that the four prohibitions of Acts 15:20 are drawn from Leviticus 17–18, referring explicitly to the recurring phrase "the alien who sojourns in your/their midst" (Lev 17:8, 10/12, 13; 18:26). The use of the catchphrase בתוך ("in the midst") explains the selection of just these four laws as binding on precisely those Gentile believers who have joined the eschatological people of God.[27] Bauckham then demonstrates the logical coherence of James's twofold argument:

> In the first place, the conflated quotation in Acts 15:16–18 establishes that Gentiles who join the eschatological people of God are not obliged to be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. But secondly, an exegetical argument which creates a link between closely related prophecies and Leviticus 17–18 establishes that the Law of Moses itself contains just four commandments which do explicitly apply to precisely those Gentiles …. [T]he same exegetical case which demonstrates conclusively that Gentile Christians do not have to keep the Law also shows that they do have to observe these four prohibitions.[28]

In contrast, Zetterholm suggests that the laws imposed on the stranger living in Israel be left out. He argues that, according to James, Gentiles could become *God-fearers*, for whom there was already an established and halakic-defined way of social

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[24] Schnabel, *Mission* 2.1004, 1007.

[25] For Peter's successful pioneering role in the ethnic debate in Acts 10–11 and 15, see Bauckham, "James, Peter" 103–42.

[26] Bauckham, " James and the Jerusalem Church" 452.

[27] Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church" 458–62. In contrast, Hyung Dae Park portrays James as the leader of the Jewish ethnocentric faction rather than of the entire council, although James conceded to Paul's position. Park argues that the council adjusted James's ritual-centered list in Acts 15:20 to one that is more related to worship and covenant (Acts 15:29; "Drawing Ethical Principles from the Process of the Jerusalem Council: A New Approach to Acts 15:4–29," *TynBul* 61 [2010] 271–91, esp. 277–88).

[28] Bauckham, " James and the Jerusalem Church" 461–62.

interaction with Jews. While Paul advocated the admission of Gentiles into the people of God *as Gentiles*, James considered this to happen *as God-fearers*. James then demanded that Jewish and Gentile believers in Antioch form separate commensality groups, and his position prevailed. This inner-Christian separation eventually led to the "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity.[29] Bauckham, however, objects to precisely such an argument: "The requirements of the decree are not understood as those which Jews in general held to apply to Gentiles, but as those which the Law of Moses prescribed for Gentile members of the eschatological people of God."[30] Thus, the law itself envisaged the incorporation of Gentiles *as Gentiles* into the eschatological people of God. Hence, they did not need to keep the law. At the same time, the law provided just four stipulations for such Gentiles, adherence to which showed that they fulfilled the law. Indeed, observance of the four stipulations *demonstrated* that Gentile believers belonged to the eschatological people of God *as Gentiles*.

The corollary of Bauckham's argument is immense but rarely acknowledged. Although Bockmuehl and Dunn accept Bauckham's case that Acts 15:20 goes back to Leviticus 17–18, they then pursue their own agenda. Zetterholm does not even mention Bauckham's article, while Witherington (see below) merely refers to it without interaction. Schnabel discusses various views on the Jerusalem decree, including Bauckham's, but does not seem to arrive at a clear position himself.[31]

Bauckham's argument has various implications. First, the Jerusalem council aimed at providing authoritative ruling on the obligation of Gentile believers to the Mosaic law, rather than facilitating table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers.[32] Dunn, for example, argues that the Jerusalem decree favored Jewish conservatism, effectively regulating table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians on Jewish terms.[33] Bauckham, however, perceptively remarks that even though the Jerusalem decree might have resolved the issue of mixed table fellowship, the four prohibitions were *in principle* binding on Gentile believers whether they had any contact with Jewish Christians or not.[34]

Second, James's ruling was not about compromise, whether couched as cultural sensitivity, pragmatism, or accommodating conservative views. It was, as Bauckham asserts, about a concrete scriptural argument to guide the entire Christian mission. Dean Flemming thus misses Bauckham's point. While agreeing with Bauckham, Flemming then asserts that Gentile believers would have done "well" to follow the mentioned abstentions (Acts 15:29), not because they were obliged to by the law but to be culturally sensitive towards Jewish believers, who also had to consider their mission to fellow Jews (Acts 15:21).[35]

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[29] Zetterholm, *Formation* 145, 156–61.

[30] Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church" 470, n. 164.

[31] Schnabel, *Mission* 2.1016–19.

[32] Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church" 460–64.

[33] Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 462–68.

[34] Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church" 464.

[35] Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Leicester: Apollos, 2005) 46–47.

Third, James's halakic argument can neither be ignored, by arguing, for example, that Acts 15:20 refers to the social setting of pagan temple feasts,[36] nor pitted against Paul's halakic position, as Bockmuehl argues.[37] Bockmuehl contends that "the men from James" in Antioch represented James's halakic, which was stricter than Paul's halakic because James considered Antioch as a part of the *Eretz Israel* rather than the Diaspora. Besides, Bockmuehl argues that political considerations to secure a *modus vivendi* for the Jerusalem church during the persecution by Herod Agrippa I in the 40s, also forced James to interfere in Antioch.[38] However, Bockmuehl's assumption that James's mission was solely to the Jews and not to Gentiles ignores Bauckham's persistent contention that the Jerusalem church gave authoritative direction to the entire Christian mission.

