

Rethinking the Book of Acts

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Preface

The six papers in this volume derive from several of the final sessions of the Westar Acts Seminar. The Seminar was an initiative begun in 1999 under the direction of Dennis E. Smith. It ran for just over a decade and culminates with a new commentary on Acts that, along with an English translation of the text, develops many of the findings related to the Seminar's discussion. Co-edited by Dennis E. Smith and Joseph B. Tyson, *Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report* (Polebridge 2013) appears in concert with this issue of *Forum*.

All of the articles in this issue argue against the historicity of Acts. While each develops a different topic and passage within the book, their combined perspective attests that Luke's Acts is a stylized narrative that has been fashioned for particular purposes. Borrowing from a wide array of sources, Luke creates what moderns would call a work of historical fiction.

Using Acts 2:41–47 as his sample text, Dennis Smith ably demonstrates many points of similarity between Luke's description of the early Christian community and Greco-Roman associations. As the early community is depicted in Acts, ancient Greco-Roman associations followed certain rules, shared meals in common, said prayers to a deity, and emphasized loyalty among its members. These close comparisons to other types of ancient gatherings suggest that Luke's depiction of the early community reflects less of an actual early gathering of Jesus-believers and more of the Greco-Roman associations of Luke's day, to a period in the early decades of the second century CE.

Richard Pervo has contributed two essays for this issue. In the first one, "Is There a There There? Looking for Antioch in the Former Antioch Source," Pervo engages in a source-critical reading of Acts 2–14. Through his close reading of these early chapters, he locates material that conflict with Luke's overall agenda as seen in later chapters. According to Pervo, these differences in perspective suggest the use of a particular source, a gentile-mission source, which favors the seven instead of the twelve, holds to a spiritual connection with Jerusalem, and promotes Peter. According to Pervo, the source likely originated in a community centered in Antioch. In his second essay, "What Athens Has in Common with Jerusalem: The Speeches in Acts as Historical Record," Pervo demonstrates that the speeches in Acts are not likely historical. Rather than declaim facts to persons signaled within the text, the speeches help to shape the plot and are directed to the text's readers/hearers, to its external audience. Among the speeches

Pervo reviews in Acts are Paul's accounts of his conversion. Paul makes three speeches of this experience and all three differ.

By means of a comparison with Paul's views on circumcision in his extant letters and Luke's treatment of the account of Paul's circumcision of Timothy in Acts 16:1–5, my own contribution argues against the historical reliability of Luke's account. Throughout this essay, "Circumcision as a means of testing the historicity of Acts 16:1–5," I observe that, unlike Luke's portrayal of Paul's actions, in his extant letters Paul consistently argues against the necessity of circumcision and does not buckle to the wishes of observant Jews. It is suggested that the reason why Luke promoted a Paul who accommodates Jews was to challenge Marcion's rejection of Judaism and its scriptures.

In his paper "And so We Left Troy/Troas' Pseudo-Luke's Imitation of the 'We-Voyages' in Homer's *Odyssey*," Dennis MacDonald finds extensive parallels between Paul's voyages in Acts and the first leg of Odysseus' *nostoi* (the returns). MacDonald demonstrates how viewing Homer's *Odyssey* as a source for the "we-voyages" in Acts helps resolve the change in narration to the first-person plural. Homer's narrator often switches between a first-person singular or plural form and a third-person singular. According to MacDonald, Luke both borrowed from and transformed his Homeric source. MacDonald demonstrates how tales of adventures at sea were the stock-in-trade of ancient literature. He concludes his essay with the provocative idea that a fictive Luke is signaled as Acts' author, a name that would have cued the ancient readers/hearers that Acts tells its story of Christian origins from a Pauline perspective.

Finally, in his essay "Historical issues in Acts 28:11–31," Gerd Lüdemann writes that Luke bases this narrative on theological presuppositions and is historically inaccurate on many points. Since Luke claims to narrate history, Acts should be held to the same level of accuracy with regard to its claims as other similar ancient writings. In general, Luke's account is biased in favor of the Roman military. As for examples of this tendency, Lüdemann mentions that without warrant Acts exonerates Rome from any responsibility for the deaths of Jesus and Paul. With his careful review and critique of the final passage in Acts, Lüdemann concludes that Luke's agenda is to advise Rome to maintain a hands-off policy toward Christianity.

—Nina E. Livesey

Religious Practices of Early Christian Converts According to Acts 2:41–47

Dennis E. Smith

Joseph Tyson has argued that Acts is primarily a myth of origins about the first-century church.¹ An excellent example of that myth at work is found in the summary statements in the early chapters of Acts (2:41–47, 4:32–35, 5:12–16). Most scholars agree that Luke's summary statements are composed by the author, "Luke," himself.² Barrett, for example, provides a long list of vocabulary terms from 2:41–47 that are characteristic of Luke and thus point to Luke as the originator of the text.³ Nevertheless, it is appropriate to ask whether in constructing these statements Luke used historically valid data. That will be my focus in this study. I will concentrate on just one of the summary statements, 2:41–47. I consider this the most important of the set—it is the most comprehensive, it is the first in the series, and the others repeat the same themes that are found here.

The first point to be considered is the context in which this summary statement is found in Luke's narrative. The apostles have waited in Jerusalem for "power from above" as instructed by the resurrected Jesus before his ascension (Acts 1:4; see also Luke 24:49). On the day of Pentecost that power comes in the form of a miraculous group manifestation of "diverse tongues" (Acts 2:3). This is followed by a rousing sermon by Peter to which 3000 respond (Acts 2:14–41). Acts 2:41–47 summarizes the nature of the community that is immediately formed by the response to Peter's sermon. In Luke's narrative this is the first such community formed by the apostolic preaching. Prior to this, there had been a group of Jesus followers led by the apostles and members of the family of Jesus, including his mother, who met in an "upstairs room" in a residence somewhere in Jerusalem (Acts 1:12–14).

Previous Acts Seminar reports have raised doubts about much of the story of the Jerusalem church presented in Acts. The following conclusions, as affirmed by the votes of the fellows, are especially pertinent:

1. "Acts: A Myth of Christian Origins" was presented at the October 2006 meeting of the Acts Seminar. It has been excerpted for inclusion in the forthcoming book, *Acts and Christian Beginnings*.

2. See, for example, Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 268; Johnson, *Acts*, 61.

3. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.161.

- a) The “church” did not begin in Jerusalem.
- b) Peter did not preach the sermon on Pentecost as recorded in Acts.
- c) There was no miraculous beginning of the church on Pentecost.⁴

In sum, Acts has not proved to be a reliable resource for the origins and makeup of an early Christian community in Jerusalem.

Barrett, however, has taken a novel approach to this text. While he argues that Luke has taken features from the church of his day and retrojected them back to the 30's in Jerusalem, he also concludes that Luke must have gotten it mostly right. In regard to 2:42, Barrett states:

In this verse Luke gives an idealized picture of the earliest church—idealized but not for that reason necessarily misleading. That it is not misleading appears at once if negatives are inserted: they ignored the teaching of the apostles, neglected the fellowship, never met to take a meal together, and did not say their prayers.⁵

What lies behind Barrett's argument is a presupposition that is found in most interpreters of this material. While most interpreters would assume that what Luke was profiling here was a picture of the church as he knew it, it also happens to be a profile of the church *as the modern interpreter assumes it to have been in both in the first and second centuries*. That is to say, too often a specific structure and form of worship that became the norm in later Christian history is assumed by the modern interpreter to have been true from the earliest period.

What is especially striking about Barrett's argument here is what he assumes to be the norm, namely a structure in which apostolic teaching was a well-established authoritative resource for the life and worship of the community from the very beginning. In fact, this was clearly not the case, neither in the earliest period⁶ nor in the time when Acts was written. In fact, as Tyson has argued, Acts was written for the purpose of defending a specific tradition of apostolic authority in a context in Luke's day in which there was significant controversy on that very issue.⁷

On the other hand, Barrett's proposal that Luke was drawing on characteristics of the church of his own day in constructing this idealization of the early church makes sense. It correlates with Tyson's conclusion that Acts is a historical source for the early second century church rather than for the early first century church. In order to probe Acts for information about the early second century, then, we need to take a closer look at the profile of the Christian community presented in 2:41–47.

4. See especially the results of votes recorded in *Forum* 3,1 (spring 2000) 207–11 and the papers they reference.

5. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.166.

6. See, for example, Paul's arguments with the Jerusalem church and with Peter in Antioch, as well as with other early Christian missionaries in Galatia as recounted in Galatians, especially 2:1–14.

7. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*.

Acts 2:41–47

⁴¹Then everyone who was convinced by Peter's speech submitted to the purifying bath of initiation. On that day about 3000 were added to the rolls of the community. ⁴²These new members were diligent in following the by-laws instituted by their recognized leaders, the apostles, namely to be loyal to the community, to participate in all of its communal meals, and to practice faithfully the prescribed communal prayers. ⁴³A sense of awe pervaded the community as deeds of supernatural power were performed in their midst under the authority of the apostles. ⁴⁴All of these believers were united in one community in which they shared all their goods, ⁴⁵even to the point that goods and properties were sold and the proceeds given to members in need. ⁴⁶Their time was spent in diligent devotion to the rites in the temple and to the communal meals in their homes, meals that were characterized by festive joy and equal sharing with all.⁸ ⁴⁷They exemplified a communal life devoted to the praise of God and, as a result, were well regarded by all outsiders. On a daily basis newcomers who were led by the Lord to join them were added to their rolls. (Author's translation)

In my analysis of this text, I am struck by how well Luke's idealization of the early Christian community fits the model of a Greco-Roman association. Associations in the Greco-Roman world were groups of individuals united by a variety of common features (such as a common occupation, ethnic heritage, or devotion to a common patron deity) who met together regularly for communal meals. At those meals they practiced ritual acts that affirmed their communal identity. They kept membership rolls and wrote by-laws that defined the rituals to be followed, the definition and responsibilities of their leaders, and the proper behavior that was to be enforced at their gatherings. They kept a community treasury funded by the dues of the members that was used to provide for the needs of the community, primarily the meals and, quite often, for the funeral rites, including special feasts, for their members. Our primary evidence for the associations is derived from the inscriptions that recorded their by-laws.⁹

The statutes of the Zeus Hypsistos association provide a succinct collection of useful comparative data:

The law which those of the association of Zeus the highest made in common, that it should be authoritative. / ⁵Acting in accordance with its provisions, they

8. The Greek, *en aphelotēti kardias*, is obscure. Here, I have adopted the translation "with generous heart" suggested by Conzelmann (*Acts*, 24) and Johnson (*Acts*, 59) versus "simplicity of heart," for which see Bauer/Danker (*Greek-English Lexicon*, 155), Barrett (*Acts*, 1.171), Fitzmyer (*Acts*, 272), and Pervo (*Acts*, 88).

9. For a definitive comparative analysis of associations and Jewish and Christian groups, see Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*; see especially his review of recent scholarship on the relation of associations and early Christian social formation on pp. 178–82. I also provide comparative data in my book, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, esp. pp. 87–131. A new standard collection of association texts is now in preparation, the first volume of which is Kloppenborg and Ascough, *Greco-Roman Associations*.

first chose as their / president Petesouchos the son of Teepheenis, a man of parts, worthy of the place and of the company, / for a year from the month and day aforesaid, / that he should make for all the contributors one banquet a month in the sanctuary of Zeus, / at which they should in a common room pouring libations, pray, and perform the other customary rites / ¹⁰on behalf of the god and lord, the king. All are to obey the president / and his servant in matters pertaining to the corporation, and they shall be present at / all command occasions to be prescribed for them and at meetings and assemblies and outings. / It shall not be permissible for any one of them to . . . make factions or to leave the brotherhood of the president for another, / ¹⁵or for men to enter into one another's pedigrees at the banquet or / to abuse one another at the banquet or to chatter or to indict or accuse another or to resign / for the course of the year or again to bring the drinkings to nought.¹⁰

Both the Acts community and the Zeus Hypsistos association were governed by rules that defined their community life together, a community life that centered on the communal meal. The rules of the Acts community are defined by the "teachings (*didache*) of the apostles" and those of the Zeus Hypsistos association by its statutes (*nomos*, literally "law"). The communal meal in Acts is defined as "breaking of bread" (2:42, 46). In the statutes of the Zeus Hypsistos association the communal meal is called a *posis* and a *symposion*, both of which can be translated "drinking party" or simply "banquet." Whereas the Acts community practiced some of its rituals at the temple (*hieron*) and its communal meals in the dining room of a house (*kat' oikon*, 2:46), the Zeus Hypsistos association met "in a common dining room" (*en andrōn koinō*) located "in the sanctuary (*hieron*) of Zeus."

At their common meals, the Acts community practiced faithfully the communal prayers. In context, the term "prayers" appears to refer to a prescribed liturgy, much like the prescribed prayers in the early 2nd century Christian work *Didache*. Similarly at the banquet meetings of the Zeus Hypsistos association, they were to "pour libations, pray, and perform the other customary rites (*ta nomizomena*)." In Plato's *Symposium*, the diners also performed "customary rites" (*ta nomizomena*) at the banquet (176A).¹¹ While it is not clear whether the "customary rites" of Plato and the Zeus Hypsistos association had the same content, it is clear that religious rituals appropriate to the group gathered for the meal were customarily practiced. For example, another 2nd century association, the *Iobacchoi*, also included "customary rites" (*tas ethimous litourgias*, lines 111–12) in their list of activities at the banquet.¹² In Acts 2:42, Luke notes the

10. Text and translation from Roberts, Skeet, and Nock, "The Gild of Zeus Hypsistos," 40–42; translation reprinted in Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 106. The inscription was found in Egypt and is dated 1st century ce.

11. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 108.

12. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 116, 130; see also Kloppenborg and Ascough, *Greco-Roman Associations*, 241–57.

presence of “customary” prayers and defines the content as being drawn from an undefined “teaching of the apostles.”

In Luke’s idealization, the Acts community is “devoted” to the *koinonia* or the “fellowship/community” of the apostles (2:42). This designation echoes a similar phrase in the by-laws of another association, the association of *orgeones* (third century BCE) who referred to their community as a “fellowship (*koinonia*) of sacrifices,” a term which referenced the importance of the sacrificial rituals set forth in their by-laws.¹³ Acts also emphasizes the loyalty of the members to the community. Similarly, in the statutes of the Zeus Hypsistos association, loyalty to the community is prescribed. They are to “obey the president and his servant in all matters pertaining to the corporation (*koinon*).” This obedience includes “to be present at all meetings, and assemblies (*synagogai*), and outings.” They are also forbidden “to leave the brotherhood for another.” Similarly, another second-century association, the *Iobacchoi*, expressed the idea of loyalty to their community by proclaiming, “now we are first of all the *Bakcheia*,” indicating that, though there were other such associations, their loyalty was to this one.

In addition to “prayers,” the Acts community is said to have witnessed “deeds of supernatural power” in their midst. To be sure, “miraculous deeds” as an aspect of early Christian worship is an ambiguous concept. In the narrative of Acts this concept is collapsed into miracle stories that are easily defined as literary constructs (see esp. 3:1–10, 5:12–16, 8:4–24). Since in Luke’s story “miracles” tend to be a literary marker of apostleship, one cannot derive from his narrative any clear information about “deeds of supernatural power” as an expression of actual worship in his day. In an earlier period Paul also referred to “the doing of powerful deeds” when he reminded the Galatian Christians of the manifestation of the spirit in their midst (Gal 3:5). The type of activity Paul refers to here may be equivalent to the spiritual manifestations he discusses in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 in which a variety of “spiritual gifts” are listed. While much of what Paul describes remains obscure to us (see, for example, the list at 12:28), nevertheless we know they represented what was interpreted to be some sort of manifestation of spiritual power. Furthermore, we know that Paul was not always pleased at how such spiritual power was manifested in the community (1 Corinthians 12–14).

A possible parallel to such forms of worship activity can be found in the statutes of the *Iobacchoi*, an Athenian association of the second century CE that was devoted to Bacchus (or Dionysus), the god of wine.¹⁴ This association included an elaborate list of ritual activities at its communal banquets, including a *theologia*, a “theological discourse” or “sermon,” delivered by the priest,

13. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 91; see also Kloppenborg and Ascough, *Greco-Roman Associations*, 80–85.

14. Translation in Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 129–31; see also Kloppenborg and Ascough, *Greco-Roman Associations*, 241–48.

perhaps related phenomenologically to “prophecy” as a worship expression in the Corinthian community of Paul (see 1 Cor 13:2, 14:24–25). The *Iobacchoi* also included a form of ritual drama in their worship in which members would take the roles of mythological characters and deities (“*boukolikos*, Dionysos, Kore, Palaimon, Aphrodite, and Proteurythmos,” lines 124–25), roles that are probably related to the earlier section in which each member is to “speak and act their allotted parts under the direction of the priest or the archibakchos” (line 66). The list of roles is made up of mythological figures except for the *boukolikos*, or “cowherd,” a figure whose role must have been related to the “bucolic” setting in which the Dionysus myth was often located. Ritual acts connected with Dionysus often included dancing, especially forms of ecstatic dancing, represented in mythology in the aspect of the maenad, the female worshipper of Dionysus characteristically portrayed in Greek art as an ecstatic dancer. It is likely that the ritual drama of the *Iobacchoi* included a pantomimic dance from the Bacchic tradition.¹⁵ In contrast, we do not know how the “spiritual gifts” were manifest in Paul’s Corinthian community, but they would surely have represented a form of ecstatic expression that was at home in their world and perhaps not far removed from the *Iobacchoi* form of worship.

The communal meals of the Acts community were characterized by “festive joy and equal sharing with all” (*en agalliasē kai aphelotēti kardias*, literally “with joyousness and generosity of heart,” 2:46). These are typical categories of the Greco-Roman banquet. “Festive joy” was often expressed in Greco-Roman sources with the term *euphrosyne*, a term that was so commonly expressive of the banquet that it could be used to designate the entire event.¹⁶ Similarly, “equal sharing” at a banquet was frequently discussed in Greco-Roman philosophical literature as a necessary component of the well-ordered banquet.¹⁷

In the second century CE in the region of Panamara, Asia Minor, the sanctuary of Zeus Panamaros set up a series of inscriptions offering invitations to their banquets. Here is one such example:

The Master (the priest) to the Rhodians. / Since the god invites all people to the feast and provides a / table shared in common and offering equal privilege to those who / come from whatever place they may come . . . nevertheless he regards / ⁵your city to be worthy of special honor because of your excellent reputation, O Rhodians, and / because there exists between our cities a kinship to one another / and a commonality of sacred rites—I invite you to the (house of) the god and / summon also the sojourners in your city to share in the festiv-

15. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 117–19.

16. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 80–81; see also 12, 28, 84–85.

17. See the category of “social equality,” which I have defined as one of the primary values of the ancient banquet, in Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 11–12, 54–55. On this basis Plutarch developed criteria for how a banquet conversation was to be conducted: “Indeed, just as the wine must be common to all, so too the conversation must be one in which all will share” (*Table Talk*, 614E).

ity which the god provides, / just as do the Rhodians who live with us here in Caria. You will be recipients of / ¹⁰great honor if you should give my letter / a favorable reception.¹⁸

Here it is the deity who authorizes the “table shared in common and offering equal privilege” (line 3) and “provides” the “festivity” (*euphrosynēs*, line 8) that characterizes the banquet. The same banquet values are invoked in Acts 2:46. Similarly, the second-century association of Diana and Antinous set forth rules of proper behavior at the banquet so that the community could “banquet in peace and good cheer” (*ut quieti et hilares . . . epulemur*).¹⁹ In all of these references the idea is that the properly conducted banquet would be characterized by “festive joy.”

Associations regularly had officers who oversaw the meals much like a *symposiarch* or “head of the symposium” might oversee a banquet, setting the rules for the wine mixture and for the activities during the symposium. In the Zeus Hypsistos association, the president, along with his servant, was in charge of setting up the prescribed banquets and administering the rules. Just as the Zeus Hypsistos association referred to its gathering as “the brotherhood of the president,” so the Acts community, according to Luke, was constituted as “the *koinonia* of the apostles.” But unlike the Zeus Hypsistos association, the apostles do not seem to have presided at the gatherings profiled in the Acts. The most likely parallel to the function of the apostles in Luke’s idealized view is that of the founding patron of the association. The association of *orgeones*, for example, referred to themselves as “the corporation (*koinon*) of Kalliphanes and of the Hero Echelos.” The reference to Kalliphanes appears to refer to a founding officer whose influence is still being felt in the community.²⁰ The reference to the apostles in Acts 2:42 functions in much the same way.

Being well-regarded by outsiders was a concern for associations in the Roman period as well as in Acts 2:47. The association of Diana and Antinous, for example, included in its statutes the law passed by the Roman senate regarding associations:

Clause from the Decree of the Senate of the Roman People. These are permitted to assemble, convene, and maintain a society: those who desire to make monthly contributions for funerals may assemble in such a society, but they may not assemble in the name of such society except once a month for the sake of making contributions to provide burial for the dead.²¹

18. The text is from Hatzfeld, “Inscriptions de Panamara,” 73–74, no. 11. The translation is mine. See also Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 81–83.

19. Translation in Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 126–28.

20. Translation in Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 91.

21. Translation in Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 126–28.

After quoting the law, the statutes began to specify the activities of the association in such a form that it would be clear to all that they complied with the law.

In the early second century CE, Christians in Bithynia in Asia Minor were accused of unnamed crimes and brought before Pliny, the Roman governor. Pliny wrote to Emperor Trajan about his problems identifying the specific crimes of the Christians. He noted that he had enforced the Imperial decree to forbid "political associations," which may be a reference to the same law quoted above in the statutes of the association of Diana and Antinous. He also noted that Christians brought before him assured him that, when they assembled, they partook of food "of an ordinary and innocent kind," which many scholars interpret to mean that already in the time of Pliny Christians were being accused of cannibalism and other forms of forbidden secret rituals. Pliny finally concluded that Christians had to be punished unless they recanted and worshipped the image of the emperor, since their very identity as Christians made them suspicious as enemies of the state.²²

In what appears to be an implicit rebuttal to Roman rulers like Pliny, Acts makes a point of presenting Christianity as a harmless and lawful group. While Acts does not seem to have been written at a time of specific persecution, nevertheless it expresses a self-consciousness that Christians could easily be identified as an unlawful and dangerous organization.

The emphasis on sharing all possessions "in common" is a distinctive feature in Luke's idealization of the Acts community (2:44–45; see also 4:32–35). It draws on a widespread theme of his day which invoked a "utopian" model. It is a value that is embedded in Greek culture in general, as seen in an oft-repeated proverb in Greek literature: "friends share all in common" (*koina ta philōn*; see Plato, *Laws* 5.739 BC; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 9.8; Philo, *Abraham* 235).²³ It is also expressed in the form of a foundation myth for the ideal community; for example, Plato refers to the early years of Athens as a time when "none of its members possessed any private property, but they regarded all they had as the common property of all" (*Critias* 110C–D).²⁴ The theme of a "golden age" is emphasized as well by Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 1.88–111)²⁵ and Virgil (as in *Eclogue* 4.4–6).²⁶ Luke draws on this theme to paint the earliest community in an idealized form and thereby as a model for future generations to emulate.²⁷

This concept serves Luke's larger theme in regard to the proper distribution of wealth in the community for the care of the poor. What we should also notice,

22. Pliny, *Letters*, 10.96.

23. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.168–69.

24. Quoted in Johnson, *Acts*, 62.

25. Johnson, *Acts*, 62.

26. Pervo, *Profit with Delight*, 69.

27. Pervo notes that Acts shares with *1 Clement* the distinction of being the first Christian writing to propose the primitive church as a model worthy of emulation (*Dating Acts*, 447 n. 295; see also Pervo, *Acts*, 90–92).

however, is the extent to which Luke's "myth of the golden age" in this case mirrors events and concerns in the church of his day. Pervo points out the parallels between Acts, *Didache*, and *Barnabas* on this theme:²⁸

"... no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common." (Acts 2:42)

"You shall share all things with your sister or brother and you shall not say that anything is a private possession." (*Didache* 4.8)

"You shall share all things with your neighbor and you shall not say that anything is a private possession." (*Barnabas* 19.8)

Each document addresses the issue in a form true to its genre: *Didache* and *Barnabas* in the form of exhortation, Acts in the form of an idealization of the primitive community. Interestingly, the same theme is also attested by another second-century source, the satirist Lucian, a pagan observer who describes Christians as being generous to the point of gullibility:

Therefore they [Christians] despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property, receiving such doctrines traditionally without any definite evidence. So if any charlatan and trickster, able to profit by occasions, comes among them, he quickly acquires sudden wealth by imposing upon simple folk (*Peregrinus* 13).

Clearly the issue of care for the weaker members of the community was a hot topic in the second century, the period when Acts was written according to both Pervo and Tyson.²⁹

In the real world, associations had to enforce their rules, even to the point of ejecting members who failed to follow the by-laws. The *Iobacchoi* even appointed "orderly officers" to regulate behavior and "bouncers" to eject those who failed to comply.³⁰ In the idealized world of Acts, however, no enforcement of by-laws was required—the community followed all rules perfectly; no "bouncers" were needed. As a result of their diligent obedience to the by-laws and the resulting lack of any discord in their ranks, they experienced the festive joy that was the reward for a faithful community as well as the high regard of the outside world.

My conclusion is that Luke used the structure of the Greco-Roman association as the model for his idealization of the early Christian community. But why use this model? I would argue that he used the association model for two reasons: 1) it is an effective model rhetorically, because it would be well-known

28. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 307.

29. Pervo, *Dating Acts*; Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*.

30. See Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 131, lines 136–45.

to his audience,³¹ and 2) it represents the form and self-conscious social identity of Luke's own community.³²

Here are some conclusions one can draw about the church of Luke's day based on his idealized profile in Acts 2:41–47:

- a) Christian communities met in homes and conducted their worship at the dinner table.³³
- b) The "teaching" (*didache*) of apostolic tradition functioned to provide by-laws for the organization and religious activities of the community.
- c) A community treasury was kept for the purpose of facilitating the activities of the community.
- d) Among the activities funded by the community treasury was a programmatic care for the poor.
- e) The community was in the process of developing its "by-laws" regarding the patronage responsibilities of the patron class in its midst, as indicated by Luke's concern to provide guidelines for almsgiving in both Luke and Acts.

Interestingly, this summary has several parallels with recent theories about the social forms of Pauline communities, which are the earliest definable Christian communities accessible for our study. Among those parallels are the following:

- a) The private home was the context in which early Christian formation took place (see, for example, the house church references in Rom 16:5, 1 Cor 16:19, Philemon 2).
- b) The dining room, as the most commonly used room in a Greek or Roman house for entertaining guests, was the most likely location for the house church meetings.
- c) Their meetings took place at the dinner table, in the context of a formal meal or banquet. Note that meals were the locus for community gatherings, which must have included worship at Antioch (Gal 2:11–14), and

31. I have argued elsewhere that Luke was exceptionally well-versed in literary traditions connected with the symposium, or banquet, and used them liberally in the Gospel of Luke ("Table Fellowship").

32. See the conclusion of Harland: "Despite their peculiarities, both synagogues and congregations could be viewed by contemporaries as associations in the usual sense, and there are clear indications that these groups could understand themselves as such" (*Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 211).

33. Scholars have often assumed that a separation of "eucharist" from "fellowship meal" took place even, some would argue, as early as 1 Corinthians. More recent research, however, particularly a series of studies by Andrew McGowan, has emphasized that no standard form of "eucharist" developed until as late as the fourth century. Indeed, the *Didache* identifies the meal it calls *eucharistia* as a full meal (10.1). Consequently, the evidence supports the idea that the dinner table continued to function as the most likely locus for early Christian worship as long as the church met in homes. See further on this: McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, and "Food, Ritual, and Power."

probably by implication in the Galatian community itself, at Corinth (1 Cor 11:17–34), and at Rome (Rom 14:1–4, 13–15).

- d) Community organization, self-identity, and activities of the group developed out of the structure of the ancient banquet.³⁴
- e) The banquet was a model for social formation in the Greco-Roman world and was adopted as such by associations and by early Christians.³⁵

Since this profile of the church in Paul's day (40–50 CE), shares features with the profile of the church in Luke's day (ca. 110–120 CE), as seen in Luke's idealization in Acts, I find to my surprise that I am much closer to Barrett than I had expected to be. Please note that I do *not* believe Luke had any historical resource to draw on for his profile of earliest Christianity *except the community of his own day*. Nevertheless, portions of Luke's profile can be seen to represent features of early Christian communities that were still present in his own day. In that sense, Luke's profile serendipitously provides a partial picture of an early Christian community.

34. This is the central thesis of *From Symposium to Eucharist*; see esp. chapter 7, "The Banquet in the Churches of Paul."

35. Ascough, "The Thessalonian Christian Community"; Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*; Taussig, *In the Beginning was the Meal*, 87–100.

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Is There a There There?

Looking for Antioch in the Former Antioch Source

Richard I. Pervo

A Review of Pertinent Scholarship; Presuppositions.¹

Acts 1–7 is the only continuous source about Christian origins (in the narrowest sense) that has enjoyed any credibility in scholarly circles.² The first assignment I received from Dennis Smith when invited to join the Acts Seminar in 1999 was to examine this material for the purpose of identifying reliable historical data. The result did not precipitate a nationwide shortage of red ink.³ The quest for historically reliable data necessarily requires also the quest for *historical traditions*, a task that involves the somewhat tired disciplines of source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism.⁴

A century ago Adolf von Harnack proposed that the first half of Acts was based upon two documents, a “Jerusalem” and an “Antioch” (or “Antiochene”) source.⁵ The former was so labeled because it depicted events that took place in Jerusalem, whereas the latter title was more thoughtful, since it indicated that various materials derived from that Christian community’s own story of its origins. No such claims could be made for the hypothetical Jerusalem source, which soon fell by the wayside. A major reason for its desuetude is that the proposed source contained precious little data about the community at Jerusalem.⁶

1. This is a revised expansion of a paper submitted for the fall 2006 Acts Seminar but not considered at the time. The section “From the Source to the Community” is new.

2. Possible rivals include some of the material in the Pseudo-Clementines and the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, both of which exhibit dependence upon Acts.

3. That seminar paper of 4 March 2000 was published as Pervo, “My Happy Home.”

4. “Historical traditions” is a difficult phrase, since it includes traditions that may appear to contain historical fact, but do not, as well as material that is historically accurate but was not transmitted for that reason.

5. The former consisted of two pieces, combined by the author. For a concise modern summary of Harnack’s theories and their motivation, see Myllykoski, “Being There: The Function of the Supernatural in Acts 1–12.”

6. Attempts to reconstruct a presumed Aramaic linguistic substratum collapsed in the face of 20th century discoveries, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, that revealed that 1 CE Aramaic differed from scholarly hypotheses.

Insofar as one can gather, it was oriented toward the *origins of the universal, in particular, the gentile, mission*. Acts 1–7 sets the key in which much of the work is written: (unjustified) persecution does not squelch the movement but serves as the mechanism of its proliferation.

