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The Acts of the Apostles

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"The Acts of the Apostles" is the name given to the second part of a two-volume work traditionally identified as having been written by Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul. Originally the two volumes circulated together as two parts of one complete writing. But during the late first or early second century, the first volume became associated with the Gospels identified with Matthew, Mark, and John, thus forming the fourfold Gospel. Luke's second volume was left to go its own way. It was at this time, it seems, that the second volume received its present title, with the word "Acts" (*praxeis*) evidently meant to suggest both movement in the advance of the gospel and heroic

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exploits by the apostles. The reference to "the Apostles," however, is somewhat misleading, because the work deals almost exclusively with Peter and Paul and the persons and events associated with their ministries. Acts is the third longest of the NT writings, being about one-tenth shorter than its companion volume Luke (the longest NT book) and almost exactly the length of Matthew. Together Luke-Acts comprises almost 30 percent of the material in the NT, exceeding both the Pauline and the Johannine writings in size. It is said that James Denney, on being asked by a student to recommend a good "Life of Christ," looked quizzically at the questioner and replied, "Have you read the one by Luke?" [1] The point is apt because too often we favor modern syntheses over primary sources. The issue is heightened when we ask about a "History of the Early Church." Luke, who in the preface to his Gospel acknowledges the existence of other Gospels, makes no allusion to anything like his Acts. Moreover, in the NT we have only his account of the early church. Indeed, if we did not have Acts, or if Acts were proved basically unreliable, we would know nothing of the earliest

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days of the Christian movement except for bits of data gathered from the letters of Paul or inferred by looking back from later developments. To attempt a study of early Christianity apart from Acts, therefore, is to proceed mainly *ignotum per ignotius* ("the unknown [explained] by the still more unknown"), for information about the early church gained from Paul's letters often lacks an historical context. Cadbury has spoken of "the extraordinary darkness which comes over us as students of history when rather abruptly this guide leaves us with Paul a prisoner in Rome" (*Book of Acts*, p. 3). And, in fact, there is nothing to replace Acts. If one or two of the four Gospels had been lost, we should be much the poorer; but we should still have the others. Acts, however, stands alone. It is of utmost importance, therefore, to ask some searching questions about Acts. But before asking specific questions, we must know something of how the issues have been treated in the past so that we may learn how to frame our questions in the light of our knowledge today. Therefore what follows first is a brief history of the criticism of Acts during the past 150 years in order to learn what questions ought to be asked and what steps others have taken toward answering them. From that we will move on to consider the nature of historical writing in antiquity and the relation of proclamation to the writing of history in Acts to learn how to frame the questions in a manner appropriate to the material at hand. Then from such a background, the more traditional issues having to do with the purpose or purposes of the writing, its sources, the formulation of its narrative, the composition of its speeches, the form and structure of the work, its date, and its author can be treated with greater precision.

1. The Criticism of Acts

Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles during the past century and a half has progressed through various phases, taken various forms, and focused on various issues. In the nineteenth century it was largely dominated by the Tubingen school

of German critics and their so-called tendency criticism, based on an Hegelian understanding of the course of early Christian history. In 1831 F.C. Baur proposed that early Christianity developed from a conflict between Peter, who expressed the faith of the earliest believers and was in continuity with Jesus himself, and Paul, who epitomized a later Christian viewpoint, with Acts being a second-century endeavor to work out a synthesis between the original thesis of Peter and the antithesis of Paul. [2] For Baur, the conciliatory nature of Acts clearly indicates that the work is a later synthesis, perhaps written between A.D. 110 and 130, and that the Paul who wrote the *Hauptbriefe* --i.e., the authentic epistles (Rom, 1 and 2 Cor, Gal)--could not possibly be the same Paul of Acts. According to Baur, in his own letters Paul is the champion of Christian freedom whereas in Acts he is portrayed as compromising by repeatedly yielding to Jewish scruples. Furthermore, Baur argued that a close study of Acts shows that it abounds in the kind of historical errors to be expected of a second-century author trying to impose a fictitious uniformity and tranquillity upon an earlier more turbulent time and that it also contains such errors as an author would make who

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wrote well after the events occurred.

Baur himself wrote no commentary on Acts. But the suggestions in his five monographs and numerous articles about understanding the course of early Christian history were followed (though not uniformly) by such biblical and theological scholars as David Strauss, Bruno Bauer, and Albrecht Ritschl. In particular, Eduard Zeller, Baur's son-in-law and closest disciple, undertook a full-scale investigation of the narrative of Acts, arguing from its conciliatory purpose for the thoroughly tendentious, nonhistorical, and mythical character of the book. [3] Not everyone, however, was enamored with the Tübingen treatment of the NT materials generally and of Acts in particular. W.C. van Manen of Leiden, the leading representative of the so-called Radical Dutch school, criticized Baur for not going far enough in applying his principles, which he believed ultimately negated the authenticity of the entire NT. And Bruno Bauer to some extent echoed this criticism. On the other hand, most scholars came to believe that it was not just F.C. Baur's application of his principles but his principles of criticism themselves which were ill-founded and ran roughshod over the evidence. By 1914, in fact, when the nineteenth-century world of thought finally came to an end, the vast majority of scholars had rejected his views. Of great significance in bringing about a more positive attitude toward the reliability of Acts during the later part of the nineteenth century were the works of J.B. Lightfoot, Theodore Zahn, William M. Ramsay, and Adolf Harnack--four very different scholars whose work in concert tended to support the historicity of Acts. Lightfoot, in his 1865 commentary on Galatians, objected strongly to Baur's assertion that a conciliatory purpose in Acts reflects seriously upon the credibility of the account. Lightfoot declared, "Such a purpose is at least as likely to have been entertained by a writer, if the two Apostles were essentially united, as if they were not. The truth or falsehood of the account must be determined on other grounds." [4] Moreover, both Lightfoot and Zahn, in separate studies of the apostolic fathers, demonstrated that the evidence does not support Baur's tendency criticism at a point crucial to its reconstruction of early Christianity and one where it can be readily tested--viz., with regard to the origin of the Clementine and Ignatian

writings. [5] Such a demonstration was a crushing blow to the Tubingen view of Acts: if an Hegelian understanding could not be supported regarding the Clementine and Ignatian writings, it could not be supported anywhere. In addition, Ramsay's investigation of historical and geographical details in Acts, [6] coupled with various literary and source-critical studies that culminated in the work of Harnack, [7] tended to confirm in most minds at the turn of the century the basic reliability of Acts. What doubts remained centered around the portrayal of the character and activities of Paul in Acts, for where the Paul of Acts could be compared with the Paul of the Epistles, there seemed to be some serious discrepancies--though Harnack was able to quiet most of the doubts in his day by insisting that the apostle must be understood more broadly than usual. But though there remained this nagging suspicion about the presentation of Paul in Acts, it could not displace the general confidence in Acts engendered by the work of Lightfoot, Zahn, Ramsay, and Harnack.

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The end of the nineteenth century witnessed a growing concern regarding the question of Luke's literary dependence. This erupted into a vigorous debate in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Was Luke's work based on an earlier source or sources (whether written or oral) that can still be identified through various linguistic features and stylistic alterations in the text? Or are we to consider his book a free composition in the manner of certain ancient historians, with the recognizable Semitic flavor of chapters 1-15 being the result of the author's modeling of his language quarter of the twentieth century. Was Luke's work based on an earlier source or sources (whether written or oral) that can still be identified through various linguistic features and stylistic alterations in the text? Or are we to consider his book a free composition in the manner of certain ancient historians, with the recognizable Semitic flavor of chapters 1-15 being the result of the author's modeling of his language--either consciously or unconsciously--on the LXX? This period of source criticism began with Weiss's survey in 1886 of the evidence for the use of sources in the composition of Acts. [8] And many believed that the next twenty years of source-critical discussion reached its apex in Harnack's argument for multiple written sources underlying the first half of Acts, with resultant doublets in the narrative and primarily personal sources (chiefly verbal accounts and Luke's own travel journal) for the second half. But the debate veered to an extreme position in C.C. Torrey's argument that the Semitic flavor of chapters 1-15 is the result of Luke's use throughout these chapters of a single Aramaic source that he translated rather mechanically into Greek. Attempting to correct Torrey's view, Henry Cadbury, F.J. Foakes Jackson, and Kirsopp Lake combined the linguistic arguments for an Aramaic substructure for Acts 1-15 with an acceptance of multiple underlying sources and the acknowledgment that some of the apparently Semitic features of the narrative may also be explained along the lines of Septuagintal influence (BC, 2:9-10, 129-30, 145). J. de Zwaan and W.K.L. Clarke departed further from Torrey in viewing so-called Semitisms more as Septuagintisms, though they did not entirely deny the possibility of some Semitic source material behind the narrative here and there (BC, 2:30-105). And in 1923, taking a stance diametrically opposed to that of Torrey, Dibelius argued that a Septuagintal

styling on the part of the author of Acts is fully sufficient of itself to explain the Semitic flavor of the narrative that has led so many to postulate the presence of Aramaic sources (*Studies in Acts* , pp. 1-25). [9] Generally speaking, those scholars who argued for Semitic source material underlying the first half of Acts also stressed the author's faithfulness to his material and the basic reliability of the record, whereas those who explained the Semitic flavor as Septuagintal styling usually laid emphasis upon the creative ability of the writer in archaizing his presentation and viewed Acts as quite a free composition without any demonstrable historical authenticity. Contemporary critical expositions of Acts are heavily influenced by the "new hermeneutic," "form criticism," and the embryonic "redaction criticism" of Bultmann, Schmidt, and Dibelius. While the basic approach of these men was detailed in 1919 in separate programmatic studies

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on the Gospels, [10] it was in a series of articles that appeared from 1923 till his death in 1947 that Dibelius applied the methodology to Acts. [11] In his earliest treatments of Acts, which drew on the analysis of literary structures made by Norden, [12] Dibelius focused his attention on the individual units of material in Acts (the form critical method); later on, however, he began to deal more with the personal contribution of the author in the presentation of his materials (the redaction critical method). This approach gained wide acceptance through the writings of Bultmann [13] and has been crystalized in the works of Hans Conzelmann and Ernst Haenchen.

