

# Why was Paul upset?

*The incident at Antioch (Gal. 2.11-14)*

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## **Abbreviations:**

ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
AB	Anchor Bible
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>Mid-Stream</i>	<i>Mid-Stream</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
BBC	Blackwell Bible Commentaries
NTR	New Testament Readings
KNT	Kommentar till Nya testamentet

## What made Paul upset? The incident at Antioch (Gal. 2.11-14)

### 1 Introduction and abstract

#### 1.1 Preface

The tension between Jews and Gentiles is a well-recorded and pregnant debate within the field of biblical exegesis today. One of the biblical passages that directly relates to this special situation, often labelled the ‘incident of Antioch’, is Gal 2.11-14:

(11) Ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν Κηφᾶς εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν, κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτῷ ἀντέστην, ὅτι κατεγνωσμένος ἦν.

(12) πρὸ τοῦ γὰρ ἐλθεῖν τινὰς ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου μετὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν συνήσθιεν· ὅτε δὲ ἦλθον, ὑπέστειλλον καὶ ἀφώριζεν ἑαυτόν, φοβούμενος τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς.

(13) καὶ συνυπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ Ἰουδαῖοι, ὥστε καὶ Βαρνάβας συναπήχθη αὐτῶν τῇ ὑποκρίσει.

(14) ἀλλ’ ὅτε εἶδον ὅτι οὐκ ὀρθοποδοῦσιν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, εἶπον τῷ Κηφᾶ ἔμπροσθεν πάντων Εἰ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων ἐθνικῶς καὶ οὐκ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆς, πῶς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις ἰουδαΐζειν;

In this passage Peter (Cephas), an early disciple of the Jesus movement that regularly ate and drank with the Gentiles, is told to draw back and sit in isolation as soon as an orthodox (Jewish) 'fraction of circumcision' (the party of James) arrives from Jerusalem. This angers Paul immensely.

#### 1.2 Problem and aim of study

My initial interest in this particular passage lies in the traditional view that this withdrawal represents a conflict between early Christianity (Paul) and Judaism (James) —by many different scholars and distinguished names within the exegetical community commonly held opinion. It was also one of those incidents that helped to form the early church;<sup>1</sup> it seems to concern much larger issues than what can immediately be drawn from the text itself.<sup>2</sup> Overall, this is a particular cause for closer study.

Recently a new perspective on Paul has emerged. This new outlook on the contemporary theology of Paul changes the approach to the ideas and conditions of this said 'conflict'. The question is: *Why was Paul upset? With or without a presupposed cultural rupture between two religious traditions (Chris-believing Jews and Christ-believing Gentiles, with or without a friction in Paul's relationship to Judaism (which a new perspective argues), what does this Antiochene dissension signify?*

In this thesis I explore the significance of the incident as seen from different perspectives of research on Paul. Depending on old or new perspective on Paul, how should the Antioch incident be understood, or the incitements behind Paul's own statements?

One of the most common interpretations of this event is that the church at Antioch had abandoned the Jewish rules for slaughter, preparation, and consumption of food. Subsequently some argue from the viewpoint that Paul completely discarded all Jewish ritual regulations, and saw himself not as a lawful Jew primarily, but as a ritual free runner, a thoroughbred avant-Christian with revolutionary plans. Not probable, argue J. Dunn, M. Zetterholm and others. More likely is that the argument concerned purity teachings in the context of Jewish

<sup>1</sup> J. Dunn, “The Incident at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-18),” *JSNT* 18 (1983), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 4.

identity, to which Jewish converts and religious trainees were already a well-known addition.<sup>3</sup>

From this follows the enhanced question of my problem: *Does what can be known about the situation in Antioch, or the message of the text specially, match with either a new or old perspective on Paul respectively?* The object of the study is to clarify which interpretation that serves best what I have discovered to be most probable both about the incident in general, and about Paul specifically.

### 1.3 Method and demarcation of study

To render such a wide field of different approaches, I shall, in orderly fashion, study the interpretations of four different exegetes: Louis Martyn, James Dunn, Mark Nanos, and Magnus Zetterholm. Each of these exegetes represent an important perspective on Paul. It is not correct to view them as mile steps in a development from a legalistic exclusivist view of 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism to a more nuanced, historically refined ‘new’ perspective or ‘new radical’ perspective. They all comprise noteworthy comments, all of which are worth to take into consideration. In approaching this incident, I will not prefer one to another; I will draw my conclusions from a comparison of all of them.

My purpose is mainly to carry out a literary *comparative* study of their views on the incident, supplemented with a critical reading in historical and literary context. The primary material for my study is these four exegetes, not the letter to the Galatians. I shall begin with brief research theory coverage, and then continue with a short description of the new scientific situation in the research on Paul. This will lead on to a textual overview of the pericope itself, to historical and literary analysis. When necessary, I shall try to carefully discuss the differences between old and new perspective.

I shall finally address the main problem, discuss it with the aid of my textual investigation and my historical findings, and through this comparative part in the end be able to present a summary of my own conclusions.

It is important to remember that due to the lack of sources complementing this incident, the following study can only be perceived as a vivid imaginary sketch of what actually happened. The study must be guided by a hypothetical objectivity about what is most reasonable in terms of Paul's statements. A «method of hypothesis» can then be made to determine which answer is *closest to the target*, and what answers seem to be too complicated. The researcher in the context of good data and methodological consciousness estimates what is closest to the target. For instance it seems reasonable to think that Paul was greatly influenced by his own time and culture. On the other hand, answers may also become too simplistic: to regard Paul exclusively within a Jewish context makes it difficult both to explain why he even seemed to have developed a critical approach to various cultic solutions in the first place, and to move critically outside the studied material without being routed by a strong presupposition of Paul's Jewish intensions.

That is also why there are so many different perspectives on this text. Dunn, suitably, calls the account of Paul a ‘source of some perplexity’.<sup>4</sup> Paul's polemic and personal language make this a difficult story to analyze, and the fact that we only have Paul's version of the conflict is not entirely helpful.<sup>5</sup> Much is left for speculation and reading between the lines. I shall do my best to sort out the ambiguities of this intricacy.

I have left out the analysis of Galatians as a whole. That task would become too extensive. I will rely on my sources to point out when such references are necessary. Putting the effort on

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<sup>3</sup> M. Zetterholm, *Lagen som Evangelium? Den nya synen på Paulus och judendomen* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2006), 31.

<sup>4</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 3.

<sup>5</sup> J.P. Meier, “Biblical Reflections: The Conflict at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14),” *Mid-Stream* 35.4 (1996), 471.

a larger corpus of text would only help to distort the fact that I am placing focus mainly on the incident itself; what actually is at stake in this incident.

I will not undertake any longer description of the social and cultural history of Antioch either.<sup>6</sup> I will simply conclude what I find to be most relevant in terms of my problem, namely that the ethnic diversity of this congregation constituted a setting in which Paul said what he said. If I am too wrapped up on particular cultural details, it is easy to be lost in very specialized information that can easily overshadow the rest of my work. For this reason, the rigorous historical details of Dunn's paper have not delayed me.

In light of the complexity of an account that cannot be proven or disproven historically, a comparative method seems appropriate. This way the investigation is turned to the event, and the many perspectives on this event, but without the risk of failing historically, or losing important historical elements in the study.

### **1.4 Grounds for primary sources**

My selection of primary sources is based on the following considerations: Dunn's paper is obvious in this context, it contains such a broad base, and rich historical details, on which this event can be understood that it has become a classic in exegetical circles. In any study of this incident and its particularities Dunn cannot be avoided. Nanos is a very important contributor for recent research on the Antiochene situation, and Pauline studies in general, especially considering the different, and often innovative, perspectives proposed in his research. Martyn presents a balanced and carefully defined text; he is particularly relevant as one who is writing in the most widely used and distributed biblical commentaries, Anchor Bible. Zetterholm deserves a closer study given that his contribution is historically meticulous, and as a researcher at my *Alma Mater*, Lund University.

## **2 Research theory overview**

### **2.1 Premise**

In this part I will look at the theoretical vantage points that have accompanied this text and its various interpretations. I will discuss the differences in historical perspectives (for instance, Dunn makes note of these historical interpretations<sup>7</sup>), and then move into the modern and contemporary framework provided by various theologians with their prospective research analysis of the incident, which is critical in order to have any sort of understanding of this event, and the unifying qualities it has had past historical and contemporary discourses. It simply would not be possible to understand the concepts of this thesis without this research theoretical basis.

### **2.2 Old, new, and radical new perspective**

Robin Scroggs' investigation of New Testament development, *The Earliest Christian Communities as Sectarian Movement*, published in 1975, introduced the idea that early Christianity was a sect within Judaism. This opened up a new comprehension of Judaism as responsible for certain features within the early Jewish-Christian movement.<sup>8</sup> Slowly grew

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<sup>6</sup> For a longer description of Antioch's social and cultural history see: M. Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2003), 19-52.

<sup>7</sup> Dunn, "The Incident," 3.

<sup>8</sup> R. Scroggs, "The Earliest Christian Communities as Sectarian Movement (1975)," in *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (ed. D. Horrell; New York: Continuum Publishing, 1999), 69-91; cf. D. Horrell, *An Introduction to the Study of Paul*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 109-110.

awareness that this kinship with Jewish religion, and the inevitable influence on early ritual expressions, also must have had its impact on Paul himself.

In 1976 Krister Stendahl published an essay, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, that advocated a 'hermeneutically flexible attitude' towards exegesis, which in Stendahl's case meant that the original historical meaning needed to be separated from the interpretation of the church, or for instance expectations placed on the text through the interest of contemporary readers.<sup>9</sup>

According to Zetterholm, for Stendahl the original intentions of Paul must have been different from the interpretations that we may have inherited from the theology of the Reformation. Paul needed to be understood in light of his Jewish identity; he worked through the conviction that he was summoned to be an apostle to the Gentiles, rather than he wanted to convert people away from Jewish customs.<sup>10</sup>

In 1977 E.P. Sanders published his book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, which has been described as the most important book on this subject to appear in a generation. The reason it is considered so important is that it took a new approach in the research on Paul.

Sanders conducted a careful study of Judaism as it was expressed before, during and after the first centuries, 200 BC – 200 AD. He was able to conclude that the prevailing view of that time (though his sources make very different definitions of this concept) was *covenantal nomism*; Paul relates autonomously to this nomism.<sup>11</sup> Sanders writes: 'Paul's attitude towards the law, with its basis in his exclusivist Christological soteriology, cannot be paralleled in Judaism, but certain kind of his concrete ideas can be',<sup>12</sup> adopting a kind of intermediate position on the perspective on Paul.

Paul, according to Sanders, is both dependent and independent of his Jewish context and origin. A weakness of this argument, of course, could be that Sanders compares Paul and conventional 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism, as if Paul is an object outside his own world. Nevertheless, Sanders' work has been considered a vital contribution to the research on Paul.

For a long time theological education motivated an almost univocal view, a 'Protestant consensus' —Zetterholm calls this a 'wall of Protestant lack of understanding'—<sup>13</sup> that the letter to Galatia was about the Pauline justification through faith, as opposed to works of the Law.<sup>14</sup> Paul was seen as an innovative (Christian) defender against Jewish traditionalism. Again, Stendahl's work (among others)<sup>15</sup> helped to form the first steps toward a more inclusive and generous view of Jewish influence. It comprised an altering of the paradigm that had dominated biblical studies for so long, a 'new way of looking at Paul and his relation to the Torah, the Jewish people, and the Gentiles'.<sup>16</sup> The contributions since then have been many.

Because of the initial work of these theologians the outlook on Paul and his Jewish heritage is enriched with many perspectives. The main question is whether Paul —by all appearances a devoted Jew— can be said to have strayed so much from his fathers' religion that he had begun to justify his own preaching at the expense of the religious principles of Judaism. As a

<sup>9</sup> K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 1-77.

<sup>10</sup> M. Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 98-99.

<sup>11</sup> E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis/London: Fortress Press, 1977), 422-423; 543.

<sup>12</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian*, 544.

<sup>13</sup> Zetterholm, *Approaches*, 100.

<sup>14</sup> D. Gordon, "The Problem at Galatia," *Int* 41.1 (1987), 32.

<sup>15</sup> E.P. Sanders, J. Dunn, P.F. Esler, P. Fredriksen, B. Holmberg, to name a few.

<sup>16</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 5.

consequence, we have theologians that belong to what we call a traditional perspective on Paul, who view Paul as a Jewish deserter that during his lifetime broke with the conventions of his tradition and religion, and theologians that belong to a ‘new perspective on Paul’, who find it necessary to see Paul within the context of his Jewish identity, but still see some differences in terms of his personal theology. There is also a radical new perspective, meaning that everything in Paul’s aim and mission is understood as appropriate only under the conditions of a 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism setting. He was a Jew and nothing else.

These terms —old, new, and radical new— can be misleading. They do not represent an evolution from old to new, they denote different positions in the view of Paul and his relationship to Jewish mainstream religion.