The Antiochene Source enjoyed a greater vitality. Its death knell was apparently sounded by one of its staunchest former proponents, Martin Hengel, who late in his career conceded that the concept was not viable, because the data in Acts report so little *about* that community.⁷ Hengel did not conclude that everything assigned by him or others to the Antiochene Source was simply a matter of Lucan concoction. Data remain. The object of this study is to offer an account for some of these data. Readers should be aware of the following presuppositions (and correct for their biases, implicit and explicit):

1. Appeals to “traditions” as explanations for discrete items are suspect. One needs to explain such “traditions,” how they were preserved and transmitted and made available to the author of Acts. Known traditions, such as the Bible (LXX), Mark, Luke, and the Pauline corpus, are preferred to unknown (i.e., unwritten and not otherwise attested) traditions. It is possible that “Luke” (a less than perfectly convenient designation for the anonymous author of the third gospel and Acts) may have heard stories, perhaps in his youth, about Paul or Peter, etc., but hypotheses about such sources require scrupulous examination.
2. Proposals about hypothetical sources of Acts require attention to form and function. One needs to ask *why* this material was preserved and how the proposed form that it took relates to this function. On the grounds that the putative source reported the origins of a particular local community, both the Jerusalem and Antioch sources failed to convince. Early Christians did not incorporate data into their texts as time capsules for subsequent historians to examine.

Note: This conclusion places limits upon the value of this hypothetical source as data about the early community of Jesus-followers in Antioch.

Thesis

The major detectable “Christian” written source for Acts 1–15, specifically 2–14 (+) was an account of the origins of the mission to Greek-speaking gentiles, the conversion of whom did not require male circumcision and adherence to Torah (hereafter “the gentile mission”). Attempted isolation of a source is not tantamount to the isolation of historical data. Such a hypothetical source is material for historians, but is no more and no less historically “accurate” than are Mark

7. Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, 19. Local ecclesial concerns are manifest in such later works as the *Acts of Barnabas* (Cyprus) and the *Acts of Titus* (Crete), as well as the merger of the stories about Peter and Paul in later Roman productions.

and Q, for example. This text was prepared at Antioch probably in the last quarter of the first century. Its purpose was to demonstrate, against opponents of the gentile mission, that the roots of this mission were in Jerusalem and that it was authorized by divine sanctions. This is one “front,” a refutation of several “Jewish-Christian” positions, including acceptance of gentiles who did not adhere to Torah but required ethnic Jews to remain observant, acceptance of gentile converts so long as they became observant, and, perhaps, some followers of Jesus who had minimal interest in converting gentiles. From the perspective of Galatians 2, which provides the framework for the reconstruction,⁸ this argument addresses James and those to his “right.”⁹ Another issue was Paul, who had quarreled with Antioch and become an independent missionary. The hypothetical source was not vigorously anti-Pauline, but it did seek to remind its audience that Paul had begun his work as Barnabas’ subordinate and that the posture of Barnabas (and other leaders of the community?) was reasonable and legitimate. Barnabas gained the support of Peter.

Excursus: The Figure of Peter

In the canonical gospel tradition, Peter is the leader of Jesus’ followers. He was the first called (Mark 1:16–20¹⁰), his name stands first in lists of the Twelve (Mark 3:16), and he is reported as the first to have seen the risen one (1 Cor 15:5; Luke 24:34).¹¹ From Galatians 1–2 it is apparent that, although Peter was *the* leader from whom Paul expected to find a sympathetic reception, he was, with James and John, but one of three “pillars”¹² at Jerusalem.

In Acts, Peter is the first and unchallenged leader of the Jerusalem community, but by chapter 15 James the brother of Jesus predominates, and in chapter 21 he is the sole leader. This is a surprise from the perspective of Mark, which is hostile to the family of Jesus (3:20–35). Galatians 2 shows that Peter had come to have less power in Jerusalem than did James. To present the results in two succinct and oversimplified sentences: James prevailed over Peter in Jerusalem, and Peter eventually left. Peter bested Paul in a conflict at Antioch, and Paul left.¹³

8. Galatians is not an “objective historical account” and cannot be taken as such, but it is the only source for analysis of the conflicts addressed by the gentile mission source. One of the important contributions of Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, is emphasis upon the “egocentric” character of Galatians 1–2, esp. 2:1–10. Paul writes as if he and the “pillars” had made a personal contract when, in fact, the agreement was between the respective communities of Jerusalem and Antioch. Because of his separation from Antioch, Paul had to personalize the language.

9. Painter, *Just James: the Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition*, 73–78, identifies, largely on the basis of inferences from the epistles, no fewer than six different factions representing different views about the relation of Torah to mission.

10. But see John 1:40.

11. This appearance is not narrated in the New Testament.

12. Note that the Synoptics also indicate the existence of a smaller group: Peter, James, and John: Mark 1:16–20 (+ Andrew); 5:37; 9:2; 13:3 (+ Andrew); 14:33. These are important moments: call of the first disciples, a resurrection, the transfiguration, the address on the last things, and Gethsemane. Note also the role of James and John in Mark 10:35–40.

13. For a sketch of this history, see Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 46–56.

The prominence of Peter is patent in the gospel tradition, where, with one exception, he is always identified by the Greek form of his nickname, "Rock."¹⁴ Behind this portrait stands the picture of Peter propagated at Antioch. This is also the Peter of Galatians, a leading follower of Jesus who was open to gentiles. At Antioch he was later celebrated as the agent and symbol of ecclesial comprehension,¹⁵ a role that, through his eventual association with the imperial capital, he has never relinquished. Peter did not get that position by playing pope. Through the adoption (or cooption) of that Antiochene claim by the author of Matthew, Peter became the mediating figure who held together a community of Jews and gentiles, honoring the Israelite past while open to a gentile future.

Database¹⁶

Although concrete data (e.g., proper names and places) do not necessarily derive from tradition, they require attention. Among these data are lists and catalogues. Luke uses lists of names to denote important transitions in the narrative: (1) 1:13–14; (2) 6:5; and (3) 13:1.¹⁷ To this is added (4) the catalogue of nations, 2:8–11. Point (1) could have been known at Antioch, but it is otherwise attested and excluded from this survey.¹⁸

A second category includes relevant stories and narratives, that is, material that might arguably have a place in the hypothetical source: (5) "Pentecost," 2:1–13; (6) "the donation of Barnabas," 4:36–37; (7) the conflict between groups of widows and the selection of the Seven, 6:1–6; (8) the mission and martyrdom of Stephen, 6:8–7:60 (–7:1–53/54); (8a) the persecution and dispersion of the Seven, 8:1b, 4; (9) the mission of Philip, chapter 8 (in part); (10) the conversion of Cornelius, chapter 10; (10a) Peter's vision, 10:10–16; (11) the further mission of "the Hellenists," 11:19–26; (12) the house of Mary, refuge of Peter, 12:12–17; (13) the "first missionary journey," chapters 13–14 (in part); and (14) the "Apostolic Decree," 15:19–21. In accordance with the consensus of critical scholarship, the speeches (e.g., 2:14–41) and the summaries (e.g., 2:42–47) are assigned to the author.

This is not a "solid" database, the sort of thing one could print out and utilize for close analysis. The scope is roughly the first half of Acts. That provides the map on which the numbered items mark spots where it seems worthwhile to dig for treasure. Few attempts will be made to isolate the actual wording of the source from its capacious environs. Luke, as ancients were expected to do,

14. The exception is John 1:42, which immediately translates the Aramaic term *cephas*, not used again. Paul uses the Aramaic "Cephas" eight times, while "Peter" occurs 168 times (including the openings of 1–2 Peter). Ten of these are in Paul.

15. See Perkins, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church*, 9–14 *et passim*.

16. See the Appendix. Exegetical argument about these passages can be found in Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*. Dunn, *Beginning in Jerusalem*, 241–321, makes a number of valuable observations, although his perspective is not critical.

17. The final list (20:4) is beyond the scope of this inquiry.

18. Space requirements prevent the discussion of reasons for excluding other passages.

rewrites his sources in his own style.¹⁹ Most of the earthen vessels holding the treasure are quite sturdy.

The following exploration deploys both induction and deduction. The major deductive principle is that *material not in conformity with Luke's known proclivities, interests, and program demands close scrutiny*. The operative question is, "Why would Luke invent something so counter-productive?" (The question presumes that Luke did invent, as it were, a number of episodes. It is not foolproof, *per se*.) When against the grain narratives and concrete data coincide, as in (2), (7), and (8), the probability that this material comes from a source is strong. Induction yields some working hypotheses. Two of these are literary: the proposed source did not describe missionary journeys in elaborate detail and, with one possible exception (10), it apparently did not recount individual conversions or miracle stories. The chief difficulty is that criteria derived by these means dictate the contents of the source: one applies the criteria and defines the source through conformity. Few sources exhibit perfect consistency. *The object is to identify material likely to have been in the hypothetical source rather than to reconstruct it in full.*

An initial impression is that personalities are diverse. Peter is the only one of the Twelve about whom anything specific is said.²⁰ In addition are the Antiochene "prophets and teachers" named in (3), including Barnabas (6), the widows, the Seven (7–9), other "Hellenists" (11), and Mary, the mother of John Mark (12). Mark will become part of the missionary team (13:5–13). These threads do not make a coherent piece of cloth. Despite 6:1–7, the narrator does not clarify the relation between the Twelve and the Seven. For the rest, all roads lead to . . . Antioch. The Seven do not fit Luke's picture of early idyllic harmony under the guidance of the apostolic college. Since most of the cast, apart from the Seven and together with Paul, end up at Antioch, one must either explain why Luke picked that place or suspect association with a source. Because Antioch deviates from the Lucan path, which favors Jerusalem as the source of all missions, as with points (3) and (13), the latter answer is preferred. These observations establish the general perspective. Examination of the details follows.

Point (6) identifies Barnabas as a Cypriote, that is, presumably a Greek-speaking Jew, who enjoyed the favor of the Twelve. He was evidently resident in Jerusalem, where he liquidated some property and donated the proceeds to the community. This is the only positive example of such an award in Acts.²¹ It stands in tension with the summaries (e.g., 2:42–47 and the immediately antecedent 4:32–35), which presume that *everyone* who had property did the same.

19. Evidence of the use of Mark in Acts, examples of which are discussed in Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 35–49, shows that Luke was willing to extract snippets from a relatively large source or passage. This speaks against an objection that many of the items in the database are too small to be extracts from a source.

20. John is his silent partner in 3:1–10 and 8:14–25. This association may well derive from Gal 2:9.

21. The negative example (5:1–11) has no ties to the proposed source.

Barnabas comes to the aid of Paul in 9:27. This is a Lucan means for linking the two and is not derived from a source. Point (11) reports that Jerusalem (presumably the apostles) sent Barnabas to Antioch, where he stands first among the leaders (3). Barnabas was initially Paul's superior in the journey of chapters 13–14, as indicated by the occasional priority given his name (13:1; 14:12, 14; 15:25; cf. 12:25). When Luke is done with him, he sends him (together with John Mark) off to Cyprus, his home (15:36–39).

Acts' claim that Barnabas once lived in Jerusalem is open to question. As Gerd Lüdemann shrewdly notes,²² his contribution might have been made after the Jerusalem conference described in Galatians 2.²³ The source may not have located him in Jerusalem, but (as suggested by [11]) it does infer this. Location in Jerusalem was also in accordance with Luke's tendency, and 11:22–25 (11) are largely Lucan, since they apparently depend upon the prior association of Barnabas with Paul in Jerusalem (9:27). One cannot say how the source described the arrival of Barnabas in Antioch or even if it did so, but he was viewed by it as the builder of the mixed community of Jewish and gentile believers there.²⁴ Points (7), (8a), and (11) imply that he was among the first missionaries to Antioch. Probability suggests that the source traced the course of Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch, but that is not certain.²⁵ The source evidently established a link between Barnabas and the Seven.²⁶ Luke avoids making that link explicit. These Seven demand attention.

The story of the widows (7) posits two mysterious groups, "Hebrews" and "Hellenists."²⁷ For Luke these feuding bodies serve to introduce and explain the Seven. This controversy admits a new (and almost certainly historical) factor into the equation: believers, some of Diaspora origin, who spoke Greek and associated with their kind in Jerusalem. The list of the Seven (2) has strong *prima facie* claims to be associated with Antioch. All seven men have Greek names.²⁸ The first is Stephen, followed by Philip. Only these two play active roles in the narrative. Their priority is logical, comparable to that of Peter, James, and

22. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts*, 63.

23. Barnabas' property may have been in Cyprus.

24. Barnabas was quite possibly the originator of the "community organizer" form of ministry, in which the missionary settled in a city, supported himself by work, and built up groups of believers in house-based churches. Paul took up this style and practiced it with great success. See Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, 35–40.

25. The historical Barnabas may, for example, have joined the movement in Cyprus (11:19) and moved thence to Antioch.

26. On the number seven, see Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 156.

27. Definition of these terms is a notoriously difficult problem. For a recent survey of the issues, see Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*. These labels were very probably used in the source. Luke may not have understood their meaning or suppressed explicit or implicit definitions in his source. See also note 64 and the section "From the Source to the Community."

28. Note, however, that the lists of Jesus' disciples also include Greek names: Simon (2), Andrew, and Philip, two of whom, "Simon Peter" and Andrew, stand at the head of the roster.

John in lists of the Twelve. Final names are also important. Here the last is one Nicholas, a convert from *Antioch*. Although Luke wishes to explain the Seven by making them the equivalent to the order of "Deacons" that had come into existence when he was writing,²⁹ the subsequent narrative speaks only of their subsequent missionary activity. The simplest explanation of this tension is that the source viewed these people as missionaries, comparable to, if not necessarily rivals of, the Twelve. No alternative commands respect. This is pay dirt: a catalogue, constructed like that of the Twelve, of Greek-speaking missionaries (1), who were not authorized by that body and whose mission will eventually extend to Antioch through their successors, one of whom is singled out as both a former gentile and an Antiochene.

The careers of Stephen and Philip receive some attention. That of the former was meteoric, while Philip eventually settled in Caesarea, where he reemerges at a later point (8:40; 21:8).³⁰ The source evidently portrayed both Stephen and Philip as endowed with great spiritual power (6:8, 10; 8:5–7). This is to say that their legitimation³¹ was charismatic, scarcely a surprise if they were breaking new ground (and old barriers, to mix the metaphor).

Note: Charismatic legitimation refers to the establishment of a practice, principle, or procedure on the grounds of supernatural sanction rather than through tradition or legislation. In its broadest sense, the concept appears in the religious-historical dictum that "new gods" require miracles.³² Charismatic legitimation was ascribed to the new imperial dynasty founded by Vespasian, who performed healings in Alexandria.³³ Proponents of the concept take its validity for granted; opponents do not, either by rejecting the alleged miracle or by denying its relevance. If, for example, a U.S. senator proposed legislation outlawing use of the color purple on the grounds that he had received a revelation from God demanding this abolition, his justification would be rejected. Some religious bodies would accept such evidence, but most would have various tests and limits. Although punitive miracles tend to reinforce extant laws, others justify changes. An example of the latter is the question of whether human beings can declare sin forgiven (see Mark 2:1–12). In short, the validity of claims to divine sanction should not be taken for granted.³⁴

This charismatic dimension of the "theology of the Seven" is consonant with Luke's own theology, but that is insufficient grounds for attributing it

29. See Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 212.

30. Philip is the first example of an itinerant missionary who exchanged that role for the position of a settled leader.

31. "Legitimation" is a German word, taken up because it refers to the process by which the result, legitimacy, was obtained.

32. Dionysius is a well-known example.

33. Suetonius, *Vespasian* 7.1; Tacitus, *Histories* 4.81.1; cf. Cassius Dio 66.8.1 (a later summary).

34. See also below.

to redaction.³⁵ “Wisdom” and “spirit” (6:10; cf. 6:3) probably derive from the source. “Spirit” is anything but alien to Luke,³⁶ but he was no proponent of the speculative “wisdom theology” that is prominent in some parts of the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline tradition.³⁷

Possible Linguistic features.³⁸

The term “Twelve” occurs only at 6:2 in Acts and may reflect the source.³⁹ It may be of interest that “disciple” (μαθητής) appears three times in 6:1–7, the first usages in Acts. The adjective “full” (πλήρης) with reference to the Spirit, found in 6:3, 5, 8; 7:55; 11:24, is not typical for Luke. This may reflect the language of the source and could be distinguished from Luke’s usage, for whom the phrase applies to specific occasion rather than to permanent endowment.⁴⁰ “Grace” (χάρις) appears with that adjective in 6:8. The periphrastic use of “preach the message” (εὐαγγελίζομαι) in 14:7 as equivalent to the imperfect is unique. These results are generally meager in both quantity and quality.⁴¹

Stephen validated his equivalence to the Twelve by powerful preaching and stunning deeds of power. This is to say that the source accepted the claims that authentic missionaries should be able to demonstrate their worth by such words and deeds. “Our” founders did what the Twelve (and Jesus) had done.⁴² The summary style and absence of a particular example probably reflect the orientation of the source.

That document reported that Stephen came into conflict with other Greek-speaking Diaspora Jews and was lynched by a mob. Acts 6:9 may be confused in its present form, but it is highly concrete. Luke has contaminated the story by assimilation to the passion of Jesus: Luke 21:15 is probably the source of 6:10 and Mark 14:55–60, 63–64 the basis for vv. 11–14 and 7:1.⁴³ The Sanhedrin trial

35. This theology is broadly characterized and surveyed by Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 83–151, 422–34. If the pre-Pauline hymn of Phil 2:6–11 derives from Antioch, it is evidence for sapiential reflection there. See Georgi, “Der vorpaulinische Hymnus Phil. 2:6–11.”

36. See also Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts*, 80, and Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 18–19.

37. Other than 6:3, where it is paired with “Spirit” in a possible hendiadys, and 6:10, where it is applied to Stephen (although Luke 21:15 may be the source), this noun is used elsewhere only of Moses (in Stephen’s speech, 7:10, 22). On Wisdom in the Deutero-Pauline tradition, see Conzelmann, “Die Schule des Paulus,” and Schencke, “Das Weiterwirken des Paulus und die Pflege seines Erbs durch die Paulusschule.”

38. See Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, 245–65.

39. But note that it appears six times in Luke 8:1; 9:1, 12; 18:31; 22:3, 30, 47.

40. Cf. Luke 4:1.

41. These data could be amplified if the speech in 7:2–53 were taken into account. Although it is possible that the language and thought of the source has influenced Stephen’s speech, it is, like the other speeches, a Lucan composition.

42. Some of the theological issues involved in this construct will be addressed below.

43. For details, see Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 38–40. Most agree that Luke used Mark, but alleged disagreement between vv. 11 and 12–13 has been advanced as the basis for detecting

and Stephen's address are Lucan, while the account of Stephen's transfiguration (6:15; 7:55, with modifications) and the subsequent mob scene (7:57, 59–60, with modifications) stem from the source, which followed with (8a). The Stephen of Acts took issue with some elements of observance and cult. This adds another topic to the "theology of the Seven." Stephen, at least, questioned the obligations of Torah. That perspective opened the door to a wider mission, as Philip's career will show.

It is logical to assume that the source then turned to the activity of Philip (9). In the source, his mission to Samaria may have included or concentrated upon gentiles.⁴⁴ Traces of the source are present in 8:5–13, but his competition with Simon probably does not belong to the source.⁴⁵ Verses 14–25 are essentially Lucan, as is the story of the Ethiopian (8:26–39), at least in its present form. The report about Philip's subsequent work in the Greek cities along the coast, ending in Caesarea, stems from the source. A reasonable conjecture would be that, in the source, the entire story of Philip took not much more than the equivalent of perhaps six to eight verses and Stephen's not more than around twelve. The alternative is to presume that Luke more or less always replaced relatively long scenes from the source with relatively long scenes of his own devising. Greater probability adheres to the hypothesis that the source was concise, more interested in the goal than in the way.

Acts 11:19 (11) picks up the thread of 8:4. Unnamed persons carry the message to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. (The claim that they addressed only Jews is quite probably Lucan, since it conforms to his "Jews first" perspective.) Phoenicia was the territory evangelized by Philip, and Cyprus was the home of Barnabas. (The mission to Cyprus described in 13:4–12 may reflect this activity, but in its present form it is Lucan.) Among these anonymous individuals were some persons from Cyprus and Cyrene. That designation is probably a Lucan generalization of the data found in 13:1. Barnabas of Cyprus and Lucius of Cyrene are in view. The narrator reports that when these evangelists reached Antioch, they began including gentiles. This shift is reported with all of the ruffles and flourishes normally attendant upon the declaration of a one-point decrease in the Dow Jones Average. With this mission, first Barnabas and then Paul came to be associated (Gal 1:21). Considerable success ensued. At a later time the community could boast that the term "Christian" came into being there

source material in the latter case. For this view, see Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts*, 79–84, with numerous references to earlier work. This situation is more probably the result of literary technique: the terse accusations of v. 11 receive elaboration in the trial. The difficulty for readers is that the accusations are said to be false but yet seem to be affirmed, in some degree, by the narrative.

44. A recent study of the Samaritan mission is Samkutti, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*.

45. This assertion is strongly contested. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 307–8, for example, believes that a Philip source portrayed him in conflict with Simon. In the tradition, Peter is the opponent of Simon (Acts, *Acts of Peter*, Pseudo-Clementines).

(11:26). If that claim belonged to the source—"Christian" is not a word that Luke particularly admires—it is a clue to the date of the source, as it existed when Luke found it: not much earlier than the last decade of the first century.⁴⁶

One may take it for granted that Luke has not repeated the source verbatim. For him the origin of the gentile mission did not come about by accident one Tuesday afternoon in July; it was the result of heavenly visions, angelic pushing and prodding, and a personal appearance by the Holy Spirit. The source may not have claimed that the gentile mission began in Antioch, but it certainly hailed its explosion there, as Luke's account reflects. The source probably related dissemination of the message to gentiles throughout the Diaspora. Among the things historians would like to know are when and how Barnabas and Paul came to be associated with this mission.

Points (3) and (13) feature Acts 13:1–3, which relates something new: without resort to Jerusalem, directed by the Spirit, the evident leaders of Antiochene believers decide to launch a mission. Since such ideas do not fit Luke's scheme up to this time—all previous missions have begun from Jerusalem—evidence for its presence in the source is strengthened. Antioch took its orders from the Spirit, not from James and Co. Barnabas and Paul "hit the road" in obedience to an oracle. Chapters 13–14, as with chapter 10 (below), reflect elements found in ancient cult-foundation stories,⁴⁷ including the initial oracle (13:2), official and other opposition (for example, 13:8, 45, 50; 14:4–5, 19–20), eventual success, and the establishment of permanent communities (14:22–23). Stories of this type are prominent for savior gods, including Asclepius⁴⁸ and the Egyptian gods.⁴⁹

The source evidently summarized a mission in southern Asia Minor, probably beginning overland and possibly returning by the same means.⁵⁰ Few

46. See Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 290–91. "Christian" is attested from c. 100 onward. It indicates that those so characterized adhered to a different religion from Judaism.

47. On this pattern, see Gebhard, "The Gods in Transit." On the basis of a number of accounts from the Classical and Hellenistic eras (pp. 473–76), Gebhard identifies the following motifs as "most common": a crisis of some sort, communal or individual, appeal to an oracle, command to honor a particular entity, which may require an embassy to obtain a statue or other cultic representation, difficulties, including official opposition, arrival and welcoming of the god in temporary lodgings, opposition (possibly), and a new temple or the like. Note also Hanges, "The Greek Foundation-Legend," Donelson, "Cult Histories and the Sources of Acts," and Wilson, "Urban Legends." Chapter 16 contains the best illustration of this pattern in Acts.

48. IG II² 4960a, 4961 (=Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 1945 1.374–75) relate the translation of the cult to Athens in 5 BCE. For other examples, see Gebhard, "The Gods in Transit," Tables 1–2, 472–73.

49. For example, the introduction of the cult of Sarapis in the (Asia Minor?) residence of Zoilus ("The Zoilus Letter," PCZ 59, 034), on which see Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 152–59 (with an edition of the text), Nock, *Conversion*, 49–50, Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 1.257–59, and Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, 2.190, as well as the foundation of the first Sarapeion at Delos, on which see Nock, *Conversion*, 50–55, and Engelmann, *The Delian Aretalogy of Sarapis*. Among other examples are Strabo 4.1.4 and Xenophon, *Anabasis* 5.3.7, both of which feature Artemis.

50. The ground for this assertion is the improbability of the itinerary in chapters 13–14, on which see Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 319–20.

traces remain. One can point to the localities in this area, which reappear in the Pastorals (1–2 Timothy, Titus) and the *Acts of Paul*. The periphrastic form “were evangelizing” in 14:7, resumed in 14:21, is not otherwise found in Acts. Most notable is the term “apostles” in 14:4, repeated in 14:14. For Luke, neither Barnabas nor Paul qualifies as an apostle. In the source its strict meaning may have been “envoys of the community at Antioch.”⁵¹ The source would have summarized this mission to demonstrate its independence, to show that the Antiochene endeavor was validated by the Spirit, and, incidentally, to depict Paul as subordinate to Barnabas.⁵²

If Barnabas were the builder of the community, Peter was its most prized hero, for he had visited the foundation, approved its work, and helped to guide it through a difficult controversy. Acts 12:1–23 has been given its present form by Luke. The identification of an underlying source for Peter’s imprisonment and escape is difficult, but one element of the story, that he sought refuge at Mary’s, has a claim to derive from the source under investigation. Point (12) identifies a “Hellenist” house church in Jerusalem⁵³ headed by Mary, whose son, John Mark, would eventually find himself in Antioch, where he was associated with Barnabas (and, for a shorter and less successful period, with Paul).⁵⁴ Mary was a woman of some means, with a house large enough to host “the church” (12:5, 12). Her slave bore a Greek name (Rhoda). Behind all this stands a tradition about Greek-speaking believers in Jerusalem who had links to Antioch, which community could note that its progenitors had assisted Peter in Jerusalem. In the tradition, Mary’s house was quite possibly located in *Antioch*. Peter may have been a guest of hers, but Luke may simply have transferred the entire establishment to Jerusalem.

The story of Cornelius (10) also commands consideration. Luke has expanded and presented a long, dramatic narrative with a number of episodes. This, like all proper cult foundation legends, comes equipped with an initial vision, indeed a pair of visions (10:3–6, 10–16). Two factors suggest the link with Antioch: the location at Caesarea, also associated with the “Hellenists,” and the proof of worthiness: the gift of the Spirit. One might well ask whether the earliest form of this story did not attribute the conversion to Philip. If so—and this is no more than a wily conjecture—it is quite possible that Luke replaced Philip with Peter (and compensated with the story of the Ethiopian official in 8:26–39?). If Antioch told how Peter converted this gentile of status, it did not present the act as the first conversion of a gentile. Cornelius’ status as a “God-fearer” is also reasonably assigned to the author of Acts.

51. Cf. 2 Cor 8:23.

52. The communities founded in Acts 13–14 were probably of mixed composition, for Paul was not at that time an independent missionary to gentiles.

53. See Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 166.

54. Mark is linked to Antioch and Barnabas in Acts (12:25; 13:5; 15:39), and (the following as “Mark,” without “John”) to Barnabas in Col 4:10 (contrast Philemon 24), and also to Peter (1 Pet 5:13; Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.39.16).

One paragraph of the story would have come to Antioch like manna—better quails—from heaven. Peter’s vision (10a) declared all meats clean. That vision is not a requisite element of the story. Acts 10:20 suffices to give Peter the word that God wished him to visit Cornelius. The vision *does*, however, justify Peter’s approach to dietary laws at Antioch and may have belonged to the source, from which Luke inserted it into the story about Cornelius. The source may have contained a story about Cornelius and may have attributed his conversion to Peter, but the story as it stands is in conflict with other elements of the proposed source (see below). It is quite probable that (10a) came from the source and that 10:44–46(7) could have been inspired by it, but the place of the story of Cornelius in the database is doubtful. The vision abolishing *kashrut* was arguably a part of the source, which may have included one or more other stories about the prince of the apostles.⁵⁵

Did this source contain an account of the “Apostolic Council” reported in Gal 2:1–10? If it did, one cannot extract any convincing fragments of this from Acts 15, which is Luke’s reworking of Galatians.⁵⁶ Such an account *may* not have been necessary. Paul charged Peter and Barnabas with reneging on the agreement made at Jerusalem, and the gentile mission source may have seen no need to rebut that claim. It may well have contained an account of the conflict at Antioch that led to Paul’s separation. That story would have portrayed both Paul and, on the other side, any who claimed that “Jewish-Christians” *had* to observe Torah as intolerant and inflexible, while Peter and Barnabas were willing “to become Jews to Jews,” that is, to be observant when entertaining observant fellow believers as a matter of common courtesy and Christian charity.

One element of Acts 15 fits the Antiochene compromise: the “Apostolic Decree” (14), which sets out minimal rules that permit, or seek to permit, mixed Jewish-gentile association. No food, not even pork, is prohibited, but the preparation of meat will conform to the general expectations of *kashrut*. If Paul had ever heard of such rules, he rejected them.⁵⁷ Antioch is as likely a location as any for this non-Pauline gentile Christian code, which may have been a part of the source under consideration and been associated with the vision received by Peter. The “decree” belongs to a later period—post 70—in which unity of some sort between Jewish and gentile groups was achieved.

The first shall be last. Behind the story of Pentecost (4–5) stands the fundamental justification of the mission to gentiles as it was told at Antioch. To claim this eminently Lucan story for that source may lead readers to suspect that the

55. See also the note at the close of section IV.

56. On the difficulties of finding this source in Acts 15, see Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 88–89. One item that nourishes speculation is the address to the letter to believers “in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia” (15:23; cf. v. 41). In fact the “decree” is communicated to a wider circle (16:4; cf. 21:25). The letter was composed by Luke, who probably devised the address to suit his plot.

57. 1 Corinthians 8; 10:23–11:1.

author has taken a drop or two more than the situation strictly required. The grounds for attributing a form of this story to the source are none the less clear: following the hint of Gal 4:6 and the lead of Acts 10:44–46, a source of this nature could be expected to stress the presence of ecstatic phenomena as a mark or “sign” of divine approval. Their operative principle was that manifestation of the Spirit overrode requirements of Torah. The sign of gentile worthiness is the gift of the Spirit. This is consistent with the charismatic grounds for the credentials of the missionaries. The gentile mission source grounded its legitimacy in the uncontested working of the Spirit in its midst. A “Pentecost”⁵⁸ of some sort was essential.⁵⁹

Even when this proposal is conceded for the purposes of discussion, questions remain. In addition to questions of form and content are the placement of the event in the source and its geographical location. The tempting solution is to place it at Antioch and at the beginning of the source, followed by a flashback tracing the background, that is, this is what I should have done had I been the author of this document. The source probably did not associate this event with the Jerusalem apostles. The chief difficulty with Jerusalem as the setting for this story is the need for gentiles, who were in short supply there. It is therefore possible that the Jerusalem setting is due to Luke, for whom the story foreshadows, but does not inaugurate, a gentile mission.

The gift of languages may have been a component of the source,⁶⁰ which focuses upon Greek-speaking missions to those of Diaspora origin and background. One more item must be placed upon the table: the table of nations in (4). This list is quite old-fashioned. It is probably, but not certainly, Jewish in origin⁶¹ and appears to reflect the period and perspective of the Seleucid Era (312/11–63 BCE).⁶² This perspective points to . . . Antioch (the capital of the Seleucid empire) and thus to the source.⁶³ The source therefore probably located this event at Antioch and portrayed a linguistic miracle. Wherever it came in the narrative, this story demonstrated God’s miraculous endorsement of the

58. The date of Pentecost was probably selected by Luke because of its proximity to Passover (and Easter), as well as for some possible symbolic significance. This probably affected the shape of the general narrative.

59. Cf. Acts 8:14–19. Luke was no enemy of ecstatic phenomena, but he found it desirable to link such events to the presence or activities of officials.

60. See Pervo, “My Happy Home,” 47–48. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 4, allows that this source may have begun with the story of the gift of languages.

61. The valuable analysis of Scott, “Luke’s Geographical Horizon” notwithstanding, those in quest of the closest specific parallel to Acts 2:5–11 will have difficulty in choosing between the catalogue found in Philo, *Legatio*. 281–82 and that of Curtius Rufus 6.3.3.

62. If the list were based upon Seleucid claims of conquest and dominance, Syria could have been omitted as the “homeland,” while Greece and the west would be absent, because they were outside of the Seleucid sphere.

63. Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity*, 10–11, suggests an Antiochene origin and aptly identifies a proleptic function: the old list of military conquests now serves to forecast the conquest of the world by the Gospel.

universal gentile mission. Its most logical place would have been the event almost nonchalantly noted at Acts 11:20.⁶⁴ Luke offers no justification for this change of practice.⁶⁵ The source most likely related a "Pentecostal wonder" and may have depicted this as the real beginning of a general gentile mission. The story of Cornelius (10) in its present form would have been somewhat anticlimactic if located before this wonder.

The survey indicates a high probability that Acts utilized a narrative source describing the origin of the gentile mission from the perspective of the/a community at Antioch. In its support are a consistent theological viewpoint, which, although favored by Luke, is not carried out as thoroughly in the missionary narratives of Acts 16–19 as in the hypothetical source, and features the prominence of "non-apostolic" missionaries, in particular the Seven and their associates. Visible threads in the source (8:4; 11:19)⁶⁶ show an interest in succession⁶⁷ and Jerusalem origins. Although not depicted by Luke and most probably not by the source as a "rival mission," the source showed that its background was in Jerusalem, that its agents possessed the requisite credentials, and that the Spirit had decisively endorsed the acceptability of unconverted gentiles. The heart of the movement was in Greek-speaking Judaism.⁶⁸ Questions about Torah and Temple did not, the source contended, first arise in the Diaspora. They had been introduced in Jerusalem by the Spirit-filled Seven.

Luke used the story of the Antioch mission to pose and resolve the major questions prior to describing Paul's labors in the Aegean region, which, rather than Syria, is the geographical center of Acts. Against the identification of the gentile mission with Paul, the source upheld its own tradition, firmly supported by spiritual phenomena, lines of succession, Jerusalem connections, and, far from least, the endorsement of Peter. Whenever Paul was too hot to handle, the source was a useful reminder of a gentile mission independent of him. Whenever Paul became *the* "apostle to the gentiles," the source showed that others were there before him. With regard to the conflict depicted in Galatians

64. The text of Acts 11:20 is a notorious difficulty, but gentiles are in view. One outstanding task is reflection upon the meaning of "Hellenist" in the source (where it probably occurred). Did the word (the "natural" meaning of which is "Greek-speaking") mask "gentiles?"

65. Readers of Acts do not wonder at this, because they have just read the story of Cornelius and its justification by the leadership at Jerusalem, so 10:1–11:18.

66. The verb *diaspeirein* ("scatter") appears only in Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19 in early Christian literature.

67. "Succession" here does not refer to formal succession, such as "Susanna held office for three years and was followed by Mary, whom Junia succeeded after five years," but an informal procedure not unlike that of Acts, where one sees James taking charge after Peter, for example. In literary terms this could be called "showing" rather than "telling" the succession of leaders.

68. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, xxxviii, was, I believe, on the right track when he stated that "Hellenistic" was a more appropriate designation for this source than "Antiochene."

2, the source upheld the moderate and comprehensive view(s) of Peter and Barnabas. For Paul a major question was whether Jewish and gentile communities could co-exist; the source focused upon the life of mixed communities.⁶⁹

This source was clearly narrative in form, an etiology rather than a chronicle. It may have been written as, or cast, into the framework of an epistle for distribution to other communities. This vagueness prompts the necessary assertion that identification of elements of a source is not tantamount to its reconstruction. By focusing upon its differences from Acts, a requirement of the investigation, research can obscure elements that are fully consonant with the receptor text. The source materials identified constitute something of a caricature, a quality that is heightened by the impossibility of identifying what was omitted by the author of Acts. Many changes are postulated, but omissions are mainly or completely invisible.⁷⁰ One cannot draw a full picture of the source, but its outline is apparent, albeit fuzzy at both ends.

Note: A probable "Antioch source" not discussed here was a collection of stories about Peter. Such stories do not appear to have been consonant with the mission source's purpose and form, but stories and anecdotes about Peter would have been appropriate for believers at Antioch to collect. In any event, some stories in Greek about Peter made their way into the gospel tradition, others into Acts. This phenomenon was also one motivation for the *Acts of Peter*.⁷¹ Although it was not preceded by a story of Jesus, the gentile missionary source indicates that many of the impetuses of the eventual gospel genre were at work, such as a collection of wonders preceding an account of martyrdom. The thesis that gospels were the chickens that produced acts as their eggs remains valid, but some qualifications may be in order.⁷² A distinction between Acts and the source is apparent in that Luke portrays Peter as the leader of the initial mission to the Jewish people in Judea (as does Gal 2:7–8), whereas his importance for the source was his openness to gentiles.

Implications for Christian Origins

The following sketch intends to add to the stimulation evoked by postulation of the document. The gentile mission source, unlike Acts, did not pretend to be *the* story of Christian beginnings. It told the story of the origins of *some* Christians.

69. Paul most closely approximates the Antiochene position in Romans, where he is seeking acceptance from a community that he did not found, but his focus is upon the co-existence of different communities.

70. For example, from the Gospel of Luke alone it is not possible to discover that the author omitted two sections of Mark (Mark 6:45–8:2; 9:41–10:12).

71. How many of these stories might have been unflattering but useful examples for the faithful and which of them were concocted by the Evangelist Mark are interesting questions. (Some of the stories about Peter in Acts are also likely to be Lucan creations.)

72. On this thesis, see Bovon, "The Synoptic Gospels and the Non-canonical Acts of the Apostles."

Its greatest importance may be the text that brought about its obliteration. If one presumes that Luke had access to this source, then it is quite likely that it served him as the model for Acts. Both tell how a movement that began in Jerusalem spread, through the agency of persecution, to a wider world. Both fill out this geographical outline by telling the stories of missionaries. Both are legitimating narratives.⁷³

Unlike Acts, the mission source was not preceded by an account of the life and teachings of Jesus. The object of veneration was Christ, the heavenly lord.⁷⁴ Behind the source is an understanding of christology and of the gentile mission that is independent of the adaptations made by Paul, Mark, Luke, etc. Echoed in the mission source, at some level, are aspects of the "pre-Pauline" theology at Antioch. That theology evidently held that the victory of God in Christ established the latter as savior of all and abolished, for soteriological purposes, such distinctions as Jew versus Greek, etc. (Gal 3:28). Occasions of worship were far from dull; sacramental activity (baptism and eucharist) was central.

By the time the source reached the form in which it became available to Luke, however, one wing of Antiochene theology had adopted positions that resemble, in some important ways, the (reconstructed) theology of Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians.⁷⁵ This "theology of glory," as it is often called, did not, in so far as can be inferred, appeal to the historical followers of Jesus, but there are intimations that great prophets, like those of old, have arisen. The transfiguration of Stephen (6:15; 7:55) is an obvious example of Moses typology (Exod 34:29–35). Intimations of wisdom speculation can be detected in the source and were probably part of the scene in Antioch. The shift toward identification of Christ and Wisdom is most notable in Paul and Matthew.

One hesitates to propose more. The material is tenuous, and theological concepts were probably fluid and subject to rapid evolution. The remnants of this source deduced from Acts suggest that its author (presuming that there was a single major writer) had moved some distance from Paul on the question of apostolic credentials.⁷⁶ It would be reckless to propose that this was the only theology at Antioch when the source was composed. It is the only example available before Matthew, the *Didache*, and Ignatius, to be considered in the subsequent section. The noteworthy features that can be gleaned from the available data

73. "Legitimizing narrative" is one way of characterizing (Luke and) Acts to which a very broad range of scholars with differing views of genre, theology, and purposes assent. For a concise description of the phrase, see Pervo, "Israel's Heritage and Claims upon the Genre(s) of Luke and Acts," 136.

74. For an insightful sketch of this theology, with due attention to Antioch, see Mack, *A Myth of Innocence*.

75. The reconstruction in view is that of Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*.

76. This is not to suggest that Paul opposed healings, prophecies, and glossolalia *per se*. He resisted making such wonders criteria of true faith and apostleship.

are that, prior to surviving written gospels, one group of believers in Christ sought to trace its movement back to the early days in Jerusalem, a feature that might be held to smack of institutionalization, while simultaneously insisting upon charismatic legitimation for both leaders and regular members, a most non-institutional quality, and, finally, seeking to name as its “founding fathers” the Seven, Barnabas, and Peter. The story of Christian origins is not a tale of movement from the simple to the complex.

From the Source to the Community

Antioch on the Orontes.

Despite its size⁷⁷ and importance as the Seleucid capital and subsequent capital of the Roman province, literary evidence about Antioch during the first three centuries CE is scanty, and silting has left limited archaeological or inscriptional data.⁷⁸ The three works mentioned above provide (tenuous) bases for comparison: Matthew, the *Didache*, and Ignatius of Antioch. The Gospel of Matthew is reasonably and regularly but not certainly associated with Antioch. Date: c. 100.⁷⁹ The earliest reconstructed form of the *Didache* probably belongs to the period c. 120 and has found a place in an urban environment. West Syria is a likely candidate.⁸⁰ The epistles of Ignatius, a/the bishop of Antioch, are now dated c. 135. Each of these works exhibits some affinities, continuities, and discontinuities with the hypothetical mission source. For Matthew, the future church will be increasingly gentile, while Ignatius views “Jewish background” as a thing of the past. The *Didache*, which shares a catechetical interest with Matthew, upon which it is, in its present form, evidently dependent, exhibits efforts to support, or at least to acknowledge, *kashrut* from a gentile perspective.

Matthew may not have derived from Antioch, but the prominence it assigns to Peter strongly suggests a west Syrian milieu. Matthew is anti-Pauline (e.g., 5:17–20)⁸¹ and honors the “old,” that is, Torah observance, but also values the

77. Population estimates vary widely, from 150,000 to 600,000, with a Jewish population of c. 15–20,000. See Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, 294–95. The lowest of these estimates is the safest and that utilized by Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 131.

78. A standard resource is Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest*, rich in detail and thin in critical judgment. For the far from abundant available archaeological material, see Lassus, “La ville Antioch à l’époque romaine d’après l’archéologie.” Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 147–62, paints an unforgettable portrait of the gritty realities of daily life in Antioch. Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 18–52, provides a good summary of relevant issues, with many references.

79. Each of these dates falls within a +/- five year range.

80. Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 52–54, inclines toward Syria-Palestine, and sees an urban setting as possible, but does not endorse Antioch. *Did* 7.2 intimates awareness of an urban environment, but could be a later addition.

81. It is not surprising that Paul is not named, as this was the conventional practice in antiquity. None of Paul’s opponents, for example, is named.

new (13:51–52). In the end, Jesus replaces Torah (e.g., 28:16–20). If one hypothesizes an Antiochene setting, the first gospel attests the continuing presence of persons or a group (or groups) devoted to the Mosaic tradition. The demand for righteousness is Matthew’s focus. On matters of observance, the target is the scrupulous fussiness of the Pharisees rather than the trespasses of the lax. Matt 15:1–20 retains much of Mark 7:1–23, including the claim that what enters the mouth does not defile (Matt 15:11); but, in addition to elimination of the erroneous Mark 7:2–4, makes two important changes. One is the apparent deletion of the participial phrase “cleansing all foods” (Mark 7:19).⁸² The closing phrase, “but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile” (v. 20), transforms, as an *inclusio* with v. 1, the passage into a pronouncement about hand washing rather than a debate about clean versus unclean *foods*.

The *Didache* is candid about the superiority of observance, thus 6.2–3.

εἰ μὲν γὰρ δύνασαι βαστάσαι ὅλον τὸν ζυγὸν τοῦ κυρίου τέλειος ἔσῃ εἰ δ' οὐ δύνασαι ὁ δύνῃ τοῦτο ποίει
 περὶ δὲ τῆς βρώσεως ὁ δύνασαι βάστασον ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ εἰδωλοθύτου λίαν
 πρόσεχε λατρεία γὰρ ἔστι θεῶν νεκρῶν

If you can endure the entire yoke of the lord, you will be perfect; if you cannot, do what you can. Concerning food, endure what you can, but abstain from food offered to idols, for it is worship of dead gods. (author’s trans.)

The adjective “perfect” (τέλειος) derives from Matthew (5:48; 19:21) or kindred tradition. The perfection in view is comprehensive. The yoke image closely approximates that of the yoke of Torah/Wisdom (*Aboth* 3.8). This yoke is not easy and its burden not light (cf. Matt 11:28–30). Perfection is a higher and preferable state, but not all achieve it. Two classes of believers are recognized. The higher is more observant. Matthew and James (e.g., 1:25) may be seeking to push the elitist notion of the “perfect” into the realm of the love commandment⁸³ and therefore away from the sphere of impurity.⁸⁴

Did 6.3 applies the pastoral concept of “do your best” to food. Perfection here relates to *kashrut*. No one is to fall so short of perfection as to eat food contaminated with idolatry.⁸⁵ The resonance with Acts 15 is quite strong—as is the vocabulary. Note Acts 15:10 (Peter’s speech) νῦν οὖν τί πειράζετε τὸν θεόν, ἐπιθεῖναι ζυγὸν ἐπὶ τὸν τραχήλον τῶν μαθητῶν ὃν οὔτε οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν οὔτε ἡμεῖς ἰσχύσαμεν βαστάσαι; (“Now therefore why are you putting God to

82. One could argue that this phrase (καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα) is a gloss, but I am not aware of any attempts to do so.

83. Cf. also *Did* 6.4, which equates turning the other cheek with perfection.

84. See Gerhard Delling, τέλος, κτλ., *TDNT* 8.49–87, 67–78. Qumran texts tend to associate equivalent terms with purity and observance of Torah (p. 73).

85. The prohibition against consuming meat involved in ritual was quite widespread in emerging proto-orthodox Christianity. See Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 377 n. 103.

the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a *yoke* that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to *bear*?) The verb is best translated “endure” here, as in *Didache* 6. The perspectives of Peter in Acts 15 and of the Didachist are gentile, for observant Jews do not regard Torah as a burden.⁸⁶ The Didachist upholds observance as the highest standard from a gentile, outsider perspective.

These two brief probes into literature linked to the orbit of Antioch suggest the following hypothesis: those, whether ethnically of Jewish or gentile background, within Christian communities who observed Torah were considered superior to the non-observant. The latter were to aspire to higher things. This view of Torah as superior but not necessary would not have pleased Paul. Two of these texts, Matthew and James, oppose Pauline thought. On the other hand, both of these writings seek to steer the notion of perfection in an ethical direction, as can also be seen in the textual history of the “Apostolic Decree.”⁸⁷ The honor demanded for “the old” by Matthew suggests that the power of its adherents may well have been in decline. The inference to be drawn is that observance remained a living option in Antioch and its environs, that the communities were not exclusively gentile and remained mixed, at least in sentiment. This supports the suggestion that the gentile mission source looked to two fronts, at least.

The question of charismatic legitimation, deemed to have been constitutive to the source (and to Paul and Luke), did not receive continual and general approval. Jewish teachers within what became the normative tradition would not—and did not—accept the view that a vision (let alone the report of a vision by an uneducated Galilean fisherman) could cancel provisions of the Torah.⁸⁸ “Jewish Christianity” would follow the same path. Matthew, who stands at the beginning of this tradition, appears to associate charismatic activity with antinomianism.⁸⁹ For the Clementines, the claim to be authorized by a vision (as was Paul) is evidence of illegitimacy.⁹⁰ Ignatius, who stands at some remove from “Jewish Christianity,” exhibits charismatic features, and he does not seek to limit charisma to church officers.⁹¹

The ambiguity of the *Didache* on this question is famous, as it has long been viewed as a Weberian paradigm of the routinization of charisma. Acts 10:7 upholds the authority of prophets to offer the eucharistic prayer as they choose. By

86. Everyone will find religious, civic, domestic, etc. obligations burdensome and undesirable from time to time. The philosophy of Torah is that it is not a burden imposed upon the faithful to make their lives burdensome.

87. See Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 376–78.

88. Neusner, *From Politics to Piety*, 129–36, sketches the declining role of the holy spirit in Early Judaism.

89. See Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 118.

90. *Hom.* 17, 13–19.

91. Cf. Ignatius, *Phld.* 7.

and large, however, prophets are legitimated not by charismatic inspiration, but by orthodoxy and orthopraxy. The text does not discuss exorcisms, healings, or miracles of any kind. Prophetic activity is verbal or symbolic. Glossolalia receives no attention. The guiding principle (11.7) is that prophets are not to be examined (πειράζειν) and evaluated (διακρίνειν). The statement that such challenge is the sole unforgivable sin is cited in a form like Matt 12:31, but not on specific dominical authority.⁹² Having announced this principle, the text demands that authentic prophets meet certain criteria. Prophets may be itinerant or resident. The latter also deserve support (13.1–4). This picture of the role of prophet conforms to the source (Acts 13:1–3, 13) and, for that matter, would have been quite acceptable to Paul.

The foregoing introduces the matter of church offices. Point (13) identifies a number of persons as “prophets and teachers,” evidently a hendiadys: “prophetic teachers.” Two of these persons, Barnabas and Paul, are denoted “apostles” while on mission (Acts 14:4, 14). Although Luke is well aware of the prophetic office (e.g., Acts 11:27–30; 15:32; 21:9–10), he does not mention teachers. One line of intra-Pauline development can be seen in Ephesians. Ephesians 4:11 (from Ephesus c. 90+) has a full repertory: “apostles, *prophets*, evangelists, pastors and *teachers*.” The syntax indicates that the pastoral office includes the role of teaching. Acts 20:28–31 agrees with this. Because “prophetic teachers” would soon become old-fashioned, it is probable that Acts 13:1 reflects the language of the source.

On the question of order, Matthew and Ignatius seem to represent opposing poles. Matthew’s vision of the community appears to be highly egalitarian (Matthew 18; 23). Ignatius desires that each community be ruled by a single bishop, assisted by deacons and associated with presbyters. Both are idealistic; mono-episcopacy was not ubiquitous in Ignatius’ world and Antioch did not lack authority figures.

A later “Antiochene” view, shared by Matthew (23:8) and Ignatius (*Magn.* 9.1), is that Jesus Christ is the sole teacher. The *Didache*, which is often associated with Antioch, has some interesting data. The *Didache* shows how the guard was changing. *Didache* 10.7 indicates that prophets presided at the eucharist. Chapter 11 views teachers, apostles, and prophets as itinerant, but 13 indicates that they may settle in a community and that they should be supported. Acts 15:1–3 announces that, in effect, “bishops” and “deacons” perform the same functions as “prophets” and “teachers.”⁹³ One may argue about the extent to which the *Didache* is seeking to defend the old order or to affirm the acceptabil-

92. See Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 178–79.

93. Compare the *Shepherd of Hermas*, of uncertain date. *Vis.* 3.5.1 (13) lists “bishops, teachers, deacons.” *Sim.* 9.15.4 (92) speaks of those who stoned the prophets and deacons. *Sim.* 9.25.2 (102) identifies apostles and teachers as worldwide missionaries. In due course both the prophetic and teaching offices would be absorbed into the role of the bishop.

ity of the new, but the trend is clear. One interesting feature of the *Didache* is the absence of reference to presbyters.

These brief inquiries reveal both continuities and discontinuities within the Jesus movement at Antioch. A reasonable hypothesis posits the existence of somewhat distinct communities following the split described in Galatians 2, including a group that practiced Torah observance and another that did not. The former were mostly Jews by birth and the latter gentiles and Jews who no longer remained observant. The “Apostolic Decree” allowed unity if not unification. In time the non-observant group predominated. Use of the unity-seeking Gospel of Matthew by both the *Didache* and Ignatius indicates that this evangelist was successful.

The names “Hebrews” and “Hellenists” may have been applied to those two groups of the Jesus movement in Antioch. This hypothetical reconstruction views Acts 6 as a retrojection of a later division into the life of the early Jerusalem community. It is more likely that Luke was responsible for this hypothetical relocation than was the source, which may reasonably have presented its links to Jerusalem in an entirely positive light. In any case, the fundamental oppositions of Hebrews versus Hellenists and the Twelve versus the Seven derive from later conflict.⁹⁴ All agreed that gentile followers of Jesus were acceptable. The debate was whether they shared the same covenant status as the observant. Whereas those who insisted that Jews remain observant could appeal to James, Peter was initially little more than an example of expedient conformity for the sake of unity. In time he would be available to serve as a bridge figure, the trestles of which came from the “Apostolic Decree.”

These developments probably post-date the Revolt of 66–73/4 and its consequences, which included the stigmatization of Jews in general and the evident necessity of many members of Jesus-movements to define themselves as non-Jews. In the two decades after the revolt, non-observant elements came to predominate at Antioch, generating both the gentile mission source with its claim of full legitimacy and, eventually, Matthew’s attempt at a synthesis. If the term “Christian” derives from the former, it marks the public recognition of the Jesus movement as an independent body—not a Jewish sect.

Summary

- c. 35 Mixed community of Jews and gentiles formed at Antioch. This community engaged in independent missionary endeavors. Barnabas and Paul were two leaders of this endeavor.

94. This hypothesis may help elucidate the term “Hellenist,” which, although to a degree linguistic, referred to the group that claimed full equality for gentile believers in Jesus. Both terms could have been self-designations. “Hebrew” can convey a sense of superiority. See Gerhard von Rad, Gerhard, et al., *Ισραήλ, κτλ.*, *TDNT* 3.57–91.

- c. 48 Intervention from those associated with James in Jerusalem results in the formation of two separate communities, one more observant, "Hebrews" and "Hellenists."
- c. 75 The gentile community predominates. "Apostolic Decree" provides a basis for unity acceptable to most.
- c. 90 Gentile mission source justifies that component by showing Jerusalem origins and charismatic legitimation.
- c. 90–100 Gospel of Matthew attempts a synthesis. Influence of "old" waning.
- c. 120 *Didache* shows continuing reverence for observance, from gentile perspective.
- c. 130 Ignatius looks to Jewish origins and theology as elements of the past.

Appendix: The Data Base

| Number | Place Location | Probability of Inclusion within Source A=high probability as part of source B=good probability C=low probability F=not in source |
|--------|--------------------------|--|
| 1. | 1:13–14 | F |
| 2. | 6:5 | A |
| 3. | 13:1 | A |
| 4. | 2:8–11 | A– |
| 5. | 2:1–13 | A |
| 6. | 4:36–37 | B+ |
| 7. | 6:1–6 | A (without widows) |
| 8. | 6:8–7:60 (–7:1–53/4) | A |
| 8a. | 8:1b–4 | A |
| 9. | 8:5–13, <i>et partim</i> | A |
| 10. | 10:1–48 | C– |
| 10a. | 10:10–16 | A– |
| 11. | 11:19–26 | A |
| 12. | 12:12–17 | B+ |
| 13. | 13–14, <i>partim</i> | A– |
| 14. | 15:19–21 | A– |

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What Athens Has in Common with Jerusalem

The Speeches in Acts as Historical Record¹

Richard I. Pervo

Summary

A distinctive feature of the book of Acts is the presence of a number of speeches² marked by such formal features as an initial address (cf. "Ladies and gentlemen," "My fellow Americans"), rhetorical elements (below), and where desired, an appropriate conclusion. These speeches are one of the greatest differences between Luke and Acts. They are also one of the reasons advanced for regarding Acts as a specimen of historiography. There is a far from subtle irony lurking in the wings: the speeches included in ancient histories are usually the *least* historically reliable elements of those writings. This essay attempts to summarize the discussion about speeches in ancient texts, illustrate the range of authorial license, engage in a brief comparison and contrast of the speeches in Acts to those of ancient historians, and indicate why these speeches should not in general be viewed as historical.

Excursus: Winning Friends and Influencing People

The Greeks of antiquity, followed by Romans, devoted a great deal of energy to the art of persuasion, the development and construction of convincing arguments. Basic types focused upon the law-court (Did Colonel Mustard kill Mrs.

1. There is a vast amount of literature on the speeches in Acts. This essay will not include a review of scholarship. There is a useful survey by Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*. A classic discussion is Cadbury, "The Speeches in Acts." Modern discussion takes its departure from the proposals of Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*. Briefer summaries include Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 103–8, with bibliography 111–13, Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 34–40, and Bock, *ACTS*, 20–23. Note Townsend, "The Speeches in Acts," and Schweizer, "Concerning the Speeches in Acts."

2. The precise number of speeches in Acts varies in accordance with criteria. Cadbury, "The Speeches in Acts," 403, identifies twenty-four; Soards, "The Speeches in Acts," 21–22, thirty-six; and Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 104, twenty-eight. See also Pervo, "Direct Speech in Acts and the Question of Genre."

Plum with a lead pipe in the conservatory?), the legislative assembly (Let us pass legislation to abolish inheritance taxes), and varied audiences assembled to hear the pros and cons of, for example, flag-burning. The lines among these types, known as “judicial/forensic,” “deliberative/symboleutic,” and “epideictic” could and did blur. Opponents of flag burning may, for example, offer praise of the flag (epideictic) and narrate the iniquities of flag-burners (a proper feature of forensic rhetoric). Most early Christian rhetoric, such as the sermon, tends toward the deliberative: “What we should/should not do.” One relevant and serviceable guide to the subject is Mack (1990).

Introduction: The Requirements for a Poetic License in Antiquity

Wrangles about downloaded music and photocopied texts are recent manifestations of the long relationship between intellectual property and technology. Prior to the invention of printing, writing was not an important source of potential revenue for most authors. Such mercenary and technical matters had a profound effect upon ancient ideas of the employment and recognition of source material. Although Western culture has legal sanctions and moral strictures against using the words or ideas of others without attribution and against the assignment to others of ideas or words that they did not in fact use, such principles and statutes were not in general components of ancient societies. Setting these legal and moral prejudices aside is a cross-cultural accommodation that those who wish to understand Greek, Latin, and other ancient authors must make. That is the first pre-supposition. Secondly, ancients did not regard history as a science that might exhibit some artistic features. They ranked historiography proper as a genre of *literature* with its own Muse, Clio.

Greco-Roman historians (and biographers, among others) certainly utilized sources, but they were under no obligation to reveal them. When sources come up for discussion, it is often for the purpose of comparative evaluation, for example, “A. Coulter has also written on this subject. She is quite wrong.” There are moments when one is tempted to state that Greco-Roman writers cited the sources that they did *not* employ and neglected to mention those of which they *did* make use. In any case, the proper task of historians was to recast the sources in their own words. When it came to speeches, however, these restrictions did not apply. The composition of speeches provided historians with an opportunity to demonstrate their literary and rhetorical abilities. “They were the objects of special care and pride on the part of historians interested in style, and were the parts of history most appreciated by literary connoisseurs.”³ Thematically, oratory provided historians with platforms for explaining the meaning of events and for promoting their own ideas.

3. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 184.

Despite occasional efforts to rescue the authenticity of the general ideas expressed in speeches, the statements of historians, the literary critical tradition, and comparative data all provide a firm foundation for the understanding that speeches are normally the work of the author. Thucydides has long enjoyed a reputation as the finest of Greek historians and as the standard for truthful reporting. It is equally true that his speeches have been regarded, almost from the moment of their composition, as his greatest achievement.⁴ The funeral oration of Pericles (Thucydides, 2.34–46), for instance, is an enduring artifact of Western culture. Thucydides is also the single ancient historian who discusses the bases of the speeches he reports. Here is one rendition of a famous and difficult passage:

In this history I have made use of set speeches . . . I have found it difficult to remember the precise words used in the speeches (τὴν ἀκριβείαν αὐτῶν τῶν λεχθέντων⁵) which I listened to myself, and my various informants have experienced the same difficulty; so my method has been, while keeping as closely as possible to the general sense of the words that were actually used, to make the speakers say what, in my opinion, was called for by each situation.⁶

Thucydides makes what appears to be a confusing, indeed contradictory, claim. He will

- 1) report, insofar as memory (his own and that of his informants) allowed, the speakers' actual words
- 2) present speakers as saying what, in his view, the situation required

On the grounds of style, it is safe to conclude that "the actual words" are those of the author.⁷ Not until relatively recent times, under the influence of modern notions of what historians should do, did sustained attention settle upon the phrase about "what was actually said." Antiquity saw itself as following Thucydides in calling for speeches that were suitable to both speaker and occasion.⁸ Critics simply ignored the tension that seems so apparent to us. In

4. For example: Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Thucydides* 34. Dionysius, himself an historian and the major model for the *Antiquities* of Josephus, lived in the first century BCE.

5. Cf. Luke 1:3: ἀκριβῶς. Words from this stem often appear in prefaces: Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel*, 131.

6. Thucydides 1.22.3–4, *The Peloponnesian War*, 47.

7. For a recent review of the discussion of Thucydides' meaning in the context of Acts, see McCoy, "In the Shadow of Thucydides." Since McCoy's own discussion of the speeches in Thucydides evidently left a good deal to be desired, the editor was moved to correct it by supplementation ("Editor's Addendum," 23–32). Witherington (the editor) stresses that Thucydides' language is not contradictory, and he maintains that his speeches are generally reliable, although he gives no evidence for this assertion. Gempf, "Public Speaking and Published Accounts" is more nuanced than Witherington, while pleading for a degree of accuracy. Note also the much sharper summary of Moles, "Truth and Untruth in Herodotus and Thucydides," 88–121, 104–5, who concludes that ". . . license in reporting speeches became accepted historiographical principle," 105, and the valuable survey of Balch, "ἀκριβῶς . . . γράψαι (Luke 1:3)," 229–39, with numerous references.

8. Dionysius, *On Thucydides* 36.

his well-known and highly conventional essay on historiography written c. 165 CE, Lucian of Samosata repeatedly invokes the model of Thucydides against the practices of contemporary historians. In due course Lucian comes to the subject of speeches: "If a person has to be introduced to make a speech, above all let his language suit his person and his subject, and next let these also be as clear as possible. It is then, however, that you can play the orator and show your eloquence."⁹ Despite his vigorous polemic, Lucian assumes the right of authors to invent speeches. Propriety requires that they be suitable for the characters and appropriate to the subject.¹⁰ From beginning to end, suitability (τὸ πρέπον) seems to have been the only criterion worthy of discussion.