[14]

What the new hermeneutic is saying is that so-called historical writings tell us more about the authors who wrote them than they do about the events they purport to relate. What form criticism aims to do (at least as Bultmann and Dibelius used it) is to retrace the situation in the life of the writer and his church that gave rise to the fabrication of the units of material he incorporates. This it does by analyzing the literary forms and their development. And what redaction criticism aims at is to discover a profile of the author as he reveals himself in his editorial activity of fitting together the various units of material at his disposal in order to construct his portrayal. Thus redaction criticism is almost entirely occupied with the theological concerns of the author--concerns that spring from his own personal situation and can be detected primarily in the seams and structure of his composition. Accompanying this method there is often a disavowal of the relevancy of the historical facticity of the composition studied and a greatly diminished concern for the question of its sources. When applied to Acts, such an approach usually works from two basic postulates: (1) Acts must be judged either as Christian proclamation or as an historical treatise and that if it is taken to be proclamation--which it obviously is--it cannot be taken seriously as history; (2) the futuristic hope of the earliest believers precluded any historical interest on their part, so that when the author of Acts begins to take himself seriously as an historian he only shows how far removed he is from the original faith and from the events he claims to present (Conzelmann, *Theology of Luke* ,

pp. 12-15, 210-11; Haenchen, Acts of the Apostles, pp. 90-110). The kerygmatic (declarative) nature of Acts, therefore, prohibits our asking whether the sermon illustrations in it are really authentic, and its attempt to be historical shows just how far removed from its actual situation the work really is. Literary criticism, according to this view, has repeatedly shown that as a matter of fact Acts is historically quite inaccurate and preserves at best only a few names from the earliest Christian times. [15] And form criticism has shown that the work must be classed as a late first-century or early second-century production engaged in historicizing the primitive eschatology in an attempt to counter rising disillusionment because of the delay of the Parousia and the threat of Gnosticism. So in chapters 1-15 of Acts the author must be judged as producing an edifying piece of religious propaganda rather than anything that can be identified as history. Sources are at a minimum. The narrative and speeches reflect more the author's interests than those of the early church, and the pseudo-Semitized flavor he gives the composition shows something of the

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fabricated nature of the whole. Moreover, what is true for the first half of the work carries over into the rest because, if anything, the author is consistent in the way he writes. This is not to say that modern critics of the type we have been describing have lost interest in Acts or have ceased to consider it important for the study of early Christianity. Certainly not! A great deal of scholarly research has been and is being done on Acts by those most influenced by Bultmann and Dibelius. Nevertheless, there is a widespread confidence in contemporary scholarly circles that Acts provides us with historical information only for the post-apostolic period of the church and cannot be used (except inferentially) for anything earlier. Haenchen, who is now the most important Bultmannian commentator on Acts, offers the following words: "To him who knows how to read between the lines and to hear what is left unsaid, the book of Acts gives rich information about what is commonly called `the post-apostolic age.'" [16] Our survey of the criticism of Acts during the past 150 years has necessarily been brief. Much more could be said, for there have been many significant crosscurrents and eddies in the flow of critical thoughts. [17] We have only provided an overview of the course of the criticism of Acts and, in doing this, highlighted certain issues of continuing importance for any treatment of Acts today. Chief among these issues is the question of the kerygmatic nature of the work and the significance of this for the author's treatment of history. This requires an understanding of both what Luke is attempting to do in his presentation and the nature of historical writing in antiquity. Equally important is the question of Luke's eschatology and how it varied from that of early Christianity and affected his portrayal of early Christianity. But though such queries stand at the forefront of every critical discussion of Acts, the more traditional matters having to do with sources, narrative, speeches, structure, date, and author continue to be important--as do also such common topics as the conciliatory nature of Acts and the relation of the Paul of Acts to the Paul of the Epistles. All these issues, together with a number of others, will be treated in what follows, both in the introductory sections and in the commentary itself.

2. Historical Writing in Antiquity

Ancient historiography reached its zenith shortly after the NT period in the works of the Greek biographer Plutarch and the Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius. But these writers drew on traditional techniques reaching back to and developed from the fifth-century B.C. Greek historian Thucydides and his *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Underlying all truly historical writing in antiquity, as opposed to the mere chronicling of events, was the conviction that the actions and words of distinctive people in their respective periods represent more adequately the situation than any comments by the historian; that is, that the "ethos" (*ethos*) of the times is conveyed best through a portrayal of the "acts" (*praxeis*) of the participants (Stanton, p. 122). Xenophon (469-399 B.C.), for example, at the beginning of his *Memoirs of Socrates* (c. 380 B.C.), writes regarding his hero: "In order to support my opinion

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that he benefited his companions, alike by actions that revealed his own character and by his own conversations, I will set down what I recall of these" (1.3.1). [18] The "acts" of the subjects, understood in terms of both their actions and their words, were the building blocks for the historians and biographers of antiquity. But while the Greek word *praxeis* ("acts") suggests movement and exploits, what these historians and biographers were primarily interested in were illuminating vignettes that gave insight into the ethos of a period or of a person's character. Plutarch (C.A.D. 50-130), for example, in his *Vita Alexander* 1.2, states the following in commencing his portrayal of Alexander the Great:

It is not always in the most illustrious deeds that men's virtues or vices may be best

discerned, but often an action of small note, a short saying or a jest, will distinguish a

person's real character more than the greatest sieges or the most important battles.

Therefore, as painters in their portraits labor the likeness in the face, and particularly about

the eyes, in which the peculiar turn of mind most appears, and run over the rest with a

more careless hand, so we must be permitted to strike off the features of the soul in order

to give a real likeness of these great men--leaving to others the circumstantial detail of their

labors and achievements.

The historians and biographers of antiquity, therefore, were interested in what might be called indirect character portrayals by means of the actions and words of their subjects. And in the selection of those actions and words, they were more interested in setting out representative vignettes having to do with the ethos of the period than in merely chronicling exploits. Furthermore, in writing their histories the ancients frequently grouped their material *per species*, without always specifying chronological relationships. The *Life of Euripides* by the third-century B.C. biographer Satyrus, which is the only extant work from the Peripatetic school of biographical writing, contains "only one section which can in any way be called chronological; yet there is a clear tendency towards an orderly grouping of material, at least under broad captions" (Stanton, p. 120). Likewise Plutarch, who is supposed to have followed Peripatetic practices, makes no endeavor in his *Parallel Lives* to be precise chronologically but repeatedly uses such vague expressions as "about this time" or "some time after this." He refers to military campaigns, of course, in succession, but his basic method is to group his material under various categories. Of the Roman historians, only Tacitus employs a chronological framework throughout in marking off the various stages of Agricola's career. Suetonius in his *Lives of the Emperors* quite naturally works chronologically in treating first one emperor and then another. But he holds himself to a portrayal based on chronology only with regard to Julius Caesar, the first in his series. More commonly he groups his portrayals under such topics as conduct, business, family, attitude toward society, and friends. In fact, he explains his method in his portrayal of Augustus: "Having given as it were a summary of his life, I shall now take up its various phases one by one,

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not in chronological order, but by classes [*per species*], in order to make the account clearer and more intelligible" (*Augustus* 9). There has been a great deal of discussion about the attitude of the ancient historians and biographers toward factual accuracy in their writings. For the past half century, Cadbury's dicta have reigned almost supreme in NT circles: "Instead of accuracy the purpose of ancient historians tended to make the form the chief point of emphasis" (BC, 2:11), and "from Thucydides downwards, speeches reported by the historians are confessedly pure imagination" (ibid., 2:13). But that Cadbury's views are extreme has been demonstrated by Mosley in a study of the intent and practice of such writers as Lucian, Dionysius, Polybius, Ephorus, Cicero, Josephus, and Tacitus. [19] The ancients, according to Mosley's analysis, did ask the question "Did it happen in this way?" and while some were slovenly and uninformed in their reporting, others "tried to be as accurate as possible and to get information from eyewitnesses." [20] Furthermore, Glasson has pointed out that those who cite Thucydides's words "I have used language in accordance with what I thought the speakers in each case would have been most likely to say," as though that settles the matter in favor of the thoroughly imaginative character of the Thucydidean speeches, are distinctly unfair to what Thucydides was actually saying:

With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began,

others while it was going on; it was hard to record the exact words spoken, both in cases

where I was myself present, and where I used the reports of others. But I have used

language in accordance with what I thought the speakers in each case would have been

most likely to say, adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually

spoken (*History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22).

From this Glasson has aptly observed: "He does not claim to reproduce the precise words like a stenographer but in writing the speeches he keeps as closely as possible to `the general sense of *what was actually spoken* .' ... This is a very different matter from the imaginative composing of speeches suitable to the occasion [italics his]." [21] Contrary to many current statements about historical writing in antiquity, we must maintain, therefore, that the ancients were interested in what actually happened. Nevertheless, it must also be insisted that history, as opposed to the mere formulation of chronicles, was written by the ancients for moral, ethical, and polemical purposes and not just to inform or entertain. This was true for the Greek Plutarch and the whole tradition of biographical writing he represents. It was true for the Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius in their portraits of the emperors and their times. And it was true for the Jewish historian Josephus in his presentations of Jewish history and thought before a Roman audience. It is true as well for Luke's Acts, wherein, like the historiography of the OT, there is the tracing of the activity of God in various historical events as viewed from a particular perspective.

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3. Kerygma and History in Acts

While earlier generations fixed their attention first upon the Pauline letters and then upon the Johannine corpus, the focus of scholarly attention today is more on the Lukan materials--the third Gospel and the Book of Acts. And prominent among the issues being discussed today is that regarding the relation of kerygma and history in Acts: If Acts is truly of the nature of proclamation, can it also be considered history? and if Acts presents itself as history, can it really represent in fact the original proclamation of the earliest Christians? Modern theology, in reaction to earlier historic treatments of a more positivistic persuasion, has laid great stress on the fact that Acts is really Christian proclamation and not just a simple reproduction of what happened apart from any interpretation or bias. And this understanding into the nature of Acts is important and helpful, as far as it goes. Certainly Luke did not write for money, literary recognition, or only to add to human knowledge. He wrote, rather, as he tells us in the Prologue to his two-volume work, to proclaim the certainty of what his audience had been taught (Luke 1:1-4). Some, however, have taken the fact that Acts is Christian proclamation and not a simple, noninterpretative record of what happened to an unwarranted extreme. They have divorced the kerygmatic and the historical in Acts. As a result many feel constrained to choose between the subjectivism of a demythologizing approach or the sterility of a mere historicism. But interpretation and bias are inherent in every historical writing, for history, as distinct from chronicle, is the interplay between selected events and their interpretation. "All history at whatever level," as Turner reminds us, "involves construction on the part of the historian, but this does not imply that he is condemned to mere imaginative `doodling' in the sands of time." [22] The question is not whether the historian has an interpretation of the data he is putting forward but whether, given the fact of a bias, he has exercised his craft with due exactness so as not to falsify his data or distort their significance in the interests of his thesis. Indeed, the author of Acts has his own interests, theological viewpoint, and purposes in writing. And to a considerable extent these have affected his selection,

arrangement, and shaping of the particular units of material that he incorporates. But to argue that therefore his narrative must be viewed as historically suspect is a non sequitur. The question as to whether the event or the kerygma is decisive for faith in Acts (and, for that matter, throughout the NT) may not be answered in the form of an alternative. [23] The record contains an intermeshing of events, for which facticity is asserted, and the significance of those events, for which inspiration is assumed. Both the events themselves and their significance are vital for an understanding of God's mighty acts by his Spirit through his church. "Acts, like the Gospels," as Dix has insisted, "is written throughout with a strong sense of the *sacredness* of the concrete facts it narrates, because the author believes that it is through what actually happened that the `Counsel of God' was manifested and fulfilled [*italics his*]" (p. 39). Furthermore, we must recognize that every history is to some extent refractive. The passage

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of time between an event and how it was originally understood, on the one hand, and the historian's record of that event in the light of his appreciation and interests, on the other, no matter how homogeneous the development of understanding between the two, modifies to some extent immediate perceptions and initial responses--if not in the content itself, at least in the ability to appreciate more fully significances and implications. And this is true for Acts, written as it is from the perspective of the resurrection faith and coming to birth in the context of the theology that resulted from that faith. It is beyond doubt that Luke's theology was more developed at the time of writing than it could ever have been at the time of the events he relates. To this extent, the new hermeneutic, form criticism, and redaction criticism are certainly correct. But it does not necessarily follow that Luke had little interest in reproducing the details and nuances of an earlier situation. And even where events are reported from the perspective of a fuller theology and a broader understanding of how they fit together, it must be remembered that the NT authors, Luke included, were convinced that such a presentation of the facts "was more empiric and historic, more adequate, correct and true than the immediate picture had been." [24] As to the question whether Acts in purporting to be an historical treatise does not thereby show itself to be quite removed from early Christian convictions and thereby unable to represent in fact early Christian proclamation, we must consider the very large issue of the nature of early Christian eschatological thought. Those who ask the above question assume that the eschatology of the earliest believers was so entirely futuristic or "proleptic" that they gave no thought to formulating their convictions into some kind of basic system, to structuring their communal experiences, to extending their outreach through some kind of mission, or to writing down their history for others either geographically or chronologically removed from them. Those who hold this point of view also assume that the experiences of the earliest believers and their expectation of an imminent return of Jesus left them with no interest in and no time for the matters just mentioned. Moreover, all that Acts reflects as to Christology, ecclesiology, a theology of mission, and, particularly, writing the church's history only shows how far removed the author really was from the stance of the earliest believers. In fact, he

was so far removed from it that the Parousia expectation was no longer primary or vital to him. Thus its delay caused him not only to restructure his own Christian faith into a form that can be identified as "Early Catholicism," but, in accordance with this "Early Catholicism," he tried to restructure the proclamation and convictions of the earliest Christians in an endeavor to gain support for his own views. Futuristic hopes were certainly strong among the earliest believers in Jesus, and we must never deny this. But this fact does not mean that we must assert the impossibility of "realized eschatology" coexisting with a futuristic emphasis. Nor does it force us to believe that an understanding of eschatology as in some sense fulfilled could only have arisen from the abandonment of a futuristic orientation. Undoubtedly there was much uncertainty and perplexity in the early church because of the delay of the Parousia. But if we understand the faith of the