Bengt Holmberg, a former professor of New Testament theology at Lund University, Sweden, in his 1998 article *Jewish versus Christian Identity in the Early Church*, summarizes the new perspective quite well when he writes that ‘the Christians of Jewish descent, of course, had not stopped being Jews by becoming baptized in the Messiah Jesus: they still thought of themselves as Jews, and observed the Law’.<sup>17</sup> For advocates of a new perspective this is exactly what is at stake: whether the Jews following Jesus still considered themselves as Jews, or as fully bred and independent Christians with no or very little cultural (or cultic) associations to Judaism (following their personal conversion).

*Why is this important in this thesis?*

The division between old and new permeates every research of Paul’s theology, and, as we shall see, affects what conclusions are being made from textual sources. Typical for an old perspective is for instance the conviction that Paul, in his opposition against Peter, ‘emphatically asserts his belief that justification comes only through faith in Christ and not through observation of the Law’,<sup>18</sup> and therefore advocates a rift with his religion. Typical for a new perspective is the belief that Paul’s views on broken table community, on circumcision, or the equal unity and freedom of both Jews and Gentiles in Christ – or any other debate within this 1<sup>st</sup> century movement really – did not represent a fraction with mainstream Judaism as such.<sup>19</sup> The new and radical new perspectives have emerged by the inspiration of Jewish interpreters.<sup>20</sup> For an advocate of a radical new perspective on Paul it is reasonable to think that the first Christians (that is, Jewish Christians), including Paul, had not made total loss of their Jewish roots, they simply worked within the versatile framework of that community.

One camp sees Paul as a Christian convert who started criticizing his own religious tradition, one camp says it is not possible to separate Paul from his Jewish ancestry and convictions, Paul could not have departed from Jewish identity in any way, one camp argues that Paul's theology does not break from Judaism or its tradition, even if he criticized some of the features of contemporary Judaism.

It is easy to mistake an old perspective as a perspective that is dying out. Such is clearly not the case: a more traditional perspective on Paul is still a completely valid statement within the locality of this discourse. They are convenient labels but are also three independent perspectives. They summarize what is still a current debate about Paul and his writings.

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<sup>17</sup> B. Holmberg, “Jewish versus Christian Identity in the Early Church,” *RB* 105.3 (1998), 422.

<sup>18</sup> J. Riches, *Galatians Through the Centuries* (BBC; Malden/Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 106.

<sup>19</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 35.

<sup>20</sup> M. Nanos, “What was at stake in Peter’s ‘eating with Gentiles’ at Antioch?” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (ed. M. Nanos; Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 296.



### 2.3 Modern interpretations

In modern<sup>21</sup> times, the section has been interpreted more polemically, and in theories that draw a clearer line between the different theological approaches that Peter and Paul represent. One contributor was F.C. Baur who saw Peter and Paul as integrated representatives of a Jewish-Christian group on one hand, but on the other argued that they were completely different, in terms of their views on the freedom from the Law through the atonement of Jesus Christ. As the division between the two positions was intensified, so Paul's theological self-understanding became reinforced as a position that demanded full transcendence in otherwise national and cultic values.<sup>22</sup>

Lightfoot, in England, sought to find full consistency between the Lukan version in Acts, and the account of Paul in Galatians, by showing that Paul's range of gaze was directed primarily against the 'Judaizers' who influenced the situation in his parishes, rather than against Peter himself. Without excusing the act of Peter, Lightfoot considered the charge lesser by stressing the full context in which the violation occurred.<sup>23</sup>

For scientific transparency, I should clarify that in this case I completely rely on J. Riches' presentation and interpretation of their contributions (Baur and Lightfoot). I have not studied them myself.

### 2.4 The contemporary position

An early contemporary contribution is that of James Dunn – who held the Lightfoot professorial chair of Divinity at Durham College, England – and his 1983 article *The Incident at Antioch (Gal. 2.11-18)*. Dunn's paper is rather carefully executed, and a good gateway to understanding not only the incident itself, but also the historical details of the time period.

In the Anchor Bible Commentary-series (1997) Louis Martyn's *Galatians: A New Interpretation* provides a brief but well-structured analysis of the incident. Unfortunately, Martyn's approach may appear to be coloured by some undeclared intentions.

In his 2002 article *What was at stake in Peter's 'eating with Gentiles' at Antioch?* Mark Nanos summarizes the question that he thinks most exactly discerns what every investigation of the incident at Antioch needs to ask: 'What did Paul find so objectionable about Peter's decision to withdraw and separate from these mixed meals' that formed the ordinary food fellowship in the Antioch congregation? What was 'at stake in Peter's eating —or not – with these Gentiles'?'<sup>24</sup> Nanos starts from a position that the traditional interpretation of this passage needs complete reconsideration, not mainly from textual analysis, but from an investigation of the Galatian context.<sup>25</sup>

Magnus Zetterholm's doctoral disputation, republished in new format as *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity* in 2003, is a well-adjusted and informative study of social and religious structures around the church in Antioch. In one part of the dissertation Zetterholm discusses the incident in broader detail.

My reader may feel that information provided about the primary positions of these researchers is limited. The reason I do not go into detail in this section is that I will do it later. My focus on the contributions of these exegetes will culminate in the analysis belonging to the end of this thesis.

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<sup>21</sup> A Swedish connotation of the term 'modern' may differ slightly from the English.

<sup>22</sup> Riches, *Centuries*, 112.

<sup>23</sup> Riches, *Centuries*, 113.

<sup>24</sup> Nanos, "What was at stake," 283.

<sup>25</sup> Nanos, "What was at stake," 285.

## 2.5 Conclusion

The traditional perspective, where Paul is understood on the basis of a conventional reformatory approach, is today accompanied with other views, in which Paul is understood mainly within the framework of his Jewish identity. Certain perspectives have been initiated and accompanied by various theologian's efforts and conclusions. Some talk of a shift of paradigms. Paul was a Jew, but was he partly or fully converted to Christianity, or not at all? The degrees in view of how independent Paul was in relation to his Jewish contemporaries, conviction and background is divided into three steps: old perspective, new perspective, and radical new perspective. It is important not to see these designations as a development curve -- from old to new. They are convenient labels, but they are also three independent perspectives. There seems to be a far step from Dunn to Nanos.<sup>26</sup> Yet it is these positions that are still in progress. Modern and contemporary interpretations have reinforced Paul's rhetorical qualities, and the historical and social relationship to his own time and place in the 1st century.

## 3 Textual analysis

### 3.1 Premise

In the textual analysis of Gal. 2:11-14 I will provide an interpretation of the original Greek text by dissecting specific words critical to the academic understanding of the passage within its linguistic and cultural context. I will use well-known sources to further amplify these contexts and their effects upon our modern interpretation. I will also note some rhetorical components, since it adds to the comprehension of both Paul's intention and ability to deliver his message.

### 3.2 Translation

(11) When<sup>27</sup> Peter<sup>28</sup> came [back] to Antioch, since he was to be <sup>A</sup>**pronounced guilty** I opposed him to his face.

(12) For<sup>29</sup> prior some of <sup>B</sup>**James' assembly** [had] arrived he was [still] eating with the Gentiles, but when they [had] arrived, he <sup>C</sup>**drew back and separated himself** [from the Gentiles] — being afraid of <sup>D</sup>**those of circumcision**.

(13) And **the rest of the Jews** also **played along**<sup>30</sup> with him, so as to <sup>E</sup>**Barnabas [too] was carried away** by their hypocrisy<sup>31</sup>.

(14) But when I saw that they were not <sup>F</sup>**upright**<sup>32</sup> with the <sup>G</sup>**truth of the Gospel**,<sup>33</sup> I told<sup>34</sup>

<sup>26</sup> J. Dunn's text is the oldest contribution in this study, M. Nanos' the youngest.

<sup>27</sup> The passage starts with the Greek phrase Ὅτε δὲ (2.11), 'but when', instead of Ἐπειτα, 'then'. It is sensible not to draw too big conclusions from linguistic variations such as these, but according to L. Martyn this is proof that the incident is singled out as an important event that has substantial results for the soteriological agenda of the faithful community: L. Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation* (AB; New York/London: Doubleday Dell Publishing, 1997), 229; 231.

<sup>28</sup> I translate Κηφᾶς 'Peter'. The new name of Simon Peter given to him by Jesus: Mk. 3.16; Mt. 16.18; Jn. 1.42. One might think that there is a hint of irony in Paul's voice when he uses the name Cephas, 'rock'. I believe that the reason is much simpler, Peter was simply known by his vocation name.

<sup>29</sup> L. Martyn translates γάρ 'it happened in this way'. An introduction to explain the details that Paul has already summarized in the previous verse: Martyn, *Galatians*, 232.

<sup>30</sup> Aorist indicative passive of συνυποκρίνομαι. Paul describes the scene in almost theatrical vocabulary, the rest of them making fools of themselves by acting along in public display. M. Nanos translates: 'the Jews were being equally two-faced': Nanos, "What was at stake," 284.

<sup>31</sup> From ὑπόκρισις. Literally 'under-judgement'.

<sup>32</sup> Present indicative active of ὀρθοποδεῖν.

<sup>33</sup> Τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 'the truth of the Gospel'; cf. Gal. 5.2.

<sup>34</sup> Said with the weight of objurgating.

Peter **in front of everyone**: If you —[already] being<sup>35</sup> a Jew— are living <sup>H</sup>**in the manner of a Gentile**, that is<sup>36</sup> not in the manner of a Jew, why do you urge <sup>I</sup>**to judaize** the Gentiles?

### 3.2.1 Comments on translation

Immediately upon his arrival Peter is confronted (2.11). Paul thinks that he ‘was to be pronounced guilty’<sup>A</sup>, which should be understood as that he ‘stood condemned on the basis of certain facts presented’ [my interpretation].<sup>37</sup> Paul informs us of the reason for his action: After some of James assembly (τινας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου<sup>38</sup>) had arrived, Peter had deviated from former behaviour<sup>C</sup> (2.12).

Nanos regrets that the definition of James’ assembly<sup>B</sup> is often associated with ‘those of circumcision’<sup>D</sup> (τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς), and experiments with the idea that it could depict a third group, represented within the broad scale of different ritual debaters within the church.<sup>39</sup> I think it is more probable, however, that the party of James refers to them in some way. The way to understand this, I think, is that Peter changes after James’ assembly arrives, because, says Paul, he was afraid of their opinions (2.12). Martyn argues that ‘those of circumcision’ probably depicted a certain group within the Jerusalem church that manifested the importance of clinging on to their Jewish origins.<sup>40</sup> Nanos says they advocated certain cultic values.<sup>41</sup> They could be ‘circumcised men’ (=Jews) with perhaps nomist views but probably they were ‘those in favour of circumcision [of Gentiles]’.<sup>42</sup> I agree with the latter.

The difference of opinions goes so far that even Barnabas, Paul’s faithful companion, displays a change of allegiance in the matter<sup>E</sup> (2.13). Paul writes that he watched them ‘not being upright’<sup>F</sup> (‘walking in upright position’<sup>43</sup>) with the ‘truth of the Gospel’<sup>G</sup> (2.14). The accent of this expression, ‘upright’, should be understood as [my emphasis:] ‘not being able to do what it is in your correct nature to do’.<sup>44</sup> The people around Paul are losing their integrity.

In Romans Paul explains what he means by the term Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον). This is a keyword in Pauline theology.<sup>45</sup> Gospel has both salvation historical and Christological significance, meaning that the content of the good news, for Paul, is regarding (περὶ) the Messiah - Jesus Christ that after the resurrection is lord of all, Jews and Gentiles alike (Rom. 1.1-6). (Paul wants the Christological meaning to support his mission as a servant of Christ.)<sup>46</sup> The term εὐαγγέλιον carries the truth of God in his victorious revelation. It is not gospel literature; it is a grace with accurate implications for Jew and Gentile alike. The truth of the Gospel is, for Paul, in other words, good news of a certain truth, which is the revelation of Christ, the Son of God. He is concerned that this Gospel is being neglected.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Present participle active of ὑπάρχω, ‘exist’.

<sup>36</sup> The conjunction καί can have a multitude of translations: *and, but, while, also, that is*.

<sup>37</sup> Perfect participle middle or passive of καταγινώσκω.

<sup>38</sup> Literally ‘some ones from James’.

<sup>39</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 289.

<sup>40</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 234. The preposition ἐκ sometimes depicts origin.

<sup>41</sup> Translating ἐκ ‘for’, he understands the context to have something to do with a group that advocated certain cultic values: Nanos, “What was at stake,” 282,n2.

<sup>42</sup> It seems, says M. Nanos, that they followed Peter rather than influenced his position. They were ‘Christbelieving Jews’, and in their muted position they had almost the effect of figurants acting silently behind the scene: Nanos, “What was at stake,” 286-287; 289.

<sup>43</sup> The verb ὀρθοποδέω is very uncommon in Greek manuscripts. It literally means ‘upright or straight walking’.

<sup>44</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 234.

<sup>45</sup> J. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 164-165.

<sup>46</sup> S. Byrskog, *Romarbrevet 1-8* (KNT; Stockholm: EFS-förlaget, 2006), 17-19.

<sup>47</sup> Dunn, *Theology*, 165; cf. Gal. 1.6-9.

Then follows Paul's charge: 'If you —already being a Jew— are living in the manner of a Gentile' (that is having certain social behaviour<sup>H</sup>) how can you [Peter] insist to have Gentiles judaized?' (2.14)<sup>48</sup> According to Dunn, the term Ἰουδαῖζω, 'to judaize', included the broad view of what it meant to keenly embrace the Jewish religion.<sup>49</sup> The reason that Paul uses the word judaize instead of circumcision, says Nanos, could be that he is trying to make a rhetoric irony that seems to serve his polemic intentions.<sup>50</sup>

An important thing to notice is that Peter is (still) 'living in the manner of a Gentile' (2.14) in present tense. Nanos, for instance, says that it is common to translate this last verse as if Peter had used to<sup>51</sup> live like a Gentile, but that does not match with the original Greek; Peter 'lives' and 'eats' like a Gentile as Paul speaks.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.3 Literary context

Galatians 2.11-14 is a short rendition of bigger and certainly more complicated turn of events. The description Paul gives is coloured by his own opinions, and, addressed to the churches of Galatia, it summarizes —as if in triumph— the dealings and accusatorial charges that Paul made known to the church members of Antioch, and to Peter specifically. The text is cast in the form of personal memoir. Paul is the one who speaks through the entire pericope, quoting himself (2.11: 'I opposed him'; 2.14: 'when I saw'), and explains the incident.<sup>53</sup>

The fact that the event in Antioch is described through Paul's autobiographical writing complicates the task of investigating how its content affects its recipients.<sup>54</sup> If this was the real outcome of the event we do not know. Most probably it is sharpened with an oratory technique typical for Paul.

Paul uses a vocabulary of somewhat theatrical insinuation (2.13: 'Barnabas [too] was carried away by their hypocrisy'; 2.14: 'I told Peter in front of everyone'). Martyn, for instance, makes note of this dramatic quality of the pericope (and in the letter as a whole). As readers we are facing a *dramaturgical composition* that almost instinctively invites us to investigate the different characters of the drama (for the sake of drama), and maybe draw conclusions from balanced speculating of their role and place in the conflict.<sup>55</sup> J.P. Meier has compared the verses with a Greek tragedy play, where both protagonist and antagonist are seemingly right, and at the same time full of flaws. This creates a tension in the personality development of the drama and the dramatees.<sup>56</sup>

Galatians 2.11-14 is part of a longer reasoning that is hard to frame. Its complexity makes it

<sup>48</sup> The requirements for Gentiles who followed the Jewish Law were rather strict. We cannot exclude, says Dunn, that the difference between living ἐθνικῶς, 'in the manner of a Gentile', and Ἰουδαϊκῶς, 'in the manner of a Jew', would have meant such a great difference for Paul. After all, there was not clear distinction to the concept of living like a Jew: Dunn, "The Incident," 25-26.

<sup>49</sup> J. Dunn writes that one could become initiated to the Jewish cult in different ways, and to a variety of levels, circumcision not being necessary in most cases. Probably it should be understood as a closer involvement, since Gentiles participating to a lower degree were known as *memigmenoi*: Dunn, "The Incident," 26-27.

<sup>50</sup> Nanos, "What was at stake," 309-310. This argument stems from P.F. Esler.

<sup>51</sup> The reasons M. Nanos brings up seems to me a bit conspiring: That it either is an intentional misinterpretation of this text, or that 'these interpreters' wish to enhance the effect that Paul's remark had on Peter, namely that it woke him from his usual habits, is asking too much. I think it is more likely that some use past tense because they, from their interpretative position, understand Paul as actually reporting a *past* event.

<sup>52</sup> Nanos, "What was at stake," 314.

<sup>53</sup> Galatians can be said to be the literary comment of current issues concerning Israel's ritual identity, wrapped in the polemical genre of a letter. This means that Paul is determined to give a personal reflection of the event, which has the effect of taking the reader back to the front debates of the early church: Martyn, *Galatians*, 229.

<sup>54</sup> Nanos, "What was at stake," 285.

<sup>55</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 13.

<sup>56</sup> Meier, "Reflections," 473.

difficult to determine the beginning and the end. Martyn, however, says that the ‘literary unit’ begins in 2.11 and ends in 2.21.<sup>57</sup> One interesting quality of this longer text (a speech?) is that it gives no exact mark for where Paul’s reprehension of Peter ends. As one continues to read through the chapter, there is a quality of both being left with lots of possibilities why Peter was objurgated, and at the same time awareness that Paul somehow is no longer addressing the issue.<sup>58</sup> This is no coincidence. Not only is Paul using a combination of exhortation (2.14) and review (2.11-13) that is meant to communicate something essential, this also represent an informal technique underscoring that the issue at hand has no personal addressee as such, but universal applicability.<sup>59</sup> The correction (of Peter) —so to speak— counts for everyone (in this case, the congregations in Galatia).<sup>60</sup>

Paul plays with contrasts (2.14: ‘If you —[already] being a Jew— are living in the manner of a Gentile’) and dramaturgy. The dichotomy of separating Jew and Gentile was the effective language and logical universe that he used,<sup>61</sup> but we cannot be sure if this was because he was eagerly against it, or because it functioned as a rhetoric tool. He is using powerful and rhetorically coloured expressions such as ὑπόκρισις, ‘hypocrisy’, and ὀρθοποδέω, ‘upright walking’. Thus, Paul is elaborating with a language of scenic quality. He calls Peter ‘in front of everyone’ (2.14), openly (2.11: ‘I opposed him to his face’), as if on a stage. Peter withdraws, as if away from the spotlight, and, says Nanos, because he wanted to ‘hide’ his conviction that unity in Christ is a ‘truth’ of which the Gospel spoke.<sup>62</sup> Is this rhetoric function enough to account for Paul’s severe reaction against Peter? Does it provide the reader with all the necessary answers about the incident at Antioch? No.

It is important not to forget that Paul is not staging a rhetorical drama about social issues of church leader interactions just for amusement, but through this letter, and his account of the incident, exerts a practical theological admonishing of the church that is the receiver. Therefore, it is important that we understand Paul's rhetoric as an effect in a letter addressed to someone (the Galatians). This purposive language is Paul’s way to convince his audience to convert to certain attitudes and perspectives.

### 3.3.1 Galatian addressees

Paul puts this incident in the letter to the Galatians. (Dating of this letter is difficult, it was probably produced sometime between the late 40’s to early 50’s AD.<sup>63</sup>) Martyn writes that ‘[e]very episode in the revelatory history is narrated for the sake of its pertinence to developments in Galatia’, and Paul ‘recounts the incident for the sake of its impact on the crisis in Galatia’.<sup>64</sup> Martyn is very deliberate on the symbolic meaning of the quarrel and what it is communicating. The speech is addressed to Jewish Christians (in the form of Peter) to cover up the direct appeal to the Galatians. Maybe the state of this community demanded more subtle tactics than a one-to-one approach? Likewise, the ecclesial situation of Galatia should be examined to tell us what it communicates about the incident. (Not to forget, there are questions regarding where the Galatian church was located. I will briefly comment them

<sup>57</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 231.

<sup>58</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 229.

<sup>59</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 229.

<sup>60</sup> Gal. 6.1.

<sup>61</sup> Stendahl, *Essays*, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 301. This Peter withdraw because of Paul’s charge or did Paul charge him because he withdrew?

<sup>63</sup> P. Barnett has argued —in my opinion on very loose ground— that the letter might have been the first of Paul’s letters, and therefore an exceptional document to the earliest church. He calls it the ‘first document of the new faith’: P. Barnett, “Galatians and Earliest Christianity”, *RTR* 59.3 (2000), 128.

<sup>64</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 230.

later in this thesis.)

When Peter, in Antioch, is rebuked in the light of (2.14: ‘in front of everyone’) the whole community as if he had become an object of public disgrace, this could be understood as Paul addressing Teachers (foreign missionaries) in front of the Galatian church with the same threat of embarrassing themselves. Martyn is interpreting the incident along these lines.<sup>65</sup> However, warns Nanos, it should not be easily dismissed as a rhetorical ploy only aimed for the persuasion of the Galatians, or a curtain behind which a different agenda rests.<sup>66</sup> We should take the incident for what it is worth (namely an incident that actually happened). Paul is writing after the incident and his opinions are coloured by that outcome.<sup>67</sup>

If we keep this in mind, we understand that the question can be reflected back. Can the situation in the community of Galatia give us any valuable clues on what kind of episode this conflict was? Probably. That said, that is not within the scope of this study.

### 3.4 Canonical parallels

An incident at Antioch is mentioned in Acts,<sup>68</sup> although the conflict bears no prominent significance in that account. Luke refers to a letter<sup>69</sup> composed during the apostolic meeting in Jerusalem, containing regulations on the handling of food, sent to the church at Antioch.

In my investigation I have found that prohibiting the understanding to ritual preparations constitutes such a narrow interpretation of this event that it is necessary to go beyond this parallel in search of Paul’s proper cause of indignation. We need, of course, remember that the information provided by Acts is not necessarily historically reliable. There is, therefore, no other version of the conflict than the one passed on in Galatians. The author (Luke) provides no useful evidence that can shed important light on Paul’s version; what kind of reasons he had, or what consequences for the 1<sup>st</sup> century church that followed. Also, some of the intentional focus on the parallel in Acts may exhaust the real digging for knowledge when it comes to Galatians. An interpreter should never settle for the parallel as the as the most functional explanation for what really took place in Antioch.<sup>70</sup> Some will, of course, critically, and for good reasons, wonder if this is true.

Dunn writes that

‘the Gospels testify that Christians too were caught up in a debate about true cleanliness, where the meaning of Jesus’ definition of cleanliness was at issue, and where Matthew’s emphasis is distinctly more conservative than Mark’s’.<sup>71</sup>

I will not go into detail, but I think it is likely that details in the Gospels may attest for debates such as the one in Antioch. Any such comparison must not preclude a careful consideration of the dating and origins of these different sources. Of literary spread of gospels in this time very little is known, the value of this comparison lies primarily in that we, as modern readers, have access to these gospel accounts.

### 3.5 Conclusion

A translation of the original text is a prerequisite for a broader understanding of the incident’s background and content. Different exegetes have offered different interpretations of different

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<sup>65</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 230.

<sup>66</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 283.

<sup>67</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 6.

<sup>68</sup> Acts 15.30-33.

<sup>69</sup> Acts 15.22-29.

<sup>70</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 4.

<sup>71</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 32.

parts of the text, altering the meaning that can be inferred from these parts. Key expressions occurring in this text are: «pronounced guilty», «drew back and separated himself», «played along», «carried away», «upright», «truth of the Gospel», «in front of everyone», «in the manner of a Gentile», and «to judaize». Key groups are: «James' assembly», «James» (which is implicit), «those of circumcision», «the rest of the Jews», «Barnabas», «Peter», and «Paul» (silent). James' assembly is related to those of circumcision, perhaps as opinions held by them. Paul felt that certain interests groups within the Jewish-Christian community jeopardized the truth of the Gospel. This term is Christological for Paul, it is the good news of the revelation of Christ. The pericope, the incident itself, appears to be related to several other major events and key developments in the early church. The literary unit, also, to which the incident belongs, is difficult to frame. Paul's autobiographical writing makes it hard to render an exact meaning or purpose. Paul's language is filled with dramatic intention, and characteristic rhetorics. He is writing to persuade as well as reviewing. He writes because of the pericope's validity as parallel to situations arisen in Galatia, but he is not necessarily giving a historically accurate description of the event unfolded. Still, we need to see it as a historical occurrence. He writes in a dramatic style, but his writing does not provide us with enough evidence to answer why Paul was so upset. Accurate dating of the letter is difficult, the text was probably produced from late 40's AD.

## ■ 4 Historical context

### 4.1 Premise

In this part I am dissecting further into the historical landscape and atmosphere surrounding this incident, and the divisions it involved. In an intellectual understanding, I am digging deeper into the importance of human geography, the political and social context of these concepts, and the historical makeup of this community. I will explain the locale while integrating the social and religious constitution of Antioch, its relationship as a body, and how the rituals of food and purity were expressed, by Jewish and Gentile Christians, all the while maintaining their identity within the Roman-Hellenistic milieu.

To this section I have added Galatia because I do not want to withhold from the reader the fact that Paul—as I have mentioned—seems to refer to this incident from a communication strategic point of view; Galatia reflects the situation in Antioch. It is nevertheless crucial that the focus, in this thesis, remains on the historical event. I have made an initial choice to regard the incident as an historical event, not merely as a rhetorical manoeuvre. Obviously, it is appealing to deliberate on whether Paul really reflects a historical event or not, but that is not part of this chapter, or this thesis. I will simply conclude that he is.

### 4.2 Antioch

The incident occurred in Syrian Antioch,<sup>72</sup> in a church that stood under direct authority of Jerusalem. Antioch was a kettle of Hellenistic culture, a great metropolitan centre of its time.<sup>73</sup> Josephus describes the city as a metropolis of cultural expressions. (In the time shortly after the incident, the Greek group increased in number, and fused cultural

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<sup>72</sup> The reason I write 'Syrian Antioch' here is that there was a second Antioch in Pisidia, founded on a Roman settlement in the southern part of the Galatian border. Antioch of Pisidia was part of a region newly acquired by the Roman power. This second Antioch—also an important centre of trade and culture—most probably fell into the jurisdiction of Galatia, as one of their local congregations. The most distinguishable difference between these two cities was that while Jews were in majority in Syrian Antioch, they were probably in minority in Pisidia. The reason I bring this up is to not confuse these two cities.