Fourth, contra Baur and his followers/modifiers, the Jerusalem church was not increasingly marginalized because it had adopted a supposedly conservative Jewish stance. This view is taken by Dunn, who argues that "the men from James" in Antioch (after Acts 15) reminded Peter of the Jerusalem decree. Paul objected but probably lost the argument to Peter, the Antioch church fell in line with the Jerusalem church, and Paul's relationship with both churches became somewhat strained, which may explain why Paul moved further West into the Diaspora.[39] Instead, with Bauckham, the Jerusalem church remained central by providing authoritative direction for the entire Christian mission. This means that what eventually evolved as "mainstream" Christianity was not simply "Pauline" Christianity as much as a *Jerusalem-authorized* "Pauline" Christianity. Although Paul seemed to have accepted the Jerusalem decree (Acts 15:30–31; 16:4), Bauckham considers that Paul became a bit more liberal later.[40] Indeed, 1 Corinthians 8 may reflect Paul's later leniency towards the decree in Acts 15:20.

After the Jerusalem council, Jewish ethnocentric Christianity probably declined rapidly. Evidence down to the third century AD suggests that the apostolic decree was generally accepted by Jewish Christians and observed by Gentile Christians.[41] Although Paul had to defend his "law-free" Gospel in Galatia over against Jewish believers, who insisted on the Jewish way of life for Gentile believers (Gal 5:1–12; 6:12–13), he may have written this letter between the Antioch incident and the Jerusalem council, and whether Paul's opponents in Phil 3:2 were Jewish be-

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[36] So Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 460–63. For a critique, see Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law* 165, n. 89.

[37] So Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law* 79–82.

[38] Ibid. 73–75.

[39] Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 451–54, 467–68, 489–94. Similarly, Helmut Koester contends that the Jerusalem council did not solve the issue of the continuation of the (ritual) law but only reached a compromise in praxis, and even this led to further disagreements and factions, such as Petrine/Matthean traditions versus Paulinism ("ΓΝΩΜΑΙ ΔΙΑΦΟΡΟΙ: The Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity," *HTR* 58 [1965] 279–318, esp. 284–90).

[40] Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church" 470–71.

[41] Bauckham, " James and the Jerusalem Church" 464–67, 472–75. Contra Koester, "ΓΝΩΜΑΙ" 309–10.

lievers or non-Christian Jews is not certain.[42] Even though countless Jewish believers in Jerusalem were zealous for the law themselves and had been told that Paul taught Jewish believers otherwise (Acts 21:20–21), the reference to the apostolic decree virtually guarantees that they did not demand this from Gentile believers (Acts 21:25).[43] Dunn confirms that, with the destruction of the temple, conservative judaizing Christianity became increasingly marginalized post-AD 70, and survived in the second century mainly in the form of heretical sects (e.g. the Ebionites).[44] Thus, although Paul's trans-ethnic "law-free" Christianity eventually prevailed over a Jewish ethnocentric Torah-observant Christianity, this did not happen straight away or without disputes. The Jerusalem council proved to be crucial in this process.

In view of the earlier agreements in Acts 11:18 and Gal 2:1–10 on the admission of Gentiles, one could ask why the Jerusalem council had to discuss the issue again. Schnabel claims that Acts 11:1–18 and Acts 15 deal with different issues—the admission of Gentiles *as Gentiles* into the people of God, and how Gentile Christians should behave in fellowship with Jewish Christians, respectively.[45] However, although Acts 15 presumes the admission of Gentiles into the church, the issue was whether Gentiles must do so *as Jews*, thus revisiting the agreement of 11:18. This ethnic dispute was problematic for the early Christians and it took various meetings over a prolonged period to settle it.[46]

IV. CONCLUSION

The most significant development of early Christianity was its ethnic expansion of including the Gentiles *as Gentiles*. This did not happen without difficulties. The ethnic conflict within the emerging Christian movement was an intense and drawn-out process that the Jerusalem council settled in the mid-first century. This study examined in particular the Antioch crisis (Galatians 2) and the Jerusalem council (Acts 15). Contra the majority view that Galatians 2 = Acts 15, I argued that the Antioch crisis triggered the Jerusalem council. Logically connecting Acts 15:19 and 15:20, Bauckham competently showed that the Jerusalem decree was a scriptural argument throughout in order to direct the entire Christian mission. Paul was in total agreement with the outcome of the Jerusalem council and remained on good terms with the Jerusalem church. As Bauckham extensively argued, the importance of the Jerusalem decree cannot be underestimated. The critical factor in

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[42] Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church" 469, 472. Cf. Witherington, *Grace* 9–11. Contra Ian J. Elmer, who, standing in the Baur tradition, argues that the Galatian crisis was just one instance of a broader conflict between Paul and the Judaizers that can be seen across Paul's letters (1–2 Corinthians, Philippians, Romans) and originated in the split between the "Hebrews" and "Hellenists" in Acts 6 (*Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaisers: The Galatian Crisis in Its Broadest Historical Context* [WUNT II/258; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009]).

[43] Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church" 471–72.

[44] Dunn, *Partings* 233, 239–40.

[45] Schnabel, *Mission* 1.715.

[46] Bauckham, "James, Peter" 137–38, identifies five conferences relating to the ethnic issue.

the formation of early Christian identity was that it was no longer attached to a particular ethno-religious identity. Gentiles could be part of the people of God without exchanging their Gentile identity for a Jewish one. Faith in Christ, evidenced by the reception of the Spirit to signal God's acceptance, was the only requirement for membership into the true people of God—for Jew and Gentile alike (Acts 15:8–9). In his mission of admitting the Gentiles *as Gentiles*, Paul made major contributions in both the lead-up to the Jerusalem council (Acts 13–14; Gal 2:2–14; Acts 15:1–2) and in its aftermath (Acts 16–20; Rom 15:18–19). With the support of Jerusalem, Paul practiced this program of a trans-ethnic Christianity effectively, thereby also paving the way with which to engage the Roman Empire.