One motivating factor was the educational system of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, which emphasized imitation of great authors and directed students to compose suitable speeches for particular historical persons and occasions.¹¹ Fact was not, to say the least, at a premium. Fidelity could be associated with suitability in historiography, but it was not always available, and the historian may have had other concerns. An analogy from contemporary U.S. life is the appeal to "the Bible" or to "the Founding Fathers" for support of one's own views. In most cases, those making the claim offer no real textual justification for their position. So, too, ancient historians would offer speeches that either met the criterion of suitability (e.g., "this is, as everyone knows, what the Spartans always said") or supported their own positions.

Contemporary defenders of the accuracy of Luke's speeches may appeal to C. W. Fornara's contention that there was no ancient convention authorizing historians to compose speeches.¹² It is of the nature of conventions that they, unlike laws and rules, need not be stated. One often discovers them by observation—or breach. Lucian knows and accepts this convention. What he objects to is the abuse of it. The complaints of another admired ancient historian, Polybius (c. 200–c. 118 BCE), show that a historian might enter formal objections to the convention, but they certainly fail to disprove its existence.¹³ It is rarely necessary to attack customs and procedures that do not exist. Why did ancient historians and critics not discuss Thucydides about reporting actual words? It appears that some would have found such a practice undesirable while all realized that it was impossible. It was also conventional for historians to make claims that they could not fulfill. Thucydides assures his readers that he did his best.

9. The last sentence reads: πλὴν ἐφεῖται σοι τότε καὶ ῥητορεῦσαι καὶ ἐπιδείξαι τὴν τῶν λόγων δεινότητα. Lucian, *How to Write History* 71. See Hurst, *Lucien de Samosate*, 110 n. 384.

10. Lucian, *How to Write History* 26 provides an amusing example of an inappropriate oration.

11. On the Roman system, see Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome*, 85–99.

12. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Greece and Rome*, 24.

13. *Histories* 36.17. Polybius himself does not appear to have practiced what he preached in the matter of composing speeches.

Another approach is to look beyond the claims of historians to their actual practice. The results of such investigations are not very reassuring. Too many improbabilities arise.¹⁴ On occasion writers may be checked against their sources. The results of these investigations are even less reassuring. In addition to the famous example of an imperial speech preserved in an inscription and recounted by the Roman historian Tacitus¹⁵ are numerous examples of adaptations of orations from earlier authors.¹⁶ Many relevant comparisons appear in Josephus' adaptation of the speeches in his biblical sources. Here is an example of a speech that Josephus rewrote. The subject is the dying words of the patriarch of the Maccabees, Mattathias:

Table 1: The Testament of Mattathias

1 Maccabees 2:50–68

⁵⁰Now, my children, show zeal for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our ancestors. ⁵¹Remember the deeds of the ancestors, which they did in their generations; and you will receive great honor and an everlasting name. ⁵²Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness? ⁵³Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment, and became lord of Egypt. ⁵⁴Phinehas our ancestor, because he was deeply zealous, received the covenant of everlasting priesthood. ⁵⁵Joshua, because he fulfilled the command, became a judge in Israel. ⁵⁶Caleb, because he testified in the assembly, received an inheritance in the land. ⁵⁷David, because he was merciful, inherited the throne of the kingdom forever.

Josephus Ant. 12.279–284

O my sons, I am going the way of all the earth; and I recommend to you my resolution, and beseech you not to be negligent in keeping it, (280) but to be mindful of the desires of him who begat you, and brought you up, and to preserve the customs of your country, and to recover your ancient form of government, which is in danger of being overturned, and not to be carried away with those that, either by their own inclination, or out of necessity, betray it, (281) but to become such sons as are worthy of me; to be above all force and necessity, and so to dispose your souls, as to be ready, when it shall be necessary, to die for your laws, as sensible of this, by just reasoning, that if God see that you are so disposed he will not overlook you, but will have a great

14. With regard to Thucydides, see the preface of M. I. Finley to R. Warner's Penguin version (n. 9), 25–29. Finley shows that the historian not only abridged and selected but also neglected to state views that the situation required, while supplying some themes derived from his own hindsight and perspective.

15. The published account of Claudius' oration on the introduction of Gallic citizens into the Roman Senate is preserved on a bronze tablet from Lugdunum (Lyons), *CIL* 13.1668. For a translation with commentary, see Levick, *The Government of the Roman Empire*, 165–69. The speech as given in Tacitus, *Annals* 11.24, is different in theme and does not even follow the same structure. For further references, see Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World 300 B.C.–A.D. 300*, 432 n. 4, and Moles, "Truth and Untruth in Herodotus and Thucydides," 88–121, 105 n. 20.

16. Livy, e.g., often paraphrases the Greek historian Polybius, but his speeches are quite different. Plutarch and Tacitus agree closely in their account of the reign of Otho, but each goes his own way in reporting his final speech: Plutarch, *Otho* 15; Tacitus, *Histories* 2.47.

⁵⁸Elijah, because of great zeal for the law, was taken up into heaven. ⁵⁹Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael believed and were saved from the flame. ⁶⁰Daniel, because of his innocence, was delivered from the mouth of the lions. ⁶¹And so observe, from generation to generation, that none of those who put their trust in him will lack strength. ⁶²Do not fear the words of sinners, for their splendor will turn into dung and worms. ⁶³Today they will be exalted, but tomorrow they will not be found, because they will have returned to the dust, and their plans will have perished. ⁶⁴My children, be courageous and grow strong in the law, for by it you will gain honor. ⁶⁵Here is *your brother Simeon who, I know, is wise in counsel; always listen to him; he shall be your father.* ⁶⁶Judas Maccabeus has been a mighty warrior from his youth; he shall command the army for you and fight the battle against the peoples. ⁶⁷You shall rally around you all who observe the law, and avenge the wrong done to your people. ⁶⁸Pay back the Gentiles in full, and obey the commands of the law. (Trans. NRSV)

value for your virtue, and will restore to you again what you have lost, and will return to you that freedom in which you shall live quietly, and enjoy your own customs. (282) Your bodies are mortal, and subject to fate; but they receive a sort of immortality, by the remembrance of what actions they have done; and I would have you so in love with this immortality, that you may pursue after glory, and that, when you have undergone the greatest difficulties, you may not scruple, for such things, to lose your lives. (283) I exhort you especially to agree one with another; and in what excellency any one of you exceeds another, to yield to him so far, and by that means to reap the advantage of everyone's own virtues. Do you then esteem Simon as your father, because he is a man of extraordinary prudence, and be governed by him in what counsels he gives you. (284) Take Maccabeus for the general of your army, because of his courage and strength, for he will avenge your nation, and will bring vengeance on your enemies. Admit among you the righteous and religious, and augment their power. (Trans. Whiston)

There is no doubt that Josephus had access to 1 Maccabees nor that he had read this particular speech, for he paraphrases the closing advice, as noted by the *italics*. But the historian ignored both the structure and content of his model. The biblical speech urges obedience to Torah and offers a catalogue of heroic examples.¹⁷ Josephus refers to national customs and the ancestral constitution, language suggestive of the traditional structures of Greco-Roman city-states rather than, for example, of dietary laws. He also endows Mattathias with a philosopher's cloak. Like Socrates, this notable reflects upon immortality as his end draws near. As a historian, Josephus would receive low marks from us. But he was engaged in what is now called "acculturation," translating a symbol of one culture into the language and values of another.¹⁸

The following example indicates how Luke could introduce a speech into the gospel. In this case, unlike more or less all of Acts, he can be evaluated against his major source:

17. Cf. Hebrews 11.

18. Luke does the same when he makes apostles act like philosophers: Acts 4:19; 5:29; 5:12; 17:16–34, etc.

Table 2: Luke as a Speechwriter

Mark 6:1–4 (6)

Jesus left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. ²On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded.

They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! ³*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?*" And they took offense at him.

⁴Then Jesus said to them, "*Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.*"

(Narrative Conclusion)

⁵And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.

⁶And he was amazed at their unbelief. (Trans. NRSV)

Luke 4:16–28 (30)

¹⁶When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "*Is not this Joseph's son?*" ²³He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" ²⁴And he said, "Truly I tell you, *no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown.*" ²⁵But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; ²⁶yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. ²⁷There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

(Narrative Conclusion)

²⁸When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. ³⁰But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way. (Trans. NRSV)

There is a very strong consensus that Luke 4:16–30 is based upon Mark 6:1–6, which is an apophthegm (pronouncement story) centered upon the proverb about the experience of prophets in their hometowns.¹⁹ The *italics*, which indicate strong similarities, and the underlining that marks nearly identical wording intend to demonstrate this dependence. Luke also wrote a fresh conclusion. Moreover, he inserted into the anecdote a speech (vv. 18–27, less the interruption in v. 22). This example demonstrates that Luke was willing to provide a speech where his source had none. The biblical “text” of the sermon (which inserts a line from Isa 58:6 into a quotation from Isa 61:1–2, alt.) is certainly a Lucan choice, and he may have composed the rest of the material.²⁰

Josephus, likewise, might supply a speech where his source had but a sentence:

Table 3: Josephus as Speechwriter

Genesis 39:16–18

¹⁶Mme. Potiphar kept Joseph’s garment by her until his master came home, ¹⁷and she told him the same story, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me; ¹⁸but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside.” (Trans. NRSV)

Josephus Ant. 2:55–58

Accordingly she sat sorrowful and in confusion, framing herself so hypocritically and angrily, that the sorrow, which was really for her being disappointed of her lust, might appear to be for the attempt upon her chastity; so that when her husband came home, and was disturbed at the sight of her, and inquired what was the cause of the disorder she was in, she began to accuse Joseph: and, “O, husband” said she, “mayest thou not live a day longer if thou dost not punish the wicked slave who has desired to defile thy bed; (56) who has neither minded who he was when he came to our house, so as to behave himself with modesty; nor has he been mindful of what favors he had received from thy bounty (as he must be an ungrateful man indeed, unless he, in every respect, carry himself in a manner agreeable to us): this man, I say, laid a private design to abuse thy wife, and this at the time of a festival, observing when thou wouldst be absent. So that it now is clear that his modesty, as it appeared to be formerly, was only because of the restraint he was in out of fear of thee, but that he was not really of a good disposition. (57) This has been occasioned by his being advanced to honor beyond what he deserved and what

19. For evidence of this consensus, see Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 526–27. See also Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 188–89.

20. Other than the proverb about prophets, which comes from Mark and is given a pink coding, the balance of this passage is attributed to Lucan composition in Funk, *The Five Gospels*, 279–80.

he hoped for; insomuch that he concluded, that he who was deemed fit to be trusted with thy estate and the government of thy family, and was preferred above thy eldest servants, might be allowed to touch thy wife also" (58) Thus when she had ended her discourse, she showed him his garment, as if he then left it with her when he attempted to force her. (Trans. Whiston)

In this instance, Josephus replaces the few words of Genesis 39 with a short and florid oration designed to expose the vile hypocrisy of this deceiving creature. By present-day standards, the speech is inappropriate and artificial in comparison with the brief statement in his biblical model. Educated readers of Josephus' day would expect something of this nature, however, and he gave them what they wanted.²¹ The next example is far from obscure. It is selected to illustrate the liberties that Luke could take in transforming a narrative source into an oration. The source in this case was not an external document, such as Mark, but a narrative included within the book itself (Acts 9):

Table 4: The Road to Damascus

Acts 9:1–19a

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply

Acts 22:5–21

⁵From them I also received letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I went there in order to bind those who were there and to bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment. ⁶While I was on my way and approaching Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. ⁷I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁸I answered, "Who are you, Lord?" Then he said to me, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting." ⁹Now those

Acts 26:11–18

¹¹Since I was so furiously enraged at *the followers of Jesus*, I pursued them even to foreign cities. ¹²With this in mind, I was traveling to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³when at midday along the road, your Excellency, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. ¹⁴When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language. "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It hurts you to kick against the goads." ¹⁵I asked,

21. On the subject, see Pervo, "The Testament of Joseph and Greek Romance."

came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. ¹⁰Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, ¹²and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; ¹⁴and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings

who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. ¹⁰I asked, "What am I to do, Lord?" The Lord said to me, "Get up and go to Damascus; there you will be told everything that has been assigned to you to do." ¹¹Since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, those who were with me took my hand and led me to Damascus. ¹²A certain Ananias, who was a devout man according to the law and well spoken of by all the Jews living there, ¹³came to me; and standing beside me, he said, "Brother Saul, regain your sight!" In that very hour I regained my sight and saw him. ¹⁴Then he said, "The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear his own voice; ¹⁵for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name." ¹⁷After I had returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸and saw Jesus saying to me, "Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me."

"Who are you, Lord?" The Lord answered, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But get up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you. ¹⁷I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." (Trans. NRSV)

and before the people of Israel; ¹⁶I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength. (Trans. NRSV)

¹⁹And I said, "Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. ²⁰And while the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was standing by approving and keeping the coats of those who killed him." ²¹Then he said to me, "Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles." (Trans. NRSV)

The famous story of Paul's conversion is told three times in Acts.²² The narrative base, which comes from a hypothetical source, is printed in the first column. On two later occasions Acts portrays Paul as recounting this story to a Jewish audience in the temple (Acts 22) and to a mixed audience of Jewish and gentile notables (Acts 26). Underlined portions note major differences between the two speeches. (Differences between narrative source and the two speeches are ignored.) Although the same elements are found in all three accounts, there are substantial disparities. The leading shifts are in the time and locale of the commission to evangelize gentiles, which is the central theme. The speech of chapter 22 retains the figure of Ananias, but the commission is received while Paul is in an ecstatic trance in the temple—the very site in which the speech is being delivered. In chapter 26, however, ostensibly addressed to the Jewish client King Agrippa (II, 27/28–c. 90 CE), the missionary commission comes on the Damascus road.

These examples indicate that, even when there was a narrative report of events within the same volume, fully accessible to readers, authors could exercise considerable liberty in using that report as the source of a speech. Some of the minor differences between the speeches show suitability for different

22. On this narrative and the subsequent speeches, see Pervo, "Converting Paul," and Pervo, *Acts*, 230–34; 558–68; 623–38.

audiences. Chapter 26, for example, is written in more elegant Greek. Other alterations are far from cosmetic. The account in chapter 26 is both more distant from Acts 9 than that of chapter 22 and the closest of the three to Paul's own report in Gal 1:15–17, where "conversion" and commission also coincide, in the vicinity of Damascus: "When God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles . . . and afterwards I returned to Damascus." Readers of today find such contradictions a confusing and questionable practice, but it is unlikely that Luke was attempting to confound or deceive his audience, which evidently did not expect two speeches describing the same event to agree with one another. Josephus could do much the same.²³

If Luke is to be judged by the standards of ancient historians, he possessed a license to invent speeches, but the hypothesis that Luke saw himself as an historian like Polybius or Josephus remains questionable, despite frequent repetition. Luke's provision of set speeches has been, as noted, a major pillar of this hypothesis. For the purposes of the Acts Seminar, this practice does nothing to support the case for the accuracy of Luke's narrative. There are, however, important differences between the speeches reported in Acts and those of the ancient historians. In a famous essay written in 1944, Martin Dibelius noted a number of differences between the speeches of the historians and those of Luke:²⁴

1. the author of Acts tends to avoid direct personal judgments or to give two sides of a question
2. the speeches in Acts are far shorter than those found in the historians²⁵
3. Luke appears to compose speeches for critical moments and to shed light upon major events, but the actual speeches may fail to address the ostensible issues
4. There is too much variation in style. Lucan speeches often serve to illuminate and portray character (a quality expected from novelists but not from ancient historians)²⁶

Although Dibelius thinks that Luke read historians, he judges that

. . . [T]he speeches in Acts are, as we have shown, both in detail and taken as a whole, so different from the speeches we know in the work of ancient historians that we cannot name any historian whom we might say Luke had taken as his model. . . . In the last analysis, however, he is not an historian but a preacher.

23. Josephus reports quite different speeches by Herod on the same occasion in *Wars* 1.373–379 and *Antiquities* 15.127–146. In that case the differences are related to the respective genres of the two works. The *Wars* is similar to Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, whereas the *Antiquities* is like the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

24. Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*.

25. Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, 143–44, noted that a number of the speeches in Xenophon's *Hellenica* are rather brief.

26. The parenthetical comment is my own.

He concludes that Luke found new uses for the "traditional art of composing speeches."²⁷

An additional factor not made explicit by Dibelius, is that the speeches of historians tend to stand apart from the narrative in that they function as interpretation and commentary upon it. The speeches in Acts, on the other hand, are normally *part* of the narrative. Political oratory may lead to *decisions*. The orations of Acts precipitate events of which they often constitute a part. Furthermore, as Colin Hemer recognized, the speeches in Acts, which comprise at least 30 percent of the total verses in the book, should not be divorced from other types of direct speech. According to his calculations, "slightly more than half the book of Acts is taken up with the recording of direct speech."²⁸ He offers comparisons with the first book of Josephus's *Jewish War* (8.8 percent of the sections include direct speech; the total percentage based upon an actual word count, would be smaller), with the first book of Polybius, where the contrast is "extreme," and the opening book of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, where there is also little speech.²⁹ Hemer concludes: "Thus the author of Acts displays an interest in direct speech that is not readily paralleled in other ancient literature."³⁰ The issue Hemer identifies is that, if the use of speeches in Acts evokes techniques favored by historians, the use of dialogue is quite different from historiography.³¹

If the speeches in Acts are somewhat unlike those found in historical works, it might be suggested that they could therefore be accurate.³² The author may have wished, unlike many historians, to preserve the thoughts and ideas, if not the precise words, of early Christian leaders. Memories were well trained; records of trials were kept and may have been accessible. The use of "we" suggests that the author was present during the period covered in Acts 21–28 and therefore able to hear or receive reports about what Paul and others said. Then

27. Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, 183. Many of his conclusions have been qualified or challenged. They are set forth because they still set the parameters for debate, as a glance at any commentary of the past half-century will indicate.

28. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, 416. See also Pervo, "Direct Speech in Acts and the Question of Genre."

29. See also Plümacher, "The Mission Speeches in Acts and Dionysius of Halicarnassus," who explores the speeches in Dionysius as precipitants of action (similarities between Luke and Dionysius may derive from Luke's knowledge of Josephus).

30. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, 416–18. In n. 10 on p. 418, he states that biography also has a relatively small quantity of direct speech. Hemer did not include ancient novels within his investigation. In some of those works, the "interest in direct speech" is "readily paralleled." See Pervo, "Direct Speech in Acts and the Question of Genre."

31. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 183 n. 3, also notes the density of spoken matter in Acts in contrast to the practice of historians.

32. Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 248–49, raises this question in his Appendix on the historicity of Acts. He concludes: "The matter needs examination" (249). This recommendation is somewhat disingenuous, for the matter has received a great deal of examination, an excellent summary of which can be found on those two pages, which are a model of a compact yet lucid review of scholarship with numerous references to primary texts.

there is the theologically “primitive” and archaic quality of the speeches in Acts 1–7, which are set in Jerusalem. Luke would not have had the wits to produce such undeveloped theology had he wished to do. These proposals can be answered point by point:

1) The view that Luke was governed by canons of strict accuracy is no more than a scholarly desire for dependable information, bolstered by traditional reverence for scripture and, in some circles, by the nineteenth-century concepts of biblical inerrancy.³³ Although comparison of Luke with Mark (and, via Matthew, with Q) indicates that Luke handles the tradition of Jesus’ sayings rather conservatively, there is no proposal that Acts made use of a corresponding “speech-source.” Hemer sought to classify the major speeches in Acts as summaries of what was actually said upon the occasion.³⁴ He regarded “. . . [A]ny supposition that they are verbatim reports . . .” as “an extreme position.”³⁵ Rejecting this “extreme position,” Hemer goes on to say

The brief summary paragraphs we possess do not purport to reproduce more than perhaps a *précis* of the distinctive highlights. They do not read as transcripts of oral delivery and the responses of the audience to them do not relate realistically to the bald words reported. The real issue is whether they are Lukan summaries or Lukan creations.³⁶

The leading obstacle to the acceptance of this hypothesis is the first sentence. Luke nowhere states that he is presenting “a *précis* of the distinctive highlights.” At 2:40, following the dialogue that closes Peter’s Pentecost address, the narrator states that he is abridging a speech: “*Peter testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’*” There is a difference between an abridgement and a *précis*. The former alters a text by deletions of varying length. Readers expect that they will encounter the author’s own words, albeit fewer of them. A *précis* is a summary often prepared by the hand of another person. Hemer supports his view by reference to summaries, such as 9:22, 14:1, 3, etc.³⁷ I do not see how these passages enhance his case. When Luke wishes to summarize a message, he does so. The proper mode for a *précis* is indirect discourse, as in Acts 17:17: “*Paul argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day*

33. “Inerrant” is first attested in English with reference to other than the “fixed stars” (versus the planets) in 1837. The corresponding doctrines of papal and biblical infallibility arose in the nineteenth century in the face of the claims of science.

34. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, 415–27. (This section is part of an appendix assembled by the editor from incomplete drafts.) I have not been able to trace the claim that the speeches are intended as summaries further back than Jaquier 1926: cclix; cclxvii.

35. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, 418.

36. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, 418.

37. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, 418.

with those who happened to be there."³⁸ An example of the practice can be seen in Plutarch's life of Mark Antony:

It so happened that when Caesar's body was carried out for burial, Antony delivered the customary eulogy over it in the Forum. When he saw that his oratory had cast a spell over the people and that they were deeply stirred by his words, he began to introduce into his praises a note of pity and of indignation at Caesar's fate. Finally, at the close of his speech, he snatched up the dead man's robe and brandished it aloft, all bloodstained as it was and stabbed through in many places, and called those who had done the deed murderers and villains.³⁹

Few of those educated in the English-speaking world are now familiar with Plutarch's summary. We are, however, privileged to know the speech itself, through the kind offices of Shakespeare (*Julius Caesar* III.2.80–276), the opening sentence of which, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears," could be recited by some Americans who might have difficulty recalling the first stanza of the U.S. national anthem. If Luke had wished to make it clear that his speeches were summaries of longer addresses, he would have been well advised to make use of the medium of indirect discourse, as did Plutarch in this example. Since the claim that these speeches are summaries has no support from the narrator, it cannot stand. The argument presented by Hemer *et al.* constitutes what rhetoricians call an "enthymeme," a syllogism with one premise suppressed: "Since these speeches are too short to be *verbatim* records, they must be summaries." The full syllogism is: "Luke is highly accurate. The speeches in Acts are too short to be *verbatim* reports. Therefore they must be summaries." The problem, of course, is that the major premise (Luke is accurate) is highly debatable.

2) Many ancients did possess well-trained memories, but this ability did not enable hearers to retain the contents of an oration upon one hearing. Thucydides speaks of the difficulty of remembering speeches (1.22, cited above). Although records were kept of trial proceedings, these notes did not include *verbatim* transcripts of speeches.⁴⁰ The notion that Peter and Paul had shorthand recorders at hand is an idea that does not even attain to the level of fantasy.

3) Contemporary advocates of a "we-source," that is, eyewitness material marked by the first-person plural, tend to view the composer of the we-source as different from the final author of Acts.⁴¹ By all accounts, the speeches are the

38. Even in such summaries, Luke often breaks into direct speech, as in 17:2–3. (Direct discourse involves quotation. Indirect discourse places or summarizes what was said in the author's own words. *She said, "They are here"* is direct discourse. An indirect report would be *She said that they were here at 5:00.*)

39. Plutarch, *Life of Mark Antony* 283.

40. See Cadbury, "The Speeches in Acts," 406.

41. For example Porter, *The Paul of Acts*, 1–66, and Wehnert, *Die Wir-Passagen der Apostelgeschichte*.

work of the final author of Acts. There is no strong case in current scholarship for support of the claim that some of the speeches in Acts stem from the author’s recollections.

4) The theology of the speeches is not “primitive,” nor is it inconsistent with Lucan theology.⁴² The material claimed to be early is, in fact, quite well attested in Christian writings of the second century.⁴³ Discussions of this alleged “primitivism” must perforce be limited to the speeches reported in Acts 1–7 and in particular to the speeches of Peter in Acts 2 and 3, since the standard for what is “primitive” is the theology of Paul as found in his letters.

This argument opens the door to a larger issue. The speech of Paul at Pisidian Antioch (13:16–41) bears striking resemblances to earlier speeches, notably those of Peter and Stephen.⁴⁴ If Luke did obtain accurate information about the early preaching of Peter, it must be conceded that he attributes similar methods and ideas to Paul. For the latter, however, there is a control: his letters, the theology of which is the leading grounds for regarding that of Acts as primitive.⁴⁵ Few arguments so readily and so persuasively deconstruct as does the claim for a pre-Lucan, early Christian theology in the speeches of Acts as evidence for their accuracy. In his survey of the speeches in Acts, Marion Soards was more impressed by their similarity than by their differences.⁴⁶ From this observation, Soards arrives at an understanding of the purpose of the speeches: to demonstrate that early Christians shared uniform beliefs. The speeches bring together varied strains of history and thought, imposing a unity upon both the book of Acts and the theology of the early church.⁴⁷ The speeches create history rather than report it.⁴⁸ Table 5 exhibits a striking example of this similarity:

Table 5: Peter and Paul

Acts 2:25–31 (Peter)

²⁵For David says concerning him, “I saw the Lord always before me, for he

Acts 13:35–37 (Paul)

³⁵Therefore he has also said in another psalm,

42. The most sophisticated argument for the early character of the theology represented in the speeches of Acts was Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*. Dodd was not engaged in demonstrating the historical accuracy of these sermons. His goal was the discovery of the early Christian creed.

43. See Pervo, *Dating Acts*, for evidence of the compatibility of the theology of Acts with second century texts.

44. On these parallels, see, among others, Tannehill, *The Narrative Union of Luke-Acts*, 168–69, 174.

45. Although there are texts associated with the name of Peter, including 1–2 Peter, *Gospel of Peter*, *Apocalypse of Peter*, *Letter of Peter to James*, none of these are compositions of Peter that can form a standard for comparison.

46. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*.

47. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 12–13; 182.

48. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 107, provides a list of nine elements regularly found in missionary speeches.

is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; ²⁶therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. ²⁷For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption.

²⁸You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence." ²⁹Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor *David* that he both *died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.* ³⁰Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹Foreseeing this, *David* spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, "He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption." (Trans. NRSV)

"You will not let your Holy One experience corruption."

³⁶For *David*, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, died, was laid beside his ancestors, and experienced corruption;

³⁷but he whom God raised up experienced no corruption. (Trans. NRSV)

Both passages quote the same Psalm and deploy the same exegetical method. The citation comes from LXX Ps 15:8–11 (= Psalm 16 in the Hebrew Bible). The common argument depends upon this Greek text.⁴⁹ The exegetical presumption is that "scripture cannot be broken," so to speak. Scripture states that the body of God's Holy One will not decay. Since this cannot apply to the author, *David*, it must apply to another.⁵⁰ Peter and Paul can confidently supply the missing answer. Luke's evident purpose in showing both missionaries engaged in the same interpretation of an identical passage in their first missionary sermon is to demonstrate that Christian proclamation was everywhere the same.⁵¹ Furthermore, the argument of Acts 13 depends upon the fuller quotation of the psalm in Acts 2, where *David* is presented as speaking in the first person.⁵²

As Martin Dibelius recognized, the speeches in Acts are addressed to the readers of the book rather than to their dramatic audiences. Luke does not take excessive measures to conceal this interest. In a speech urging the selection

49. Citation of the LXX would have been appropriate in Pisidian Antioch, where Greek was the dominant language, but not in Jerusalem.

50. Cf. Acts 8:34, where the first question of the Ethiopian official is whether the author of Isaiah speaks of himself or of another.

51. For additional examples of such shared quotations, see Cadbury, "The Speeches in Acts," 407.

52. Other examples include the citation of Deut 18:15–16 in Acts 3:22–23 (Peter), which is abbreviated in the speech of Stephen at 7:37. The text of 17:23 presents Paul as speaking of "an unknown god," the existence of whom is assumed in the following verse. The gap was filled in 14:15–17, which argues that God is known through creation. See Townsend, "The Speeches in Acts," 151–52.

of a twelfth apostle, Peter summarizes for his hearers the fate of Judas (Acts 1:16–18), concluding in the next verse, “This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.” For the dramatic audience, who themselves were “residents of Jerusalem” at the time in question, this information was wholly gratuitous. Furthermore, “their language” was, for that audience, “our language,” Aramaic, the very language in which this speech would have been made. This, the first formal address in Acts, establishes the reader as the actual audience of the speeches.

The language barrier to historicity is not limited to the foregoing example. Sermons delivered to Jewish (or Jewish-Christian) hearers in Acts introduce and interpret various scriptural passages. All of these, like the example cited above in Table 5, are from the Greek Bible (LXX) and depend upon it. In some cases the Hebrew text would not sustain the argument. A notable example comes from the speech of James at the “Apostolic Council” in Acts 15. In order to clinch his argument for the inclusion of gentiles in the community, James cites Amos 9:11–12. Table 6 compares the two, in English translation.⁵³ The crucial verse is underlined:

Table 6: The Septuagint

Amos 9:11–12 (Hebrew Text, Trans. NRSV)

¹¹On that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; ¹²in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name, says the LORD who does this.

Amos 9:11–12 (Greek Text, Acts 15:16–18, Trans. NRSV)

¹⁶After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, ¹⁷so that all other peoples may seek the Lord—even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things ¹⁸known from long ago.

The argument depends upon the Septuagint, a version that the historical James would have been unlikely to cite and may not have been able to read. No citation, close paraphrase, or Aramaic version would have sufficed to make the point. This exegesis comes from a milieu in which the Greek Bible is the only bible.⁵⁴

53. There are differences between the LXX as we have it and the citation in Acts. Although these are interesting, they do not affect the crucial point, which is v. 12.

54. The Qumran texts of this passage show no important deviation from the Masoretic text rendered by NRSV (Abegg, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, 440), and therefore provide no support to claims that James was citing an edition of the Hebrew text closer to the LXX than to the MT. The LXX has a number of examples of kinds of sensitivities that have become controversial in contemporary translations. The most notable of these tone down animosity toward gentiles and their gods or express openness toward non-Jews. The modifications of Amos 9:11–12 are thus typical.

In conclusion, the various speeches in Acts were composed in Greek by the author of Acts for the readers of the book. They have considerable historical value for the time, circumstances, and views of Luke, but they are not first-hand records of primitive Christian history. Peter and James certainly spoke in various circumstances in Jerusalem and Paul did proclaim his message in Corinth and elsewhere, but the speeches contained in Acts are not based upon recollections of what was said at the time. Any resemblance between what was actually said and what is reported in Acts is most probably purely coincidental. In summary form, the *general* reasons for attributing the speeches of Acts to the author are:

1. Greco-Roman antiquity presumed that speeches included in works of literature, including history, were the work of the author rather than the putative speaker. This is the “default” position.
2. the speeches in Acts are Lucan in language, style, and thought
3. the speeches often play a role in the narrative; they lead to action
4. the majority of the speeches are interdependent: reinforcing, sequential, or assumed as pre-supposition to other speeches. They build upon and depend upon one another.
5. the speeches establish the unity of the narrative of Acts and the continuity of its plot and thought
6. they are therefore directed to the readers of the book rather than to the dramatic audiences in the text
7. means and motives for preserving the speeches did not exist. Transcripts of sermons were neither made nor retained. Legal records were incomplete and unavailable. There is no known social context, such as liturgy, preaching, teaching, doctrinal self-definition, defense against opponents, etc., for preserving, translating, and transmitting material of this type and length.⁵⁵

Appendix: Letters

Ancient critics treated letters included within historical works as authorial compositions, on the same level as speeches.⁵⁶ Henry Cadbury took note of a letter contained in Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War* that Dionysius of Halicarnassus evaluated as a Thucydidean composition, and of the letters in the works of the historian Sallust (first century BCE), which received a similar

55. This assertion can be established by contrast with most of the speeches of Jesus in Luke, such as those found in Luke 6, 12, 21, and 22, where the speeches are constructed from independent units or shorter blocs of material for which there are *Sitz im Leben*. No student of the speeches of Acts, to my knowledge, disputes this contrast.

56. Copies of real or alleged decrees in epistolary form are a different matter, although their authenticity is often hotly disputed.

evaluation from Fronto (second century CE).⁵⁷ Of the two letters in Acts (15:23–29; 23:26–30), Cadbury says that they “. . . are so characteristic of the author’s style as to support the presumption that he is responsible for them.”⁵⁸

The content of these letters does nothing to disturb this judgment. Although the provisions of the Apostolic Decree in Acts 15:23–29 are probably not a Lucan invention, they could not have been promulgated at the time in question, since Paul was not aware of them.⁵⁹ The authenticity of the letter of Claudius Lysias in Acts 23 stands or falls with the historicity of the events it summarizes, some of which—the account appearance of Paul before the Sanhedrin and the massive conspiracy necessitating his rescue, for example—are unlikely. Lysias also appears to borrow the language of Gallio in Acts 18:15 in his summary of the issue. It is entirely in agreement with Luke’s perspective and program that there were no substantive charges against Paul. If Lysias had regarded Paul as innocent, he should have discharged the prisoner—who, according to the letter, is a rescued victim rather than an accused felon in any case—without further ado. Finally, it is most unlikely that Luke had access to official correspondence.

57. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 190–91. The references are Dionysius of Halicarnassas, *On Thucydides* 42 and Fronto, *Letters* 2.1.

58. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 191.

59. 1 Corinthians 8; 10:1–11:1.

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Circumcision as a Means of Testing the Historicity of Acts 16:1–5

Nina E. Livesey

In Acts 16:1–5 the author, commonly referred to as Luke, recounts that the apostle Paul circumcised Timothy, a Christ-believer and son of a Jewish mother and gentile father. Hearers and readers of this account are given the impression that, because Timothy would have been considered a Jew on account of his mother, the Jews in the areas to which Paul planned to visit would be better prepared to accept his message of Christ if Timothy were circumcised. Thus, Paul circumcised Timothy to accommodate Jews of the region. Through a comparison of Paul's pronouncements and fuller treatments of circumcision that derive from his extant correspondence and Luke's narration of Paul's understanding of circumcision, I demonstrate that Acts 16:1–5 reverses Paul's position concerning circumcision. Rather than representing any of Paul's various understandings of circumcision, Luke creates his own Jew-pleasing image of Paul to advance his own theological position.

Paul on Circumcision

Paul's pronouncements regarding circumcision are the result of his own reorientation of thinking and require the same of his gentile audiences. Based on his revelation (Gal 1:15–16), Paul resolves that access to, worship of, and acceptance of the God of Israel has now been made available to gentiles as gentiles (that is, uncircumcised or foreskinned). That the God of Israel would govern and consider just persons who live their lives non-Jewishly, who do not follow the Jewish laws and practices such as circumcision, was one of Paul's fundamental principles and involved a new way of thinking about God's dealings with gentiles.

Paul's stance regarding circumcision and gentiles was new and different, because in the ancient world adherents of the God of Israel were with only few exceptions¹ circumcised. Shaye Cohen has argued this point most extensively and forcibly.

1. See Philo, *Migration of Abraham*, 89–93.

The Greek-speaking Jews of the second temple period and the Hebrew- (and Aramaic-) speaking Jews after 70 CE debated the meaning of circumcision and the ritual's exact place in the conversion process, but as far as is known no (non-Christian) Jewish community in antiquity accepted male proselytes who were not circumcised. Perhaps the God of the Jews would be pleased with gentiles who venerated him and practiced some of the laws, and perhaps in the coming eschaton gentiles would not need to be circumcised to be part of God's holy people; but if those gentiles wanted to join the Jewish community in the here and now, they had to accept circumcision.²

Paul's letters recount the difficulty in gaining acceptance for his novel idea. Those who felt convinced that gentiles needed to become circumcised Jews in order to belong to the God of Israel, opposed the plan,³ and even those gentiles who wished to gain access to this God were themselves confused about how they could belong without first taking this customary ritual for becoming a Jew (Gal 1:6–9; 2:3; 3:1–4, 6, 10–11, 13–14; 4:8–11, 21–5:12; 6:12–13, 15).⁴

Paul is thoroughly convinced and unyielding in his opinion that gentiles in Christ should remain in their uncircumcised state. Indeed, this is the main issue Paul addresses in his letter to the Galatians and one on which he touches briefly in his letter to the Philippians (3:2–4). Paul is not swayed by any opposition, either by the so-called “circumcision party” (τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς; Gal 2:12), or by other opponents or influencers⁵ (Gal 5:2–12, 6:12–13; Phil 3:2–4)

2. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew,” 27. In addition, according to Cohen, for Josephus “the essence of ‘conversion’” is circumcision. Cohen, “Respect for Judaism by Gentiles According to Josephus,” 421. Other scholars have agreed with this view. See Schiffman, *Who was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism*, 25, 39; Nolland, “Uncircumcised Proselytes?,” 173–94; Fredriksen, “Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2,” 239.

In contrast, see Collins who surveys propaganda literature (*Sibylline Oracles* 3 and 4, the *Letter of Aristeas* and *Pseudo-Phocylides*), Philo, Josephus, and a conversion text from the Diaspora, *Joseph and Aseneth*, and concludes that the propaganda literature does not require conversion and that circumcision was not a universal requirement for conversion to Judaism in the second-temple period. Collins, “A Symbol of Otherness,” 163–79. See also Jonathan Z. Smith who writes, “The wide range of uses and interpretations of circumcision as a taxic indicator in early Judaism suggest that, even with respect to this most fundamental division, we cannot sustain the impossible construct of a normative Judaism. We must conceive of a variety of early Judaisms, clustered in varying configurations.” Smith, *Imagining Religion*, 14. See also McEleney, “Conversion, Circumcision and the Law,” 332.

3. In Paul's Letter to the Galatians, we see the opposition to allowing gentiles access to the God of Israel without being circumcised. For a review of the rather sizeable scholarship dealing with the issue of the identity and goals of the opponents, see Mark Nanos' writings.

4. This is the issue that Paul takes up in his letter to the Galatians, addressed to gentiles.

5. For a history of the various names of those who negatively influence Paul's addressees, see Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians*, 115–30. Nanos opts for the name “influencers,” others have labeled this group “Judaizers” (Marcion), “opponents” or “rivals” (Hans Dieter Betz and many others), “agitators” (Robert Jewett), and “teachers” (J. L. Martyn).

who insist upon this Jewish practice. He argues forcibly against gentiles taking up this practice, stating that Christ would no longer be of any benefit to them and that they would be effectively removed from Christ (Gal 5:2, 4). Paul refers ironically or even sarcastically to any other position on this issue as “another gospel” (ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον; Gal 1:6),⁶ one that he equates with an anathema (ἀνάθεμα; Gal 1:7–9). Paul allows for no deviation from his original stance regarding circumcision and does not in any way accommodate the opinions of others on this subject. According to Paul, no gentiles in Christ are to be circumcised.

While Paul’s letters reveal a nearly exclusive concern for gentiles, his various pronouncements concerning the on-going validity of the rite of circumcision pertain to the states of circumcision and uncircumcision, thus to both Jews and gentiles in Christ. According to Paul, the physical practice of circumcision is no longer significant. In Gal 3:28 Paul remarks, “There is no longer Jew nor Greek; there is no longer slave nor freeperson; there is no longer male and female; for

In her recent monograph, Michelle Murray has argued that the opponents are gentile Christians who Judaize. According to her, a Judaizer is a gentile who lives like a Jew by observing various components of the Mosaic law but who does not fully convert to Judaism. Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 3, 29–41. Adopting this view, however, requires the assumption that a “Christian” theology that included certain Jewish laws existed prior to or even alongside of Paul’s theology. As far as I know, we have no articulation of being “Christian,” if one can use this term, prior to Paul’s articulation of what it means to be in Christ.

Nanos appears to lean more toward the notion that the influencers in Galatia are themselves former gentiles who have taken the steps necessary to fully convert to Judaism; that is, they have become Jews. Nanos’ opinion turns on how best to interpret the participle περιτεμνόμενοι Paul uses (Gal 6:13) to identify them. At the end of his lengthy discussion, Nanos concludes, “Whatever choice is made about this substantive participle, these influencers are Jewish, whether natural-born or proselytes, and thus in Paul’s judgment ‘indebted to do the whole Law’ (5:3).” Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*, 234–42.

6. Mark Nanos argues that, in these early verses of Galatians, Paul employs ironic rebuke to chastise his gentile audience. Nanos asks, “Why does he rebuke them?” He answers, “For an inappropriate interest in and trust of the influencers and their message of *apparent* good in view of the *real* good that has become theirs already in Christ.” Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*, 39–44. Thus, according to Nanos, Paul does not seriously consider that there is another gospel.

The existence of another “gospel” that functions as an actual alternative to Paul’s gospel is often what leads commentators to conclude that the opponents of Paul have an alternative Christian message to that of Paul. Thus, they surmise that the opponents are Jewish-Christian or Christian Jews or Gentile Christians. All of these designations are related in that they understand that to belong to Christ one must also follow some aspects of Jewish law. These distinctions are anachronistic, however, because they assume knowledge of Pauline theology regarding the significance of Christ prior to Paul’s articulation of it. Interestingly, Betz calls Paul’s “other gospel” the “gospel of circumcision.” According to Betz, the opponents are “Jewish-Christian missionaries rivaling Paul.” Betz goes on to say, “Except for the demand of obedience to the Torah and acceptance of circumcision, their ‘gospel’ must have been the same as Paul’s.” Betz, *Galatians*, 7, 48.

we are all one in Christ Jesus.”⁷ Twice in his letter to the Galatians (5:6, 6:15) and once in 1 Corinthians (7:19) Paul restates this claim. In 1 Cor 7:19, he states emphatically that neither the state of being circumcised nor the state of being with foreskin (ἀκροβυστία) is of any significance. In Gal 5:6, Paul uses the Greek verb ἰσχύειν (“to be strong”) and two negative particles (οὔτε. . . οὔτε) to describe the insignificance of the states of circumcision and foreskin. Rather than translating this verse more literally, as “neither circumcision nor foreskin is strong . . .”, J. Louis Martyn renders the phrase, “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision accomplishes anything at all.”⁸ Despite some variance in the translation of this verse, Paul is likely saying that such a determiner of ethnic identity has no controlling significance for those in Christ. In each of the other two verses in which Paul uses very similar wording (Gal 6:15 and 1 Cor 7:19), he uses the Greek verb εἶναι (“to be”), more clearly stating his claim as to the insignificance of the states of circumcision and foreskin for those in Christ.⁹ Furthermore, according to Paul, no one is to change his physical condition, either to become circumcised, or visa-versa become with a foreskin—a procedure known as epispasm (1 Cor 7:18). By adopting such a casual attitude toward this ritual, Paul essentially robs it of any meaningful significance.

Paul also directly addresses Abraham’s circumcision, the presumed “father of circumcision” (Gen 10:11–12; Rom 4:12). Even in the case of this prominent Jewish figure with whom Jews associate the rite of circumcision, Paul strips the literal rite of value. The significance of Abraham’s circumcision was not to establish his identity as a Jew nor to signify the sign of the covenant between the God of Israel and himself (Gen 17:11) but, instead, to be a metaphor (a seal) that signified being made right with God through trust in God (σφραγίδα τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῆς πίστεως). Abraham was made right with God prior to becoming circumcised and thus *without* circumcision (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:9–12). The purpose of his circumcision was not, as it is in Gen 17:10–14, to have all others

7. Within the recent history of interpretation, this verse has been understood variously. The verse came to the attention of several New Testament scholars after the publication of Daniel Boyarin’s monograph on Paul that includes this verse within its title. In my opinion, Boyarin misinterprets the sense of this verse and instead understands Paul to say that he would make everyone the same. In contrast, in this same letter Paul wants to do just the opposite: to maintain ethnic status for gentiles. Thus, the meaning of this verse is not that Paul would actually wipe away ethnic, social, and gender difference, but that he would have people *consider* such categories as insignificant. Paul is talking about a state of mind and not a physical condition. In contrast to Boyarin, Pamela Eisenbaum states, “Paul’s vehement rejection of circumcision demonstrates his commitment to maintaining Jews and Gentiles as different and distinct, and militates strongly against seeing Paul’s goal as creating human homogeneity.” Eisenbaum, “Is Paul the Father of Misogyny and Antisemitism?,” 518.

8. Martyn, *Galatians*, 467, 73.

9. Gal 6:15 states, οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστιν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία. First Cor 7:19 reads, ἡ περιτομή οὐδὲν ἐστιν καὶ ἡ ἀκροβυστία οὐδὲν ἐστιν. Martyn translates the next two passages as follows: “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything at all” (Gal 6:15), and “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing” (1 Cor 7:19). Martyn, *Galatians*, 473.

follow suit and become circumcised themselves but, just the reverse, so that everyone who follows after him (Rom 4:12) may have the possibility of being made righteous *without* circumcision (4:11–12).

A possible exception to Paul's insistence upon the insignificance of physical circumcision is found in Rom 3:1–2, a passage in which Paul remarks that the physical sign of circumcision has significance for Jews as they were entrusted with the oracles of God. Yet in this verse Paul is referring to the historical significance of circumcision for Jews and not to the present value of circumcision for Christ-believing Jews and gentiles.

Paul assesses circumcision positively elsewhere in his writings, but only in so far as it functions as a metaphor. In Romans, Paul gives primacy to a circumcision of the heart¹⁰ (Rom 2:29). According to him, a person is deemed a Jew, not by his literal circumcision of the flesh, but instead by his attitude of heart. "For a person is not a Jew by visible appearance, nor is circumcision by visible appearance, in flesh, rather a Jew is in secret (hidden), and circumcision is a matter of the heart—in spirit/breath and not in letter" (οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερωῷ Ἰουδαίος ἐστὶν οὐδὲ ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερωῷ ἐν σαρκὶ περιτομή, ἀλλ' ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαίος, καὶ περιτομὴ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι; Rom 2:28–29). Paul stresses the inner disposition to make the case that gentiles can be "circumcised" without having to change their physical state.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul affirms a metaphorical circumcision for those in Christ. The "circumcised," of whom Paul counts himself a member, are those who serve in the spirit of God, boast (καυχᾶσθαι) in Christ Jesus, and do not have confidence (πίθειν) in the flesh (3:3). The entire phrase reads ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες (3:3). While here Paul offers two positive values for circumcision, neither pertains to literal circumcision. Indeed, his reference to "not" in the flesh (οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ)¹¹ is likely a direct reference to the insignificance of literal circumcision for being named among "the circumcised."

In sum, by means of a revelation Paul advances the notions that for those in Christ (gentile or Jew) the physical states of circumcision and uncircumcision have no significance whatsoever and that gentiles may be considered full members of the God of Israel without this requirement. The notion of circumcision is assessed positively only as a metaphor: it defines a Jew as someone whose heart is "circumcised" (Rom 2:28–29), and represents those who serve in the spirit of God, boasting in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:3). Abraham's circumcision receives its "real" value for Paul and his gentile audiences as a sign and seal of a state of righteousness granted to Abraham while he was yet uncircumcised

10. This is certainly not a new concept. Paul draws upon scriptural precedence (Deut 10:16; Lev 26:41; Jer 4:4, 6:10, 9:25; Ezek 44:7, 9). See also 1QS 5:5; 1QpHab 11:13; 4Q 177, 184. Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, 236 n. 153.

11. Silva, *Philippians*, 149.

(Rom 4:11). Nowhere in the writings of Paul is the physical rite of circumcision required or necessary. To the contrary, as a literal rite, it is robbed of its value. Paul is consistent on this issue and does not waiver in the face of opposition or the influence of others. To the contrary, he holds firm to the belief that in Christ no one (gentile or Jew) should change his physical condition, either becoming circumcised or removing the marks of it.

Luke's Paul on circumcision versus Paul on circumcision

In the book of Acts, Luke claims to narrate events as they happened (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1–2).¹² Thus, the book of Acts makes a claim that it falls within the genre¹³ of history. As such, with Acts the hearer/reader would not expect innovation or the creation of ideas but rather the narration or interpretation of the past. As we shall see, however, with regard to Paul and circumcision, Luke departs rather dramatically from his stated purpose of narrating history.

In Acts 16:1–5, Luke recounts the story of Paul's dealings with Timothy. Hearers/readers of Acts learn that Timothy is a product of parents of differing ethnicities: his father is Greek (16:3) and his mother is a Jew (16:1). This explanation clues his audience that Timothy is at least half Jewish or perhaps even by Jewish standards fully Jewish.¹⁴ In recognition of the presumption that Jews¹⁵ would insist upon circumcision, Luke recounts that Paul circumcised

12. Regarding the purpose of Acts, F. F. Bruce comments, "The author does not leave his readers to speculate what that purpose might be: he states it explicitly in the prologue to his Gospel" (Luke 1:1–4). Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 6.

13. There are extensive and varied views on the subject of the genre of the book of Acts. For a recent discussion of the history of this debate, see Smith, "The Acts of the Apostles and the Rewriting of Christian History," 7–32. Smith demonstrates that Acts has many parallels with the ancient novel genre and is perhaps best viewed as "interpreted" history (p. 27).

14. Shaye Cohen concludes his article regarding the ethnic status of Timothy by stating that, according to the majority of commentators and historical witnesses, Timothy was considered a gentile. There are, however, some exceptions. "Ambrosiaster," the name given to an unidentified commentator who wrote during the second half of the fourth century, and in contrast to both Jerome and Augustine, argued that "Timothy was a Jew because of his Jewish mother." His father, according to Ambrosiaster, was a proselyte. Timothy was not circumcised as a child because the mother was already a believer. Cohen, "Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1–3)? Patristic Exegesis, Rabbinic Law, and Matrilineal Descent," 260, 68. Cohen cites other more modern scholars who have followed this view, including Lake and Cadbury, Belkin, Packer, Hanson, O'Neill, Stählin, Wilson, E. Preuschen, H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, H. Conzelmann, J. Munck, and M. Hengel. Most of these scholars argue that rabbinic law influenced the author of Acts (p. 262, n. 34). F. F. Bruce comments, "By Jewish law Timothy was a Jew, because he was the son of a Jewish mother." Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 304. According to Matthew Thiessen, Timothy's ethnic status is ambiguous. Some may have considered him a gentile and others a Jew. Paul circumcised him only because of the pressure of the local Jews. Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 121–22.

15. The Paul of Acts is concerned to appear religiously correct to Jews, not to Jewish-Christians. See Walker, "The Timothy-Titus Problem Reconsidered," 234.

Timothy. Thus, Paul is seen to conform to this Jewish custom. Luke writes, “[Paul] took and circumcised Timothy on account of the Jews in those places” (καὶ λαβὼν περιέτεμεν αὐτὸν διὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους τοὺς ὄντας ἐν τοῖς τόποις ἐκεῖνοις; Acts 16:3). Similarly, Luke mentions that Paul—now accompanied by Timothy—declaims a predetermined script upon his arrival at various cities. Acts 16:4 states, “as they went through the cities, they handed over to them resolutions (δόγματα, from whence comes our word “dogma”) to observe, those decided upon by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.” Paul’s message was well received, as the gatherings of disciples increased in both their faith/confidence (τῇ πίστει) and number.¹⁶ This reference to numeric growth confirms Paul’s obedience to the elders and his accommodation to his Jewish audience.

In contrast to the account in Acts, Paul never mentions having circumcised Timothy, and in Galatians does not buckle to the wishes of those who desired the circumcision of Titus, a Greek companion with whom Paul traveled to Jerusalem. Indeed, Paul raises the issue of not having to circumcise Titus to bolster his argument against the circumcision of gentiles (Gal 2:3–5). To make the case that Paul did not have Titus circumcised because he was a gentile, whereas he agreed to the circumcision of Timothy because he was a Jew, reveals a miscomprehension of Paul’s statements on circumcision.¹⁷ As mentioned, nowhere in his extant correspondence does Paul call for the circumcision of anyone, regardless of the pressure or custom to do so.¹⁸ With regard to the assumption that other interpreters of Galatians make that Titus eventually became circumcised, Pervo writes, “The context of Galatians makes this reading all but impossible, since Paul would not have introduced into an argument against the [voluntary or otherwise] circumcision of male converts evidence against his case, but interpreters do not always take context into account.”¹⁹ Moreover, Paul’s statement that he did at one time preach circumcision (Gal 5:11) is intended to mean that he *no longer* adheres to this policy, and that the position he now holds is diametrically opposed to it. Paul makes his point even clearer when he suggests that anyone who advocates circumcision should castrate himself (Gal 5:12).

16. This expression and those similar to it become a common refrain in Acts. See Acts 2:47; 4:4; 6:1, 7; 11:21; 14:1, 22; 15:41; 18:23; 19:20.

17. For example, Betz writes, “The contrast is not that Paul had resisted Jewish pressure in Gal 2:3, while he yielded in Acts 16:3, but that Titus was a Gentile and Timothy could be regarded as a Jew. Paul himself did not deny the Jews their Jewish rites, even when they were Christians; so both accounts can be true.” Betz, *Galatians*, 89. In addition, F. F. Bruce interprets, “He [Paul] set his face implacably against any move to circumcise Gentile believers like Titus (Gal 2:3–5), but Timothy was in a different situation.” Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 304.

18. Günther Bornkamm questions the accuracy of the report that Paul would have circumcised Timothy, although for reasons that differ from my own. According to Bornkamm, Jews would not have been satisfied by a token circumcision for an already “baptized Christian” (Acts 16:1); such an act would have overturned Paul’s own principle regarding the non-necessity of circumcision for salvation. Bornkamm, “Missionary Stance,” 203.

19. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 88.

In circumcising Timothy (Acts 16:3), Luke's Paul demonstrates a willingness to accommodate Jews.²⁰ A portrait of a Jew-friendly Paul can be seen throughout the book of Acts. Luke sets up a conciliatory stance for Paul when he informs his hearer/reader of the conflict regarding certain Jews and circumcision (Acts 15:5). Luke also gives the hearer/reader the impression that Paul is not opposed to the circumcision of the children of Jewish believers (Acts 21:17–24).²¹ Luke has Peter take up the mission to the gentiles (Acts 15:7), allowing Paul to devote part of his efforts to Jews (Acts 13:2–43; 14:1; 16:4–5; 17:1–4, 10–12, 16–17; 18:4–5; 19:8–8; 20:21).²² Luke also seems intent upon portraying Paul, not only as sensitive to Jewish customs, but also as a practicing Jew himself. Luke's Paul refers to himself as a Jew (Acts 21:39; 22:3) and as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), and he takes part in a Jewish vow (Acts 21:26). By contrast, the Paul of the letters never claims to be a *practicing* Jew (Phil 3:4–7) and does not accommodate Jews.²³ Furthermore, in his letters Paul describes himself as the apostle only to the gentiles (Gal 1:16; 2:2, 7–9; Rom 1:1–5, 13; 11:13; 15:16) and is rarely seen to take up the concern of Jews.²⁴

Three other aspects of the Acts 16:1–5 narrative, those surrounding the account of the circumcision of Timothy, contribute additional evidence of Luke's departure from Paul's writings, widening the gap even further between the Paul of the letters and the Paul of Acts. First, while the Paul of Acts defers to the elders and apostles in Jerusalem, the Paul of the epistles expresses ambivalence toward leaders there and toward the city itself. In Galatians, Paul speaks of would-be leaders in Jerusalem as those who only seem to be so (τῶν δοκούντων εἶναι τι; Gal 2:6).²⁵ In his allegory of Hagar and Sarah, he extols a heavenly Jerusalem and not the present-day one (Gal 4:21–32). By contrast, in

20. As Gaventa states, "His [Paul's] deed also anticipates the charge in 21:21 that he undermines the law of Moses; even at this point he is revealed to be innocent." Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 233. With regard to the Paul of Acts 21, Pervo states, "Luke wishes to emphasize that Paul not only did not act against Torah (cf. Acts 16:1–3) but also that he did not condemn its practice out of hand." Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 135.

21. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, 65–74.

22. Philipp Vielhauer comments on the various differences between the Paul of the letters and the Paul of Acts. This Paul, says Vielhauer, goes to the synagogue first and, only after being rejected there, does he go to the gentiles. Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts," 39. Similarly, William Walker states that the "role claimed by Paul in Galatians is claimed by Peter in Acts." Walker, "Acts and the Pauline Corpus Revisited," 79. See also Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 92.

23. In 1 Corinthians 9:19–23, although Paul considers himself to be free from group distinctions, he claims to become like several other groups, Jews, those inside and outside the law, and the weak. In 1 Cor 9 he claims to feign being a Jew, but in Acts he claims to be a Jew; he wants to follow the laws for their own sake. This is a fundamental change in disposition.

24. One main exception is, of course, Romans 9–11.

25. Betz comments that Paul characterizes his relationship with the Jerusalem authorities similarly to that of his opponents in Galatia. Paul makes a point of stating that his authority comes from a revelation of Jesus Christ, not from humans (1:12); Paul relativizes "the authority of the Jerusalem apostles." Betz, *Galatians*, 94.

Acts Paul makes a point of stating that he delivers the decisions of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts 16:4). Jerusalem itself becomes a place of prominence throughout Acts,²⁶ a respect for the city that is lacking in the writings of Paul. Thus, Jesus ordered his apostles not to leave Jerusalem (Acts 1:4); the spirit descends on the apostles there (Acts 2:1–13); Jerusalem functions as a command center for the apostles (Acts 8:14, 25; 15:4–29; 16:4; 21:17); Paul desires to head back to Jerusalem from his travels (Acts 20:16); Paul makes a purification rite at the temple (Acts 21:26); and Paul depicts his life as having been spent in Jerusalem among Jews (Acts 26:4). One wonders if the two writers are speaking of the same leader and of the same place and time.

Second, the decisions of the council of apostles and elders differ between the two writings (Gal 2:7–10 and Acts 15:19–20).²⁷ In Galatians, the authorities counsel Paul only not to “neglect the poor,” but in Acts, a council decides that new gentile believers should avoid things polluted by idols, things strangled, and blood, and to reject fornication. If Luke is reliant upon Paul’s letter to the Galatians, as is most likely the case,²⁸ he alters his source considerably, again raising the specter of doubt as to the reliability of the account.²⁹

And third, in contrast to the Paul of the letters, Luke is concerned to emphasize the numeric success of Paul’s mission. The notion of an increase in Christ-believers (Acts 16:5) is a recurrent theme and functions like a catch phrase within Acts. Luke employs the Greek word ἀριθμὸς (“number”) four times to

26. There are considerably more references to the word “Jerusalem” in the book of Acts and in the Gospel of Luke than in any other books of the New Testament.

27. Gerd Lüdemann mentions four areas of inconsistency in the proceedings of the council between Galatians and Acts. Lüdemann, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 192.

28. William Walker argues convincingly that Luke both knew and used Paul’s letters in his own work. See Walker, “Acts and the Pauline Corpus Reconsidered,” 77–86. For his argument that the circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:1–3) borrows directly on Paul’s circumcision of Titus (Gal 2:3–5), see Walker, “The Timothy-Titus Problem Reconsidered.” See also his helpful bibliography on the scholarship on this issue in Walker, “Acts and the Pauline Letters,” 105–15. Walker cites twenty-seven authors who argue that “the author of Acts both knew and used at least some of the letters” (p. 111). Pervo remarks, “In one way or another Galatians 2 is the chief source of Acts 15.” Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 81.

29. Dennis Smith remarks that a theology of triumph of God’s control over history supports the storyline in general. Smith, “Acts of the Apostles,” 27. Günther Bornkamm has argued that the author of Acts has dispensed with Paul’s notion of justification and replaced it with “the idea of *Heilsgeschichte*,” salvation history. “The notion of *Heilsgeschichte* as well as the mission to the gentiles are consistent themes throughout Acts.” Bornkamm, “Missionary Stance,” 201. F. F. Bruce remarks, “Luke [the author of Acts] wishes to make it clear that the progress of this faith was no mere product of human planning: it was directed by divine agency.” Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 13. According to Loveday Alexander, the author of Acts wants to give the impression of a factual account. She finds that Acts is “a narrative which both implies and creates the presumption of a shared religious experience.” Alexander, *Acts in its Ancient Literary Context*, 163. Beverly Gaventa describes well the situation of the narrative of Acts. “The human characters who inhabit the story—many and intriguing though they may be—are subsidiary to the larger story of divine activity.” Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 27.

denote an increase in the number of disciples; on the other hand, Paul employs this word only once and in a quote from Isaiah (10:22–23), a passage that makes an analogy between the number of the children of Israel and sand of the sea (Rom 9:27). The building up of numbers of Christ-believers is incompatible with the fundamental and recurring notion in Paul's letters that the present time is soon ending and that one's aim is to be with Christ (Rom 8:18–23; Phil 3:7–31).

As we have seen, Paul's understanding of circumcision as seen in Galatians, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Philippians contradicts Luke's narration of Paul's stance with regard to circumcision in Acts. The Paul responsible for Galatians did not and would never have circumcised Titus, the likely forerunner and model of Luke's account of Paul's circumcision of Timothy. Unlike the Paul of Acts, the Paul of the letters does not accommodate the wishes of his opponents and especially not over the issue of circumcision. Indeed, Paul's own statements are so different from what Luke relates that one could make the case that Luke is referring to a Paul different from the one responsible for the letters. Yet that is not likely the case, because as a known figure within the tradition, Paul's name would have provided legitimacy and authority.³⁰

Why would Luke characterize Paul in ways that are fundamentally at odds with the Paul of the letters? More to the point, why would Luke portray a Paul sensitive to Jews and their traditions? Recently, Joseph Tyson has argued convincingly that Luke's characterization of Paul is intended to challenge Marcion's widely known image of Paul. Marcion was a well-known Christian and active in the early decades of the second century,³¹ yet his understanding of Christianity was very different from that of Luke. Marcion denied the God of Israel and the Hebrew Scriptures. Similarly, Marcion's Paul strongly opposed Judaism and Torah.³² The second-century Christian thinker Justin speaks disparagingly of Marcion. Confessing to be a Christian, Marcion teaches his disciples to believe in a god greater than the Creator God (1 *Apol.* 26). In contrast to Marcion, Justin's theology is founded on the preeminence of the God of Israel, and he bases his belief in large measure on Scripture (LXX). While perhaps not to the same degree as Justin, Luke is also dependent upon Scripture to support his claims (Acts 2:16–21, 25–28; 3:13, 18–26; 7:2–51; 15:16–17; 28:26–27). If, as Tyson mentions, Marcion denied the Hebrew Scriptures, he (Marcion) would also have denied the validity of one of Luke's primary sources of authority, undermining his claims. And if Marcion portrayed a Paul opposed to Jews and Torah, might not Luke have altered the portrayal of Paul and advanced instead just the

30. The author of Acts' use of Paul or "Paulinism" "consists in his zeal for the worldwide Gentile mission and in his veneration for the greatest missionary to the Gentiles." Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts," 48.

31. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, 31.

32. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, 68–69.

reverse, a Paul sensitive to Jewish concerns if only to safeguard his claims?³³ It appears, then, that what we have in Acts is something akin to what we see more clearly later in the writings of Justin: a central concern about the nature of Christianity itself.³⁴ Luke recognized a need for the Hebrew Scriptures and for the God of Israel, whereas Marcion did not. Luke, then, had to change Paul's image to fit this new circumstance.

If Luke was challenging Marcion, the date of Acts would need to correspond to a time when Marcion or his thoughts were still alive and threatening, sometime in the first decades of the second century.³⁵ One piece of evidence surrounding the circumcision of Timothy supports this relatively late date for the book of Acts. If Timothy is considered to be a Jew, as the logic of the text suggests, then Luke demonstrates an awareness of matrilineal descent, religious status as being determined by the mother and not by the father.³⁶ The notion, however, that descent could be determined by the mother (the matrilineal principle) is unattested in any writings, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the Qumran scrolls, Philo, Paul, or Josephus, and only emerges for the first time in the first quarter of the second century CE (M. Qiddushin 3:12).³⁷ Shaye

33. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, 68–69.

34. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, xi.

35. Throughout his lengthy monograph, Richard Pervo argues that the book of Acts fits most comfortably in the thought world associated with the Deutero-Pauline material and should be dated in the early decades of the second century. Thus, Acts is not a first-hand account of early Christians. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 17, 45, 46, 98–99, 107, 310–46. In contrast, F. F. Bruce would set the date of its composition to between 69 and 96 C.E., the Flavian period. Bruce finds that the “historical, geographical, and political situation presupposed by Acts . . . is unmistakably that of the first century and not of the second.” Bruce, however, seems to conflate to a certain degree the date of composition and the time about which the author of Acts writes. The author is intending to write about the events that “took place” immediately following Christ’s resurrection appearance and ascension (Luke 24:50–53). According to Bruce, the author had access to eyewitnesses of the events narrated in Acts, suggesting a date of composition somewhat near to the events themselves. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 6.

36. For some reason, Timothy was not circumcised as an infant. The reason for this, as suggested by the text, is likely because his father was Greek. Yet according to the text, the Jews in the area would have been offended that the son of a Jewish woman had an uncircumcised son. Thus, the Jews would consider that the mother determined the religious status of the child, not the father.

37. Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 73, 223. With regard to the rabbinic law, Cohen mentions that, even if such a law was in existence, this is no guarantee that Jews of Asia Minor observed or were aware of it. Cohen, “Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1–3)?,” 266–67.

Elie Wiesel claims an awareness of the Talmudic tradition of matrilineal descent. He writes, “It was the Talmudic masters who decided the mother would determine who belongs to the Jewish race. They had very fine, very humane reasons for this. At that time, the Romans occupied Judaea, and Roman soldiers did not always behave like gentlemen. So the Wise Men said, ‘When a Jewish woman is violated by a soldier, that in itself is terrible enough, but when she becomes pregnant and she knows she is carrying the son of an enemy of her people, then her suffering is two-fold.’ That is why they decided that at least the son or the daughter she carried would not be her enemy, but would be Jewish.” Wiesel and Cheron, *Evil and Exile*, 201.

Cohen states that the rabbinic law follows the Roman one.³⁸ Roman law makes a distinction in the status of the offspring based on whether the parent's marriage is licit or not. In the case of illicit marriages, the child takes the status of the mother. In the rabbinic law of the second century, the offspring of a woman of an unrecognized union is a *mamzēr*, a Jew barred from marrying other Jews. In the specific case of the offspring of a Jewish woman and gentile man (M. Yevamot 7:5), the offspring is also considered a *mamzēr* and takes the status of the mother.³⁹ Cohen remarks, "All rabbinic authorities, however, seem to agree that the child of a Jewish woman by a Gentile man was a Jew."⁴⁰ This subtle point regarding matrilineal descent provides some evidence that Acts is a second- rather than first-century writing.

Conclusion

Paul's and Luke's treatments of circumcision differ significantly. While Luke purports to narrate events as they occurred, those he attributes to Paul and to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, there is little corroborating evidence to substantiate his claims. Paul's treatments of circumcision reveal that he diminishes its value as a literal rite. According to him, in Christ the states of circumcision and uncircumcision are not significant. He counsels strongly against making any change to one's physical condition, either to become circumcised or to remove the marks of it. He rails against the circumcision of gentiles. He never buckles to opponents, Jewish or not, and he never claims to have seen to the circumcision of anyone, Jew or gentile. The council's determination to which Paul alludes in Gal 2:7–10 has relatively little in common with the council's decisions discussed in Acts 15:6–21. Indeed, to faithfully narrate the thoughts and actions of Paul, the author of Acts would have had Paul insist to the Jews of the area that Timothy *not* become circumcised. Luke, then, only feigns narrating history. The reason for this subterfuge seems to pertain to the challenges to Christian self-identity Marcion advanced, a perspective that was fundamentally at odds with that of Luke.

38. Cohen, "Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1–3)?" 264–65.

39. Cohen, "Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1–3)?" 274–75.

40. Cohen, "Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1–3)?" 265.

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Pseudo-Luke's Imitation of the "We-Voyages" in Homer's *Odyssey*

Dennis R. MacDonald

According to Acts 15:40–16:8, Paul and Silas passed westward through Syria and Asia Minor and arrived at Troas, on the coast of the Aegean. Homer knew this city as Sigeum, about ten miles south of Troy. Like many ancient cities, it had been renamed Alexandria in honor of Alexander the Great, and, to distinguish it from its namesakes, was called Alexandria in the Troad. Long before Luke's time it had come to be known simply as Troas. According to Suetonius, rumor had it that, because of Rome's mythological affinity with Troy via Aeneas, Julius Caesar considered moving the capital from Rome to "Alexandrea [Troas] or Ilium."¹ Suetonius explicitly identified Troas with the legacies of Troy.²

While at Troas, Paul received a vision.

⁹A vision appeared to Paul at night: a man of Macedonia stood there and entreated him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰Because Paul had seen the vision, we immediately sought to leave for Macedonia, inferring that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them. ¹¹Setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, ¹²and from there to Philippi, the first city of the district of Macedonia.³

This is the first of several shifts in the narrator's voice from the omniscient third person to the first-person plural. Insofar as these passages for the most part involve travel, scholars often refer to them as "we-voyages." The origin and function of these passages has been one of the most controversial topics in the interpretation of Luke-Acts. Conservative commentators have been prone to view them as evidence that the author actually accompanied the apostle on these journeys. Source critics often have seen in these passages evidence of a personal travelogue that Luke used without attribution, but surely Luke was sufficiently in control of his story to shift the first-person source to his own

1. *Jul.* 1.79.

2. It is possible, but by no means certain, that Horace knew of this plan and opposed it in *Carm.* 3.3. For the identification of Troas with Troy, see Erskine, *Troy Between Greece and Rome*, and Koet, "Im Schatten des Aeneas," 432–36. Troas appears in 2 Cor 2:12 and 2 Tim 4:13.

3. If this Macedonian man imitates a traditional Greek character, it probably is the most famous Macedonian of all, Alexander the Great. Note that Troas was Alexandria in the Troad.

third-person voice. Furthermore, the we-passages display Luke's own vocabulary and style, evidence either that he composed them himself, or that he thoroughly revised whatever source he may have used. Some critics have proposed that Luke used the first-person voice to claim the historical veracity of an eyewitness, even though the text never exploits the device to this end. Others have taken these passages as expressions of solidarity with Paul and his churches.⁴

Homeric epic provides an elegant solution to this ancient problem: books 9–12 of the *Odyssey* narrate voyages in the first person, but the poet establishes the theme already in book 1: "The famous singer [Phemius] sang for them [the suitors], and they sat, / listening in silence. He sang of the Achaeans' miserable return [νόστον] / from Troy, which Pallas Athena laid upon them" (1.325–327). The returns, or *nostoi*, of the Achaean army from Troy was a favorite topic for ancient bards. Although Athena had supported the Greeks during the war, she bedeviled their return because of their savagery during the sack and the desecration of her sacred objects; Odysseus' return thus was the exception insofar as Athena was his most consistent Olympian ally. His *nostos* nemesis instead was Poseidon.

Nestor told Telemachus, in the first-person plural, how the Greek army departed. "After we sacked the lofty city of Priam, / we traveled in ships" (*Od.* 3.130–131). The old man also told him of Menelaus' *nostos*: "For we were sailing together coming from Troy, / the son of Atreus and I" (3.276–277). According to book 4, Menelaus regaled the lad with his own *nostos* in the first-person singular and plural:

First we dragged our ships to the wondrous sea,
set the masts and sails in the balanced ships,
and the men, too, boarded and sat at the benches.

* * * * *

I left, and the immortals gave me a fair wind
and sent me quickly to my beloved homeland. (4.577–579 and 585–586)

The poet later presents other *nostoi* in the first-person plural. For example, Agamemnon, in hades, refers to his return (11.406–411), and Odysseus tells a mendacious account of his: "Having sacked the city of Priam, we traveled / homeward in our ships" (14.241–242). Many ancient authors imitated Homer's we-voyages, including Lucian: "Once upon a time, setting out from the Pillars of Heracles and heading for the western ocean with a fair wind, I made a voyage. . . . Well, for a day and a night, sailing before the wind, we were advancing with difficulty, as land was still dimly in sight" (*Ver. Hist.* 1.5).⁵

4. For an overview of the history of research, see Praeder, "The Problem of First Person Narration in Acts," Robbins, "By Land and by Sea," and MacDonald, "The Shipwrecks of Odysseus and Paul," 88–89.

5. See also *Little Iliad* frag. 14, *Iliou Persis* frag. 1, Pindar, *Nem.* 7, Hyginus, *Fab.* 116 and 125, Aeschylus, *Ag.* 636–680, Euripides, *Cycl.* 277–279, and *Hel.* 400–402.

The most famous Homeric first-person *nostos* was that of Odysseus in books 9–12. It begins like this:

Let me describe my disastrous *nostos*
 that Zeus laid upon me as I traveled from Troy.
 The wind carried me from Ilium and brought me to the Cicones
 at Ismarus. There I sacked the city and slew the men.
 And from the city we captured their wives and many of their possessions
 and divided them among us. (9.37–42)

Throughout these books the narrator switches gracefully among the first-person plural, the first-person singular, and the third person, even though the voice remains that of Odysseus throughout.⁶ Compare the following.

Od. 9.37–42

"Let me describe my disastrous *nostos*
 / that Zeus laid upon me as I traveled
 from Troy. / The wind carried me from
 Ilium and brought me to the Cicones /
 at Ismarus. There I sacked the city and
 slew the men. / And from the city we
 captured their wives and many of their
 possessions / and divided them among
 us."

Acts 16:11–12

Setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight
 course to Samothrace, the following day
 to Neapolis,¹² and from there to Philippi,
 which is the first city of the district of
 Macedonia.

After Odysseus left the Troad, his first stop was Ismarus, home of the Cicones. This town cannot be located with precision, but scholars usually place it in southern Thrace, opposite Samothrace. According to the *Aeneid*, the Trojans built their fleet at Antandros and sailed to the shore of Thrace, where they founded the city Aeneadae, facing Samothrace.⁷ In other words, Paul's first voyage nearly retraces the first leg of Odysseus' *nostos* and Aeneas's flight.⁸

But Luke does not blindly imitate the epic; he transforms it. On the first leg of Odysseus' *nostos*, fresh from destroying Troy, he and his men "sacked the city [of Ismarus] and slew the men. / And from the city we captured their wives and many of their possessions / and divided them among us" (*Od.* 9.40–42). Paul's mission in Macedonia, however, was to "proclaim the good news." As we have seen, Paul's reason for going to Macedonia in the first place was that "a man of Macedonia" asked him to come. Instead of raping the women, Paul converted Lydia and the other women worshipping outside the city. If Luke's readers had recognized the relationship between Paul's we-voyages and those of Odysseus, they should also have recognized how radically different the voyages were.

6. The only exception is the digression in *Od.* 11.333–376.

7. *Aen.* 3.1–18.

8. So also Koet, "Im Schatten des Aeneas," 438: "Paul's crossing [to Macedonia] evokes associations (and congruence) with many ancient stories, from Homer to the myths promoted by Augustus and his followers of the Trojan region as Rome's motherland."

Paul's second we-voyage did not depart from the Troad; it returned there: "These men went ahead and were waiting for us in Troas. ⁶But we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we joined them in Troas, where we stayed for seven days" (Acts 20:5–6). What follows is the story of the reviving of Eutyclus, "Lucky," almost certainly a transvaluative emulation of Homer's story of "unfortunate" Elpenor, who fell to his death at the end of book 10 of the *Odyssey*.

After the episode with Eutyclus, the narrator resumes the first-person-plural voice. This third we-voyage, the second from the Troad, takes the apostle south along the coast of Asia Minor, the general route that Nestor contemplated for his return from Troy.

Od. 3.155–158, 164–165, and 168–172

"Half of the army was checked and remained / with Agamemnon, son of Atreus, shepherd of the army, /and half of us embarked and rowed away, and quickly the ships / sailed. . . . / With a convoy of ships following me I fled. . . . Flaxen-haired Menelaus came late / and caught up with us at Lesbos, just as we were debating the long voyage, / whether we should sail to seaward of rugged Chios, / toward the isle of Psyria, keeping Chios itself upon our left, / or to landward of Chios past windy Mimas."

In both we-voyages, the traveling parties sailing from the Troad separate and rejoin the voyage later either at Lesbos (Nestor and Menelaus) or at Assos, a city on the Troad, after which they sail to nearby Lesbos (Paul and company). Nestor debated whether to sail past Chios, which is precisely what Paul did. Both voyages ended safely.

Luke's first-person narrator later states that Paul sailed from Miletus to Tyre past Cos, Rhodes, and Cyprus. The passage bears a modest resemblance to the *nostos* of Menelaus, also told in the first person. The king of Sparta did not sail straight for home but wandered about gathering wealth.

Od. 4.83–85

"Having wandered to Cyprus, Phoenicia, and Egypt, / I came

Acts 20:13–15

Having gone ahead to the ship [at Troas], we set sail for Assos expecting to take Paul aboard there. Because he intended to travel by foot, he had made this arrangement.

¹⁴When he joined us at Assos [a city on the Troad opposite Lesbos], we took him on board and went to Mitylene [the main city of the island Lesbos]. ¹⁵Sailing from there, we arrived opposite Chios on the following day, on the next we put in at Samos, and on the next we came to Miletus.

Acts 21:1–3

So it happened that after bidding them adieu, we set sail. Having set a straight course, we went to Cos, and on the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ²We found a ship passing over to Phoenicia, boarded, and put to sea.

to the Ethiopians, Sidonians, Erempi, / and Libya.” [The purpose of Menelaus’s wanderings was to collect wealth for his return home.]

³We came in sight of Cyprus, passed it on our left, sailed for Syria, and put in at Tyre, because there the ship was to offload its cargo.

Tyre had been founded by Phoenicians, also known as Sidonians. The similar itineraries of Menelaus and Paul are not impressive on their own, though both voyages are narrated in the first person and mention cargo.

Because Paul, as a Roman citizen, had appealed to Caesar for a decision in his case, he was sent under arms from Caesarea to Rome. This voyage is the final we-voyage in Acts, and it too involves the Troad, though indirectly. “When it was decided that we sail for Italy, they handed over Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion by the name of Julius of the Augustan Cohort. Embarking on a ship of Adramyttium that was about to sail to regions along the coast of Asia, we put to sea” (Acts 27:1–2a). Adramyttium was a port city in Mysia, viz., the Troad, at the base of Mt. Ida, famous in the *Iliad* as the gods’ favorite lookout on Troy. Thus, even this final voyage has a connection with the Troad.

Acts 27:2 resembles the embarkation of Odysseus in *Od.* 12, also told in the first-person plural.

Od. 12.401

“Embarking [ἀναβάντες] at once,

we put out [ἐνήκαμεν] into the broad sea.”

Acts 27:2a

Embarking [ἐπιβάντες] on a ship of Adramyttium that was about to set sail to one of the ports along the coast of Asia,

we put out to sea [ἀνήχθημεν].

The ship was returning to homeport, so Paul took it only as far as Myra in Lycia. Luke names only one of Paul’s travel companions, Aristarchus, who also appears in Acts 19:29 and 20:4. Luke may have known of him from Colossians.

Col 4:10a

Greet Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner.

Acts 27:2b

Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.

Although it is possible that Paul actually did suffer shipwreck on this way to Rome—2 Cor 11:25–26 refers to three earlier catastrophes at sea—the significance of Acts 27 lies, not in Paul’s history, but in Luke’s rhetorical tradition. Students practiced “writing the storm,” an exercise that Pseudo-Dionysius of Halicarnassus thought overworked (*Rhet.* 10.17). Lucian expected his readers to be able to reconstruct elements of the shipwreck from memory: “Why repeat

the many details of his [a sea-captain's] story—huge sea, cyclones, hail, and all other evils of a storm?" (*Tox.* 19).⁹ The following excerpt could pass as a satirical reading of Acts 27:

I used to listen—not without curiosity and interest—to those who told of some shipwreck and their surprising salvation, like those men at the temples, many of them together, with shaved heads who went on at length about third waves, gales, headlands, jettisonings, breaking of masts, and snapping of rudders, and then how the Dioscuri appeared—such are stock in trade of such tragedies—or some other *deus ex machina* sitting on the masthead or standing at the rudders and guiding the ship to a soft beach; thus the ship, brought gently to rest, broke up at leisure, and they disembarked safely thanks to the grace and favor of God. (*Merc.* 1)¹⁰

Lucian says that such men tell these tales to win sympathy and donations from those who hear them, not only because they suffered misfortune, but also because they “were loved by the gods.” The satirist then goes on to use shipwreck as a trope to describe the shipwrecked careers for teachers of wealthy families.

At first they sailed, and in a while the deep showed calm. [They then narrate] how many ordeals they endured for the entire voyage—thirst, seasickness, seeping brine—and in the end how, after they smashed their unlucky raft on some underwater rock or steep headland, they swam away pitiable, naked, and destitute of every necessity. (*Merc.* 2)

The most popular Greek models for such storms came from the *Odyssey*, but the very popularity of the genre frustrates a search for a specific antetext insofar as Luke may have known many such stories and may not even have needed a literary model at all. As we shall see, three aspects of the chapter suggest a Homeric connection: (1) the narration in the first-person plural, (2) distinctive Homeric vocabulary, and (3) the appearance of a divine messenger promising safety, a surprisingly rare motif.

⁴We launched from there and because of headwinds sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, ⁵and having sailed across the open sea past Cilicia and Pamphylia, we put in at Myra of Lycia. ⁶It was there that the centurion discovered an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and loaded us on it. ⁷We sailed along slowly for several days and with difficulty made it as far as Cnidus; because the wind prohibited us from proceeding, we sailed under the shelter of Crete at Salmone, ⁸skirted its shore with difficulty, and came to a place called Fair Havens, near to which was a city, Lasea.

⁹After some time elapsed, because the voyage already was unsafe and because the Fast already had passed, Paul urged ¹⁰them, saying, “Men, I see that

9. Cf. Juvenal, *Sat.* 12.22–24 and Seneca, *Suas.* 1.15 and 3.2, where the author requires an rhetorical storm on demand: *describere nunc tempestatem*.

10. I am grateful to Ryan Carhart for making me aware of this text.

the voyage will involve injury and considerable loss not only to the cargo and ship but to our very lives." ¹¹But the centurion persuaded the pilot and the owner of the ship to do other than what Paul had said. ¹²Because the harbor was unsuitable for winter anchorage, the majority decided to sail from there, if somehow they might reach Phoenix for winter anchorage, because its harbor faces the southwest and northwest. (Acts 27:4–12)

To this point in the story, nothing points to the voyages of Odysseus apart from the narration in the first person, but when Homer's hero was about to sail from Calypso's island, he, too, was suspicious and fearful "in a small craft to cross the great abyss of the sea, / fearsome and difficult, that steady, swift-sailing ships cannot / even traverse" (*Od.* 5.173–196). Paul's departure from Fair Havens modestly resembles Odysseus' departure from Calypso. Both heroes begin their fateful voyages with fair weather.

***Od.* 5.268–271 (cf. 12.400–402)**

[Calypso] sent a harmless and warm wind. / The noble Odysseus was delighted to spread his sail to the wind; / and he skillfully ran a straight course / sitting at the rudder.

Acts 27:13

When Notos blew [a warm wind from the south], thinking that their intention had prevailed, they set out and hugged the coast of Crete.

Ancient literary voyages characteristically personify and name the winds: the South Wind was Notos, the North Boreas, the East Euros, and the West Zephyros. We shall see that this pertains both to the *Odyssey* and to Acts 27.

Odysseus sailed uneventfully for seventeen days, but then Poseidon saw him and sent a hurricane. Paul's ship was not long at sea before a storm arose. Descriptions of gales in ancient literature are often formulaic: battling winds, high waves, darkness that thwarts navigation, despairing crews, and foundering ships. These elements also appear in the shipwrecks of Odysseus and Paul.

***Od.* 5.291–296, 327, 330–332, 297–298, and 305**

[Poseidon] gathered the clouds and troubled the sea / holding his trident in his hands. He aroused all the blasts / of all the winds [ἀνέμων] and hid with clouds / both land and sea. Night rushed down from heaven. /

The Euros and Notos clashed, as did stormy Zephyros / and aether-born Boreas that rolled a huge wave.

[327 and 330–332:] A great wave bore [ἐφόρει] the ship here and there along its course. . . . /

Acts 27:14–20

Not much later a violent wind [ἄνεμος] called Eurakylon [a hybrid of the Greek Euros and the Latin Aquilo, North Wind] rushed down from the island.

¹⁵Because the ship was carried away and

The winds [ἄνεμοι] bore [φέρον] the ship here and there. / Sometimes Notos tossed the craft to Boreas to carry [φέρεσθαι], / and sometimes Euros acceded to let Zephyros drive it on.

[297–298 and 305:] Then the knees of Odysseus gave way and his beloved heart / dissolved. . . . / “Now my utter destruction is sure!”

Similar descriptions of storms at sea appear in many ancient texts, some of which may be imitations of *Od.* 5, though most are not. Vergil imitates *Od.* 5 in the first book of the *Aeneid*. To determine whether Luke too imitated the epic one needs to identify distinctive traits that they share and are not characteristic of tempest tales in general. One such unusual trait is the appearance in both tales of a heavenly messenger. As the tempest drove Odysseus’ boat, a goddess appeared.

The daughter of Cadmus, beautiful-ankled Ino, saw him—
 Leucothea, who once was a mortal in speech
 but now in the depths of the seas has been allotted honor from the gods.
 She took pity on wandering Odysseus with such woes;
 she emerged from the sea like a flying gull
 and sat on the firmly bound boat and spoke,
 “Ill-fated man, why did Poseidon the Earthshaker so
 terribly cause you pain, insofar as he sowed so many evils for you?
 Surely he will not utterly destroy you, even though he is bent on doing so.

* * * * *

Strip off these clothes and leave your boat to be driven by the winds
 and try to reach the land of the Phaeacians by swimming with your arms,
 for it is your fate there to escape.
 Here, stretch this immortal headscarf under your chest.
 You are in no danger of suffering or perishing.”

* * * * *

could not defy the wind [ἄνέμῳ], we gave up and were driven [ἐφερόμεθα].¹⁶After we ran under the shelter of a small island called Cauda, we were barely able to control the dinghy,¹⁷which they hoisted up and then tried to undergird the ship with ropes. Because they feared running aground of the Syrtis, they lowered the kedje and thus were driven along [ἐφέροντο].¹⁸Because we suffered a severe winter storm, on the next day they began a jettison,¹⁹and on the third day, with their own hands, they tossed overboard the ship’s tackle.²⁰When neither sun nor stars appeared for several days, and when no small tempest opposed us, finally all hope that we would be saved was vanishing.

When she had thus spoken, the goddess gave him the headscarf,
and she again dove into the surging sea
like a gull; and a dark wave hid her. (5.333–341, 343–347, and 351–353)

Instead of doffing his clothing and donning the veil, Odysseus feared that the goddess was tricking him to abandon ship. He tried to manage on his own, but try as he might, the storm was too much for his craft. Finally, Poseidon crushed the ship, and the hero had to follow Ino's command.

As Paul's ship drifted out of control, an angel appeared to him, just as Ino had appeared to Odysseus.

***Od.* 5.333, 337–339, 341, and 343–347**

The daughter of Cadmus, beautiful-
ankled Ino, saw him, / . . . She emerged
from the sea . . . /
sat on the firmly bound boat and spoke, /
"Ill-fated man, . . . / [Poseidon] will not
utterly destroy you. . . . / Strip off these
clothes and leave your boat to be driven
by the winds / and try to reach the land
of the Phaeacians by swimming with
your arms, /
for it is your fate there to escape. /
Here, stretch this immortal headscarf un-
der your chest. / You are in no danger of
suffering or perishing."

Acts 27:23–26

"This very night an angel of the God
whom I serve
stood by me ²⁴and said,
'Paul, do not fear,

for you must stand before Caesar,

and indeed God has favored you and
all who are sailing with you.' ²⁵So take
heart, men, for I trust in God that all will
turn out just as I was told, ²⁶but we must
run aground on some island."

In each column a heavenly being appears to the hero bouncing about in a storm. Ino has pity on Odysseus; God takes pity on Paul and the other passengers. In both cases the hero learns that it is his fate to survive, but he will lose the ship. Furthermore, in both cases someone resists the advice. Odysseus tried to stay with the ship instead of abandoning it for Ino's veil. Luke states that some of the sailors tried to escape the ship on lifeboats, but Paul insisted that the rest of the passengers would only be saved if everyone stayed aboard.

²⁷The onset of the fourteenth night found us driven into the Adriatic, and in the middle of the night the sailors supposed that they were approaching a landfall.¹¹

11. It may be worth noting that twice in Acts 27 Luke uses a number that appears nowhere else in the New Testament: τεσσαρεσκαδέκατος, the adjective "fourteen" written as a compound. The only other use of such a compound in the New Testament appears in Luke 3:1 for the number fifteen: πεντεκαδέκατος. A similar compound appears in *Od.* 5, where one reads that "For seventeen days he sailed with favorable winds and seas, navigating at night by the stars. On the eighteenth [ὄκτωκαιδεκάτη] day he saw his destination in the

²⁸By taking a sounding they learned that the depth was twenty fathoms, and a little later they took another sounding and learned that it was fifteen fathoms. ²⁹Out of fear that we run aground in a rocky area, they cast four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. ³⁰When the sailors attempted to flee from the ship by lowering the skiff into the sea on a pretext of lengthening the anchors from the prow, ³¹Paul said to the centurion, “Unless these men stay on the ship, you cannot be saved.”

³²Then the soldiers cut the lines to the skiff and let it fall away. ³³Until day was about to break Paul kept urging everyone to take nourishment: “Today is the fourteenth day that you have been waiting, refraining from food, and not eating anything, ³⁴so I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, for not a hair from your heads will be destroyed.” ³⁵Having said these things and taken bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of everyone, broke it, and began to eat. ³⁶Everyone took heart; they, too, took nourishment. ³⁷All of us who were on the ship numbered about two hundred and seventy six. ³⁸Now filled with food, they lightened the ship by dumping the grain into the sea.

³⁹At daybreak they could not recognize the land, but they did observe a bay with a beach on which they wanted, if possible, to ground the ship. ⁴⁰They abandoned the anchors and let them drop into the sea; at the same time they untied the cables of the rudders, foisted the foresail to the wind, and tried to steer the ship to shore, ⁴¹but they struck a sandbank and ran the ship aground. The prow jammed and remained immovable, while the stern was demolished by the force of the waves. (Acts 27:27–41)

Luke’s word here for “prow” (πρῶρα) appears in the New Testament only here and earlier in Acts 27:30; the verb for “jamming” (ἔρειδεῖν) is found only here; and the word for “stern” (πρύμνη) appears only here and in Mark 4:38, the calming of the sea.¹² Each nautical term is common in the *Odyssey*.

More distinctively Homeric, however, is the expression “ran the ship aground” in Acts 27:41. Elsewhere, Luke refers to ships as πλοῖα, even when narrating Paul’s voyage to Rome. Here, however, he uses ναῦς, which appears nowhere else in the New Testament. In addition, the verb Luke used for grounding the ship is ἐπικέλλειν and appears nowhere in the LXX or the New Testament, nor does the uncompounded form κέλλειν. In fact, both words are distinctively poetic. The poet of the *Odyssey* uses ναῦς with (ἐπι)κέλλειν six times, always in books 9–12 where Odysseus tells his story in the first person, as here in Acts 27. For example,

No one saw the island with his eyes,
nor did we notice the huge waves rolling to the land

distance, the island of the Phaeacians” (5.278–80). Compare this with Acts 27:33: “Today is the fourteenth [τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτην] day.”

12. Among other Homeric nautical words found in the New Testament only in Acts 27 are λιμὴν, “harbor” (vss. 8 and 12) and ἄσσοιν, “nearer” (vs. 13). Nautical words found in Acts 27 and the epic but seldom elsewhere in the New Testament are κυβερνήτης, “pilot” (vs. 11; cf. Rev 18:17), Notos (vs. 13; cf. 28:13 and Luke 12:55), πέλαγος, “open sea” (vs. 5; cf. Matt 18:6), and πηδάλιον, “rudder” (vs. 40; cf. Jas 3:4).

before we ran aground our well-benched ships [νήας . . . ἐπικέλοισαι].
 Once our ships had run aground [κελοσάσθησι . . . νηυσί], we lowered all the
 sails
 and disembarked on the shore of the sea. (9.146–150)

Later in book 9 one reads: "We ran our ship aground [νήα . . . ἐκέλοισαμεν] on the sands / and disembarked on the shore of the sea."¹³ Circe told Odysseus: "Run your ship aground [νήα . . . κέλοισαι] by the deep-eddying Oceanus"; he did: "When we arrived, we ran our ship aground [νήα . . . ἐκέλοισαμεν]."¹⁴ Although scholars in general have been reluctant to see Homeric imitation in Luke-Acts, these phrases have caught the attention of many interpreters. For example, the philologist Friedrich Blass said that 27:41 "might have been taken from Homer himself."¹⁵ F. F. Bruce calls it one of Acts' "unmistakable Homeric reminiscences."¹⁶ According to Susan Marie Praeder, "Little else except a reminiscence of the *Odyssey* would explain the only appearance of *epikellein* and *naus* in the New Testament."¹⁷

Paul and his company were forced to abandon ship, just as the angel had predicted.

⁴²It was the intention of the soldiers to kill the prisoners to prevent anyone's escape by swimming, ⁴³but the centurion, who wanted to save Paul, thwarted their plan; he ordered those who could swim to jump in first to reach the land ⁴⁴and the rest to follow, some on planks and others on debris from the ship. And so it was that everyone was rescued on land. (Acts 27:42–44)

This result once again resembles the shipwreck of Odysseus. Try as he might, the hero was unable to save his ship.

Poseidon the Earthshaker raised up a huge, vaulting wave,
 fearsome and difficult, and drove it against him.
 And as a strong wind disturbs a pile of dry straw
 and scatters it here and there,
 so it scattered the great beams of the ship. (5.366–370)

But the hero

straddled a single plank, as though riding a race horse,
 and stripped off the clothing that beautiful Calypso had provided him.
 Immediately he stretched the headscarf beneath his chest,
 dove into the brine, and spread his arms
 ready to swim. (5.371–375)

13. *Od.* 9.546–547; cf. 12.5–6.

14. *Od.* 10.511 and 11:20; cf. 13.114.

15. Blass, *Acta apostolorum*, 282. See also Blass, *Philology of the Gospels*, 186: "Must we not accept it for a certainty that Luke . . . had gone through his Homer?"

16. Bruce, *Acts*, 474.

17. Praeder, "Acts 27:1–28:16," 701.

Athena checked all the winds but Boreas to drive her hero to the Phaeacian island, and three days later he arrived near his destination, survived a great wave, and prayed to Zeus. “Immediately the god stopped its flow, held back the wave, / made it calm before him, and saved him / at the mouth of a river” (5.451–453).

Here is Luke’s account of what happened after the passengers reached land. Notice the continuation of the first-person plural.

¹And after we had been spared, we then learned that the island was called Malta. ²The barbarians extended unusual solicitude to us, for they kindled a bonfire and welcomed us to it because of the onset of rain and the cold. ³When Paul gathered a bundle of twigs and placed it on the fire, a viper, escaping the heat, latched onto his hand. ⁴And when the barbarians saw the creature hanging from his hand, they told each other, “Surely this man is a murderer, for Dike [Justice] did not permit him to live, even though he was saved from the sea.” ⁵Then he shook the creature into the fire and suffered no harm; ⁶they were expecting him soon to swell up or even immediately drop dead. They waited for a long time but observed nothing unusual happen to him, so reversing themselves they began saying that he was a god. (Acts 28:1–5)

After Odysseus’ shipwreck in *Od.* 5, he swam ashore at the island of the Phaeacians. His first task was to find warmth, for he feared that “the harsh frost and gentle dew might conquer / my gasping spirit with weakness, / and a cold breeze blows from the river in the early morning” (5.467–469). In a wood he found two intertwining bushes that formed a shelter from the elements. Gathering its fallen leaves into a bed, he snuggled in; “like someone who hides a fire brand with black ashes, / . . . saving a seed of fire . . . , / so Odysseus covered himself with leaves” and fell asleep (5.488 and 490–492).

While he slept, Athena went as a dream to sleeping Nausicaa, the Phaeacian princess, and urged her to go to the mouth of the river to wash clothes.

Noble Odysseus awoke
and, sitting up, debated in his mind and heart,
“Oh my, to the land of what mortals have I come?
Are they insolent, wild, and wicked,
or are they fond of strangers and god-fearing in their minds?” (6.117–121)

Covering his genitals with a leafy twig, he emerged haggard and caked with brine. When he begged Nausicaa for clothing and hospitality, she ordered her maidservants to give him some of her brothers’ clothes. He bathed and anointed himself, and Athena restored his appearance such that Nausicaa was love-struck. “Not without the will of all the gods who hold Olympus / does this man come in contact with the godlike Phaeacians,” she told her servants. “For earlier he seemed repugnant to me, / but now he resembles the gods who hold broad heaven! / Oh that such a man might be called my husband!” (6.240–244).

At the beginning of book 5, Zeus had told Hermes that the Phaeacians would pay Odysseus "heartfelt honor, as though he were a god / and send him by ship to his beloved homeland" (5.36–37). Later, when the hero had entered the city, King Alcinous wondered if he might be "one of the immortals come from heaven" (7.199). Odysseus then corrected his theology.

Alcinous, let some other thought occupy your mind, for I am not
like the immortals who hold broad heaven—
neither my frame nor physique—but like mortals.
Those people you know who have endured the greatest misery,
I am like them in such sorrows. (7.208–212)

In other words, both Odysseus and Paul, after shipwrecks, swim to islands where the inhabitants mistake them for gods.

Luke continues his account of Paul's stay at Malta as follows:

⁸In that region there happened to be land belonging to the island's leading citizen, Publius by name, who took us in and entertained us graciously for three days. It so happened that Publius' father was bedridden, stricken with fever and dysentery. Paul went to him, prayed, laid his hands on him, and cured him. ⁹When this happened, others on the island who were sick arrived and were cured; ¹⁰they rewarded us handsomely and stowed provisions for our needs when we were ready to sail. ¹¹After three months, we set sail on an Alexandrian ship that had wintered on the island, bearing the standard of the Dioscuri. (Acts 28:8–11)

The phrase "they rewarded us handsomely" translates *πολλαῖς τιμαῖς ἐτίμησαν*, literally, "they honored us with many honors," that is, material rewards in addition to the provisions for the journey to Italy. The giving of gifts is an important aspect of Odysseus' sendoff from Scheria, as Zeus had predicted to Hermes: the Phaeacians would pay him "heartfelt honor [*τιμήσουσιν*], as though he were a god / and send him by ship to his beloved homeland" (5.36–37). Indeed, they gave him magnificent gifts in gratitude for his storytelling.¹⁸ In addition, "they stowed" (*κατέθεντο*) clothes, bread, and wine on the ship for his voyage (13.63–72); the Maltese, in thanks for Paul's curing of the sick, "stowed" (*ἐπέθεντο*) what was needed for his voyage (Acts 28:10).

The voyages to Ithaca and Rome were both uneventful. The Phaeacian sailors drove their ship with astonishing speed (*Od.* 13.76–115). Paul's ship, bearing the figurehead of the Dioscuri (the twins Castor and Pollux, protectors of ships and sailors), quickly arrived in Puteoli, assisted by a brisk Notos (Acts 28:11–13). Luke never identified the figureheads of Paul's other ships, so his doing so

18. See *Od.* 8.387–445, 11.338–361, and 13.8–23 and 363–371.

here is significant; it is another connection between Paul's voyages and Greek mythology.¹⁹

The differences between the two stories are as significant as the similarities. Paul does not resemble Odysseus; he surpasses him. The Phaeacians had assumed that Odysseus must be a god because of his glorious appearance or because he had sneaked into the palace without detection. But the Maltese supposed that Paul was a god because he miraculously survived a serpent's bite, a demonstration of divine power. King Alcinous had rewarded Odysseus' marvelous tales of adventure with conveyance home, but Publius rewarded Paul's healing of his father and others with conveyance home.

Here is an overview of the parallels between the two shipwrecks:²⁰

Od. 5–7 and 13

- Odysseus fears disaster and Calypso predicts it.
- Odysseus sails in good weather.
- After many days, a storm arises.
- Notos and Euros blow.
- Darkness hides the sun and stars.
- Odysseus abandons hope.
- Winds drive the helpless ship.
- Odysseus expects to die at sea.
- The prophecy of Calypso has come true: there were dangers at sea.
- The goddess Ino appears to Odysseus.
- Ino tells Odysseus that he will not perish, but he will lose the ship.
- It is the fate of Odysseus to escape.
- Odysseus does not trust the goddess and tries to manage on his own.
- The ship wrecks.
- Odysseus rides a plank and then swims.
- Odysseus reaches the shore of an island.
- The locals will show generosity.
- Odysseus, cold, gathers leaves.
- Those who find Odysseus recoil in fear of his appearance.
- Later, people suspect from his appearance that the hero is a god.

Acts 27:1–28:11

- Paul predicts disaster.
- Paul sails in good weather.
- Before long a storm arises.
- Notos and Eurakylon blow.
- Darkness hides the sun and stars.
- The sailors abandon hope, but not Paul.
- Winds drive the helpless ship.
- The passengers expect to die; not Paul.
- The prophecy of Paul has come true: there were dangers at sea.
- An angel appears to Paul.
- The angel tells Paul that no one will perish, but they will lose the ship.
- It is the fate of Paul to stand before Caesar.
- The sailors do not trust the word of the angel and try to manage on their own.
- The ship wrecks.
- Some passengers ride planks; others swim.
- Everyone reaches the shore of an island.
- The barbarians show generosity.
- Paul, cold, gathers firewood.
- The locals fear Paul is a murderer being punished by a god.
- Later, people suspect from Paul's surviving the bite that he is a god.

19. The Dioscuri are common in ancient shipwrecks; e.g., *Hom. Hymn* 33 (to the Dioscuri), Lucian, *Nav.* 7–9, and *Herp.*

20. Acts 27 also shares much with the mendacious voyage narrated in the first person in *Od.* 14.292–315.

[Odysseus feared wild beasts on shore.]

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Phaeacians "honor" Odysseus with gifts for his stories. • Alcinous provides Odysseus with a ship. • Odysseus sails safely to Ithaca. | <p>The Maltese grant Paul "many honors" for his healing of people with diseases. The Maltese provide Paul with a ship and supplies. Paul sails safely to Italy.</p> |
|--|---|

Who Was that Masked Sailor?

Despite the remarkable similarities between Luke's we-voyages and those in the *Odyssey*, there is one glaring difference. Whereas Homer placed his we-voyages on the lips of characters within the narrative, Luke employs the first-person plural as an alternative voice of his omniscient narrator.²¹ That is, English translations of the *Odyssey* isolate the we-voyages between quotation marks, but one cannot do so for Acts, where the use of the first person implies the author actually traveled with Paul. Surely the author of Acts expected his or her readers to be curious about that person's identity.

The names of Paul's associates in the epistles and Acts frequently overlap, but two names are conspicuous for their absence: Titus and Luke. Several scholars have proposed, in my view rightly, that Titus is missing because Paul had insisted that he not be circumcised (Gal 2:3), whereas the Paul of Acts permits the circumcision of Timothy (16:3). Luke's absence likewise is suspicious. The name appears only once in authentic Pauline epistles and twice in the Pseudo-Paulines. In Philemon 23–24, Paul lists people who were with him when he composed this letter; they include Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke. This list contains two names that became identified with two of the three Synoptic Gospels. This list seems to have informed the author of the Deutero-Pauline epistle Colossians.

Phlm 23–25

Epaphras my fellow-prisoner greets you in Christ Jesus ²⁴[as do] Mark, Aristarchus,

Demas, and Luke, my fellow-workers.

²⁵May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Col 4:10–12a, 14, 18b

Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner greets you [as do] Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, . . .

¹¹and Jesus called Justus, who are of the circumcision, who alone were fellow-workers for the kingdom of God, who became my comfort. ¹²Epaphras, one of your own, greets you, a servant of Christ Jesus. . . .

¹⁴Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, as does Demas. . . .

¹⁸May grace be with you.

21. Acts 28:6 implies that even the first-person narrator was omniscient.

Surely the parallels between these two texts are too striking to attribute to accident; the author of Colossians seems to be imitating Philemon here. Similarly, the salutations at the end of 2 Timothy seem to imitate those at the end of Colossians.

Col 4:10, 12a, 14, 18b

Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner
greet you [as do] Mark, the cousin of
Barnabas, . . .

¹²Epaphras, one of your own, greets you,
a servant of Christ Jesus. . . . ¹⁴Luke, the
beloved physician, greets you, as does
Demas. . . .

¹⁸May grace be with you.

2 Tim 4:10–11 and 22b

For, in love with this present world,
Demas has abandoned me. . . . ¹¹Luke
alone is with me.

Bring Mark along with you, for he is use-
ful to me for the ministry. . . .

²²May grace be with you.

Ancient subscriptions to each of these books—Philemon, Colossians, and 2 Timothy—state that it was written from Rome. The tradition increasingly strengthened the intimacy between Luke and Paul: whereas Paul called Luke his “fellow-worker,” the author of Colossians called him “beloved physician,” and the author of 2 Timothy stated that Luke was Paul’s sole companion in prison just before he died: “Luke alone is with me.” In this regard, one also might cite the martyrdom section of the *Acts of Paul*, which begins with two of Paul’s associates awaiting his arrival in Rome, Titus and Luke, the very characters missing in action in Acts (11:1)! Note that the reader of Acts last views the participating narrator at 27:16: “And when we entered Rome.”

I consider it highly likely that the author of Acts expected his readers to interpret Paul’s mysterious traveling companion to have been Luke, who otherwise is suspiciously absent. But I would go further: I will argue that the original title of the two-volume work named Luke as its author.

Unmasking the Fictive Author of Luke-Acts

Although the title of the Gospel in all manuscripts ascribes the work to Luke, consensus opinion is that this title was not original, so scholars for centuries have debated the authorship of the longest continuous narrative of the New Testament.

Proposals for the authorship of Luke-Acts fall into three categories.

1. Some hold that, although the titles of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles may not be original, they nevertheless were composed by Luke, Paul’s travel companion, and that the original title of the work, whatever it was, identified him as such.

2. Others hold that the work(s) originally were anonymous and only later were attributed to Luke. This seems to be the dominant position among critics (e.g., François Bovon and Richard I. Pervo).

3. I will argue that, although we do not possess the original title of the work, it most likely identified Luke as the author, but as a pseudonym.

The first position one might call "authentic Luke"; the second "anonymity"; and the third "fictive-Luke."

I consider the "authentic Luke" position to be unworthy of serious consideration. Pervo, Joseph Tyson, and others have shown beyond reasonable doubt that the Acts of the Apostles and probably the Gospel of Luke were written no earlier than 115 CE, and most likely in the 120s.

Advocates of "anonymity" fall into two categories with respect, not to the identity of the author, but to that of the recipient whose name appears in the prefaces of both works: Theophilus. Most scholars, it would appear, hold that although the author is anonymous to us, he or she was not anonymous to the historical addressee, but this creates a problem with respect to the literary strategies of the work, for one must view the stated recipient as a *sui generis cognoscite* of the authorial identity.

Fewer advocates of "anonymity," however, hold that the name Theophilus is a pseudonym; the name may be significant, meaning "lover-of-God" or "beloved-of-God." This option is an improvement insofar as it removes the two-tiered hermeneutic (one for the expressed recipient and one for everyone else), but it creates a literary centaur: a book by an anonymous author for a pseudonymous patron, a cipher for actual readers.

I hold to the third position, which I would prefer to call "double-pseudonymity," fictive Luke and fictive Theophilus. My primary reason for taking this position is my conviction that the author of Luke-Acts modeled his preface after a preface of another work in which a historical author wrote an extensive discussion of Jesus' career for an actual individual. Luke transformed the introduction by creating for his work both a pseudonymous author and a pseudonymous recipient.

I agree with many scholars who date Papias' literary activity to the first decade of the second century, slightly before the composition of Luke-Acts but from the same general geographical region. Papias was bishop of Hierapolis and Luke-Acts apparently was written in the vicinity of Ephesus. Thanks to Eusebius, we possess most of the preface to Papias' *Exposition of Logia about the Lord*.

But I will not hesitate to set in order for you whatever I learned well and remembered well from the elders with interpretations to confirm their reliability; for I would not take joy, as many would, in those who had much to say, but in those who taught the truth; not in those who remembered the commandments of others, but in those who remembered the commandments given by the Lord for faith and derived from the truth itself. ⁴If ever someone who had followed

the elders should come by, I would investigate the sayings of the elders, what Andrew or Peter said, or Philip, Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples had said, or what Aristion and the elder John, disciples of the Lord, say. For I did not consider things derived from books to benefit me as much as things derived from a living and surviving voice." (Frg. 5 [*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.3–4])

The word "but" at the beginning indicates that something must have preceded Eusebius' excerpt, and the word "you" that directly follows "but" in Greek (δέ σοι) suggests that Papias addressed his entire work to an individual whose name most likely appeared earlier. It is likely that Papias next discussed the composition of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew.

The elder [John] used to say this too: "Mark became Peter's translator; whatever Peter recalled of what was said or done by the Lord Mark wrote down accurately, though not in proper sequence. For Mark himself neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but as I said, he later followed Peter, who used to craft teachings for the needs [of the occasion], not as though he were crafting a sequential arrangement of the logia about the Lord; so Mark was not in error by thus writing a few things as he remembered them, for he made it his one purpose to omit nothing that he had heard or falsely to present anything pertaining to them." (Frg. 5 [*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15])

"Matthew, for his part, set in order the logia in the Hebrew language, but each translated them as he was able." (Frg. 5 [*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16])

Compare these passages with the preface of the Gospel of Luke.

Since many have attempted to set in order an exposition of the matters that have come to fruition among us, ²as those who became from the beginning firsthand observers and assistants of the message handed on to us [their expositions], ³it seemed good to me, too, having followed them all thoroughly, to write [an exposition] precisely in sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴so that you may recognize the certainty of sayings about which you have been instructed. (Luke 1:1–4)

In my recently published book, *Two Shipwrecked Gospels: The Logoi of Jesus and Papias's Exposition of Logia about the Lord* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2012), I compare in detail Papias' preface, including the discussions of Mark and Matthew, and Luke's preface. Here I can do no more than provide the following summary in the form of parallel columns:

Preface to the *Exposition* (frg. 5 [*Hist. eccl.* 3.39]) Luke 1:1–4

- Title: *Exposition of Logia about the Lord*, that is, both logoi and episodes. Luke states that he, too, would write an exposition concerning Jesus; Acts 1:1 refers to the Gospel as "The first account concerning everything which Jesus began to do and to teach."

- Papias knew the Gospel of Mark and heard from the elder John that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew

"Since many have attempted

and that "each translated it as best he could." Papias also seems to have known a work by Aristion, a disciple as well as an elder, entitled *Expositions* [διηγήσεις] of the *Logoi of the Lord*.

- "I will not hesitate to set in order [συγκατατάξαι] whatever I learned well." Matthew "set in order [συνετάξατο] the logia."

to set in order an exposition [ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν] of the matters that have come to fruition among us,

- Mark translated the teachings of Peter; Matthew wrote his own Gospel in Hebrew, and at least two others translated it into Greek. Peter and Matthew were firsthand observers, while Mark and Matthew's translators were assistants. For Papias, the value of the elders was their transmission to posterity of traditions (παραδόσεις) about Jesus and the disciples.

²as those who became from the beginning firsthand observers and assistants of the message

handed on [παρέδωσαν] to us [their expositions],

- Papias learned about the teachings of the disciples by inquiring of anyone who had "followed [παρηκολουθηκώς] the elders."

³it seemed good to me, too, having

followed [παρηκολουθηκότι] them all

- Mark "wrote accurately [ἀκριβῶς ἔγραψεν]" but not in sequence. "I [Papias] will not hesitate to set in order for you [σοι] . . ."

thoroughly to write [an exposition] precisely in sequence [ἀκριβῶς καθεξῆς . . . γράψαι] for you [σοι],

- Before Eusebius' excerpt, the bishop probably named the recipient of his work.

most excellent Theophilus,

- Papias wanted to reassure his reader of the truthfulness of the traditions he received (τοῖς ἀληθείαν διδάσκουσιν . . . τᾷ ἀληθείᾳ . . . ἀληθείας), including "the sayings [τῶν . . . λόγων] of the elders."

⁴so that you may recognize the certainty [ἀσφάλειαν]

of sayings [λόγων] about which you have been instructed."

Although it is possible, if not likely, that Mark and Matthew originally were anonymous, by Papias' day they clearly bore names from the first Christian generation, and Luke must have been aware of it. I find it difficult to imagine that an author who wished to replace earlier works ascribed to Jesus' "first-hand observers" (Peter and Matthew) or to "assistants of the message" (Mark, Matthew's Greek translators, and Papias) would have written anonymously. Other second-century Gospels bore the names of Jesus' associates, such as the *Protogospel of James* or the *Gospel of Thomas*.

By choosing this authorial pseudonym, the author of Luke-Acts announced from the outset that his story about Christian origins would have a distinctly Pauline slant, unlike that of Q, Mark, Matthew, or Papias. Whereas the fifth book of Papias' *Exposition* extended the narrative from Jesus to the author's own day, say to about 100 CE, Luke's second book, the Acts of the Apostles, extended the narrative only to Paul's imprisonment in Rome in the early 60s, about half a century earlier than his own time. By writing under a pseudonym drawn from the Pauline epistles, the author could acknowledge that he was not personally associated with Jesus or the Twelve—his knowledge of them derived from careful research on earlier writings—but at the same time imply that he **was** personally associated with the Pauline mission until the end of the time period that he narrated. There can be little doubt that this strategy was successful, even to our own day, if one is to judge from the persistence of advocates for the historical reliability of Luke's composition of these books.

Conclusion

In the first section of this paper I argued that the author of Luke-Acts modeled the "we-voyages" after the *nostoi* of the Achaeans from Troy in Homer's *Odyssey*, but unlike those episodes, Acts narrates these voyages not in direct discourse but as memories of the omniscient narrator. Thus, the second section of the paper proposed that ancient readers familiar with Pauline tradition are likely to have identified Paul's mysterious traveling companion as Luke, who is never named in Acts. The final section of the paper argued that the original title of the work, whatever it was, offered the name Luke as its fictive author to notify the reader that this work would retell the story of Christian origins from a Pauline perspective, by one who was with the apostle until the end. Whereas for the Gospel, pseudo-Luke had to glean his material from sources, none of which got the sequence quite right; for the Pauline parts of Acts, he could speak as a firsthand witness.

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Historical Issues in Acts 28:11–31

Gerd Lüdemann

In this paper, I shall deal first with historical issues in Acts in general, and then turn my attention to a specific passage, namely Acts 28:11–31. I proceed in this way in the interest of transparency, because one's overall approach to Acts necessarily determines how one deals with any specific section of it.

Historical Issues in Acts

Among other things, the author of Luke-Acts intends his work to be taken as historical reportage on early Christianity. The very first verse of Acts invokes the opening of his gospel, in which he claims to have critically evaluated all the available sources and goes so far as to attest the precision of the result.

¹Since many have attempted to compose a narrative about the events which have come to fulfillment among us, ²as they have been handed down to us from those who from the beginning were themselves eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³I too have thought it good, since I have investigated everything carefully from the start, to write them out in order for you, excellent Theophilus, ⁴in order that you know the certain basis of the teaching in which you have been instructed. (Luke 1:1–4)

This same introduction plainly refers to previous accounts—none of which he deems entirely precise—and promises what today might be called a new critical edition. The opening words of Acts constitute a virtual guarantee that the same intention and criteria guided his account of the spread of Christianity in his second book.

Luke interprets the continuity of salvation as a “course” (*dromos*) or “way” (*hodos*). In the sermon Luke ascribes to Paul in Pisidian Antioch, the apostle speaks of John the Baptist's entrance (*eishodos*) into the world (Acts 13:24) and says, “As John was finishing his course . . .” (*dromos*) (Acts 13:25). Acts perceives Christian life generally as a “way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22) and, in looking back on his missionary activity in his farewell speech at Miletus (Acts 20:18–35), Paul describes the end of his missionary work as the completion of his course (*dromos*, Acts 20:24).

As was the case with Jesus, John the Baptist, and the apostles, Luke has a theological purpose for recounting the activity of Paul: he is committed to explaining and defending his concept of salvation history. This history is to be

seen in the movement from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47) to Rome (Acts 1:8 and 28:16–30). The worldwide scope of the mission encompasses the whole Roman Empire (see Luke 2:1) and Paul emerges as the central character in the spread of the good news. Every element of the story—the Galilean genesis; the crisis, tragedy, and exaltation in Jerusalem; the establishment there of the first community; and what Luke sees as the experimental mission of the Hellenists—leads towards the universal availability of salvation. Halfway through Acts, the Jerusalem conference serves as a pivotal event, distinguishing the primitive church from that of the present and laying the foundation for Paul’s independent mission (note Acts 15:39–40). The Pauline era grows out of and is validated by the sacred history of the Jerusalem community.

Because Paul’s “first missionary journey” antedates the Jerusalem conference, it has a transitional function. First, it illustrates the issues that provoke the conference: the fact and the success of taking the gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 11:20–21) were in effect emphasized by the geographical scope of the new itinerary. Second, Luke uses the journey to present the well-known transformation of Saul into Paul (Acts 13:9) and elevate Paul’s status to that of “The Apostle to the Gentiles” (see Acts 13:13, 16, 43, 45, 50; 14:20).

Thereafter, Paul advances alone to center stage, and his mission carries him all the way to Rome. Clearly, this narrative strategy has theological motives, for placing it *after* the Jerusalem conference emphasizes the Lukan church’s roots in the primitive church and thus the continuity of salvation history. Luke’s motives are *not* primarily chronological; chronology is pressed into the service of theological meaning. He is an apologist, not a secular historian. When he has discovered the theological significance of an occurrence, he is able to derive from it the correct chronology.¹ We would be unjust to him if we scrutinize a report of his on the basis of historical research alone, for the litmus test must always be theology: namely, how does this or that fit into the history of salvation.

These discoveries reveal that we should look at the journeys of Paul in the framework of Luke’s theology of salvation history. Moreover, the relationship of salvation-history and profane history in Luke-Acts raises a fundamental question concerning the use of secular historical data gathered from Luke-Acts in any valid history of early Christianity.

While it is true that no historian writes without bias, to what degree have Luke’s particular biases led him to invent narrative elements? One illustrative issue is his favorable treatment of the Roman state, examples of which appear in Luke’s depiction of members of the Roman military.

It is amazing what an important role Roman military personnel play in Luke-Acts. Until around 175 CE there were no Christian soldiers. Late in the second century, however, soldiers ever more frequently encountered the Christian mission and were converted. This raised the question of whether they could remain

1. Cf. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke*, 33.

servants of Rome. The issue had earlier been addressed in Luke 3:10–14—undoubtedly a Lukan invention—in which John the Baptist addresses such pillars of the Empire as publicans and soldiers, and urges them to behave always in strict conformance with their duties. Later, in Acts 10, Luke portrays the first Gentile Christian to be none other than Cornelius, a Roman centurion. How far ahead of his time Luke was! What an anachronistic position he had taken!

One of the clearest examples of Luke's positive portrayal of Roman military personnel appears in his account of the trial and execution of Jesus. Comparison with Mark's narrative shows that he goes out of his way to minimize the involvement of the Roman soldiers. Not only does Luke omit the scourging scene (Mark 15:16–20), so that Jesus is remanded immediately after Pilate's verdict, but he reports that Jews, not Romans, are the ones who led Jesus off to be crucified (Luke 23:24–26, 33). Those who called for Jesus' death have also judged, condemned, and executed him. An often overlooked corroboration is found in Luke 24:20, where we hear two of Jesus' disciples explain to an unrecognized traveler that the chief priests and Jewish leaders not only handed Jesus over to be executed but also actually crucified him. To be sure, one cannot assume that Luke limits the responsibility for Jesus' death to the Jewish elite, for he clearly assigns guilt to the people in 23:4, 13–16, and repeats the charge in Acts 3:15 (note "Israelites" in verse 12).

Having both directed the blame elsewhere and minimized the negative portrayal of the Roman soldiers found in his sources, Luke is free to shine a favorable light on Rome and its agents when he depicts Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and the subsequent events, which resemble nothing so much as a case of protective custody to benefit a threatened prisoner.

Instead of being set free, of course, Paul felt obliged to appeal to the emperor, and was sent as a prisoner to Rome. Even so, Luke has created a tragic complex of circumstances in which Romans often show admiration for Paul and take pains to save his life. To be sure, the Romans eventually executed him, but as in the case of Jesus' death, Luke eliminates the violent expression of Roman rule in their executions. Naturally, the writer of a Gospel could not simply ignore Jesus' death as he did that of Paul. Relieving the Roman authorities of responsibility for Jesus' condemnation and crucifixion by ascribing the stroke to others is a literary *tour de force*; in historical and theological terms, it is a *monstrosity*. History comes in a distant second to the evangelist's zeal in promoting his ecclesiastical program.

How much of Acts is historically accurate has long been subject to argument, but far more important to a useful assessment of the book is to recognize the *framework* Luke has created for the events. For however authentic or fictitious a reported event, its meaning is in considerable measure controlled by its historical context. For example, Paul's implied date for the "Apostolic Council" varies considerably from that proposed in Acts 15—and the difference could well change its significance considerably.

We do know that Acts employs a straight-line narrative: the story proceeds without interruptions or subplots. But if only because it oversimplifies the actual chronicle of events, it cannot be taken to be a valid history of early first-century Christianity. Besides, the story contains many loose ends that Luke did not bother to hide and poses obvious questions he ignored. Yet more troubling is the appearance of puzzling characters like Apollos, who knew only John's baptism (Acts 18:24–28) and the Ephesian disciples who had never heard of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1–7). And strangest of all, we learn nothing about Christianity's arrival in Rome! How can these oddities be explained?

Luke uses carefully selected figures to demonstrate Christianity's triumph. We meet good guys like the disciples, Christian teachers, and martyrs and bad actors like heretics and, distastefully but inevitably, the Jews. And despite a few bumps in the road, the path to ultimate salvation leads straight ahead and has no forks or detours. To be sure, such basic narrative strategies yield stories that are easily remembered and reiterated, and thus likely to be influential. Unfortunately, by avoiding the nuances and complexities that are part of human history, such simplistic dramatization necessarily distorts the truth. Studying the abundant evidence of Christianity's early diversity places Acts in a very different perspective and shows how much Luke has left out. Above all, we may find ourselves reluctant to accept his biases concerning Jews and other troublemakers who hinder what he sees as the monolithic and inevitable progress of Christianity. Today, the good/bad, orthodox/heretic distinctions are at last coming to be seen as judgments made after the fact by those who wish to promote the winners among whom they see themselves.²

To put all this in a sharper perspective, let me first list Luke's theological presuppositions and next epitomize the limitations on the historical value of his two-volume work for the study of Christian origins. As for the first, one can make the following observations:

- a. The Holy Spirit is instrumental in salvation history.
- b. All things are predetermined by the will of God.
- c. The spread of the primitive Christian mission is unstoppable.
- d. Roman power is sympathetic to Christianity (a corollary of this is that any pro-Roman traits or characterizations in Acts and the third Gospel are open to historical doubt).
- e. The unbelieving Jews will go to any lengths to thwart Christian goals and purposes (as with the previous statement, any negative statement about them is likewise open to historical doubt).

Concerning the latter issue, one must conclude that

- a. Luke has misrepresented Paul's relationship to the Jerusalem community.
- b. Luke has misrepresented Paul's theology.

2. Cf. Bowden, "Appendix: Ideologies, Text and Tradition," 159–60.

- c. Luke's description of Paul's actions is in part miraculous, in part false, and deceptively incomplete.
- d. Luke makes Peter appear Pauline and Paul appear Petrine.
- e. Luke places Paul's major mission immediately after the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15). In reality it had started long before the Jerusalem conference—indeed at least a decade earlier.
- f. Since the inner and outer growth of the communities is divinely assured, Luke presumes that strong affirmations of extraordinary growth do not demand sources.
- g. Granted that Luke's narrative concerning the various mission sites is unbalanced, it is a striking omission that he fails to say anything about the real beginnings of Christianity in Galilee, northern Galatia, Rome, and Egypt. Instead he spends sixty verses—most of them the purest fiction—on the sea-voyage to Rome.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, one must give credit to Luke for being correct on two points:

- a. At the beginning of primitive Christianity, the Jerusalem community played an important role.
- b. Paul was a key figure in the proclamation, expansion, and shaping of primitive Christianity. Luke rightly devotes more than half of Acts to him.

Yet Acts cannot profitably be read without the corrective of the authentic letters of Paul, for:

- a. Acts presents an inaccurate chronology of primitive Christianity between 30 and 70 CE.
- b. The routes reported in Acts are partly inventions, partly duplications, and commonly misplaced in time. Paul's letters allow us to reconstruct the real chronology of his missionary journeys and to integrate the valuable itineraries of Acts into an orderly account.
- c. In many cases Acts not only fails to provide solutions to the enigmas of the letters but further complicates these enigmas.

Some have argued, and some continue to do so, that ancient canons of historicity differ so drastically from those of today that any verdict must be anachronistic. Yet such urgings are beside the point, deceptive, or as false as the occasionally advanced statement that the ancients did not care about false attribution of writings.³

Among comments of other contemporary authors, note those of Lucian of Samosata,⁴ a theorist from the second century who bases his judgment on Thucydides, promoting "him above all others as the paradigm of what a historian should be."⁵

3. In what follows I have used material from Lüdemann, *Intolerance and the Gospel*, 233–44.

4. See Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 13–20.

5. McCoy, "In the shadow of Thucydides," 9.

⁴¹That, then, is the sort of man the historian should be: fearless, incorruptible, free, a friend of free expression and the truth, intent, as the comic poet⁶ says, on calling a fig a fig and a trough a trough, giving nothing to hatred or to friendship, sparing no one, showing neither pity nor shame nor obsequiousness, an impartial judge, well disposed to all men up to the point of not giving one side more than its due, in his books a stranger and a man without a country, independent, subject to no sovereign, not reckoning what this or that man will think, but stating the facts.⁷ ⁴²Thucydides laid down this law very well: he distinguished virtue and vice in historical writing, when he saw Herodotus greatly admired to the point where his books were named after the Muses. For Thucydides says that he is writing a possession for evermore rather than a prize-essay for the occasion, that he does not welcome fiction but is leaving to posterity the true account of what happened. He brings in, too, the question of usefulness and what is, surely, the purpose of sound history: that if ever again men find themselves in a like situation they may be able, he says, from a consideration of the records of the past to handle rightly what now confronts them.⁸ . . . ⁴⁷As to the facts themselves, he should not assemble them at random, but only after much laborious and painstaking investigation. He should for preference be an eyewitness, but, if not, listen to those who tell the more impartial story, those whom one would suppose least likely to subtract from the facts or add to them out of favor or malice. When this happens let him show shrewdness and skill in putting together the more credible story. When he has collected all or most of the facts let him first make them into a series of notes, a body of material as yet with no beauty or continuity. Then after arranging them into order, let him give it beauty and enhance it with the charms of expression, figure and rhythm.⁹

Since Luke places himself in the context of ancient historical writings, he deserves to be measured on the basis of the ancient standards. Let me hasten to add that the ancients who were educated enough to pursue such matters were interested both in what really happened and in whether a document carried

6. Aristophanes or Menander.

7. In Greek, *ti pepraktai legôn*.

8. Lucian, *How to Write History* 41–42, 47, 57. Chapter 42 is a free paraphrase of Thucydides 1.22.4: “And it may well be that the absence of the fabulous from my narrative will seem less pleasing to the ear; but whoever shall wish to have a clear view both of the events which have happened and of those will someday, in all human probability, happen again in the same or a similar way—for these to adjudge my history profitable will be enough for me. And, indeed, it has been composed, not as a prize-essay, to be heard for the moment, but as a possession for all time.”

9. Lucian, *How to Write History* 41–42, 47. Chapter 47 is based on Thucydides 1.22.2–3: “But as to the facts of the occurrences of the war, I have thought it my duty to give them, not as ascertained from any chance informant nor as seemed to me probable, but only after investigating with the greatest possible accuracy each detail, in the case both of the events in which I myself participated and of those regarding which I got my information from others. And the endeavor to ascertain these facts was a laborious task, because those who were eye-witnesses of the several events did not give the same reports about the same things, but reports varying according to their championship of one side or the other, or according to their recollection.”

the correct name of the writer. Thus my work on Luke-Acts is directly responsive to these criteria and to the goal of modern enlightenment—and ultimately to Luke himself. Despite his glaring inaccuracies, he was without doubt the first Christian historian,¹⁰ and he was part of the Greco-Roman tradition—a careful study of which indicates that historiography did not wait until the Enlightenment to become a self-conscious form of literary art.

A number of Greek and Roman historians engaged in an ongoing discourse about historical truth, including the issues of intellectual deceit and forgery. Moreover, those of the Greek and Roman intelligentsia, though lacking the sophistication of modern critics, had developed clear criteria by which to uncover fraud. Let me first offer the example of the great physician Galen of Pergamum, and following that, two further citations. All three will demonstrate that, if writers of literary works that were intended for an educated audience knowingly employed false attribution or deliberately falsified a text, they were considered guilty of a malfeasance.¹¹

In “My Own Books,” Galen reports the following incident:

I was recently in the Sandalarium (= sandal-makers’ street), the area of Rome with the largest concentration of booksellers, where I witnessed a dispute as to whether a certain book for sale was by me or someone else. The book bore the title: Galen the doctor. Someone had bought the book under the impression that it was one of mine, someone else—a man of letters—struck by the odd form of the title, desired to know the book’s subject. On reading the first two lines he immediately tore up the inscription, saying simply: “This is not Galen’s language—the title is false.” Now, the man in question had received only the basic education that Greek children were always given by teachers of grammar and rhetoric.¹²

A little later Galen complains:

My books have been subject to all sorts of mutilations, whereby people in different countries publish (literally, “read”) different texts under their own names, with all sorts of cuts, additions and alterations.¹³

Concerning false attributions, Galen’s report allows us to draw three conclusions:

1. People of even moderate education learned enough of what we would call style-criticism to enable them to distinguish genuine from false writings.

10. Wilken, *Myth of Christian Beginnings*, 33–51; Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, xi.

11. Cf. with this the statement in Annette Merz’s thorough study, *Die fiktive Selbstausslegung des Paulus*, 198: “An acceptance of pseudepigraphy can be found in antiquity only and sporadically among physicians and philosophers (e.g., Pythagoreans and Epicureans) who justify writings of pupils in the name of the master. Yet, I would stress more that this is according to the sources already a reaction to the results of investigations of authenticity which in turn reinforces the general reservations to writing with a false name.” (Trans. my own)

12. Galen, *My Own Books*, 3.

13. Galen, *My Own Books*, 3.

2. Plagiarism, that is, spreading someone else's ideas under one's own name, was considered unacceptable.
3. Pseudepigraphy, that is, publishing one's own ideas under someone else's name, was improper.

Two episodes from "The Lives of Eminent Philosophers" by the Greek writer Diogenes Laertius in the third century CE shed further light on the general disapprobation of false attribution and plagiarism.

Aristoxenus the musician asserts that Heraclides also composed tragedies, inscribing upon them the name of Thespis. Chamaeleon complains that Heraclides' treatise on the work of Homer and Hesiod was plagiarized from his own. Furthermore, Autodorus the Epicurean criticizes him in a polemic against his tract *Of Justice*. Again, Dionysius the Renegade, or, as some people call him, the "Spark," when he wrote the *Parthenopaeus*, entitled it a play of Sophocles; and Heraclides, such was his credulity, in one of his own works drew upon this forged play as Sophoclean evidence. Dionysius, on perceiving this, confessed what he had done; and . . . the other denied the fact and would not believe him.¹⁴

The examination of both the authenticity and completeness of writings was a daily task for the librarians of such great libraries of antiquity as Pergamum and Alexandria, to mention only these two. Athenodor, the head librarian of the library of Pergamum, got himself into trouble by altering Stoic writings. Diogenes Laertius gives this report:

Isidore of Pergamum . . . likewise affirms that the passages disproved by the school were expunged from his works by Athenodorus the Stoic, who was in charge of the Pergamene library; and that afterwards, when Athenodorus was detected and compromised, they were replaced.¹⁵

When we compare it to the literary meticulousness of the Greco-Roman world, Hebrew literature shows a lack of development in awareness of intellectual property, commitment to historical truth, and sense of authorial individuality. In fact, the literature of what later became the Old Testament was for the most part tradition-literature rather than author-literature. Even the books of the prophets were constantly reworked by their disciples and by later theological schools. And not only is the same true for the panoramic history that stretches from 1 Samuel to 2 Kings, but the Chronicler's account is ultimately a further commentary on those narratives, for he is engaged in the same task as that of his prophetic and historical predecessors: rewriting earlier proclamations or accounts to suit the needs of the present generation. To be sure, it sometimes appears that, when the reworking of earlier accounts produced con-

14. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 5.92–93.

15. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.34.

traditions too obvious to overlook, the author-redactor felt obliged to observe some elementary literary scruples.

That suspicion gains credence especially if, as is widely accepted, the original text of Deuteronomy (= Ur-Deuteronomy) was discovered in the Temple as the report in 2 Kings 22–23 suggests. For that can mean only that priests had written it and then either staged or simply claimed its discovery before handing it on to King Josiah.¹⁶ In this same vein, one may reasonably wonder why this particular piece of Old Testament literature repeats the so-called “canon formula” of Deut 4:2a at 13:1,¹⁷ which resurfaces in Rev 22:18–19 with its dire threats against any who add to or subtract from the received words (of God). Obviously, two canons of truth—the religious and the intellectual—collide here. Yet most parts of the Old Testament and many Jewish sources recognize only one of these principles and remain oblivious to or unaware of the other. That basic fact makes it extremely difficult for the critical scholar to relate to these writings, let alone establish meaningful dialogue with people who take seriously the historical accuracy of these “holy” texts.

Be that as it may, the necessity of arriving at interpretive conclusions concerning falsely attributed documents cannot be avoided, even when their authors may be lacking in historical reliability or truthfulness. This is especially the case, because many of these very authors are in the habit of asserting their own truthfulness while warning against the forgeries of others. Thus their reliability is doubly undermined, for they not only show themselves untrustworthy but also hypocritically proclaim the untrustworthiness of others who are playing the same game.

In the course of employing the available historical-critical tools, I do not presuppose the impossibility of miracles. I am not taking what Colin Hemer has described as “an absolute position that miracles do not happen, and that *all* alleged instances must accordingly be either rejected or re-explained.”¹⁸ Yet I do both recognize and posit that the three-storied universe of the ancients is an outmoded concept and that anything in Luke-Acts and elsewhere that presupposes such an image of reality must be rejected insofar as we are committed to dealing with representations of fact. For the rest, I approach every miracle story of Luke-Acts in search of evidence of its historical veracity and do not base my judgment on preconceived notions as to what can or cannot happen. One note of qualification is in order at this point, however: one’s belief in God or god

16. For the details of Deuteronomy’s discovery under Josiah in 622 BCE and parallel discovery-accounts of other sacred books from antiquity to modern times (e.g., the book of Mormon), see my *The Unholy in Holy Scripture*, 59–73. In recent times some scholars tend to ascribe the composition of 2 Kings 22–23 (on the basis of Deuteronomy [!]) to exilic or postexilic circles who wanted to connect king Josiah with a radical reform of the cult in Jerusalem (see Kratz, *Propheten Israels*, 73).

17. For the Old Testament, see Prov 30:6 (cf. Eccl 3:14; Sir 18:6; 42:21).

18. Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, 438.

should play no role in the historical investigation. The Acts of the Apostles must be investigated as all other religious or nonreligious texts are examined. The rules that apply for historical science should also apply for theological study when it comes to the investigation of the historical records of Christianity. The assumption that the history of this or any other religion has to be reconstructed as if God does not exist should find common agreement among twenty-first century scholars.¹⁹

Van Harvey has rightly said that

what we call historical inquiry is really the formalization by professional historians of our modern, Promethean desire to know, a desire that is actually rooted in everyday life. Historical reasoning is merely the formalization of one method that has, over time, proved to be our best guarantor of achieving this desire and of holding in check the special pleading, obscurantism, and tendentiousness that are omnipresent in human existence.²⁰

History, then, is directly related to scientific knowledge as “public knowledge of public facts.” By “public knowledge” I mean—following Don Wiebe—non-idiosyncratic knowledge mediated through intersubjectively tested sets of statements. And by “public facts” I mean “states of affairs in the world.”

Yet, for whatever reason, Christian scholars are sometimes chary about heeding the strictures of this protocol. Instead, they resort to philosophical reflections calculated to protect the believer against history. Two examples should suffice. Ben Witherington remarks,

These stories [of Acts] will no doubt continue to create problems for some moderns who rule out in advance the supernatural, including supernatural events such as miracles, and dismiss all history writing that includes such tales as pre-critical and naive in character. I would suggest that such an a priori approach to miracles is equally uncritical and naive, not least because science has hardly begun to plumb the depths of what is and is not possible in our universe.²¹

And Joseph A. Fitzmyer opines,

If one is philosophically convinced that miracles do not happen or that God does not so intervene in human history, then all such narratives immediately become unhistorical or nonhistorical. If, however, one accepts the possibility of such divine intervention, judgment is then open to their historical validation. Clearly, Luke reckoned with such possibility, for he did not hesitate to include such items in his narratives in Acts.²²

19. All this has less to do with a “materialistic worldview” than with common practice among professional historians.

20. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer*, xx–xxi.

21. Ben Witherington III, *Acts of the Apostles*, 223–24.

22. Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 126.

To this sort of sophistry I reply that we can reckon with the possibility of supernatural events only if the historical analysis of a specific case admits of no other explanation. At any rate, one ought not to begin with the assumption that miracles occur.

My exegesis of the passage below in Acts follows my pattern of dividing passages into series of texts. In the translation, I have employed underlines, italics, and bold-faced type to stress key words and ideas and thus foster a close reading of the text. Sentences printed in boldface type contain elements that require close attention. The highlighting is a reminder not to historicize their content but rather, once the necessary work on Luke's edits has been accomplished, to begin with the investigation of the underlying tradition. Unless otherwise indicated, italics denote Luke's editorial pen. One must always take into account, of course, that Luke's vocabulary, style, and agendas have been so effectually engrafted onto the sources as to give the entire text an undeniably Lukan flavor. The text is then outlined to summarize its content and to provide both an initial insight into its structure and an inkling of the connection between the sentences and clauses, and thus their intended meaning. Both of these issues are further pursued in the subsequent section, which seeks to discover the *purpose* of the passage by means of a brief analysis of Luke's language and the context of the passage.

Next I attempt to discover whether Luke has reworked *tradition*. Its existence may have been suggested in the analysis of Luke's purpose or by un-Lukan expressions. Nevertheless, the possibility of tradition must always be demonstrated separately. While we have particularly good reason for assuming traditions in Acts 16–21, the situation in Acts 1–5, 6–12, and 21–28 is different, for traditions cannot be extracted from or controlled by a comparison with the letters of Paul (as they often can in Acts 16–21). This is true even if in individual sections (here Acts 5, 8, and 12 resemble 28) information from outside Luke can be used as comparative and/or corroborative material. Finally, I attempt to reinforce the broad notion of "tradition" already mentioned—one that includes, not only written sources, but also oral reports and information that were generally available to Luke, including, of course, the results of his apparently wide reading.

After that—under the heading "Historical Elements"—I subject the reconstructed traditions in that block to historical verification. In this pursuit Paul's letters often play a significant role, and specific historical findings may be subjected to criticism and counter-proposals. Some may deem such an approach to be overly reliant on hypotheses, but the alternative path, one that is too often followed, would be merely to restate—and thus tacitly affirm the historicity of—the Acts account. I cannot bring myself to concur with, say, the assertion that in most cases the historicity of narrative elements in Acts is a wide-open question. I rather seek to offer conclusions based on the best evidence and an objective analysis of the existing data.

Last but not least, I separately address the question of the historical value of Luke's account. For one thing, in the shaping of the tradition may be hidden valuable information that my analytic method has failed to evoke. For another, many scholars and laypersons still regard the Acts account as the authoritative source for information about primitive Christianity. Therefore, the issue of historicity must be addressed separately and forthrightly. Third, by focusing specifically on the historical value of Luke's narrative, I can address the possibility that Luke might after all have been a companion of Paul and that his reports therefore deserve a critical evaluation on their own merits.

Historical Issues in Acts 28:11–31²³

To illustrate these exegetical comments and methods, I have chosen the last twenty-one verses of Acts to serve as an example. It is perhaps ironically appropriate that in this short concluding passage we should encounter such a profusion of the thematic elements and historiographical offenses that characterize the book as a whole. Indeed, it is not too much to see this passage as an epitome of his literary method.

a. Translation

¹¹After **three** months we set sail in an Alexandrian ship that had wintered at the island, with the "Twin Brothers" as an emblem. ¹²And we landed at Syracuse and stayed there for **three** days, ¹³and from there sailing round arrived at Rhegium. A day later, a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. ^{14a}There we found **BROTHERS** and were invited to stay with them for seven days. ^{14b}AND SO WE CAME TO ROME.

¹⁵And the **BROTHERS** there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.

^{16a}AND WHEN WE CAME INTO ROME, ^{16b}Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with only a soldier to guard him.

¹⁷After **three** days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, "**BROTHERS**, though I had done nothing against the people or the customs of **our fathers**, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. ¹⁹But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—not that I mean to lay the blame on the (whole) nation.

²⁰For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain." ²¹And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the **BROTHERS** coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. ²²But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

23. In what follows I have used material from Lüdemann, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 343–56.

²³After setting a day, a large number of them visited him at his lodging. From morning till evening he explained and testified to **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**, appealing to both the Law of Moses and the Prophets in an effort to convince them about Jesus. ²⁴And some were convinced by what he said, but others would disbelieve. ²⁵And so they disagreed among themselves, and as they departed, Paul offered one final statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to **your fathers** through Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶Go to this people, and say,
You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.

²⁷For this people’s heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.’

²⁸Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; and they will listen to it.”²⁴ ³⁰He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹proclaiming **THE KINGDOM OF GOD** and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ openly and without hindrance.

b. Outline

11–16: Journey from Malta via Syracuse, Rhegium and Puteoli to Rome.
Welcome by the Christian brothers there. Paul’s privileges in his Roman captivity: private quarters watched over by a single guard
17–28: Paul meets with the Jews of Rome and proclaims the kingdom of God
30–31: Living at his own expense, Paul preaches unhindered for two years

c. Luke’s purpose

Verse 11: The Twin Brothers are the twin sons of Zeus, Castor and Pollux, who were expected to deliver people from distress at sea.²⁵

Verses 12–13: “The ship docked in Syracuse for three days, then in Rhegium, and from there it sailed about 230 miles in only two days, with a south wind blowing, to Puteoli, the chief Italian port for overseas shipping at that time.”²⁶

Verses 14–16: This section is not without tensions, for while verse 14b reports that Paul and his companions have reached Rome (“and so we came to Rome”), verse 16a seems to depict a second arrival. In keeping with verse 16a but clashing with verse 14b, verse 15a reports that representatives of the Christian community met Paul at both the Forum Appii, some forty-three miles from Rome, and Tres Tabernae, about thirty-three miles from the city.

24. Verse 29 (“And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, holding much dispute among themselves”) does not belong to the original text. It is a later addition.

25. Cf. Lucian, *Navig.* 9; Epictetus 2.18.29.

26. Krodell, *Acts*, 482.

Conzelmann²⁷ explains the tension by saying that in verse 14b Luke anticipates the arrival in Rome, but he gives no reason for this and indeed none seems evident. A more likely proposal offered by Haenchen²⁸ is that verse 14b is part of the travel account and verse 15 is a redactional expansion by means of which Luke intended a parallel to Paul's reception by the Jerusalem church in 21:17. The trouble with this is that Luke makes no further use of the incident, since further contact with the Christian community would have intruded on Paul's conversations with the Jews. (Note the corresponding neglect of the Jerusalem community in Acts 22-26). Verse 16 once again exemplifies Luke's scheme of showing Romans to be generally well disposed to Paul (cf. 27:3 to 27:16 and recall the deferential attitude of the tribune in 21:40a and the centurion's concern in 22:26). Of course, we must not assume that Luke's purpose and the content of the tradition that he reworked were always in conflict.

Verses 17-20: In this brief apologia Paul repeats earlier protestations: (1) He has traduced neither his people nor his ancestral customs (verse 17; cf. 25:8; 21:21). (2) It was some of his fellow Jews who compelled him to seek safety in an appeal to the emperor rather than be set free by the Romans and be vulnerable to assassination plots (verses 18-19; cf. 25:9-12). (3) It is to secure the future hope of Israel that Paul is in prison.²⁹

Verse 21: Although this verse presents the picture of a major split between Roman Jews and Christians, as well as a serious difference of opinion between the Jews of Rome and those in Jerusalem, neither of these situations can claim evidentiary or even inferential support. We can, however, see another of Luke's many portraits of Paul as both triumphant missionary to the Gentiles and interpreter of Christianity to the Jews.³⁰

Verse 22: That the Jews knew nothing of Paul and only by hearsay of Christianity is all but incredible in view of seemingly unassailable reports that during the reign of Claudius, Jewish-Christian riots—instigated by "Christ"—led to an expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem (cf. 18:2). Here Luke may well be redacting tradition so as to portray Paul as the putative founder of the Roman church, but he may be equally interested in establishing that Paul is making a fresh start with the Jews of Rome.³¹

Verse 23: The author is the one who has forged a connection between "kingdom of God" and verbs of testimony and proclamation (cf. 19:8 and below, verse 31). Paul's preaching to Roman Jews is one last recapitulation of the Lukan

27. Cf. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 224.

28. Cf. Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 719.

29. Cf. Acts 23:6; 24:15; 26:6.

30. See Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 1.1241-42.

31. Cf. Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 1.1242. Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 372, differs, proposing that Luke is silent about the community because he knows that its relationship to Paul was not clear.

kerygma. His listeners' reaction is so described as to convey the impression that by and large they are a lost cause.

Verse 24: It might at first seem that the statement "And some were convinced by his words but others would disbelieve" fails to accord with the subsequent conclusion in verse 28: "Know then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles: they will listen"—and that verse 24 therefore reflects a tradition. Indeed, verse 24 seems to show a result that does not match the cursing of the Isaiah quotation. On the other hand, 17:4 and 19:9 show similar redactionally created Jewish responses to Paul's preaching. Moreover the verse stresses the divisive effect of Paul's preaching. It is thus eminently reasonable to understand verse 24 as redactional preparation for the subsequent action.

Verse 25: The Jews demonstrate once again that they are at variance among themselves. Note the contrast to verse 17: Paul no longer speaks of "our fathers" but of "your fathers." Thus Luke distances Paul from the Jewish people (cf. his use of the same technique in the speech of Stephen, Acts 7).

Verses 26–28: This citation of Isa 6:9–10³² is the last of repeated assurances that the gospel will hereafter be preached only to the Gentiles (see 13:46–47; 18:6). Verse 28 is a summary that employs unmistakably Lukan vocabulary. Conzelmann³³ is correct in saying that, as much as we may deplore the historical consequences, the Lukan church is thoroughly Gentile Christian. J. D. G. Dunn strikes a different note,

(T)he turn to the Gentiles is *simply* part of God's larger scheme of salvation: the turn to the Gentiles does not imply a rejection of Israel (see also on 13.46–47). In other words, the Lukan Paul is no different from the Paul of Rom. 9–11: the mixed and largely negative response of the Jews to the gospel of Messiah Jesus and the positive response of the Gentiles is *simply* a phase in the larger purposes of God to include all, Jews and Gentiles, within his saving concern.³⁴

Similarly, Gerhard Krodel remarks,

Since Luke did not write "all Gentiles," we must assume that the meaning of *all* is inclusive of Jews rather than exclusive. In the epilog Luke did not establish a new Gentile particularism at the expense of Jews—something which would run counter to his whole narrative.³⁵

Yet Tyson observes wisely,

We must seriously consider the significance of the fact that the third Pauline announcement about going to the Gentiles comes at the very end of the book.

32. In Luke 8:10 the third evangelist omitted the quotation from Isa 6:10, which he read in Mark 4:11.

33. Cf. Conzelmann, *Theology of St Luke*, 145–50.

34. Dunn, *Acts of the Apostles*, 356. Italics added.

35. Krodel, *Acts*, 507.

Narrative endings carry special weight and often supply just the ingredient that is necessary for a full understanding of the text. In the present case we have a motif that has appeared twice before (Acts 13:46–47; 18:6), with some confusion about its implications. At the end it comes again (Acts 28:28), but now with a sense of finality. On principle, there is no reason to reject the supposition that a text may refer to an event that is beyond the temporal scope of its narrative world. But here the only clear reference is to the reception of the gospel by Gentiles: “they will listen” (Acts 28:28), and nothing further is said about Jewish reception.³⁶

Verse 30: The report that Paul lodged for two years at his own expense implies that Luke must have known of a subsequent change and something of its conditions; but he is silent on these matters.³⁷ The phrase “living at his own expense” may recall 20:33–34 and reminds us once again “that Paul does not take advantage of others.”³⁸ The visitors that Paul welcomed included “all” — according to codex D also the Jews — but that latter proposal must be excluded.

Verse 31: This verse gives a description of Paul’s missionary activity in Rome. As elsewhere, the object of his preaching is the kingdom of God (see above, verse 23). Significantly, the last word in Acts is “without hindrance.”³⁹

In short, Luke’s purpose shines through here. He pictures the people of Rome as at least tolerant of Paul’s ministry as well as the Christian message, and seems thus to be advising the Roman state to leave things alone. For Rome to continue its “hands-off” policy toward Christianity is no doubt among Luke’s chief desires, and perhaps the central aim of the book’s final chapters is to promote this end. Indeed, it is this motive together with the many echoes we hear from the opening pages of the book that alert us to the great care with which Luke has shaped his ending. Further support for this conclusion appears in the clearly purposeful omission of any mention of the impending judicial crisis or its outcome. We are told that Paul’s imprisonment dragged on for another two years (28:30); but his trial — to say nothing of the possibility of his being found guilty — must be expunged from the record to allow for a properly heroic ending.

By not telling the story of Paul’s martyrdom, Luke avoided introducing the reader to the ugly side of it. So he did not have to highlight any involvement of false Christian brothers or Jews.⁴⁰ Last but not least, he could also spare the Roman state, whose favor he was constantly currying. “Luke had stressed the church’s unity in the power of the Spirit from the beginning, and he had shown that, when problems arose, they were solved in a spirit of unanimity (cf. 6:1–6; 15:5, 22–29). He would not possibly mar this story at its conclusion.”⁴¹

36. Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, 145.

37. Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 726.

38. Gaventa, *Acts*, 368.

39. In Greek, *akōlytōs*.

40. Cf. Tjara, *Martyrdom of St. Paul*, 84.

41. Krodell, *Acts*, 487.

d. The tradition reworked by Luke

The itinerary from Malta to Rome via Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli likely derives from tradition.

Verse 14: “The information ‘Christians in Puteoli’ is pre-Lukan.”⁴²

Verse 15: Paul’s reception by members of the Roman community could reflect either a traditional report or an isolated element, but in any case it is clear that Luke obviously knew of the Roman community.

Verses 16b, 30: Descriptions of Paul’s imprisonment probably come from a tradition, since Luke would appear to have no reason to create them. The datum “two years” is commonly adduced to demonstrate the author’s familiarity with events concerning which he is apologetically silent (note also the hints contained in 20:18–38). Neither elements of the tradition nor editorial hints specify the time of Paul’s death.

e. Historical elements

The tradition is no doubt correct in reporting Paul’s journey from Malta to Rome.

Details of Paul’s imprisonment found in the tradition are probably authentic. In many cases of lenient detention,⁴³ the accused was guarded by two soldiers; in Paul’s case, one sufficed. Given this level of custody, Paul could well have practiced his craft in order to pay his rent and underwrite the expense of his guard. It should be noted that *enemeinen . . . en idiô mishômati* is almost always translated “in his own hired dwelling,” but this translation lacks specific evidential support; the phrase could equally well be translated “at his own expense”⁴⁴ or “on his own earnings.”⁴⁵

1 Clem. 5.3–7—composed in the late nineties of the first century in Rome and sent to the church in Corinth—allows us to conclude that Paul died as a martyr in Rome:

³We should set before our eyes the good apostles. ⁴There is Peter, who because of unjust jealousy bore up under hardships not just once or twice, but many times; and having thus borne his witness he went to the place of glory that he deserved.

⁵Because of jealousy and strife Paul pointed the way to the prize for endurance.

⁶Seven times he bore chains; he was sent into exile and stoned; he served as herald in both the East and the West; and he received the noble reputation for his faith. ⁷He taught righteousness to the whole world, and came to the limits of the West, bearing his witness before the rulers. And so he was set free from this world and transported up to the holy place, having become the greatest example of endurance.⁴⁶

42. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 7 n. 1.

43. Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 181.

44. Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 191–92.

45. Lake and Cadbury, *Beginnings of Christianity*, 4.348.

46. Translated by Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

Clearly this passage is heavily stylized and contains elements of a “rhetorical panegyric modeled on the classical motif of the truly wise man battling in the arena of the spirit.”⁴⁷ The phrase “limits of the West” either derives from the fact that the author inferred from Rom 15:24–25, 28 that Paul had carried on a mission in Spain (cf. also the probable use of 2 Cor 11:23–33 at the beginning of verse 6) or it understands Rome as the farthest limit of the West (for the author the westernmost point and the place of Paul’s martyrdom are identical).⁴⁸ Despite the stylization mentioned and the fact that nothing is said about the circumstances of Paul’s death, that he died a violent death in Rome is not in doubt (1 Clement is a letter from the Roman community), since the words “bearing his witness before the rulers” refer to his martyrdom⁴⁹—an interpretation that is further confirmed by the clause “he was set free from this world” that follows immediately.⁵⁰

The Historical Value of Luke’s Account

The ending of Acts is odd. Luke knows perfectly well that the Roman state executed Paul, but besides failing to mention that fact, he stresses Paul’s freedom to preach the gospel without any hindrance. (The Roman guard is mentioned in verse 16 but never thereafter.) These strange details are interrelated. Luke has decided that Paul’s execution “was not edifying,”⁵¹ and that it is important to emphasize Paul’s freedom to engage in unimpeded preaching. Thus he invents a theologically based (but intentionally unhistorical) picture of the Roman state in order to gain present and future privileges of unhindered preaching.

Clearly, one is entitled to be skeptical of such an author’s accounts.

47. Bornkamm, *Paul*, 105.

48. Cf. Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 39.

49. Cf. 1 Tim 6:13.

50. Cf. Bornkamm, *Paul*, 105–106.

51. Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 1.1249. Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 732, suggests that Luke has chosen not to relate Paul’s execution, because he did not want to enhance devotion to Christian martyrs. Barrett lists other possibilities.

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