<sup>73</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 231.

cooperation with Jews became even more common.)<sup>74</sup> Antioch was the gateway between Asia and Asia Minor, and as such a proper testing site for a two-folded mission to both Jews and Gentiles. It was unique in this respect, and differed from both the fully Jewish community of Jerusalem, and its pagan sister communities in the north. It was also a city of many cultural and religious disagreements, both inside and outside the church.<sup>75</sup> It is realistic why such a diverse setting could have been the arena of an incident such as the one Paul describes. The text clearly presents a controversy. Paul even writes that he ‘opposed’ Peter ‘to his face’ (2.11).

The two main figures of the Antioch community were Paul and Barnabas (mentioned in 2.13). Both were Jews, but advocated a mission aimed on the conversion of Gentiles.<sup>76</sup> There must have been reasons for Paul to mention Syrian Antioch as a prime example; perhaps the congregation shared some comparable conditions with Galatia. In other words, the incident at Antioch is an account of an incident that occurred in Syria but which communicated important lessons to the situation in surrounding congregations.

The synagogue in Antioch was part of a Roman structure for local societies, called *collegia*. The Jews, as ‘an identifiable entity’, were considered a local association, and a more privileged one.<sup>77</sup> (When Paul is writing ‘the rest of the Jews’ he probably means the rest of the congregation members: 2.13). Different sub-groups within the Jewish community used the synagogue as a meeting place,<sup>78</sup> it is probable that the Christ believing Jews was such a sub-group.

#### 4.2.1 Table fellowship and ritual purity

Sharing a meal had a special symbolic significance in the east, and the handling of food constituted a distinguishing factor for the self-understanding as God’s chosen people.<sup>79</sup> The question of who was a good or poor table companion (in terms of ritual purity), then, naturally occupied the cultic consciousness of every Jew. Intercourse with Gentiles was generally unadvised.<sup>80</sup> The main concern was the ritual purity of these uncircumcised people. This explains why the text addresses issues such as eating and circumcision (2.12: Peter was eating with Gentiles).

The church of Antioch, due to its high number of non-Jewish members, had other food practises than what was common, or maybe considered appropriate, in Jerusalem. Even if requirements relating table companions and their ritual purity could be strict, many interpretations of these regulations within the Hellenistic world remained rather flexible, especially in Christian circles. Because of the high rate of Gentiles in certain congregations, many had developed a community around the sharing of food that was extremely permissive. This proves that table fellowship, the way in which it supposedly was conducted at Antioch, was quite normal.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Date of incident

Dunn supports a dating of the incident to late 40’s AD depending on the assessment of the Jerusalem conference,<sup>82</sup> although he also mentions that it could be that the incident precedes

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<sup>74</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 23.

<sup>75</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 232.

<sup>76</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 232.

<sup>77</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 32; 37; 126.

<sup>78</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 40.

<sup>79</sup> Zetterholm, *Approaches*, 103.

<sup>80</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 12; 14; 18. Cf. Acts 11.2-3.

<sup>81</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 33.

<sup>82</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 4.



the meeting in Jerusalem, and that the meeting was summoned to resolve the conflict.<sup>83</sup> The parallel between Gal. 2.12 and Acts 15.1 points to a probability that the incident occurred before the meeting, says Dunn.<sup>84</sup> It is of prime importance, however, to note that a common criticism is that the story in Acts 15, because of its open narrative construction, has disputed historicity. With this credibility as a historical source announced, we should be cautious and not look for too great a historical correspondence between these both accounts. The most likely is that the incident came after the meeting in Jerusalem, which only resolved the circumcision issue, and that the table-fellowship (which was the issue at Antioch) is the later event.<sup>85</sup> Zetterholm dates the incident to early 50's AD,<sup>86</sup> which I agree with.

### 4.3 The church in Galatia

The Galatian congregations were the sister churches of Antioch,<sup>87</sup> established while Paul and Barnabas were still the missionaries of Antioch,<sup>88</sup> on Paul's first missionary journey. They stood in direct financial link with Antioch.<sup>89</sup> In other words, the church in Galatia was Paul's 'doing', He was the founding father and instigator of their theology. As an important figure in both Antioch and Galatia, this was probably the reason that any deviation from the council decisions in Jerusalem that had direct effect over his original churches made him upset, and that he emphatically expressed this view in Antioch.<sup>90</sup>

The church in Galatia certainly shared many similarities with the church in Antioch, but they also had significant differences. The Galatians were a Celtic people that had been conquered and assimilated by the Romans.<sup>91</sup> This means that I have espoused a support of recently introduced theories in the so-called 'North-South Debate'. (Since the aim of this study is not to investigate the Galatian situation in its necessary details, I will not go further into the debate except noting that my argument points to a position as a supporter of the 'South Galatian hypothesis' or 'province theory').<sup>92</sup> This is not central for my conclusion; it is not the objective of this study to pay any detailed attention to the complexity of Galatia.

The Galatian community was as a church with members of mixed origins, both Gentile and Jewish by birth<sup>93</sup> (it is not a coincidence that Paul, in his account, mentions that Peter failed to live credibly in the manner of both: 2.14!), like Antioch – however, while the church in Syria, where the incident occurred, and where birth-Jews were in majority, did not have the geographic and political independence from Jerusalem<sup>94</sup>, the situation in Galatia, where the Gentiles dominated,<sup>95</sup> was quite different. The Jews of Antioch would see themselves as still

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<sup>83</sup> Dunn, "The Incident," 29.

<sup>84</sup> Dunn, "The Incident," 30.

<sup>85</sup> Dunn, "The Incident," 38.

<sup>86</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 129.

<sup>87</sup> R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, (WBC 41; Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1990), lxxx.

<sup>88</sup> Dunn, "The Incident," 39.

<sup>89</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 242.

<sup>90</sup> If the decision in Jerusalem was a circumcision free mission that explains why Paul writes about 'those of circumcision' (2.12) in his account.

<sup>91</sup> D. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 103.

<sup>92</sup> This debate concerns the location of the Galatian church. Lack of evidence means that the matter remains unresolved. A common theory, the 'North Galatian hypothesis' supposes that Galatia was located in an ethnically characterized area in northern Asia Minor, while the 'South Galatian hypothesis' puts the church in the Roman province of Galatia. A reason may be that Paul calls his other churches by their roman provincial names: S. Williams, *Galatians* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 17-18; For a longer discussion of this see: Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxiii-lxxii.

<sup>93</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 231.

<sup>94</sup> Dunn, "The Incident," 5.

<sup>95</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 230.

within the Diaspora, and for them Jerusalem would serve as a proud origin, but that was not necessarily the case in Galatia.<sup>96</sup> At least the Galatians, supposedly, had a wider chance to create a more inclusive and liberal interpretation of the Christian message, and its formal dependency on Jewish identity and Jerusalem.

If we miss that Paul is trying to communicate a point through the example of an outsider but still a closely associated community—we also miss the fact that the so-called ‘Gentile assimilation’<sup>97</sup> probably had gone much further in Galatia. It is precisely because the Gentiles supposedly were in majority in Galatia (but not in Antioch) that we understand why the argument of Gal. 2.11-14 proves so sensitive.

Nanos defines three main characters of this pericope, Peter, Paul and Barnabas, and three groups, the ones *for* circumcision, the rest of the Jews, and the party of James, but finds that none of these are connected to the assumed missionaries in front of the Galatian congregation.<sup>98</sup> It is important not to confuse these groups with ‘Teachers’, since there is a risk that this will minimize or limit our understanding.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4.4 Conclusion

The church of Antioch was a mixed community that stood under direct influence of the authority of Jerusalem, in one of the largest and most diverse metropolitan cities of its time. The Jewish synagogue was considered a free association within the Roman collegia-structure, and it stood in direct link with the Jewish community in Jerusalem. The Antiochene church seem to have developed a very tolerant practise for sharing of meals between Jews and Gentiles, although Jewish and Gentile exchanges were not uncommon. This openness also seems to have influenced other areas of ritual life, like ritual purity and circumcision. Sharing meals had special symbolic significance and indicated status and rang within the community. Questions regarding table companions and authority followed. The incident probably accounts for events that happened in the early 50’s AD.

### ■ 5 Why was there a conflict in the first place?

#### 5.1 Premise

As I have discussed hitherto, Antioch was a place where Jews and Gentiles were able to share in many social customs and cultural behaviours. Unfortunately, this diversity alone will not be able to explain Paul’s temper. First we must investigate the background of the event, and look at some of the theological elements that appear to have been at stake in Antioch. There are a vast variety of theories about why the incident occurred, but it is not my impression that these explanations have worked separately. Rather, they are three individual elements of one and the same event. The reason for this section is to outline a broad overview of the factors that together caused the incident at Antioch.

#### 5.2 The ripples of Jerusalem

One of the most commonly held opinions is that the incident had something to do with the aftermath of the Jerusalem council in 49 AD.

In Acts 15, Luke writes that some Jews of Pharisaic heritage had begun advocating the conversion (the circumcision) of the Gentiles, in order for them to be saved (Acts 15.1). This

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<sup>96</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 5.

<sup>97</sup> M. Zetterholm defines assimilation as an ‘individual’s change of symbolic universe in a social context’: Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 66.

<sup>98</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 285. Why Nanos leaves out James, I do not know. Maybe he considers him represented by ‘his’ assembly?

<sup>99</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 285.

upset the Jesus-believing group, which decided to convene a delegation that could go to Jerusalem to discuss the matter with the elders (15.2). Once in Jerusalem, Peter and Paul answered and convinced the brethren that no special burden (circumcision) should be imposed on the Gentiles who, already, lived and participated in Jewish circles, otherwise they are expected to follow Jewish purity laws: things that have been defiled by idolatry, food that has been ritually pre-prepared in the wrong manner (15.19-21).<sup>100</sup>

A necessary objection in this case is that the information provided by the story in Acts 15 is of questionable historicity. We do not know if Luke is writing about a real event, or fiction. We have no way of verifying if they are related events,<sup>101</sup> should the events described be historically trustworthy.<sup>102</sup> For that reason, the link that can be established to Gal. 2 can only be thought of as superficial.<sup>103</sup> However, given that every statement in the particulars of Paul can be criticized on similar grounds (and that the course of Gal. 2.11-14 is also uncertain), it seems to me that the most appropriate is to assume that these descriptions are related in some way. It simply serves more opportunities to the understanding of this incident to assume that they are!

It is difficult to see, I think, how this first council of the apostles could not have a direct impact on the incident at Antioch. Regarding why the incident occurred, for instance Meier surmises that it depended on the reaction that the council in Jerusalem had started. Reactions almost always follow big decisions. Maybe that decision veiled a subtler question, Meier asks. (Possibly, he imagines the consequences from both an organizational and ritual angle.) How is the decision at Jerusalem going to be practically implemented in the rest of the church - after all, that something worked in Jerusalem did not necessarily mean that it worked everywhere else?<sup>104</sup>

Riches summarizes the legacy of the ritual debate that started in Jerusalem but had its culmination in Antioch quite well when he states that

‘the Antioch dispute reveals within Jewish Christianity both a strict and a liberal party. The stricter party ‘wished to impose on Gentile Christians also the general principle that there was no salvation apart from Judaism, which all Jewish Christians held alike, and this to its full significance and practical issues’, whereas the more liberal party, probably headed by the Jewish apostles, upheld the general principle, but, in the light of the concessions made to Paul at Jerusalem, ‘renounced the carrying out of their principles, which consistency might have demanded, and limited their operations to Judaism’.<sup>105</sup>

Even so, the concerns raised in Jerusalem seem to have been somewhat different from the issue at hand in Antioch. The Noahide Laws, rules of conduct expected from Gentiles, are usually mentioned. I do not intend to examine them.

### 5.3 The Gentile intercourse

The early church, around the time of this incident, struggled in a position where it had to

<sup>100</sup> These are sometimes referred to as the ‘Noahide laws’.

<sup>101</sup> The historicity of Acts is a long and well-known debate. The author also known as ‘Luke’ is primarily a theologian or historical novelist who writes to fit his wishes for the inclusions of Gentiles, particularly in Acts 15: R. Pervo, *The Mystery of Acts: Unraveling Its Story* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2008), 5; 170.

<sup>102</sup> I mean ‘trustworthy as sources to a historical occurrence’; fiction can be historical.

<sup>103</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxx.

<sup>104</sup> Meier, “Reflections,” 471.

<sup>105</sup> Riches, *Centuries*, 112-113: quotes F.C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine; A Contribution to a Critical history of Primitive Christianity* (vol 1; trans. and ed. E. Zeller. Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1876). Repr. in *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine; A Contribution to a Critical history of Primitive Christianity* (Forgotten Books, 2013), 127-128.

balance its global ambitions and Hellenistic diversity with Jewish origins. It had developed into a larger spiritual and administrative unit. New congregations had been established in many places on the Roman continent (Galatia was one of them!). Some with Jewish majority, some dominated by Gentiles. These issues, and other new approaches came into play; the degree of observance of the Torah, the Jewish Law, which was expected of Jew and Gentile alike, the circumcision of Gentiles, the regulations concerning ritual meals and ritual purity, the width of the Jewish-Christian salvation, among other things. Some ritual rulings had been decided at the meeting in Jerusalem 49 AD, but not all.

Meanwhile, the entire Jewish nation, subject to a foreign occupying power, faced substantial national pressure. The early church, once started as an exclusively Jewish cult, was caught in the middle between Roman and Jewish authorities. Previous conclusions concerning 'James' assembly' (2.12), a group with the weight of the Jerusalem authority (Jesus' brother) that laid force upon issues such as the conversion of Gentiles through circumcision, seem intelligible in this instance.

Antioch at this time, as stated before, was a cultural melting pot. It was, in Martyn's wording, a 'time bomb'<sup>106</sup> where different cultural and ritual expressions risked causing unforeseen dilemma, specifically between Jews and Gentiles. The church at Antioch had probably formed a freer assembly, exercising multicultural interactions and habits (2.12: 'eating with Gentiles'; 2.14 'living in the manner of a Gentile') that were not normally expected in Jewish circles. A large part of welcoming and converting operations towards Gentiles were already carried out within Jewish society, but conditions in Antioch enthused a unique environment for a broader repertoire of «ethnic liberties».<sup>107</sup> The authority in Jerusalem, presumably, got word of the church's adaption. A visit to Antioch was issued.

Consequently, another view is that the incident occurred due to the fact that Antioch had evolved in a direction where the common expressions and exchanges between Jews and Gentiles had become increasingly common (in layman terms: a problem). Antioch was already a multicultural city. That this blend of cultural and ritual activities and particularities would not have caused a conflict at any given time is almost impossible to imagine. Zetterholm says that the conflict was rooted in the fact that the Antiochene church had evolved into a free and open community between Jews and non-Jews.<sup>108</sup>

Of course Zetterholm's argument should not be understood as purely demographical, what Zetterholm is after is the religious and ritual implications that this unit of different individuals and backgrounds had – the impact on how the rituals of the congregation were conducted (something I describe as Jewish openness towards the particular conditions of Gentiles, an inclusive approach to cultural eigenvalues). This must have seemed odd in the eyes of the Jerusalem authority. Certainly, it is appropriate to ask why. Was this not the result of the meeting in Jerusalem? Or had the authority in Jerusalem suddenly changed their minds on the question of the mission towards the Gentiles?

The answers could be many, stretching from Paul and Luke (Acts) depicting different versions of the conclusion of the Jewish authority, to concerns over the Antiochene inclusivism being confirmed and therefore influencing the Jerusalem brethren to act in anxiety, or even the relationship between Paul and Peter,<sup>109</sup> and Peter's natural connection to Jerusalem.

## 5.4 Peter is changed

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<sup>106</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 232.

<sup>107</sup> So unique that Paul is able to call it a 'hypocrisy' (2.13) if this order was disregarded.

<sup>108</sup> Zetterholm, *Lagen*, 33.

<sup>109</sup> Riches, *Centuries*, 106.

A third explanation is that the events that built up a conflict came from a changing attitude on the part of Peter. This development (or regression, depending on perspective) of Peter's character, what Martyn calls the 'unsettling change in Peter', and Peter's close connection to Jerusalem, created a theological contradiction within the Antiochene community. (It had its final manifestation when 'he drew back and separated himself' from the Gentiles: 2.12). Peter is first invited to the church at Antioch, and initially shows great adaptability to the diversity of the congregation, but as soon as the traditional group from Jerusalem appears he alters his previous disposition and isolates himself from the Greek minority.<sup>110</sup> It could also be, perhaps, that the reminder from Jerusalem was all that Peter needed in order for him to consolidate an opinion that he already held.

About the actual circumstances surrounding Peter's repentance not much is known. Meier says that when James' assembly arrived and 'saw the mixed community ignoring the food laws laid down by the Torah, they were furious'.<sup>111</sup> Others prefer a more cautious understanding. Martyn, for instance, believes that James only delivered a modest message, warning Peter that too adaptable an attitude toward pagan customs would jeopardize the success of his mission to the Jews,<sup>112</sup> a mission that was issued by the authorities in Jerusalem. Peter was maybe encouraged to be more mindful, the Bible can motivate the reality of such advice.<sup>113</sup> Zetterholm believes the delegation from Jerusalem simply shared their desire to assimilate the non-Jews into the Jewish community (through circumcision), no conflict intended.<sup>114</sup>

What is clear is that the ritual and national demands directed against the local church made Peter (and later the rest of the Jewish majority, including Barnabas: 2.13) isolate himself during the communal meal. By this markedly deceitful behaviour Paul was rigorously offended; in his tone of voice the cultural depth and sensitivity of this disagreement emerges, when he calls Peter's error out in public (2.14: 'in front of everyone').

## 5.5 Conclusion

Although nothing is certain, it is helpful to draw an overall picture of what motivated the conflict in Antioch. There are several sides to this. Firstly, the incident occurred in the aftermath of a discussion that the meeting in Jerusalem had instigated. Certain issues that had not yet been thoroughly investigated needed to be resolved. Secondly, the strong pressure that the Jewish culture and religion were exposed to during the Roman occupation had caused concern within Jewish circles. Antioch, as a multicultural congregation, was immediately the subject of this crisis. Thirdly, Peter's reaction was perhaps a sign of a long drawn out personal process, in respect to proper ritual standings, which he himself had been through. These explanations added jointly to a development that led up to the conflict in the church of Antioch.

## 6 Comparative analysis

### 6.1 Premise

In this section, I will explain in detail the various exegetes works on the incident at Antioch, and also do a shorter concluding comparative discussion of their perspectives.

### 6.2 James Dunn: The Incident at Antioch (1983)

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<sup>110</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 241.

<sup>111</sup> Meier, "Reflections," 472.

<sup>112</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 242.

<sup>113</sup> Acts 21.20-24.

<sup>114</sup> Zetterholm, *Lagen*, 33.

Dunn believes that the Jewish food laws comprises an all too easy answer on the ‘perplexity’ that was this incident, but principally finds the cause behind the incident in the inequalities concerning Jewish food laws and table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles.

*Were food practises an important part of the incident?*

From a traditional perspective on Paul it is easy to be led to believe that food practises were the most important feature of this incident, says Dunn. Instead he calls for a more multisided solution. The food practises may very well have been part of the issue, but certainly not the complete picture. The important question is *what* laid the foundation for the Antiochene practises? An answer only focusing on cooking or eating comes too easily to be completely satisfying, according to Dunn.<sup>115</sup>

The incident at Antioch was provoked by the arrival (2.12: ‘prior some of James’ assembly [had] arrived he was [still] eating with the Gentiles, but when they [had] arrived, he drew back’) the party of James (the authority of Jerusalem<sup>116</sup>), and therefore it is important to assess what kind of congregations both Antioch and Jerusalem were. The early church (which we call the earliest Christian church) was not separated from Judaism; it was a sect within that tradition. Antioch was a Diaspora community with an increasing number of Gentiles recruits. Therefore, the important thing early became how these Gentiles were able to become part of this tradition, as seeds of Abraham. Dunn points to Gal. 3-4 as evidence. Jewish believers thought it was unquestionable that Gentiles should circumcise themselves if they should have any entrance to the cult, and right to its heritage, but circumcision, says Dunn, was only one of these discussions.

Paul’s concern, he says, was not his salvation doctrine as opposed to the Law, but the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. His important question was not how ‘I’ can be saved, but how the Gentiles should be incorporated in the Messiah-believing community (the Jewish idea of righteousness, in other words, the covenant).<sup>117</sup>

Dunn moves on to make a thorough historical investigation of occurrences surrounding this incident. He recollects some historical incidents, which he feels leads to the conclusions that there were national and cultic tensions at the time of the incident that could have forced the community to be at guard. Dunn says that the Christian sect had a lot of opposition turned against it. For instance the killing of James (the brother of John) —which was met with approval among the public— encouraged the Jewish authorities to embark on Peter.<sup>118</sup> It could certainly have affected the believers at Antioch to become more thorough with their ritual (and national) expressions. Also, if this infant movement was believed to be a risk that compromised the ritual safety of the larger community, it could well have received internal opposition from its fellow Jews as well, or from the Jerusalem authorities. Under such terms it is likely to see the party of James as a delegation sent to Antioch to investigate such threats, perhaps the form of open food fellowship with Gentiles that occurred in Antioch, argues Dunn.<sup>119</sup>

Dunn underscores the particular symbolic significance of a shared meal that existed within Judaism in those days (and still today). Sharing a table would not have been considered a small thing, thus who was the right table companion, and what was the right food, would have been an increasingly important issue. These laws, says Dunn, defined the separateness of the

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<sup>115</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 4.

<sup>116</sup> The authority of Jerusalem, in Antioch: Dunn, “The Incident,” 6.

<sup>117</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 4-5; 8.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Acts 12.1-3.

<sup>119</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 7-9; 32.

chosen people.

Dunn points to the study of J. Neusner that showed that, among the rabbinic traditions of this time period, 67% concerned table fellowship, and other pharisaic references.<sup>120</sup> After studying all religious parties: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes – Dunn finds that concerns of ritual purity existed on all sides of the Jewish 1<sup>st</sup> century society.

The mainstream view of this time period seems to have been to avoid intercourse with Gentiles, but Dunn also point to the opposite. Table fellowship existed, perhaps quite commonly, but always carefully regulated.

Also, Gentile converts, proselytes (circumcised converts), and pagans open to the traditions of Judaism were often seen in a positive light. There were so-called God-fearers, Gentiles with a fundamentally open attitude towards Judaism, but it is not certain to what degree these were expected to keep the Torah.<sup>121</sup>

The issue at Antioch (Dunn recovers his original starting point) is the food fellowship between Jews and Gentiles. Dunn writes that Peter, including the other Jewish worshippers, had abandoned the Jewish regulations for food fellowship completely (Peter ‘was [still] eating with the Gentiles’: 2.12). This affirms Dunn’s new perspective on the development of the early church, his conviction that Christianity developed out of Judaism as a movement that early on began to question Jewish conventions and restrictions. This constituted the foundation upon which James and the authorities of Jerusalem felt they needed to react.

It is possible, says Dunn, that the Antiochene congregation was already following many of the regulations; the demand on them could have been whether or not to become circumcised, but the evidence points in other directions. For instance, why would Paul call out the act of circumcision ‘judaization’ (2.14), if the congregation was already as judaized as it was? A third alternative is that the congregation was observing food laws, but not other (stricter) laws.<sup>122</sup>

Again, I believe that this describes Dunn's initial position. As an advocator of a new perspective he is comfortable with letting Paul be interpreted from the context of his Jewish identity, but only to a certain degree. Dunn makes it clear that he still wants to keep the view on Paul as an early visionary who maintained a certain distance to the Jewish cult, specifically to its stranger and stricter regulations. Paul used the foundation of his Jewish beliefs to make attempts to new ritual inclusion.

Dunn thinks Peter withdrew from fellowship (2.12) either because he felt the demand was reasonable and he could not deny the authority from Jerusalem (‘James’ assembly’: 2.12), because he could also sense the national tension in that period, or that he simply yielded to the demands to not risk open conflict between Jewish groups and interests. Perhaps, he even felt convinced by the large number of Jewish recruits that were willing to live righteously, in full attendance.

Paul on the other hand was advocating a new type of «equality in Christ». If the Gentiles of the Christ-believing community were found to be sinners, then that would count for Jews as well. For Dunn it means that the predominant view of Paul was that the covenant could not be everything: Faith also played a big part. Paul saw for the first time that justification through faith in the atonement of Christ meant a new way of thinking about the Jewish covenant as a whole.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 14,n44.

<sup>121</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 12; 14-19; 21; 23; 33.

<sup>122</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 24; 28-31.

<sup>123</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 34-37.

### 6.3 Louis Martyn: Galatians 2.11-14 (1997)

The main issue at Antioch for Martyn is Peter's, and in the long run all church member's, relation to the 'truth of the Gospel' (2.14: τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου). This is a vague term, and neither Paul nor Martyn explains exactly what this means. According to Martyn the truth of the Gospel is something that Paul has considered at the conference in Jerusalem (2.5). Paul felt, through the act of Peter, that previous agreements at Jerusalem had been violated at Antioch. He is upset because Peter is justifying an anti-Gospel within the congregation itself.<sup>124</sup> Martyn does not explain what he means by the term 'anti-Gospel', probably it depicts a feeling that Peter is acting against the true Gospel, that is a literal truth found in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

*What is the 'truth of the Gospel'?*

This is something Paul explains in 2.15-4.7.<sup>125</sup> In short, the capacity of personal competence through πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, through the faith promise of Jesus Christ.<sup>126</sup> (There are also useful definitions in Paul's other writings.)<sup>127</sup>

Martyn's observations are very coloured by his traditional convictions. Large part of his investigation is spent discussing receivers and rhetorical features. Martyn concludes, for instance, that the food laws were of no consequence in the Antiochene church. Paul is writing συνήθειαν, that Peter 'ate' (2.12), to signify that Peter himself was very used to this custom.<sup>128</sup>

Part of Martyn's effort is spent on solidifying a somewhat conventional Christian position; however, some of these conclusions seem overly simplistic. An old perspective of Martyn's shines through when he writes: 'Paul held the church of God to be made up of former Jews and former Gentiles'.<sup>129</sup> The choice of 'former' could indicate that there are views already held by the researcher, which governs the conclusions he draws from the studied material. Also, Martyn writes that the members of the Antioch community related to their ethnic origin to 'some degree'.<sup>130</sup> Is this a sign that Martyn feels that any observance of Jewish identity to a larger degree must mean a problem in terms of Christian fidelity?

Probably. It should, regardless, only be considered as a condition given by a perspective that Martyn supports.

After Martyn's main section he continues to dig deeper in to some of the particular expressions mentioned in Paul's account, starting with 'those of [*the*] circumcision' (Martyn's translation, my emphasis). He finds parallels in other parts of Paul's writing (Rom. 4.11-12). This term seems to point not primarily to Jews generally, but of those [Jews] who have been drawn into the church.<sup>131</sup> It is also a certain group within the congregation of Jerusalem, which demanded that all meal should be conducted separately from the Gentiles. Thus, Martyn concludes, the phrase is used to depict a group within the church, especially in Jerusalem where this group aimed to convert certain Gentiles. The reason it is in the account of Galatians is that Paul borrowed the expression from the Jerusalem community.

At the same time, 'those of circumcision' (2.12) depict Jews within the Antioch community that make a great deal out of their ethnic and religious heritage. It is wrong to translate them 'Jews', they were more likely Christian Jews – rather than Jews or Jewish Christians. They

<sup>124</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 235; 241; 243.

<sup>125</sup> See my previous discussion in 3.2.1 *Comments on translation*.

<sup>126</sup> Gal. 3.22.

<sup>127</sup> 1 Cor 15.1-8; 1 Rom. 1.1-6.

<sup>128</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 232.

<sup>129</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 232.

<sup>130</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 233.

<sup>131</sup> L. Martyn finds evidence for this in Acts 10-11.



acted to impose food laws on the Gentiles in Antioch. This development, with the circumcision party living at Antioch made Paul wary about the church's relationship to Jerusalem, Martyn thinks.

Peter is an opponent of this group. Therefore, what happens in Antioch is that Peter finally gave in for their views, showing great disaccord with his previous actions. This 'lack of integrity' is what angers Paul.<sup>132</sup> Maybe this is why Paul is able to write that Peter acted while 'being afraid of those of circumcision' (2.12)?

The party of James had been sent to Antioch to deliver a message to Peter, and since Paul did not precisely mention this message (or its content), the message surely must have concerned circumcision.<sup>133</sup>

Even if Martyn does not specifically say that James' assembly and those of circumcision were connected, this is probably what he believes. He certainly sees a connection between them.<sup>134</sup> The way he draws his conclusion is that since Peter turned away from the Gentiles in fear of the circumcision-group, likewise the message from James had something to do with circumcision.

'The other Jews' (2.13) is a group that shares the characteristic with Peter, being Jews by birth. That is why Paul calls them 'the others', meaning the others of [the same kind as] Peter.<sup>135</sup> Likely, behind this vocabulary rests Martyn's interest to put Paul's Christian beliefs against the Jewish inaccuracy of Peter. This is a classical old perspective division.

According to Martyn, ethnic origin could not have meant anything important for Paul. He conducts his mission in disregard of ethnicity.<sup>136</sup> After all, Martyn probably wants to defend the Christian purity of Paul's mission from ethnic Judaism.

Martyn places a lot of emphasis on the Antiochene relation to Jerusalem. After all, the consequences of the incident were going to be that Paul parted from both Antioch and Jerusalem. The development as Martyn sees it is thus: National pressure puts James in charge. James, the authority of the Jerusalem church, reminds Peter, who shares the customs of a mixed church, that he is put in charge of the mission to the Jews. His mission to the Jews would be at risk if he adjusts to Gentiles. Peter obeys. Paul thinks this has caused a deviation from the call of the baptismal unity between different groups (maybe even a fraction to Jerusalem?<sup>137</sup>) and reacts. Paul attacks Peter rather than James because of James message. This message must have been cleverly put together, soothing Paul in intentions of missionary work. Peter had been granted the task of preaching to the Jews, but he had the mixed congregation in Antioch as his platform.

Martyn seems to have high presuppositions of whether this conflict necessarily had something to do with occurrences that limited Paul's heroic reputation, and, secondly, guides the works of Martyn and what he is looking for in terms of credible explanations.<sup>138</sup>

Is this incident of minor consequence? After all, arguing over depthless details seems utterly innocent? No, says Martyn. The mere fact that this text is included in Paul's account gives us the hint that this must depict something important in the development of early Christianity.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 234; 237-240.

<sup>133</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 233-234.

<sup>134</sup> This is also the conclusion that I have reached, although this connection does not need to be literal.

<sup>135</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 234.

<sup>136</sup> Martyn; *Galatians*, 233; cf. Gal. 3.28.

<sup>137</sup> My own reflection.

<sup>138</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 241-244.

<sup>139</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 229.

By writing ἐθνικῶς [---] ζῆς, ‘living like a Gentile’ (2.14) Paul introduces the conflict between Gentile and Jewish lifestyle, namely Law-observance, Martyn says. He returns to this when he explains Paul’s phrase ἰουδαΐζειν, ‘to judaize’ (2.14). He says it seems to depict the conversion of Gentiles without the right conviction of the heart. He explains why, he feels that Paul is pointing out that Peter is trying to get the Gentiles to observe something that is ‘in a significant sense false’. To have the Gentiles ‘observe even a part of the Law’ would have been an indication that the atonement of Christ would have been put out of play.<sup>140</sup> What he is talking about is probably food laws or certain regulations imposed on the Gentile members.

Since the Eucharist was also conducted under the food laws Martyn sees a connection to the Lord’s Supper in Peter’s withdrawal. Not only did he separate himself from the Gentiles, he probably separated himself also in terms of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>141</sup> I find this to be agreeable. Sharing of food had symbolic significance, not just practical measures.

#### **6.4 Mark Nanos - What was at stake in Peter’s ‘eating with Gentiles’ at Antioch (2002)**

According to Nanos, the comprehension of this pericope depends on the understanding in two parts: The opposition to Peter’s eating with Gentiles, and why Paul opposed Peter’s withdrawal.<sup>142</sup> Of course Nanos’ questions are understating his own opinion that Peter was in fact opposed in these two instances, whether in general or for certain reasons.

The party of James (2.12) is traditionally linked to James (Jesus’ brother) of Jerusalem. Paul says that he agreed with the mission towards the Gentiles. Were they invited or not, were they followers of Paul’s opinions or not? Were they spies? We do not know. Paul says nothing about what the group of James advocated or how they were related (if they were) to the other group. We do not know if they were part of the objection, they could just have been a time marker in the account.<sup>143</sup>

The traditional view is that James is in the same group as those *in favor of* circumcision (2.12). Nanos regrets this prevailing interpretation in contemporary works, and separates the groups; they might even have been adversaries, he thinks. It is more likely that the incident resembles a debate between Jews (where the Christians are a subgroup in the discussion), rather than a debate between Christians.<sup>144</sup> It should be clear that they were separate groups, though this may not be as clear as Nanos would like to assume.

The important group of the incident is no doubt, in Nanos article, ‘those for circumcision’ (2.12), is a pressure group advocating the circumcision of Gentiles, enforcing a view that the Gentiles should be submitted to discrimination at the table, which Paul objects. This group is the one that Peter fears – therefore it is important to define it correctly. Since this group is in favour of circumcision it means that they too are circumcised, like Paul and Peter.

Nanos notes that references to the circumcised and the Jews are often synonymous elsewhere. A distinction between the circumcision-group and Jesus-believing Jews will place a barrier between Jews and circumcision, which cannot be correct, argues Nanos. Paul is recommending circumcision himself (Rom 9.3-5; 11.1; Phil. 3.3-5).<sup>145</sup>

This is where Nanos new radical perspective is apparent. The group for circumcision could not have been a problem because of the emphasizing itself; after all, Paul also emphasizes circumcision. But if they are only Jews like Paul, maybe belonging to the same group as ‘the

<sup>140</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 236.

<sup>141</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 233.

<sup>142</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 283.

<sup>143</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 286; 292.

<sup>144</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 289-290.

<sup>145</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 286-287; 303; 311.

rest of the Jews' 2.13), why does Paul not use this term instead? An old perspective assumes a critical difference between Paul and Jews—but why would he call them the Jews, if he is also one? Was Peter afraid of the Jews? Even if such a perspective seems attractive in its contrasting distinctions, it is mistaken, according to Nanos.

The reason that Nanos does not give in to this argument is that he assumes that there are other pretensions behind this group that triggers Paul's reaction. Paul made an internal distinction between Jewish groups when he separated those for circumcision (2.12) from the rest of the Jews (2.13). The only reason for doing this, argues Nanos, is that they were a group that advocated circumcision (a group of Jews, but not *all* the Jews). Maybe they were mainstream Jews with a more aggressive attitude in ritual matters?

In what way were they advocating circumcision? By proselyte assimilation, this was the common way to absorb new members, apart from the Jesus movement, in which there seem to have been generous space for cultural coexistence. The members of Antioch, including Peter and Paul, eat with Gentiles as if their [the Gentiles'] conversion is not necessary. This causes the annoyance of the circumcision-group.<sup>146</sup>

Some scholars<sup>147</sup> have suggested that this group persuaded the delegation of James to come to Antioch to investigate. Consequently, they were not necessarily physically present in Antioch. This would mean that a group existed before its existence was known, but more importantly, that a group far away was interested in the situation in Antioch. Nanos thinks this is unlikely.<sup>148</sup>

I think Nanos too quickly dismisses this idea. This could explain why there were in fact some connections between 'those for circumcision' and James' assembly (2.12: After all they are mentioned in the same sentence). When we talk about ideas in general they are unconsciously associated with a name that sounds like a membership, but it does not mean that we are actually pointing to a physical group present. We are simply talking about an idea in general. Perhaps the advocates of circumcision depict an 'idea' more than an organized group?

The group called the 'rest of the Jews' (2.13) follows Peter's lead, says Nanos. It is likely that they were Christ-believing Jews, they were not the same group as those for circumcision. Paul considered them not so open with their own convictions.<sup>149</sup>

Paul, according to Nanos, did not see a distinction between truth of the Gospel (being faithful in Christ) and eating according to Jewish regulations, he simply did not agree with the level of observance, or the way it was conducted. Life in the Diaspora was conducted with a great deal of exchange with ethnic neighbors. The table fellowship as such was not the problem, but how it was done. Freedom in Christ means freedom on the same terms within the Law but not entirely replaced by regulations.

The reason that other groups were opposed to table fellowship in Antioch was because it adapted Gentile terms too lightly, too often. Fear of what this close connection might become attracted resistance. They should become circumcised for practices to continue. At the same time, there is no reason to believe that the Jews were not eating with Gentile guests according to the customs pertaining to guests. Restrictions at meals were common in this time period. Nanos refers to social details as «who sits closest», «who talks with whom», «who is served

<sup>146</sup> Nanos, "What was at stake," 288-289.

<sup>147</sup> M. Nanos' list: B.I. Reicke, W. Schmithals, R. Jewett, K. Haacker, et al.

<sup>148</sup> Nanos, "What was at stake," 291.

<sup>149</sup> Nanos, "What was at stake," 286.

first» etcetera. The food was probably not the issue; Paul never labels the opposite group the ‘party in favor of a rigorous diet’.<sup>150</sup>

Neither did the debate concern how to exclude Gentiles, but rather how they could be included into the community. Instead of food, Nanos wants to focus on identity. The problem for Paul was how the Gentiles were being identified at the shared meals; it did not necessarily have anything to do with food, or the habit of eating. They shared meals, but they did not do it under the expectation that they would become Jews (2.14: ‘why do you urge to judaize the Gentiles?’). They were neither proselytes nor pagan guests. Because of the eschatological hope of living in the last days they were being treated as equals. For Paul these Gentiles were as equals in their own right.

Why would they need to be introduced as proselytes if they living in the last days. Maybe the openness had its cause in a time-problem: Judaization could be a very long process of social assimilation (for Nanos, ending with the ritual passage of circumcision), maybe Paul felt that there was no time for that change?

If they were equal in their own right, and ate with the congregation, and if the Christ-Jews ate with them because it did not affect their status as Jews within the covenant, then it cannot be that the Jews were afraid that they were too intimately associated with these Gentiles – should not the problem be if they were ‘pure’?

No, ‘it is the *status* of these Gentiles that is at stake in Peter’s decision to eat with them or not’.<sup>151</sup> According to Nanos the removal of Peter (2.12: ‘he drew back and separated himself [from the Gentiles]’), and the accusation of Paul that he was living as a Gentile (2.14: ‘you — [already] being a Jew— are living in the manner of a Gentile’), does not mean that Peter returned to observance (after living as a Gentile), it means that Peter ignored the message that the Gentiles too were righteous. Maybe it also had to do with the communal identity, as much as the individual Jews and Gentiles. Or maybe the Jewish congregation included Gentiles to not upset the local authorities of Syria?<sup>152</sup>

The meaning (I guess ‘truth’ is an equivalent phrase) of ‘the death of Christ’ is at risk when Peter withdraws as if ‘clouded by social anxiety’.<sup>153</sup> This may be the reason Nanos provides for Paul’s reaction, when he [Paul] ‘saw that they were not upright with the truth of the Gospel’ (2.14).

According to Nanos - was Peter’s withdrawal a problem for Paul?