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earliest Christians to be best characterized as "inaugurated eschatology" (which I believe to be the case), then we must judge that their lives and thoughts were focused more on a person than a program. And while that person's return was delayed, his work for them and his presence with them provided the essential basis for their Christian experience. Or as van Unnik has aptly said:

I cannot help confessing that the exegetical basis for many statements in the modern

approach to Luke-Acts is often far from convincing, at least highly dubious in my

judgment.... Has the delay of the *parousia* really wrought that havoc that it is sometimes

supposed to have done, or did the early Christians react differently from the way modern

scholars would have done? In the light of the history of early Christianity this effect of the

Parousieverzogerung is highly overrated. The faith of the early Christians did not rest on a

date but on the work of Christ. [25]

4. Luke's Purposes in Writing Acts

Basic to every evaluation of Acts is the question of the purpose or purposes of its author. Tendency criticism began here, arguing that the nature of Acts can be explained entirely on the basis of a conciliatory purpose and its extent of

treatment can be explained by the fact that its author was unwilling to say more. All forms of redaction criticism, whether ancient or modern, also begin with the insistence that to have a profile of an author from his writing is to possess the most important key to the nature of his work. With the necessity of evaluating Acts as to the purpose(s) for which it was written, all seem to agree. But the question of the exact definition of that purpose remains. Under the spell of the Tubingen school, the conciliatory purpose of Acts was taken to be supreme. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, most were prepared to view the apologetic purpose as dominant. Influenced by Ramsay and Harnack, many during the first half of the twentieth century considered Luke's purposes to be primarily historical and didactic. And since the middle of the present century, Luke's kerygmatic purpose has been emphasized almost to the exclusion of all others. While at various times certain clusters of opinion as to why Acts was written have emerged, even within these there has existed a range of ideas as to exactly how Luke expressed his purpose and how he should be understood. Therefore, in what follows we must set forth more precisely what can be said about Luke's purposes and show something of the nature of the supporting evidence. Luke himself states that his purpose in writing his two-volume work was "so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:4). The "most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3; cf. Acts 1:1) to whom Luke addressed his work seems to have been a man who, though receptive to the gospel and perhaps even convinced by its claims, had many questions about Christianity as he knew it. From the way Luke writes to him, we may surmise that Theophilus was concerned about how the Christian faith related to Jesus' ministry, to Jews

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and the world of Judaism, to the lifestyle of certain scrupulous Jewish Christians, to the more universalistic outlook of Gentiles, and to the sanctions of Roman law. Also, he was undoubtedly interested in how the gospel had been received and what success it had met in the various centers of influence known to him in the eastern part of the empire, from Jerusalem to Rome. Certainly when receiving his first instruction in the gospel, Theophilus had been told of Jesus' death and resurrection. But, judging from Luke's Gospel, apparently the meaning and implications of that death and resurrection were not quite clear to him; and a number of references to persons and events associated with the ministry of Jesus baffled him. Likewise, the subsequent experiences of the early Christians seem to have been somewhat vague to him. The advent and activity of the Holy Spirit, the early ministries of the disciples, the conversion of Paul and his relation to the Jerusalem apostles, the nature and extent of Paul's ministry--and probably more--were all things that Theophilus had questions about. So Luke writes to deal with his friend's uncertainties and the queries of others like him who will read his account. Acts, therefore, like many another work, was probably written with multiple purposes in view. Primary among the reasons for its composition was undoubtedly a kerygmatic purpose. It proclaims the continued confrontation of men and women by the Word of God through the church and shows (1) how that gospel is related to the course of redemptive history, (2) its rootage in and interaction with secular history, (3) its universal character, (4) how it has been freed from the Jewish law, and (5) how that behind the proclamation of the Word of God stands the power and activity of the Holy Spirit. In his first volume, Luke shows how men and women were confronted by the Word of God in the earthly ministry of Jesus (cf. Luke 5:1; 8:11, 21; 11:28). In Acts Luke seeks to show how men and women continue to be confronted by that same Word through the ministry of the church (cf. 4:29, 31; 6:2, 4, 7; 8:4, 14, 25; 10:36; 11:1, 19; 12:24; 13:7, 44, 46, 48-49; 14:25; 15:35-36; 16:6, 32; 17:11, 13; 18:5, 11; 19:10). The Word of God is for Luke, as Haenchen rightly observes, "the clamp which fastens the two eras together and justifies, indeed demands, the continuation of the first book (depicting the life of Jesus as a time of salvation) in a second; for the salvation which has appeared must be preached to all peoples, and the very

portrayal of this mission will serve the awakening of belief, and hence the attainment of that salvation" (*Acts of the Apostles* , p. 98). Haenchen, of course, along with Bultmannians in general and Conzelmann in particular (*Theology of Luke* , passim), thinks that Luke's stress on the Word of God as being the message of salvation in Jesus is a secondary and erroneous concept of salvation-history entirely of Luke's own creation and introduced to solve the embarrassing problem of the delay of the Parousia. Others, however (myself included), view it as primary and rooted inextricably in the confessions of the earliest believers and the consciousness of Jesus himself. Be that as it may, for Luke the message of salvation in Jesus proclaimed by the church is in direct continuity with the ministry and teaching of Jesus. That is why Luke wrote a sequel to his Gospel, thus making explicit what was presupposed in the earliest Christian preaching.

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Furthermore, this Word of God is firmly fixed in the context of world history. It began with the miraculous births that took place "in the time of Herod king of Judea" (Luke 1:5) and during the reign of Caesar Augustus, "while Quirinius was governor of Syria" (Luke 2:1-2). It focuses on a ministry that commenced "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar--when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene--during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas" (Luke 3:1-2) and that culminated under the judgment of Pilate and Herod Antipas (Luke 23:1-25). And it spread throughout the Roman world principally during the reign of the emperor Claudius (Acts 11:28; 18:2), when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia (Acts 18:12-17), when Felix and Festus ruled in Judea and Ananias was the high priest in Jerusalem (Acts 24-25), and between the times of the Jewish kings Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1-23) and Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25:13-26:32). In addition, this Word regarding salvation in Jesus has permeated the Jewish homeland of Palestine-Syria and has been received with a measure of acceptance in the main centers of the eastern part of the Roman Empire, finally entering the capital city itself "without hindrance" (the adverb *akolytos* being the final word of Luke's two-volume work). It is a universal message. It began in Jerusalem among Jews and spread "to the ends of the earth" (as promised by Jesus himself, Acts 1:8) to include all kinds of people. It is a message that by means of a process under the Spirit's direction, a process that can be depicted in its various stages, finally and inevitably freed itself from the shackles of Jewish legalism and a Jewish lifestyle. It is a Word of God that affected the lives of many through the power and activity of the Holy Spirit, that selfsame Spirit who came upon Jesus at his baptism and through whom he accomplished his mission. There is also inherent throughout the presentation of Acts an apologetic purpose. Its author seeks to demonstrate that Christianity is not a political threat to the empire, as its Jewish opponents asserted, but rather that it is the culmination of Israel's hope and the true daughter of Jewish religion--and, therefore, should be treated by Roman authorities as a *religio licita* along with Judaism. Roman law, for entirely pragmatic reasons, identified certain religions as *licita*, or legal and permitted, and others as *illicita*, or illegal and

forbidden. Those accepted as legal had been dominant in various areas or among certain ethnic groups and could serve to reinforce the Pax Romana. Those forbidden were the minority faiths that tended to fracture loyalties and splinter peoples and therefore deserved harsh treatment. Judaism was considered a *religio licita* , both in Palestine and throughout the Diaspora, simply because of its refusal to be taken as anything else and because of the troubles it caused Rome when attempts were made to amalgamate it with other religions. Christianity, however, had its problems in respect to legality as it moved out into the empire, even though it had been born within Judaism. Its founder had been crucified as a messianic pretender in Jerusalem, its separate identity as "Christian" had been asserted by others in its

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mission to Antioch of Syria (Acts 11:26), and Jews within the Diaspora were insisting that it had no right to imperial protection since it was sectarian. Acts acknowledges the fact of such accusations. At Philippi the charge brought against Paul and Silas is given as disturbing the peace "by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice" (Acts 16:20-21). At Thessalonica the charge is one of "defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus" (Acts 17:7). And at Corinth it is that of "persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law" (Acts 18:13). Furthermore, at Paul's later trials the Jews charged him with being a sectarian who stirred up riots within the Jewish communities and therefore deserved to be tried under Roman law (Acts 24:5-9).

Luke also takes pains to point out that despite differences between the Christian message and that of Judaism, the charge of *religio illicita* had never been accepted by any well-informed Roman official. In his Gospel he shows the Crucifixion to be a gross miscarriage of justice from the perspective of Roman law and reports that Pilate three times declared Jesus' innocence (Luke 23:4, 14, 22). And in Acts, Luke speaks of a number of Roman officials, both Gentile and Jewish, who acknowledge that there is no factual basis for the accusation of *religio illicita* brought against Paul and his coworkers. At Paphos, the proconsul of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, "an intelligent man," was converted to Christianity (Acts 13:6-12). At Philippi the magistrates apologized to Paul and Silas for illegally beating and imprisoning them (Acts 16:35-39). At Corinth the proconsul of Achaia, Gallio, judged Paul and Silas guiltless of any offense against Roman law, viewing the Jews' dispute with them as an intramural matter (Acts 18:12-17). At Ephesus some of the officials of the province were Paul's friends, and the city clerk absolved him of the charge of sacrilege (Acts 19:31, 35-41). In Palestine the governors Felix and Festus found Paul innocent of the charges against him, with Herod Agrippa II agreeing upon examination that "this man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment" and saying that "this man could have been set free, if he had not appealed to Caesar" (Acts 24:1-26:32). Perhaps the manner in which Luke closes his narrative (ch. 28) shows that he wants his readers to

understand that even at Rome no formal accusation was made against Paul, either by a delegation from Jerusalem or by the leaders of the Jewish community there, and that therefore the apostle was set free. But that is not certain and must be discussed later. It seems evident, therefore, that in writing Acts Luke also had an apologetic purpose. But to speak of this *apologetic purpose* entails asking to whom that apology was directed, and the answer to that is not clear. At the close of the last century, many viewed Acts as something of a trial document sent to a Roman magistrate named Theophilus and perhaps meant eventually for the eyes of the emperor. Barrett may have overreacted against this idea when he insisted:

It was not addressed to the Emperor, with the intention of proving the political harmlessness of Christianity in general and of Paul in particular; a few passages might be

construed to serve this purpose, but to suggest that the book as a whole should be taken in

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this way is absurd. No Roman official would ever have filtered out so much of what to him

would be theological and ecclesiastical rubbish in order to reach so tiny a grain of relevant

apology (*Luke the Historian* , p. 63).

But granted that no Roman official would have done so, that does not mean Luke could not have written with such an intent, much as the later apologists did--even though they seldom, if ever, received the hearing they desired. Still, the view of Acts as a trial document much overstates the case and ignores other emphases in the book. On the other hand, we need not conclude that if the work is not a trial document its apologetic element was addressed only to those already in the church--either to Jewish Christians in Rome, urging them to be more conciliatory toward Gentiles since various Roman officials had a favorable attitude toward the early Christian mission (cf. Zeller), or to Christians with a Gnostic bent, arguing that an appreciation of the Christian faith cannot be restricted only to the initiated (cf. Barrett, *Luke the Historian*). Instead, it is better to conclude that while Acts as an apology had Theophilus primarily in view because of his concern regarding Christianity's legal status in the empire, it was also meant for other Gentiles, whether they were Christians or not. A third purpose for writing Acts seems to have been, as Baur, Zeller, and others long ago asserted, a conciliatory purpose--though the Tübingen scholars much overstated this and drew illegitimate implications from it. Acts presents the careers of Peter (chs. 1-12) and Paul (chs. 13-28) in strikingly parallel fashion. (For a detailed presentation of this, see the introduction to Acts 2:42-12:24.) Likewise, Acts presents Paul as conceding primacy in the church to Peter and apostleship to the Twelve based on their earthly companionship with Jesus; whereas Peter and the Jerusalem apostles, in turn, concede to Paul another mode of apostolic authority as well as Peter's

initiative in the law--free outreach to Gentiles. [26] Luke is a master at setting up his material in balanced form, as we shall see later in discussing the structure of Acts. Moreover, to again quote Lightfoot's famous dictum on the Tübingen formulation of the conciliatory purpose, "Such a purpose is at least as likely to have been entertained by a writer, if the two Apostles were essentially united, as if they were not. The truth or falsehood of the account must be determined on other grounds." [27] Paul's own letters, in fact, indicate quite clearly that at Jerusalem some were pitting Peter and the Jerusalem apostles against him because they preferred Peter to him. And even in Paul's own churches, similar party factions arose, with some saying, "I follow Paul"; others, "I follow Apollos"; or, "I follow Cephas"; and still others, "I follow Christ" (1Cor 1:12). Surely it is not too hard to imagine that when Acts was written, Luke well knew of continuing sentiment in the churches that would sharply divide the ministries of Peter and Paul. So while Luke necessarily had to portray their differences, he also needed to delineate the continuity and points of comparison between them, and do it through the structure of his presentation and, wherever possible, in its details.

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Finally, Luke may well have written Acts with a *catechetical purpose* in mind. In antiquity, tractates and letters were often circulated widely even though addressed to only one person or group. Josephus, for example, in the work dubbed *Contra Apion*, addresses one he calls "most excellent Epaphroditus" in the prologue to volume 1 and "my most esteemed Epaphroditus" in the prologue to volume 2. Yet he did this fully expecting his defense of the Jewish religion against various forms of Greek speculation to be widely circulated and read--which it certainly was. Epaphroditus may have been a grammarian who wrote on Homer and possessed a large library and became Josephus's patron. But while he undoubtedly received *Contra Apion* from Josephus's own hand, the work was meant to instruct many more readers than Epaphroditus. In a much less formal way, Paul's letters also were meant to be read widely, as we see from his instruction to the Colossians: "After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea" (Col 4:16). So, too, Luke probably wrote his treatise to Theophilus with the expectation that in addition to its kerygmatic, apologetic, and conciliatory purposes, it could also be used within various churches for instructional purposes, to show how Christianity moved out from its origins in Palestine to become a movement of God's Spirit in the Roman Empire. Thus Luke portrays in dramatic vignettes drawn from the early church's history the essence of early Christian preaching, the activity of the Holy Spirit in applying and spreading the message, the gospel's power, its transforming quality, its type of adherents, their sacrifices and triumphs, and the ultimate entrance of the Christian proclamation into the city of Rome itself. Undoubtedly, as its author surely intended, such a catechetical purpose met a vital need among scattered congregations only recently formed--a need for instruction about the nature of the faith and the church's early history. Also, this instructional material helped draw believers together spiritually. And while Luke could hardly have visualized anything beyond the needs of the churches of his day, his writing continues to do just that today.

5. The Sources of Acts

The question of the sources Luke used in writing Acts is more easily raised than answered. In fact, it has to be asked in two ways because the first part of Acts has a definite Semitic cast whereas the second half has more a Greek cast, like the Prologue to Luke-Acts (Luke 1:1-4). Most discussions of the sources of Acts, therefore, are concerned with source-critical issues for chapters 1-15 and form-critical issues for chapters 16-28. And this must be our procedure as well. The identification of sources underlying the presentation of Acts 1-15 was viewed during the first decades of this century with great optimism. Of the various analyses of the text proposed, Harnack's may be taken as representative (*Acts*, pp. 162-202). Harnack discerned in Acts (1) a Jerusalem-Antiochean source behind 11:19-30 and 12:25-15:35, which has considerable historical value for at least the material from 13:4 on; (2) a Jerusalem-Caesarean source

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underlying 3:1-5:16; 8:5-40; 9:29-11:18; and 12:1-24, which was in written form for chapters 3-4 and 12 (though perhaps transmitted orally for the rest) and which in its "Recension A" provides "the more intelligible history of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and its consequences" as now appears in 3:1-5:16; (3) a "Recension B" of the Jerusalem-Caesarean source that provides rather confused material as now found in 2:1-47 and 5:17-42, thereby setting up a number of doublets in the finished text; (4) a separate source in 6:1-8:4 having to do with the martyrdom of Stephen, though related to the Jerusalem-Antiochean source and with an interpolated reference to Paul at the end; (5) a separate source in 9:1-28 dealing with the conversion of Saul; and (6) legendary material in chapter 1. Harnack doubted that the usual literary clues of vocabulary, style, and historical blunders can be used to differentiate one source from another. He insisted that Luke has so reworked his sources as to impose his own personal stamp throughout the finished product. But he did believe that one can group the material according to the persons and places depicted, with the doublets furnishing particularly useful indicators of the presence of source material involved. Most obvious and most important among the doublets of Acts 1-15 was the double arrest of the apostles and their two appearances before the Jewish Sanhedrin in 4:1ff. and 5:17ff., which Harnack claimed were simply two versions of the same event. In 1937, however, Jeremias showed that far from being repetitious and therefore artificial in their dual inclusion, the two narratives reflect with accuracy a significant point in Jewish jurisprudence and complement each other. [28] Jewish law, as Jeremias pointed out, held that a person must be aware of the consequences of his crime before being punished for it. This meant that in noncapital cases the common people had to be given a legal admonition before witnesses and could only be punished for an offense when they relapsed into the crime after due warning. Thus Acts 4:1ff. says that the Sanhedrin realized the apostles were "unschooled, ordinary men" (v. 13) and they were given a legal warning not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus (v. 17), while Acts 5:17ff. says the Sanhedrin reminded the apostles of its first warning (v. 28) and turned them over to be flogged because they persisted in their sectarian ways (v. 40). With this demonstration of the correlation of these two accounts, which has been

convincing to most scholars today, [29] Jeremias effectively set aside what Harnack had considered to be the clearest and surest instance of a doublet resulting from Luke's use of parallel source materials. And with Jeremias's demonstration, most attempts to support a thesis of parallel sources underlying the narrative of Acts 1-15 have come to an end--though, of course, doublets in Acts are still being proposed by literary critics on the basis of Luke's interpolations into his primary source material (e.g., 11:27-30 and 15:1-33, as Jeremias himself argues), but no longer on a thesis of parallel sources. Although most scholars today no longer argue for parallel sources for Acts, the possibility remains that some basic source or sources, either written or oral, underlie the substructure of the first half of the book. The probability of this depends largely on how one evaluates the markedly Semitic cast and coloring of chapters 1-15. It also depends on the question of whether such

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Semitic features are to be credited mainly to translation, underlying sources, or an imitation of the language of the LXX--or, in some way, to a combination of these factors. But precise answers to such questions on a strictly linguistic basis are, as Black rightly warns, "only very rarely possible." [30] Nonetheless, there are some things that can be said to the issue and need to be pointed out here. Through linguistic analysis, Black and Wilcox have concluded that while certain "Semitisms" may be explainable as merely Lukan "Septuagintisms," there are also in Acts 1-15 a number of "hard-core Semitisms" that cannot be explained except on some theory of Aramaic (perhaps also Heb.) sources underlying the composition. [31] And Martin, on the basis of a series of studies on such unconscious syntactical traits as the frequency and positioning of conjunctions, prepositions, and articles, has argued convincingly that while certain phrases and idioms in Acts reflect Septuagintal influence, there are, however, a number of Semitic syntactical features particularly which are more common in the first half of Acts, *indeed in certain subsections* of the first part of Acts. This phenomenon is difficult, if not impossible, to explain on the basis of conscious or unconscious influence of the Septuagint on the writer, and most naturally to be explained as the result of Semitic sources underlying these subsections [italics his] [32] Indeed, in his 1974 monograph on the subject, Martin identifies these subsections as being "16 sections which clearly do go back to written Semitic sources (1:15-26; 2:1-4; 4:23-31; 5: 17-26; 5:27-32; 5:33-42; 6:1-7; 6:8-15; 7:9-16; 7:17-22; 7:30-43; 9:10-19a; 11:1-18; 13: 16b-25; 13:26-41; 14:8-20) and 6 others which probably go back to Semitic sources (2:29-36; 2:37-42; 7:1-8; 7:44-50; 9:19b-22; 9:32-35)" (*Semitic Sources* , pp. 2-3, passim). This is not to suggest that such Semitic features in the text must be viewed as merely the result of translation, as Torrey asserted in proposing his "unified Aramaic source" theory and as Martin (along with Winter and Albright [33]) tends to think has resulted through the use of multiple complementary sources. Nor does the recognition of Semitic features imply our ability to identify the nature or extent of the sources. Black is undoubtedly right in speaking of Luke's use of sources as more literary than slavishly literal (*Aramaic Approach* , pp. 274-75); [34] and Turner should probably be heeded in his insistence that we consider Lukan source material in

more an ultimate than an immediate sense. [35] But the presence, character, and distribution of such "hard-core Semitisms" have much to say against the view that Luke was merely attempting to archaize his presentation by using Septuagintal language. And though Sparks has eloquently tried to argue the Septuagintal and archaizing nature of Luke's material, [36] the fact "that such primitive elements have been preserved is `a rather strong indication of the general authenticity' of the first fifteen chapters of the Acts of the Apostles." [37] As for possible source materials underlying the writing of Acts 16-28, attention has always been directed first of all to four passages in the narrative where the writer uses the pronoun "we"-- 16:10-17 (travel to and evangelization of Philippi); 20:5-15 (ministry in Troas and travel to Miletus); 21:1-18 (journey from Miletus to Jerusalem); and 27:1-28:16 (journey from Caesarea to Rome). [38] The "we" of these passages has been explained in four ways:

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1. The editor of Acts, working from an earlier "travel document" or "diary," either accidentally

or carelessly left the pronoun stand without noting that he was quoting directly.

2. The author of Acts designedly led the pronoun in his source materials stand in his finished

product, thus attempting to gain greater acceptance for his work by passing himself off as

one of Paul's companions.

3. The author of Acts used the "we" as a kind of "last-minute embellishment," or "stylistic

device," apart from any necessary source materials, in order to give the narrative the

appearance of a "a fellow-traveler's account."

4. The author of Acts had from time to time been a companion of Paul in his travels and

discreetly indicated this by using "we" in those places in the narrative where he tells of

events at which he had been present. [39]

Linguistically, as has often been observed, the "we" sections are inextricably bound up with the whole of Luke-Acts, which suggests that they cannot be explained simply on the basis of source criticism and that the use of "we" must be related more to the author of Acts than to his possible sources. Furthermore, there

are striking similarities between these sections and the more readily identifiable editorial material in Luke-Acts in matters of vocabulary, syntax, style, manner of presentation, and even in what is neglected [40] --similarities that do not appear in Luke's Gospel when there is a dependence upon either Mark or Q and that do not appear in the first part of Acts where Semitic sources seem to have been used. In addition, it is in these "we" sections that a greater fullness of detail appears in the portrayal of Paul's ministry, whereas elsewhere the narrative is briefer. All the evidence of this kind seems to require the conclusion either that the author of Acts was exceedingly skillful in creating the impression of eyewitness reporting or that these sections must be judged to be based on firsthand observation. Of the two, the majority of critics have preferred the latter. To hold that the "we" sections in Acts are firsthand accounts on the part of the author himself is supported by what his prologue to Luke-Acts reveals about him (Luke 1:1-4). "A careful study of the prologue shows," Dupont insists, "that the writer is presenting himself as a contemporary and eyewitness of a part of the facts he recounts and this statement indicates the importance that should be attributed to the passages he writes in the first person" (p. 102). On the other hand, the main argument against accepting the "we" sections as the result of firsthand observation is that no companion of Paul would so grossly misrepresent his character and ministry. Luke 1:1-4 and its testimony regarding authorship will be discussed later. As for the portrayal of Paul in Acts, this will be dealt with in what immediately follows. Here it is sufficient to say that on the basis of literary and form-critical considerations alone, the "we" sections of the second half of Acts give every indication of being the firsthand report of the author of Acts. A great part of what remains in the presentation of chapters 16-28 is made up of three missionary sermons of Paul, one pastoral discourse, and five speeches in which he defends himself. [41] The missionary sermons--at Antioch of Pisidia (13:16-41), Lystra (14:15-17), and Athens (17:22-31)--each have their own form, manner of presentation, and type of argument.

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The first is very Jewish, the second more pedestrian, and the third philosophical. The pastoral discourse to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (20:17-38) also has its own form and content, being similar to the Pauline Epistles. As for Paul's speeches in his own defense--before a Jerusalem crowd (22:3-21), the Sanhedrin (23:1-6), the governor Felix (24:10-21), the governor Festus (25:8-11), and Herod Agrippa (26:2-29)--these have their own distinctive style and mode of argument, dependent on the audience and situation he was addressing. One may, of course, insist that all this variety of presentation and fitting of sermonic material to the situation shows the creative genius of the author. But it is more probable that these things show that Luke was using various sources for his accounts of Paul's sermons and defenses, even though Luke's thorough reworking of these sources prevents us from identifying or recreating them. Likewise, though there have been many attempts to reconstruct the sources underlying the "they" sections of the narrative in Acts 16-28--and though we may gain the impression from the narrative itself that its author must have had access to various documents--Luke's literary ability and his liberty in handling his materials was evidently too great to enable us to identify with any certainty the presence, extent, or nature of his sources. The writer of Acts was truly an author, not a compiler or an editor. The recognition of Semitic sources underlying the first half of Acts and of eyewitness reports embodied in the second half, with various other materials possibly used elsewhere, certainly increases our general level of confidence in the historical worth of the presentation. But ultimately Acts must be judged as a finished product and not just on the basis of its sources, even though these sources may be judged historically respectable.

6. The Narrative of Acts

Probably the most extensive attack ever mounted against the historical reliability of the narrative of Acts was that by Zeller in the mid-nineteenth century. [42]

Beginning with the position of his father-in-law, F.C. Baur, on the conciliatory purpose of Acts, Zeller undertook an exhaustive examination of its details, disparaging its facticity because of its numerous historical blunders, inclusion of the miraculous, and portrayal of Paul. But the Hegelianism and tendency criticism of Baur and Zeller soon fell out of favor. Although the superstructure of Tubingen collapsed, the debris remains--in fact, many of its building blocks are being reused in the scholarly study of Acts today. Modern critics continue to fault Acts for its historical blunders, inclusion of the miraculous, and portrayal of Paul. They also add such charges against it as that its kerygmatic purpose preempts any real interest in historical veracity, that it readjusts the earliest proclamation to meet the problem of eschatological disillusionment (also, perhaps, to meet the problem of rising Gnosticism, though that is more hotly debated), and that it is incomplete and fails to deal with the historically significant issues of the day. But though objections to the historical reliability of Acts appear formidable, much can be said to put matters in a fairer perspective. We have already discussed Luke's purposes in writing Acts, arguing that the work does

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reflect a dominant kerygmatic purpose and also a conciliatory intent. But we have not drawn the same implications from such observations that others have drawn. Likewise we have argued that, though some early Christians may have been disillusioned by the delay of the Parousia, the faith of the earliest Christians was in a person, not in a program. Whatever "readjustments" are to be found in Luke-Acts must be seen as a recapturing of the essential convictions of the early church and not just the product of an author's creative genius. Moreover, while we recognize that many take the impossibility of the miraculous as an axiom of historical criticism, we regard that as a matter of philosophical outlook and personal skepticism rather than one of historical investigation and careful research. The issues, however, that need to be dealt with here have to do with the portrayal of Paul in Acts and Luke's manner of treating historical details. The most weighty argument against the authenticity of Acts in the opinion of many is "that the Paul of the Acts is manifestly quite a different person from the Paul of the Epistles." [43] Adolf Hausrath, the nineteenth-century Heidelberg church historian, once insisted:

One could as well believe that Luther, in his old age, made a pilgrimage to Einsiedeln,

walking on peas, or that Calvin on his death bed vowed a golden robe to the Holy Mother

of God, as that the author of Romans and Galatians stood for seven days in the outer court

of the Temple, and subjected himself to all the manipulations with which rabbinic ingenuity

had surrounded the vow, and allowed all the liturgical nonsense of that age to be

transacted

for him by unbelieving priests and Levites. [44]

Many today, without being quite so colorful, agree with this because they believe that the author of Acts has grossly misrepresented Paul in portraying his activities and presenting his theology. So they judge Luke's description of the relations between Paul and the Jerusalem church to be "a happier one than the facts warrant" (Barrett, *Luke the Historian* , p. 74). Lightfoot and Harnack, however, were notable dissenters from this type of criticism and insisted that the split between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the Epistles is more a scholar's construction than a fact of history. [45] In my book *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (esp. pp. 211-63), I have argued for an understanding of Paul's background and teaching that will allow for a more adequate appreciation of his practices as portrayed in Acts; and in *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* , I have argued for a better understanding of the commitments of the earliest Jewish believers in Jesus. Undoubtedly there are differences between the Paul of his own letters and the Paul of his "biographer," and undoubtedly Pauline Christianity and early Jewish Christianity were distinguishable entities. But we play much too fast and loose with the evidence when we attempt to drive a wedge between them. Paul writes as an evangelist and pastor to his converts, affirming the essentials of his message within a context of personal humility, whereas Luke writes as an historian and admirer of the apostle, with a sense for the historical unfolding of the gospel and a desire to highlight the heroic. While we must ask for a body of agreement in the respective

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portrayals, we cannot reasonably call for identity in details or uniformity in viewpoints.

The situation is somewhat comparable to Plutarch's treatment of the members of the Roman family Gracchus in his *Parallel Lives* and Appian's depiction of these same leaders in his *Civil Wars*. While both wrote in the second century A.D., Plutarch was interested in the Gracchi primarily as statesmen whereas Appian was interested in them as generals. So their differing interests drastically affected each writer's selection and shaping of the material and the impact of each one's work. Yet there is also a large body of agreement between Plutarch's and Appian's treatment of the Gracchi. As Underhill observed:

It is not wonderful therefore that, starting from such very different points of view, and with

such arbitrary methods of selecting and arranging their materials, Plutarch and Appian

should have written two very different accounts of the Gracchi and their doings. The

wonder is rather that they should agree so well as they do. Thus to attempt to pronounce in

general terms which is to be preferred before the other, is almost an idle task: the better

course is to compare the two narratives in detail, and to discuss the value of each part

separately. [46]

So "it is not wonderful" that Luke portrays Paul as a great miracle worker whereas Paul himself laid claim to "the things that mark an apostle--signs, wonders and miracles" (2Cor 12:12) only when forced to assert his apostleship; or that Luke thought of his hero as an outstanding orator whereas Paul acknowledged that some were saying that "in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing" (2Cor 10:10); or that Luke should depict Paul's apostleship as related to and in continuity with that of the Jerusalem Twelve whereas Paul himself insisted that his apostleship was in a real sense unique. [47] If we really believe in redaction criticism, we must allow various portrayals to be influenced by the respective purposes of authors at the time of writing. Real life is broader than the precision of mathematical equations, though those who fault Acts for its portrait of Paul often tend to forget that. (For further discussion of these matters, see the commentary in loc.) As for Luke's treatment of historical details in Acts, almost all of Zeller's identifications of historical discrepancies have been effectively countered by the extensive research of Ramsay. Therefore we seldom hear of Zeller today. On the other hand, Ramsay became so impressed with the historical trustworthiness of Acts and the "true historic sense" of its author that at times his presentations suggest that Luke wrote only as an historian without any purpose but to inform.

[48] Thus Ramsay is usually neglected because of the kerygmatic concerns of scholars and theologians today. Nevertheless, Ramsay's basic point that on matters having to do with Hellenistic geography and politics, as well as with Roman law and provincial administration, Acts is an extremely reliable guide to the situation of the mid-first century A.D. was well made and has been supported of late by the Roman historian Sherwin-White. Likewise, Ramsay's insistence that "a writer who proves to be exact and correct in one point will show the same

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qualities in other matters" is a legitimate inference from his more limited area of investigation and deserves general credence (*Trustworthiness of the NT* , p. 80). There still remain, however, a number of historical problems in Acts that seem to go beyond any ready explanation and beyond what scholars believe to have been the situation in the first century. Most notorious of these is the reference to the Jewish revolutionaries Theudas and Judas the Galilean in Gamaliel's speech recorded in Acts 5:36-37:

Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men

rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing.

After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people

in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered.

The major historical blunders in the passage appear to be (1) its disagreement with Josephus as to the chronological order of these rebellions, for Josephus depicts that of Judas as having taken place first about A.D. 6 (Antiq. XVIII, 4-10 [i.1]), with that of Theudas coming later in about A.D. 44 (Antiq. XX, 97-98 [v.1]); and, more seriously, (2) its making Gamaliel in about A.D. 34 refer to an uprising of Theudas that did not occur until a decade or so later. Nineteenth-century critics were quick to highlight this problem, usually explaining it as a result of Luke's confused dependence upon Josephus. They argued that the writer of Acts had confused Josephus's later reminiscence (Antiq. XX, 102 [v.2]) of Judas's revolt with the earlier actual revolt and had forgotten

some sixty years or more after the event (if indeed he ever knew) that Gamaliel's speech preceded Theudas's rebellion by a decade or so and did not follow it. The arguments for Luke's dependence upon Josephus, however, have been pretty well demolished by the literary analyses of such scholars as Schurer and Thackeray. [49] It may well be that the Theudas of Gamaliel's reference was one of the many insurgent leaders who arose in Palestine at the time of Herod the Great's death in 4 B.C. and not the Theudas who led the Jewish uprising of A.D. 44 and that Gamaliel's examples of Jewish insurrectionists refer to a Theudas of about 4 B.C. and to Judas the Galilean of A.D. 6 whereas Josephus focused upon Judas of A.D. 6 and another Theudas of A.D. 44. The problem with Acts 5:36-37 may therefore result as much from our own ignorance as from what we believe we know as based upon Josephus. Kummel enumerates a number of factors relating to incomplete narration and selectivity of material that convince him that the author of Acts lacked historical interest. So he discredits the historical worth of what is presented on the ground that "we do not learn the historically significant things about [Paul]." [50] Such objections, however, tell us only that Kummel's view of what was significant in apostolic history and Luke's own understanding are quite different-- something of little importance as an argument against the facticity of Luke's account. Turner has pointed out the following respecting the historical NT materials:

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The fact that a number of questions which we should wish to put to the documents are

unanswerable does not by itself cast doubt on their veracity as historical documents. It may

merely imply that we are selecting the wrong criteria to get the best out of our subject-

matter or framing the wrong questions to put to our sources. However legitimate its

methods and aims, criticism can easily and imperceptibly turn into hypercriticism and

become in the process as ham-fisted as literalism. [51]

And van Unnik has observed:

Would it not be wise to be somewhat more moderate in the questions we ask of Luke?

Because he was not omniscient on all events of the apostolic age, it does not follow that he

was unreliable in what he does tell us, or that he is a pious but untrustworthy preacher. We

must grant him the liberty of not being interested in all matters that interest us. [52]

Luke, it is true, varies considerably from modern historians. He does not cite authorities and strive for completeness. Nor does he interact with competing viewpoints. He presents his material in dramatic vignettes, which "present not so much a single picture as a series of glimpses" (Foakes-Jackson and Lake, BC, 1:301). He is more interested in impressions than the establishment of causes and effects; he is more interested in portraying the advances of the gospel than in detailing resultant implications. And what he does tell us often leaves us baffled and searching for the thesis that will unify the whole. Because Luke has presented his material in a unique way, is uninterested in many of the issues that preoccupy modern historians, and uses his narrative to proclaim the continuing activity of the ascended Christ in the world through his Spirit in the church, we do not have to relegate his presentation to the historically unreliable. In Luke's view, which was that of most other historians and biographers of his day, this was the only way his narrative could achieve its aim and compel interest.

7. The Speeches in Acts

The tone for contemporary critical study of the speeches in Acts was set in 1922 by Cadbury in "The Greek and Jewish Traditions of Writing History":

To suppose that the writers were trying to present the speeches as actually spoken, or that

their readers thought so, is unfair to the morality of one and to the intelligence of the other.

From Thucydides downwards, speeches reported by the historians are confessedly pure

imagination. They belong to the final literary stage. If they have any nucleus of fact behind

them it would be the merest outline in the *hupomnemata* [i.e., remembrances] (BC, 2:13).

A number of studies have been written during the past half-century in support of Cadbury's

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claim, arguing (1) that Luke, indeed, as a Greek historian, followed the Thucydidean model; (2) that the speeches of Acts fit too neatly into their redactional contexts for the material to be drawn from the primitive church; and (3) that the theological content and vocabulary of the speeches are that of Luke himself (as determined by comparison with his editorial activity elsewhere in Luke-Acts) and therefore cannot be that of the earliest Christian preachers. [53] Yet critical opinion regarding the sermons and addresses of Acts has not moved in only one direction, and many have come to feel that such judgments are extreme. As has already been noted in the Historical Writing in Antiquity section, ancient historians did ask questions as to what really happened and sought to be as accurate as possible. We pointed out from the example of Thucydides that even though verbatim reporting was disclaimed, the attempt was to adhere "as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually spoken" (*History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22). As for the similarity of structure between the speeches themselves and between the speeches and the narrative of Acts, this may be freely acknowledged without necessarily denigrating the content. To an extent, of course, all the speeches in Acts are necessarily paraphrastic, for certainly the original delivery contained more detail of argument and more illustrative material than Luke included--as poor Eutychus undoubtedly could testify (Acts 20:7-12)! Stenographic reports they are not, and probably few ever so considered them. They have been reworked, as is required in any precis, and reworked, moreover, in accord with the style of the narrative. But recognition of the kind of writing that produces speeches compatible with the narrative in which they are found should not be interpreted as inaccurate reporting or a lack of traditional source material. After all, a single author is responsible for the literary form of the whole. Comparing Luke's Gospel with Matthew's, we can demonstrate that Luke did not invent sayings for Jesus. On the contrary, he seems to have been more literal in transmitting the words of Jesus than in recounting the events of his life. Evans believes that such a comparison is fallacious since the discourses of Jesus and the sermons of the apostolic men in Acts are two entirely different literary genres, the one composed of independent *logia* and the other of more rounded and carefully constructed units. [54] And Dibelius insisted that the comparison

should not be taken as presumptive evidence for a similarity of treatment by Luke in Acts:

When he wrote the Gospel, Luke had to fit in with a tradition which already had its own

stamp upon it, so that he had not the same literary freedom as when he composed the Acts

of the Apostles. On the other hand, unless we are completely deceived, he was the first to

employ the material available for the Acts of the Apostles, and so was able to develop the

book according to the point of view of an historian writing literature (Studies in Acts, p.

185).

Yet even though we have no comparable "Matthew" for Acts, and though the literary genre of the discourses in Luke and the speeches in Acts differ, there is no prima facie reason why

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Luke's handling of the material in the latter should be assumed to differ widely from his treatment in the former. And though his respect for the speakers behind the latter never rivaled his veneration for the person of the former, it is difficult to believe that such a difference would have appreciably affected the desire for accuracy of content, if not also of word, that he evidences in his Gospel. We must, therefore, continue to insist on a presumption in favor of a similarity of treatment in Luke's recording of the words of Jesus and his recording of the addresses of Peter, Stephen, Philip, James, and Paul that engenders confidence in the reliability of the content of the speeches in Acts, even though it has been reworked by Luke into its present precis form. That Luke actually strove for accuracy of content in presenting the speeches, or at least did not impose his own theology on them and pervert their original character, has been argued in significant articles by Ridderbos and Moule. [55] Ridderbos points to the lack of developed theology in the speeches of Peter as a mark of reliable historiography rather than of inventive genius. And Moule convincingly insists that in spite of frequent claims to the contrary the Christology of Acts is not uniform, either between the speakers themselves or between them and Luke--that there are a "number of seemingly undesigned coincidences and subtle nuances," which indicate a retention of the essential nature of the content. [56] The problem as to why in Acts 1-15 the early Christian leaders are portrayed as quoting (in the main) from the LXX when their sermons and addresses had their origin (for the most part) in an Aramaic-speaking community is a difficulty without a ready solution. Many have asserted that this phenomenon of Greek biblical citations in material credited to Aramaic-speaking preachers lies heavily against the authenticity of the speeches. But both the observation and the conclusion drawn from it fail to take into account a number of pertinent factors. In the first place, while the quotations of Acts are fairly representative of the LXX in general, the LXX alone is not sufficient to explain all their textual features. J. de Waard points out that the quotations of Acts 3:22-23 (Deut 18:15, 18-19), 7:43 (Amos 5:26-27), 13:41 (Hab 1:5), and 15:16 (Amos 9:11) are prime examples of where "certain New Testament writings show affinities to the DSS as regards the Old Testament text" (p. 78). Likewise, there is the possibility that in Acts Luke assimilated

Aramaic or more Hebraic type text-forms to the text that was, to quote C.C. Torrey, "familiar to those for whom he wrote" (p. 58). In support of Torrey's thesis at this point, Max Wilcox has shown that while the biblical quotations in Acts 1-15 are strongly Septuagintal, the allusions, because they are less capable of exact identification and therefore less subject to special treatment, seem to have escaped a process of assimilation and retain more their original Semitic cast (pp. 20-55). Perhaps some credit for the Septuagintal features of the quotations should also be given to a Greek testimonia collection of OT passages circulating within the church about the time of Luke's composition (ibid., pp. 181-82). It seems, therefore, that we are faced with at least two issues regarding the text-form of the quotations in the first fifteen chapters of Acts: (1) the variety of biblical versions in the first century and (2) assimilation for the sake of Greek-speaking readers. In addition, the possible presence of a Greek testimonia collection(s) adds a further complication. Until additional

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evidence is available, we may be well advised to leave questions as to textual sources and deviations in early Christian preaching somewhat open. We may suspect that the answer to our problem lies in one or more of the suggestions alluded to above, and we may be able to build a reasonable case in defense of a thesis. But all we really know is that the biblical quotations in Acts are dominantly Septuagintal, with a few parallels to the biblical texts at Qumran. None of this, however, necessarily impinges upon or supports authenticity.

8. The Structure of Acts

The Acts of the Apostles was originally written as the second part of a two-volume work, and its inseparable relation to Luke's Gospel must be kept in mind if we are to understand the work. As Cadbury insisted over fifty years ago: "Their unity is a fundamental and illuminating axiom.... They are not merely two independent writings from the same pen; they are a single continuous work. Acts is neither an appendix nor an afterthought. It is probably an integral part of the author's original plan and purpose." [57] The Prologue to the two-volume work (Luke 1: 1-4) suggests, in fact, that the author's intention was to write "an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us"--things that stretched from the birth of John the Baptist to the entrance of the Good News into Rome. [58] And his use of the emphatic verb "began" (*erxato*) as he commences his second volume (Acts 1:1) sets up the parallel between "all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach (*italics mine*)" as recorded in his Gospel and what he *continued* to do and to teach through his church as is shown in Acts. Luke alone of the evangelists seems to have viewed the history of the advance of the gospel as of comparable importance to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus--understanding, it seems, Jesus' accomplishment of redemption and the extension of that redemption through the activity of the church as being part and parcel of the same climactic movement in the drama of salvation. On the one hand, therefore, Luke has taken pains to construct his second volume with an eye to the

first; he sets up numerous parallels in the portrayal of events in the two volumes and repeatedly stresses features in the second that fulfill anticipations expressed in the first. The geographical movement of Jesus in the Gospel from Galilee to Jerusalem, for example, is paralleled in Acts by the geographical advance of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. The importance of the Holy Spirit in the birth narratives, in the Spirit's descent on Jesus at his baptism, and in the Spirit constantly undergirding his ministry (cf. Jesus' declaration of this fact found only in Luke 4:18-19) is paralleled in Acts by the Spirit's coming upon the disciples at Pentecost and the repeated emphasis upon the Spirit as the source of the church's power and progress. Similarly, Luke's stress in Acts upon the special significance of the apostles, the centrality of Jesus Christ in the early apostolic preaching, and the universal dimensions of that preaching finds roots in his Gospel in such unique ways as calling the disciples "apostles" (Luke 6:13) and extending the quotation of Isaiah 40:3 to include the universalistic statements of vv. 4-5 (Luke 3:

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5-6), as well as more inferentially at many other places. Further instances of such parallel phenomena are much too numerous to mention here; they will be dealt with in the commentary in loc. Often the parallelism is so subtly presented in the narratives that it is easily overlooked unless one studies Acts with Luke's Gospel constantly in mind. This structural parallelism and tying in of details between the two volumes runs throughout Luke's writings--not crudely or woodenly, but often very subtly and skillfully--and we do well to watch for it. [59] "St. Luke," as Ehrhardt said, "is far too good a writer and too honest an historian to labour this parallelism; but the structural similarity is close enough to deserve our careful attention" (*Ten Lectures on Acts*, p. 13). On the other hand, Acts is not simply a parallel to the Gospel, ending at Rome as the Gospel ended at Jerusalem. If it were, it would be the less important part of Luke's two-volume work-- something like a shadow of the original. But Acts is important in its own right as the logical and geographical completion of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Indeed, none of the apostolic figures of Acts is portrayed as paralleling the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Probably that is why Luke had no interest in closing Acts with an account of Paul's death. If he knew of it, he evidently did not consider it appropriate to include it; if it had not occurred when he was writing Acts, he felt no compulsion to wait for it before completing the book. Nevertheless, Luke presents the apostolic ministry as the necessary extension of the redemption effected by Christ. Luke views both the accomplishment of salvation and the spread of the Good News as inseparable units in the climactic activity of God's redemption of mankind--a truth probably picked up from Paul (cf. Rom 8:17; Philippians 3:10-11; Col 1:24). So for Luke, as O'Neill points out, "the full significance of the central happenings at Jerusalem is not worked out in history until Paul has reached Rome" (p. 6). Various proposals about Luke's construction of the second volume of his work have been made. Some scholars have divided it according to underlying sources and others according to topics. What is required in any structural analysis of Acts, however, is a thesis that takes into account both the parallel features in Luke's Gospel and the structural phenomena in Acts. In particular, four features need to be kept in mind in considering the structure of the Gospel: 1. It begins with an introductory section of distinctly Lukan cast, dealing

with Jesus' birth and

youth (1:1-2:52) before taking up the narrative held in common with Mark and Matthew.

2. The Nazareth pericope (4:14-30) serves as the topic paragraph for all that Luke presents

in his two volumes; most of what follows this pericope is an explication of the themes it

contains. [60]

3. In his presentation of Jesus' ministry, Luke follows an essentially geographical outline that

moves from the Galilean ministry (4:14-9:50), through the ministry in Perea and Judea (9:

51-19:28), and concludes in Jerusalem (19:29-24:53).

4. Luke deliberately sets up a number of parallels between our Lord's ministry in Galilee and

his ministry in the regions of Perea and Judea. [61]

In addition, five phenomena relating to the structure of Acts need to be recognized:

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1. It begins, like the Gospel, with an introductory section of distinctly Lukan cast dealing with

the constitutive events of the Christian mission (1:1-2:41) before it sets forth the advances

of the gospel "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (1:

7).

2. This introductory section is followed by what appears to be a thematic statement (2:42-

47). This material, while often viewed as a summary of what precedes, most probably

serves as the thesis paragraph for what follows.

3. In his presentation of the advance of the Christian mission, Luke follows an essentially

geographical outline that moves from Jerusalem (2:42-6:7), through Judea and Samaria (6:

8-9:31), on into Palestine-Syria (9:32-12:24), then to the Gentiles in the eastern part of the

Roman Empire (12:25-19:20), and finally culminates in Paul's defenses and the entrance of

the gospel into Rome (19:21-28:31).

4. In his presentation, Luke deliberately sets up a number of parallels between the ministry of

Peter in the first half of Acts and that of Paul in the last half. [62]

5. Luke includes six summary statements or "progress reports" (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20;

and 28:31), each of which seems to conclude its own "panel" of material. [63]

Taking all these literary and structural features into account, we may conclude that Luke developed his material in Acts along the following lines: Introduction: The Constitutive Events of the Christian Mission (1:1-2:41)

Part I: The Christian Mission to the Jewish World (2:42-12:24)

Panel 1--The Earliest Days of the Church at Jerusalem (2:42-6:7)

Summary Statement : "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith"

(6:7).

Panel 2--Critical Events in the Lives of Three Pivotal Figures (6:8-9:31)

Summary Statement : "Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed

a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in

numbers, living in the fear of the Lord" (9:31).

Panel 3--Advances of the Gospel in Palestine-Syria (9:32-12:24)

Summary Statement : "But the word of God continued to increase and spread" (12:24).

Part II: The Christian Mission to the Gentile World (12:25-28:31)

Panel 4--The First Missionary Journey and the Jerusalem Council (12:25-16:5)

Summary Statement : "So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in

numbers" (16:5).

Panel 5--Wide Outreach Through Two Missionary Journeys (16:6-19:20)

Summary Statement: "In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power" (19:20).

Panel 6--To Jerusalem and Thence to Rome (19:21-28:31)

Summary Statement : "Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God

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and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ" (28:31).

Laying out the structure of Acts in this way highlights not only the parallelism that exists between Luke's second volume and his first but also the parallelism built into Acts in its portrayal of the ministry of Peter in chapters 1-12 and that of Paul in chapters 13-28. Likewise, accepting such a scheme for the construction of the book provides us with a cogent explanation for one of the most difficult questions about Acts: Why does it end as it does? The reader is left at 28:30-31 with Paul a prisoner for two years in his own rented quarters at Rome, where "boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." But it is very strange that we are told no more, and so various explanations have been proposed for this abrupt ending. One common explanation is that Luke was prevented by his own death from writing more. Another is that he really intended to write a trilogy, with the third volume dedicated to the apostle's ministry in the western part of the empire (as his second volume had dealt with the apostle's ministry in the east) and with the inclusion of an account of Paul's martyrdom; but for some reason he never completed it. Those who propose this usually point to the classical distinction between the word *protos* used in Acts 1:1, which means the "first" of a series and could suggest the intention of more than two volumes, and the comparative *proteros*, which signifies the "former" of two. Furthermore, they often cite Paul's intention expressed in Romans 15:23-24, 28 of carrying on a ministry beyond Rome that would extend to Spain (cf. 1 Clement 5). But the classical distinction between "first" and "former" probably did not always hold in latter times among common people, and there are reasons to believe that Paul's hope for a ministry beyond Rome in the western part of the empire never materialized. Another explanation for the abrupt ending of Acts has been advanced by many who see Acts as a trial document for presentation before the imperial authorities. They have suggested that Luke stopped where he did because there he rested his case and, with the condemnation of his client, had no desire to complete the book. Others have insisted that Acts ends where it does because, writing about A.D. 62, Luke knew nothing more about Paul. And still others have proposed that in saying that Paul

resided for two whole years at Rome without any formal charge being laid against him, Luke was obliquely implying that Paul was not brought to trial but that his case was dismissed according to Roman law--actually an appropriate ending for the book and one that stresses the fact that all the accusations against Paul had come to nothing. Each of these proposals has some merit and can be argued rather convincingly. Some of them can be joined with others in a common argument. But Luke was not writing a biography of Paul, even though he included many biographical details about him in Acts. Luke was showing how the Good News of man's redemption had swept out from Jerusalem, across Palestine, into Asia Minor, then on throughout Macedonia and Achaia, and how it finally entered Rome, the capital of the empire. And when Paul's goal was reached, his story was told. The structure of Acts as laid out above not only parallels the structure of Luke's Gospel and conforms most adequately to the text of Acts itself, it also implies that Luke ended where he did because his purpose in writing was completed. The gospel that Jesus effected in his ministry from Galilee to Jerusalem

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had reached its culmination in its extension from Jerusalem to Rome. And with that victory--as he visualized it--accomplished, Luke felt free to lay down his pen.

9. Date of Composition

We have held back' discussion of the date of Acts till after dealing with the structure of the book, for the question of date has traditionally been connected with a particular explanation for the ending of Acts. Baur, like many today, saw no correlation. But at the turn of the century a majority explained the abrupt ending by the maxim "the narrative has caught up with the events." So they concluded that Acts was written shortly after the last event mentioned. Adolf Harnack led the way in establishing this position, and a number of commentators have since taken a similar stance (e.g., A. Wikenhauser, F.F. Bruce). Much that Harnack and his successors said about an early date for Acts is still valuable and important. But if we are unable to give the same explanation as Harnack and his successors for the ending of Acts, we cannot equate the issues of its ending and date in the same manner. We believe that to date Acts by the nature of its ending is a non sequitur because it fails to take into account Luke's main purpose in writing the book. Broadly speaking, scholars today are divided into three camps respecting the dating of Acts: those who argue for the composition of the book somewhere around A.D. 115-30, those who hold to a date somewhere between A.D. 80 and 95, and those who hold to a date prior to A.D.

70. An early second-century date has often been argued on the basis of the work's apparent "Early Catholicism" (i.e., its recasting of the earliest futuristic eschatology and Spirit-controlled enthusiasm into such forms as Christology, ecclesiology, realized eschatology, and missionary outreach) and its "anti-Gnosticism." But these matters are hotly debated--and, even if true, could have existed earlier than the second century. O'Neill has recently taken the lead in arguing for Acts as having been written between A.D. 115 and 130. He begins with the thesis that "the only way now left to solve the problem about the date of

Acts is to decide where its theological affinities lie" (p. 1). O'Neill finds the closest parallels to the theology of Acts in the writings of Justin Martyr, particularly in his *First Apology*, and argues for an early second-century date on the basis of the arguments "that Luke and Justin Martyr held common theological positions without being dependent on each other, and that Luke-Acts was completed in time for Luke to be used by Marcion" (pp. 21-22). But as Barclay aptly observes about O'Neill's view: "Of the ingenuity and of the scholarship with which it is supported there is no question; but it has failed to gain general acceptance, if for no other reason, because an easier explanation of the facts is that Justin knew Acts." [64] Furthermore, to attribute to an early second-century writer the fabrication of the earlier part of Paul's story and then to view such a writer as hesitating to produce an account of Paul's experiences in Rome is hard to imagine. "It is certain," as Ehrhardt points out, "that the mind of the early second-century Church, which produced a great number of apocryphal Acts of various

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Apostles, did not work in this way" (*Ten Lectures on Acts* , p. 3).

Most scholars today date Acts somewhere between A.D. 80 and 95. They reason like this: Acts cannot have been written before the Fall of Jerusalem because the third Gospel cannot have been written before that date, and the third Gospel is earlier than Acts. On the other hand, Acts cannot have been written after A.D. 95 because the case for a member of Paul's missionary team having written the "we" sections is strong. Furthermore, it must have been written sometime after Paul's death, for Paul might have objected to certain things Acts describes him as having said and done. Yet Acts must have been written before Paul's letters were gathered into some kind of recognizable collection, for the book says nothing of its hero as a correspondent. The *terminus a quo* , therefore, is held to be set by the references to the Fall of Jerusalem in Luke 19:43-44 and 21:20-24, which require the Gospel to have been written after A.D. 70, and by the general sequence of synoptic relationships epitomized by the revision of Mark 13:14-20 in Luke 21:20-24, which also seems to point to a date after A.D. 70. As for the *terminus ad quem* , it is set sometime after Paul's death but before the collection of the Pauline letters--a collection that seems to have been known in at least elementary form by Clement of Rome, who wrote the work known as 1 Clement about A.D. 96. Nevertheless, Acts contains a number of features that point to an earlier date than A.D. 70 for its composition. Chief among these is the portrayal of the *situation of the Jews* . They are represented as being both a spiritual and political power who had influence with the Roman courts and whose damaging testimony against the Christians must be countered. But how could the Jews act as Luke depicts them acting *after* their destruction as a nation in the war of A.D. 66-70? And why would Luke *after* that time want to argue before a Gentile audience that Christianity should be accepted as a *religio licita* because of its relation to Judaism? True, Vespasian and Titus waged their war against the Jews of Palestine, and particularly against their Zealot leadership, without mounting a general persecution against Diaspora Jews or imposing official restrictions on them. Yet in the eyes of the Roman world Palestinian Judaism was largely defunct after A.D. 70, and Diaspora Judaism undoubtedly came under something of a cloud as a result. Luke's apologetic,

however, is built upon the dual premises that (1) the Jewish leaders throughout the Diaspora and particularly the Jewish authorities at Jerusalem are at the time an important voice before Roman courts of law, even the imperial court at Rome; and (2) Judaism both in the Diaspora and at Jerusalem is accepted by Rome as a *religio licita*. Apart from such assumptions, Luke's apologetic makes no sense at all. Yet this was hardly the case at any time between A.D. 80 and 95, though it came to be the case to some extent through the efforts of Rabbi Akiba between A.D. 110 and 130. [65] But acceptance of Judaism by Rome as a *religio licita* was the situation prior to the outbreak of hostilities and the disastrous conflagration that followed in A.D. 66-70. Likewise, *the estimation of Roman justice* implicit in Acts argues for its early composition. Acts expresses a generally hopeful outlook regarding Christianity's acceptance in the Gentile world and its recognition by Roman authorities. This could hardly have been the case after the

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Neronian persecution of Christians that began in A.D. 65. If Luke had known of the martyrdom of Paul and Peter under Nero at Rome (cf. 1 Clement 5), and along with them the martyrdom of many other Christians, "the last word of Acts [i.e., *akolytos* `without hindrance'], which," as Plooi long ago pointed out, "surely not without significance stands in its prominent place as the crown of the narrative, would be not only meaningless, but *in its tendency* nearly equal to a lie [italics his]." [66] The attitude of Acts toward Roman power and justice is more like that of Paul in Romans 13:1-7, written before Nero's persecutions, than that of John the Seer in Revelation 17:1-6, written during the last years of the first century. In addition, *the archaic nature of the language* in Acts says something about its date, suggesting either that its author wrote before circumstances and expressions had changed or that he was extremely ingenious in historicizing. Ramsay has documented Luke's surprising accuracy in geographical, political, and territorial details. Regarding the regional boundary between Phrygian Iconium and the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe in 14:6, for example, he has shown that such "was accurate at no other time except between 37 and 72 A.D." (*St. Paul the Traveller* , pp. 110-13). And Harnack has shown that the language of Acts appears to be the language of the earlier days of the church, particularly in such matters as the titles ascribed to Jesus, the designations employed for Christians, and the manner of speaking about the church (*Date of the Acts* , pp. 103-14). It is possible, of course, to credit all these features to the ingenuity and genius of Luke. But they are best explained by the hypothesis of an early date for the writing of Acts. Finally, there is the surprising fact that *Acts reflects no knowledge of Paul's letters* , either in what is said or what is assumed on the part of its readers. In support of this we cite but two examples drawn from letters that were undoubtedly written before Acts, no matter how early we date it: There is no integration of Paul's statements in Galatians 1 and 2 regarding his personal contacts with the Jerusalem apostles and his visits described in Acts 9, 11, and 15. Nor is there any correlation between the many experiences referred to in 2 Corinthians (esp. ch. 1-2 and 11-12) and Paul's missionary journeys recorded in Acts. These phenomena may, of course, be interpreted as evidence for the personal aloofness and the

chronological distance of the author of Acts from his hero. Thus it may be used to support a late date for the work. On the other hand, the phenomena just mentioned suggest a very early date for Acts--viz., that it was before the significance of the Pauline correspondence was appreciated and by a companion not actually with Paul (to judge by the distribution of the "we" sections in Acts) when he wrote the letters in question. To sum up, there is much to be said in support of an early date for Acts. On our view, the *terminus a quo* would be the writing of Luke's Gospel (which, of course, precedes Acts, and which, in turn, rests on the publication of Mark's Gospel and at least the knowledge that Matthew wrote a Gospel) and Paul's two-year imprisonment at Rome (c.61-63), referred to in Acts 28:30. As for the *terminus ad quem*, it would be the outbreak of hostilities in Palestine between the Jewish Zealots and the Roman Tenth Legion in A.D. 66 and the start of the

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Neronian persecutions at Rome in A.D. 65--all of which points to about A.D. 64 for the composition of Acts. The major objections to such a date are that it places the development of the synoptic tradition too early and treats the Olivet Discourse of Mark 13, Matthew 24-25, and Luke 21 (together with Luke 17:22-37 and 19:43-44) as predictive prophecy. But the nature of the development of the synoptic tradition and the dates to be assigned to that development continue to be matters of great dispute. We may, for instance, believe in the commonly accepted theory of synoptic relationships (Markan priority, a basic two-document hypothesis, et al.), as we do, and still question the validity of a set of dates for the synoptic Gospels that are later than the destruction of Jerusalem. After all, dating the Synoptics and Acts depends largely on one's view of the origin of the material making up the Olivet Discourse. And ultimately dating the Olivet Discourse comes down to the question of the possibility or impossibility of genuine predictive prophecy on the lips of our Lord during his earthly ministry--a possibility that this commentary affirms.

10. Authorship

The discussion of the authorship of Acts has been left to the last (though Luke has been repeatedly spoken of as having written the third Gospel and Acts) because the question of authorship depends largely on how one views other introductory matters. But now that these have been dealt with, the question of authorship arises naturally and logically. Two observations from Acts itself must govern the discussion of its authorship. The first is that stylistically and structurally the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are so closely related that they have to be assigned to the same author. This has been so extensively demonstrated by linguistic studies that it need not be elaborated here. More important, however, are the structural parallels between the two books and the comprehensive plan that is maintained throughout them. All this necessitates that, for both critical and

interpretative purposes, Luke-Acts be considered a single, unified work in two volumes. Hardly anyone today would dispute this basic observation. The second observation regarding the question of authorship is that Luke-Acts claims to have been written by one who reports at firsthand some of the events he records. In the Prologue (Luke 1:1-4) to his two-volume work, the author's use of the expression "among us" (*en hemin*) should probably be taken to imply his contemporary status with some of the events he purposes to narrate, though he disavows being an eyewitness "from the first." And his insistence that "I myself have carefully investigated everything [*parekolouthekoti*] from the beginning" suggests more than just historical knowledge of the events depicted. Dupont points out: "The verb *parakoloutheo* is in point of fact very appropriate for expressing the distinction between information received at second hand and that coming from the writer's personal presence at the events" (p. 106, cf. pp. 101-12). More particularly, however, the use of the first person plural in

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Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; and 27:1-28:16 appears to be a deliberate endeavor to indicate that the writer was a traveling companion of Paul on certain of his missionary journeys. This leaves us with a plain choice: either to accept the suggestion made by the book itself as true or to reject it in favor of some other explanation. [67] Having dated the composition of Acts about A.D. 64, there is little reason for us to dispute the implications of its "we" passages. In fact, accepting the author as a traveling companion of Paul during some of his missionary journeys explains quite adequately two rather peculiar features about the plan of Acts: on the one hand, the disproportion of the work, which devotes more than three-fifths of its space to Paul; and, on the other, the disproportion that appears in the portrayal of Paul, whose first mission is narrated with great brevity while certain parts of the second and third missionary journeys, Paul's five defenses, and the journey to Rome are described much more fully. No writer who was altogether a stranger to apostolic times or working entirely from sources would have devoted so much space to the latter part of Paul's ministry. His work would have been more symmetrically planned. Traditionally, the author of the third Gospel has been identified as Luke, the companion of Paul mentioned in Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24, and 2 Timothy 4:11. Nor has tradition ever considered any author other than Luke. His authorship was accepted by Marcion (C.A.D. 135), is included in the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to the third Gospel (C.A.D. 170), and taken for granted by the compiler of the Muratorian Canon (C.A.D. 180-200). Likewise, in the MSS of the Gospels the heading "According to Luke" (*kata Loukan*) is always found for the third Gospel. The situation regarding Acts is not quite the same. Indications of the use of Acts in the early second century are very scarce (e.g., Marcion did not use it and seems not to have known of it, even though he knew and used Luke). And while the MSS of Acts bear the title "The Acts of the Apostles," they do not name its author. Nevertheless, with Luke-Acts being originally one work in two volumes, which sometime during the last part of the first century or very early in the second began to circulate as two separate works, what is said regarding the one as to authorship must apply equally well to the other. Of lesser unanimity within the early church was the tradition that Luke was an Antiochian of Syria, which is the claim made

in the opening words of the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to the third Gospel and is repeated by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3. 4) and Jerome (*On Illustrious Men* 7; Preface to the *Commentary on Matthew*). In support of the traditional ascription, we need not insist that the author of Luke-Acts necessarily employed a vocabulary special to the medical profession of his day or expressed interests that were overtly those of a doctor, thereby confirming Paul's description of Luke in Colossians 4:14 as a physician. In 1882 Hobart proposed such a view based on a comparison of the language of Luke-Acts with that of such Greek medical writers as Hippocrates (c.460- 357 B.C.) and Aretaeus, Galen, and Dioscorides, who lived during the first and second centuries A.D. [68] Many scholars at the turn of the century followed him, particularly Adolf Harnack who was so influential in propagating this thesis. But in 1919 Cadbury demonstrated in the publication of his Harvard doctoral thesis that the majority of the so-called medical words

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identified by Hobart in Luke-Acts can be found in about the same frequency in such ancient writers as Josephus and Lucian of Samosata, who were not physicians. [69] And he followed that with a series of studies arguing that the supposed medical terminology of Luke-Acts was employed very widely in the ancient world--even among, as he called them, "horse-doctors." [70] The gibe has frequently been made that Cadbury won his doctorate by taking Luke's away from him. All Cadbury did, however, was demonstrate by linguistic evidence that one cannot prove that the author of Acts was a physician and therefore "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col 4:14). Yet while the language of Luke-Acts does not require us to believe that "Luke, the beloved physician" wrote Acts, it puts no obstacle in the way of that belief. What we can say positively is that the tradition that Luke wrote the third Gospel and Acts goes back at least to the early second century, that it was unanimously accepted within the church, and that it would be very strange were it not true. If an early ecclesiastical writer were attempting to pass off Luke-Acts as the work of someone close to an apostle in order to invest it with authority, why did he not attribute it to Paul himself--or at least to Timothy or Titus, both of whom were better known than Luke? Why, indeed, ascribe it to an individual who played no major part in the advance of the gospel and whose name appears only three times in the NT? To be sure, attempts have been made to set aside the tradition; but none of them is convincing. Consequently there are no compelling reasons to reject the tradition that Luke, Paul's physician friend, who appears to have been a Gentile (Col 4:10-15), was the writer of Acts.

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12. Outline (References in outline are tied to commentary.)

Introduction: The Constitutive Events of the Christian Mission (1:1-2:41)

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B. The Mandate to Witness (1:6-8)

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D. The Full Complement of Apostles (1:12-26)

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a. Apologia section (2:14-21)

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2. Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin (7:2-53)
 - a. On the land (7:2-36)
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C. The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus (9:1-30)

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3. Saul's conversion evidenced in Damascus (9:19b-25)

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A. The Ministry of Peter in the Maritime Plain of Palestine (9:32-43)

1. Aeneas healed at Lydda (9:32-35)

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1. Cornelius's vision (10:1-8)

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C. The Church at Antioch of Syria (11:19-30)

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2. The death of Herod Agrippa I (12:19b-23)

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Text and Exposition

Introduction: The Constitutive Events of the Christian Mission (1:1-2:41)

The structural parallelism between Luke's Gospel and his Acts is immediately seen in the comparative size of the two books and the time spans they cover. Each would have filled an almost equal-sized papyrus roll; each covers approximately thirty-three years--though, of course, the Gospel is somewhat longer and more controlled in focus by existing traditions within the church. The parallelism is also evident in the plan and purpose of the opening chapters of each book. Luke 1:5-2:52 (after the Prologue of 1:1-4) is essentially a preparation for 3:1-4:13, and together these two sections constitute material introductory to the narrative of Jesus' ministry that begins with the pericope of 4:14-30. So, too, Acts 1:6-26 (after its Preface of 1:1-5) serves to prepare for 2:1-41, and together these two chapters comprise an introduction to the ministry

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of the church that commences with the thesis paragraph 2:42-47 and continues by means of a series of illustrative vignettes beginning at 3:1.

A. A Resumptive Preface (1:1-5)

The Prologue to Luke-Acts is really Luke 1:1-4. Here, however, Luke begins his second book with what may be called a "resumptive preface" which serves to link the two books and anticipates the features he wants to stress as being constitutive for the Christian mission.

1 Luke calls his Gospel "my former book" (*ton proton logon*). The Greek article *ton* specifies an antecedent writing and the suffix of the verb translated "I wrote" (*epoiesamen*) calls for the possessive "my." Luke uses the word *logos* (usually translated "word" or "message" in the NT) in the technical sense of a section of a work that covers more than one papyrus roll. The occurrence of the adjective *protos* ("first"; NIV, "former") rather than its comparative *proteros* ("former") need not imply that Luke intended his Gospel to be the first in a series of three or more treatises, as Zahn and Ramsay have supposed. While the classical usage of *proteros* as "former" to be contrasted with "present" or "latter" is maintained by Josephus in the Preface to Book II of *Contra Apion* and also appears in the Pauline letters (cf. Gal 4:13; Eph 4:22; 1Tim 1:13), Luke never uses *proteros* , which is rare in the nonliterary papyri of the day. Just as we today use "first" for "former" even when speaking about only two things, Luke should probably be understood as using *protos* as a comparative (cf. Acts 7:12) without any implication that his work was intended to go beyond the two volumes. Luke says that the subject of his first volume is "all that Jesus began to do and teach" up to his ascension. Throughout his two volumes Luke uses the word "all" as a general expression that the context in each case must define. So we cannot assume he meant his Gospel to be any more exhaustive than Acts. In a number of places in

the NT "many" (*polloi*) and "all" (*pantes*) are used interchangeably (e.g., Matt 20:28, