

## ***The Judaizing Controversies***

### I. Introduction

#### A. Significance

1. Early historical controversies often seem mainly theological & Christological
2. But this earliest controversy was soteriological
3. Rooted in NT history

#### B. The Issue

1. Question: “What is the status of the Law?”
2. Earliest use (perhaps): Gal. 2:14 “to live like Jews”
3. Is the Law necessary to salvation?

### II. Course of the Controversy

#### A. Challenge of Judaizing in the NT

1. Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15)
  - a. Demand for circumcision & keeping of the law (15:1, 5)
  - b. Meeting of the Council (15:6-22)
  - c. Apostolic Decree (15:23-29)
2. Galatians
  - a. Threat of “another gospel” (1:6-9)
  - b. Confrontation w/ Peter (2:11-16)
  - c. Just shall live by faith (3:11)
  - d. Illustration of Hagar and Sarah (4:22-31)

#### B. After the NT

1. Issue diminished w/ destruction of Jerusalem → Separation of Jews from Christians
2. Attacks from the early Church Fathers
  - a. Ignatius of Antioch: One of the earliest fathers
  - b. Epistle of Barnabas: A note of hostility

#### C. Forms of Jewish Heresy

1. Judaizers—those who held the necessity of the Mosaic law for salvation
2. Nazarenes
  - a. Early Jewish Christians who followed the Jewish customs but apparently did not deny the gospel nor insist on acceptance of the law
  - b. Some would place James in this camp
  - c. Schaff observes that they are not truly “heretics” (cf. Messianic Judaism)
3. Ebionites
  - a. True Judaizers who accepted Christ as Messiah but denied His deity
  - b. Claimed John the Baptist as their example
  - c. Insisted on the law (including circumcision) for salvation
  - d. Rejected Paul and his writings
4. Easter (Quartodeciman) Controversy
  - a. Celebrating Easter on Passover (14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan) whenever it fell
  - b. Reflects concerns about the influence of Jewish thought/practice
  - c. Not really a *heresy*

#### D. Ramifications

1. Defended salvation in Christ alone
2. Separation of Christianity from Judaism
3. Council of Jerusalem → Precedent for ecumenical councils?

4. But also roots of Antisemitism?