

Katamares 14:24 to 15-3.

14:27 Declaring What God Had Done

That the Mission Be Firmly Established.

Chrysostom: They did not say what they themselves had done but “what God had done with them.” It seems to me that they mean through their trials. It was not for nothing that they went there, nor to rest. They were providentially guided by the Spirit, so that the preaching to the Gentiles might be firmly established.... And note Paul’s ardor. He does not ask if there is need to speak to Gentiles; he speaks at once. This is why he says, “I did not refer myself to flesh and blood.” 20 Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 31.21

15:1 Teaching the Believers

The Early Church No Stranger to Doctrinal Disputes.

Origen: Observe what he alleges as a proof of his statement: “Christians at first were few in number and held the same opinions, but when they grew to be a great multitude, they were divided and separated, each wishing to have his own individual party. This was their object from the beginning.” That Christians at first were few in number, in comparison with the multitudes who subsequently became Christian, is no doubt true.... He also says that “all the Christians were of one mind,” not noticing, even in this particular, that from the beginning there were differences of opinion among believers regarding the meaning of the books held to be divine. At all events, while the apostles were still preaching and eyewitnesses of Jesus were still teaching his doctrine, there was no small discussion among the converts from Judaism regarding Gentile believers and whether they ought to observe Jewish customs or reject the burden of clean and unclean meats as not being obligatory on those who had abandoned their ancestral Gentile customs and had become believers in Jesus. Against Celsus 3.10–11.2

15:2 Paul and Barnabas Go to Jerusalem

Reconciling Acts and Galatians.

Chrysostom: How can he say in his letter to the Galatians, “I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me, nor did I move”? 3 We suggest this: in the first place because he had not gone up spontaneously but had been sent by others; and in the second place because he did not come in order to learn something 4 but to persuade others. Indeed, from the beginning he held that opinion that the apostles approved later, namely, that it was not necessary to circumcise. Until that day, however, it had seemed to them that [Paul] was not worthy of faith, but they rather listened more to those who lived in

Jerusalem. So [Paul] went up, not in order to gain what he had been ignorant of before but in order to persuade his opponents because those who were in Jerusalem agreed with them. He had recognized from the start what had to be done and needed no teacher. And he had a clear and sure idea, beyond any discussion, of what the apostles would have decreed after a long discussion. Since it had seemed opportune to the brothers that he might learn something about them, he went up not for himself but for them. Even though he says, "I did not go up," we can explain that. He did not go up at the beginning of his preaching or in order to learn. And he means both these things when he says, "I did not go immediately in flesh and blood." He did not simply say, "I did not go" but "I did not go immediately." Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 15.2–4.⁵

The Significance of the Law.

Ammonius: It is to be noted that the early believers, with much searching and great eagerness, discussed dogmas, and that they benefited to such an extent through their discussions and that the Antiochians did not hesitate to send [someone] to Jerusalem to inquire about the controversy. And yet their inquiry was not, in the first place, about the Godhead, or the providential incarnation of the Son, or the Holy Spirit, or angels, or powers, or heaven, or anything like this, but about circumcision, about the least part of a man's genitals. They were aware of the fact that the words "a single iota and a single point of the law" ⁶ were full of a great spiritual meaning. The Antiochian disciples were afraid to take authority, but they took so much thought even for questions that seemed to be trifling, seeing that those from Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to consult those in Jerusalem, while the disciples from Jerusalem sent Judah and Silas back to Antioch with their letters. Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 15.7–8.⁷