Not necessarily. The problem is that Peter has acted as if there is a difference in terms of discrimination in God between Jews and Gentiles. Peter’s withdrawal put the Gentiles in an awkward position; his insecurity was projected on them, instead of defending their place and value. Peter should not behave in a manner than seems to suggest that the value of the Gentiles affects his identity, or that his identity has something to do with Gentiles. It could have been a sign that Peter was actually weak in his Christian belief, although part of a minority group. Conformity may affect them the most that feel that their identity is insecure.

The reason Nanos thinks Paul objects is thus: If Peter, a Jew, is identified as being righteous on the same term as Gentiles, how can he behave in a way that gives the impression that these Gentiles are not his equals? The expression ‘living like a Gentile’ signifies righteousness for Nanos. Paul rebukes Peter because Peter is adapting to the conventions, not following the community of the Jewish group he belongs to (the Jewish Christians in Antioch). Paul is not

<sup>150</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 284; 296-300; 303-304; 310.

<sup>151</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 303-304.

<sup>152</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 300-306; 316.

<sup>153</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 303.

presenting a new idea, he wants Peter to stand for beliefs he has already affirmed.<sup>154</sup>

### 6.5 Zetterholm - The Formation of Christianity in Antioch (2003)

What is at stake at the incident in Antioch, says Zetterholm, are different versions of covenant theology. Even if the Christian movement resembled a group where Jesus-believing Gentiles were embraced on the same (or close to the same) conditions as Jews, and were considered ‘equals in Christ’ - it must have denoted a real theological dilemma that the only existing movement that could ensure their salvation was Judaism. In order to solve this puzzle Paul presented an idea that Gentiles needed to be integrated in the Jewish covenant, without imposing the Torah. They were not pagan – although still Gentiles, or ‘righteous Gentiles’.<sup>155</sup>

This ultimately punctures a view that sees Paul as outside the common covenantal nomism of the time.<sup>156</sup> Covenantal nomism, staying in God’s grace by the observance of the Torah, was the common view of Jewish groups of this time period. It introduces the view, however, that the Gentiles were within the covenant, to some regards gratuitously. Ritual purity was not an issue. The problem for Paul was to explain why the Gentiles needed not to adopt the Torah, not why the Jews should abandon it.<sup>157</sup>

Zetterholm writes:

‘Paul makes use of traditions deeply embedded in his own religious tradition. Monotheism, the eschatological pilgrimage of the Gentiles, and covenantal nomism are combined with a firm conviction of living in the messianic age, resulting in a soteriological model for the inclusion of the Gentiles into the covenant that provides salvation for both Jews and Gentiles’.<sup>158</sup>

There is no doubt that Gentiles converted to Judaism. ‘To become part of the covenant people’ writes Zetterholm, ‘a Gentile had to become solely affiliated with Judaism, not only theologically but socially.’<sup>159</sup> Paul is not so concerned with how salvation will work for Jews, the covenant already secures their salvation. Mainly, for Paul the salvation of the pagans is essential. Christ is a new revelation, but still within the frames of the old covenant. The Gentiles were included in this covenant as Gentiles, they did not have to go through any rituals of initiation, and they did not have to be circumcised. This builds up a conflict in Antioch.<sup>160</sup>

Most likely, the Jesus believers were a ‘synagogue consisting of Jesus-believing Jews’, and the ‘Jesus-believing Gentiles related to this synagogue as any Gentiles related to any Jewish community.’<sup>161</sup> The Jesus-believing Jews observed the local *halakhah*, which in Antioch must have meant that there was nothing to worry about in terms of sharing meals with Gentiles. If Gentiles were in fact participating in the Jewish rituals and communities, there must have been reasons for regulations, Zetterholm concludes.

Do sources censure the apparently unimaginable behaviour of sharing a meal with the Gentiles, or are they social comments attesting that this sort of behaviour actually existed? If food with the right preparations and service around is served, then table-fellowship seems not to have been a problem. The Gentiles were welcome; the question was in what way. After

<sup>154</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 303; 310-311; 314-315.

<sup>155</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 148. The term ‘righteous gentiles’ is borrowed from M. Nanos.

<sup>156</sup> M. Zetterholm divorces E.P. Sanders in this instance. Sanders states that Paul completely denies the importance of the covenant: Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 156-157.

<sup>157</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 142; 159.

<sup>158</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 158.

<sup>159</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 127.

<sup>160</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 157; 161.

<sup>161</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 94.

closer examination, only some groups shared this view (table fellowship with Gentiles).<sup>162</sup>

Greek and Roman banquets give evidence for table separations between the Jew and the Gentile. Zetterholm concludes that there was in fact nothing special with these separations (which for him is indirectly what Gal. 2.11-14 is addressing), which was simply how a banquet in those times was conducted. The Jews were cautious about social and ethnic intercourse, but these kinds of exchanges seem to have happened anyway, and may have been quite common in the 1<sup>st</sup> century context of Antioch. Understandably, considering the suspicion towards Jewish people that existed in this society, the avoidance of table-fellowship with Gentiles was rarer if the meal was served in a Jewish home. There is evidence that Jews had isolationist policies, but that does not suggest that all Jews did not share meals with Gentiles. 'We cannot assume', says Zetterholm, 'that these different groups of Jews held the same view of table-fellowship with Gentiles'. To find that there is only one kind of table-fellowship is 'oversimplification' of Judaism.<sup>163</sup>

I think this is a good point, especially considering what Paul is writing in his depiction of the incident. Obviously some kind of discussion of the practical approaches had occurred between the first Jesus-believers in the Antiochene congregation. Things that made Paul able to note a changing attitude in Peter (2.12: 'prior some of James' assembly [had] arrived he was [still] eating with the Gentiles, but when they [had] arrived, he drew back and separated himself').

Paul's solution of salvation was considered a threat to common social laws of Judaism. Given these circumstances Zetterholm thinks it is understandable why James might have sent a party to Antioch (2.12 'James' assembly'). How could they accept that Gentiles were being included in the 'covenant of circumcision without circumcision'? James called for a solution of either isolation from table-fellowship or embracing of circumcision. When the requirements of the isolation of Gentiles were known, Peter too demanded circumcision<sup>164</sup>.<sup>165</sup>

There is no evidence of communities that remained open to the possibility of conversion without circumcision. Neither is it probable to think that early Christianity represented one fraction that was so on the brink of Judaism<sup>166</sup> that the view on circumcision was fading.

It is important to note, however, the eschatological belief behind the urge to proselyte the Gentiles. Both the urgency of becoming circumcised, but also that of not becoming circumcised, because of this urgency, can speak for this context.<sup>167</sup>

Maybe this eschatological confidence that Zetterholm mentions is what lies behind the last 'logic' of Paul's retribution: 'If you —[already] being a Jew— are living in the manner of a Gentile, that is not in the manner of a Jew, why do you urge to judaize the Gentiles?' (2.14). What is the purpose of complete conversion if the glory of God will be established in due time?

Zetterholm, trying to avoid the anachronistic trap, search for evidence in historical references to the contemporary Jewish views regarding Gentiles. This evidence may advice how we think the Gentiles within the Jesus-movement were treated. It shows that there is no conclusive view; there were both positive and negative views on Gentiles. Zetterholm does

<sup>162</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 146; 151; 153.

<sup>163</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 150; 154-155; 164.

<sup>164</sup> It is apparent, that the church in Galatia has been seduced to becoming Jewish, maybe by becoming circumcised. M. Zetterholm, therefore, finds coherence between the demands of circumcision in Galatia and in Antioch: Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 135-136. Cf. Gal. 6.12-13.

<sup>165</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 161; 163; 166.

<sup>166</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 142.

<sup>167</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 136; 141.

conclude, however, that the Christians must have represented a much more positive faction, since the ‘movement was a missionary one’.<sup>168</sup> Zetterholm writes:

‘The identification of Jesus as the Messiah within the Jesus movement triggered specific strata within these traditions and resulted in missionary activities directed towards Gentiles’.<sup>169</sup>

Zetterholm takes no interest in the sayings of Jesus. This is over the scope of a study of the incident, he assumes. Since Jesus did not have a specific program for the inclusion of Gentiles it is easy to understand why there must have been so many different views present within the early Christian-Jewish movement. That may be, but surely what the Jesus says cannot be completely irrelevant? For instance Dunn points to stories, now part of the Christian Gospel, where the Messiah-believers had to discuss its take on ritual purity.<sup>170</sup> After all, is it not a Jesus-believing community that Zetterholm reconstructs? Luke writes Acts with the interest of defending the Christian mission toward the Gentiles. Luke also writes a Gospel. Could this not be of interest?

According to Zetterholm, Paul’s unity in Christ depends on the certain distinction between Jew and Gentile. It is only in truthfulness towards one’s own Jewish identity that one can remain one in Christ. Maybe this was the reason of Paul’s anger; that Peter somehow had undermined this principle of tolerance and openness within the context of the Antiochene community?

Zetterholm also thinks it is unlikely that Paul is trying to depict the Eucharist meal. However, it does not have to be a question whether it is a Communion in a literal sense, but primarily in a symbolical sense. We know that meals, and food, and their preparations, and role, were a symbolic dimension within Judaism. If indeed the meal tradition had a Eucharistic connotation in Antioch, then it must have had its origin in the movement’s covenantal viewpoints.<sup>171</sup>

## 6.6 Incident in dialogue

Martyn in this study is the representative for a traditional (old) perspective on Paul. He argues on the basis that Paul works against the Jewish establishment and authority. Paul is a representative of traditional (Lutheran) Christian values. He places the freedom through the atonement of Christ against Jewish Law observance. Dunn represents a middle position (new perspective) where Paul is viewed as standing in a Jewish context, but that individual parts of Paul's theology are signs of Paul's uniqueness within conventional Judaism, and perhaps an early attempt of independence. Paul is a Jew, but he does not agree with some of the classical Jewish cultic values, circumcision, ritual purity etcetera. Nanos and Zetterholm represent a radical new perspective. The entirety of Paul's activity is analyzed from the point of view that Paul is a Jew who remains a Jew active in his Jewish context and with Jewish considerations.

Nanos is unmistakably opposed to a traditional perspective on the Antioch incident. He summarizes the old perspective as follows:

1. The objection against Paul and Peter is that they disregarded the Jewish regulations because they had faith in Christ. Peter withdrew in order not to break the Law, or upset the Jews. Prior (Acts 10) he had a vision that taught him the worthlessness of narrow traditions (presumably Judaism) (Lightfoot). Peter betrays his anticipation from Judaism (Betz).
2. Paul was upset because any observation of the Torah should not compromise church life.
3. The Antioch church’s embracement of Gentile fellowship revealed that the Old Testament

<sup>168</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 137-139.

<sup>169</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 156.

<sup>170</sup> Dunn, “The Incident,” 32-33: Lk 7.19; Mt. 15.17; 20.

<sup>171</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 139-140; 143; 164.

statutes were no longer valid (Burton).

4. Christianity is seen as ‘universalistic and inclusive’, Judaism is ‘particularistic and exclusive’. Christianity is a religion of faith, Judaism a worship of Law.<sup>172</sup>

The old perspective seem to draw ritual consequences out of a mixed practice, the consequence being that the idea that the early church was purely Christian is strengthened. The problem with an old perspective, says Nanos, is that it tries to force the interpretation of this pericope in to a schematic understanding of opposites: exclusivism versus inclusivism, law versus faith, etcetera. Its view on Paul, and his projected opinion that the truth of the Gospel has nullified the careful observance of Jewish food laws, is not acceptable. It incorrectly assumes that Peter ‘turned back’ to Judaism. It also draws faulty conclusions about the conversions of Gentiles; Gentiles within the Jewish context were already undergoing a long process of inclusion. Even so, changing the outlook of Paul (new or old perspective) does not mean that the issues at Antioch are changed.<sup>173</sup>

Martyn sees a clear conflict between Paul and Peter. He argues that the quarrel in Antioch principally regarded whether Peter, who had made himself comfortable with a particularly open-minded food practise, changed his behaviour as soon as the party from Jerusalem arrived. This is why Paul puts the verb συνήσθιεν, ‘ate’, in past tense. This also confirms that James’ assembly, in Martyn’s view, was some sort of ritual pressure group. According to Martyn, Peter – used to flexible eating habits – immediately upon the arrival of some of the Jewish authority abandoned his former inclusive (Christian) behaviour, and dissociated himself from the Gentiles. But why would he do this? The answer that Martyn proposes is based on his primary notion that Peter and Paul were exposed to a group that advocated Jewish legalism (food practices and circumcision), which Peter fell for. Paul naturally opposed to this form of formal (Jewish) correction – in Martyn’s understanding, as an opponent of Law-righteousness – reacts. Martyn is bound to his conventional perspective, the view on Judaism as a religion of legalism is typical of a more traditional approach towards Paul.

Zetterholm disagrees with Martyn. If a view suggests that the early church shared meals, disregarding Jewish ritual regulations, this cannot consider seriously the early development of the Jesus movement. It is not probable that the Jews disregarded the Torah in that way. They were Christ-believing Jews, not Christians. Dunn also disagrees. First of all, Paul was not opposed to the leadership of James’ group from Jerusalem. In fact, the group in Jerusalem had a natural authority that any law observant Jew was expected to follow. Paul’s anger did not concern the decisions that the authority of Jerusalem implemented, the church in Antioch was already in acceptance of the authority by Jerusalem’s leadership; otherwise they would not have sent Paul and Barnabas as delegates to the council in Jerusalem. The massive adjoining to James’ position was not in any way a revolutionary occurrence.

Paul’s concern, Dunn says, was not his salvation doctrine as opposed to the Law, but the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. It is partly about food practices, but that is not the complete picture. His important question was not how ‘I’ can be saved, but how the Gentiles should be incorporated in the Messiah-believing community (the Jewish idea of righteousness, in other words, covenant).

Zetterholm says it is covenant theology that is the problem at Antioch. Paul represents a radically new view of the covenant idea, he wants pagans included as they are. This is also in part what Nanos concludes; the conflict is not about how the Gentiles should be excluded, but how they should be included. I think this is a good point!

Dunn, Nanos and Zetterholm points out that Paul worked as part of his Jewish context, with

<sup>172</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 292-296.

<sup>173</sup> Nanos, “What was at stake,” 284; 295; 297.



a firm identity as a Jew, to a greater or lesser extent. Therefore, it is unlikely that Paul reacts on the basis that Peter is stuck in a legalistic trap, the reasons need to be sought elsewhere. This also means that the incident at Antioch does not need to be such a clear conflict between Paul and Peter as Martyn suggests.

All exegetes suggest that the group associated with James relates to the authoritarian role Jerusalem played in the first century. Especially Dunn and Martyn makes a big point of this group's presence in the Antiochene congregation. Nanos, on the other hand, thinks the ones from James could just as well have been a time-marker in the telling. After all, if we look closely at the text they function as a time-marker for when Peter's behaviour changed.

Martyn insists that James' group and the circumcision party is the same people; it is a movement working both in Jerusalem and Antioch, which emphasizes its Jewish heritage and allegiance to the religion and the ritual regulations. Paul is opposed to all groups. They are Jewish legalists that have influenced Peter to break past agreements. They want to exclude the Gentiles.

For Nanos it is implied that there is a conflict, but it is not certain that there is only one group, or Paul against Peter. It is also likely that different names depict several groups with different interests in the conflict. The important group for him is the circumcision group. They emphasize the essence of assimilating the Gentiles through circumcision. Circumcision is not the act of circumcising as such, but the identity that is shaped after the rite. Paul is opposed to the degree of ritual obedience. According to Nanos Paul faults Peter because he is doing something socially or strategically wrong; he is putting the Gentiles in a difficult spot, he is advocating a degree of excorporation Paul does not agree with. Because of the eschatological hopes of imminent salvation there is no reason to treat the Gentiles other than as equals.

According to Martyn, ethnic origin could not have meant anything important for Paul. He conducts his mission in disregard of ethnicity. This may be Martyn's way to defend the Christian purity of Paul's mission. Dunn talks of increasing nationalism among the Jews in the time of the incident, attesting the possibility that ethnic values could in fact be at stake. Maybe this was a question of the level of Judaization within the movement? Nanos describes the incident as a conflict concerning the method of proselytization, circumcision or something else. Zetterholm says that the conflict is about the inclusion in the covenant. Both Dunn, Nanos, and Zetterholm, points specifically to a high level of assimilation between ritual and cultural groups at this time in history.

If Judaization is a process of becoming more Jewish to different degrees, and in different steps, why would Paul urge to judaize a group (the Gentiles) that were already being judaized within that community? Because Judaization has to refer to a single event (circumcision), says Nanos. In fact, it *must* refer to the ritual of circumcision, the ritual that makes someone Jewish.

Dunn and Zetterholm are more cautious. Dunn argues that there were different kinds of Jewish converts, different ways to approach the religion. Zetterholm talks about different degrees of assimilation into the Jewish community, with circumcision as a final step. However, moral conversions does not change your identity as a Gentile,<sup>174</sup> conversion of Gentiles, for Zetterholm, meant literal circumcision.

The difference between Dunn, Zetterholm, and Nanos seems to be that Dunn thinks that the Gentiles can become Jews by association, and Nanos and Zetterholm only by 'acquisition'. Both approaches seem to fit the picture of the conflict. Either it was a conflict that concerned

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<sup>174</sup> Zetterholm, *Antioch*, 141. M. Zetterholm refers to the works of P. Fredriksen. Cf. P. Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 & 2," in *JTS* 42.2 (1991), 532-564.

various degrees of assimilation, or the ritual of circumcision specifically.

Maybe ethnicity - differently put - meant everything for Paul, which is why he seems to have advocated an approach where all were ethnically included in salvation? I think this is probable.

## ■ 7 What made Paul upset?

### 7.1 Summary

The main task of this thesis has been to investigate the reasons why Paul was upset. The investigation has been guided by a hermeneutical awareness that approaches to this problem varies depending on one's initial understandings on the predicaments of Paul, and three scientific perspectives on him (old, new, and radical new perspective). The primary material for the study has been four exegetes, Louis Martyn, James Dunn, Mark Nanos, and Magnus Zetterholm, whose different approaches I have studied without any preconceived preference. I have sought to let their elaborations be heard in all parts of the thesis where this has been relevant. I also reached the conclusion that the main interest should be on the history and the theological concepts surrounding this incident, and not the letter to the Galatians.

After a perspicuous overview of theories accompanying this pericope, in which first the diversity that together comprise a contemporary position towards this account was sketched, I moved further into the textual and historical analysis of Paul's exposition and its details. I provided my own translation from Greek, from which I concluded that the accusation of Paul is linked to some historically and theologically important expressions and phrases, also noting the groups that are present at this incident. Some of these phrases include Peter's 'guilt' (2.11), 'James' assembly', 'those of circumcision' (2.12), 'upright' (2.14), 'truth of the Gospel' (2.14), and 'to judaize' (2.14). I concluded that although we do not know if Paul provides a historically accurate description the stipulation must be to regard the incident as an historical event.

The history of this event is set in Syrian Antioch, a city of cultural diversity. The Jewish synagogue is likely the setting, it answered to the authority of Jerusalem. I have found that sharing of food in the Jewish 1st century culture had special significance; it implied the rank within the community. Questions of ritual purity, right and wrong table companions were common. Due to a high rate of Gentiles within the community, the Antiochene food restrictions were probably quite generous. Although the historical credibility of specific accounts have been questioned, it is probable that the discussion primarily concerned intercourse with uncircumcised Gentiles, and not the issue of circumcision as such (which was a resolved matter). I have discussed the probable background to the incident as a combination of several factors: a reaction to previous decisions or unresolved matters, the cultural diversity of Antioch, and an imaginable change in Peter. Although nothing can be said for sure, I arrived at the conclusion that this probably is an appropriate first step to a conclusion.

To further investigate some of the loose ends of this historical survey, and the questions it had raised, I have conducted a comparative analysis of the interpretations of the four exegetes. I have found that some weight is placed on the individual concepts, figures and groups of this pericope, and that their role and relation to the meaning and message of this incident are regarded differently by each exegete, concluding that most of this difference in approach is explained by the exegetes' various starting points in the understanding of Paul. Some of these concepts include «food laws», the «authority of Jerusalem», «Jewish and Gentile dealings», «converts to Judaism», «covenantal practises/inclusion» or «proselytization», the «symbolism of food», the existence of circumcision, «status of the Gentiles», «Paul's infallibility», and the «equality in Christ».

## 7.2 Conclusions

### *Why was Paul upset?*

After studying the contributions of four exegetes I have reached the conclusion that it could not have been the food laws or the ritual laws specifically that caused the controversy. It probably had something to do with the inclusion of Gentiles, judaization and the method of conversion of Gentiles in particular.

Why would an already judaized congregation cause Paul to react against judaization? Why could it not be the food laws? Since I have found that table-fellowship, and many other cultural expressions and variations existed, and most of them were possible under terms of observance of the Jewish Law and Jewish customs, food laws did not have to be such a big matter of debate. Because food had symbolic value, my conclusion is that the practice of sharing or non-sharing of food had the symbolic influence to point to a much larger discussion, namely the inclusion of non-Jews into the community. This is a point where I think Zetterholm and Nanos are closest to the target. Considering the ethnic and cultural diversity of Antioch in the 1<sup>st</sup> century this must have had its direct impact on the congregation. For this reason the influence of food, although an ethnic factor, probably was a sub-issue to the major factor at hand: Gentile and Jewish coexistence within the early church.

The dissension described by the text signifies different perspectives on the inclusion of Gentiles. The arrival of James' assembly, sent from the authorities in Jerusalem, actuates the conflict. Likely, their presence was enough to provoke a discussion on main matters. As I have shown Antioch was a church under Jerusalem's jurisdiction. I have also concluded that a traditional interpretation of their connection to 'those of circumcision' must remain intact, but whether they are adversaries (Martyn) or friends (Nanos) of Peter is hard to tell. The connection is probably that of a group (James' assembly) and its opinion (circumcision). It is reasonable to believe that this party sanctioned by James (the highest authority in the Jerusalem church) that had come to Antioch were in favour of immediate proselytization of these Gentiles, through circumcision. If this was the reason for their visit is inconclusive. I think not.

The phrase to pay attention to in this pericope is τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 'the truth of the Gospel'. It is easy—in fallacy—to treat this expression as a general figurative one. It is also easy to misinterpret it as the New Testament narratives that we have access to today. What Paul intends to communicate with this phrase, I have found, is the power of God's truthful revelation through his Son, Jesus Christ. This christological definition of the term εὐαγγελίου is what we should have in mind when we consider the good news of salvation in Christ, concerning Jews and Gentiles alike. Paul's frustration sprang from the misinterpretation of this revelation; he felt that certain groups within the community jeopardized this truth.

Three exegetes (Dunn, Zetterholm, and Nanos) mention, with their own words, the new covenantal interpretation that Paul instigated. This shows that this can have been an important factor in this incident.

As we have seen, the church in Antioch—Jews and Gentiles in fellowship—probably existed appropriately in a Jewish sense. This cannot have been the reason why Paul was upset. I have found that even Paul must have lived in under this arrangement, and could not have been very surprised by such requirements. At stake at the conflict at Antioch, then, is observance or non-observance to the trustworthy and permanent quality of God's salvation. Gentiles were not to take any extra measures to fit into this messianic covenant. Any rejection of this view would for Paul have meant a powerful denial of the reliability and reality of the Messiah. Maybe, in the discussions that arose, for Paul the traditional conversion advocated

by the group of James (proselytization through circumcision) represented a turn away from God's grace through Christ. Further, as an apostle of Antioch, a colleague of Paul, and a member that had walked on the side of Jesus, Peter's flexibility —however innocent and unaware on the part of Peter— must have been perceived as a provocation against this Christian legacy. This regardless of whether Paul considered himself a Jew to a greater (new, and radical new perspective) or lesser (old perspective) degree, I have found.

In my historical analysis of this pericope I have been able to establish that the Jewish nation was exposed to tremendous cultural and political pressure at the time. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that this, together with a high rate of Gentile converts within the community, made Peter act in response. As a Jew he proceeded both in obedience to his authority (Jerusalem) and in defence of his ethnic values when he withdrew, which seems reasonable in these circumstances. He was not falling back on old traditions; he was consolidating the Jewish traditions (and social strategies) that he knew. In a way, he was trying to please both parties. In his haste he was overlooking the truth of the salvation for both Jews and Gentiles – and this is probably why Paul thinks that he was 'pronounced guilty' by his convictions, and chose to confront him.

*Does what can be known about the situation in Antioch, or the message of the text specially, match with either a new or old perspective on Paul respectively?*

Not necessarily. These perspectives rather serve as guiding points for understanding the intention that Paul had with his presentation. They are useful in relation to Judaism, but they do not answer to *why* Paul was upset. To do that, we need to look further. In my second chapter I reached the conclusion that we should not see these perspectives as a development curve. By choosing an open approach I have proved that sometimes too strong assumptions about Paul and his objective can have the inappropriate effect of selecting a conclusion before the conclusion is reached. Therefore, my approach worked. What guiding assumption of Paul and Judaism have I reached? Paul probably worked within his Jewish context, as a Jew, but it is important not to neglect the unique visions of inclusion that Paul had, and that the first Jesus movement generally represented. This vision must have been rooted in a perception that the message of Jesus Christ was a renewal of the religion and the faith that they were already part of.

### **7.3 Further reflections**

It is important to understand that views that Paul expresses may have been opinions in progress. Every so often we treat the sources as if they are solid views. More likely they were ongoing debates within this community. It must have varied from case to case.

The matter at hand is perhaps not *why* there was a conflict in Antioch, but how the 'maturity' of a conflict greatly depends on the personal development of each individual. Maybe we can even find a parallel to our own days, since like the Antiochenes we live in a multicultural society with many different ethical and moral standards. Where do these social and cultural norms fit in with Paul's account? Where does the Communion, the unity and identity of the believers fit in this? Perhaps, Paul's report was symbolic of all the dangers Christians would face in the coming decades, regarding these matters and how this can affect the acceptance of a Gospel of salvation for everyone.

In the back mirror, it is of great substance to note that the 1st century church begins a remarkable journey towards clear inclusiveness toward outside non-Jewish groups and individuals, and the account in Galatians is a clear sign of what kind of disagreements this inclusive mission might have created initially.

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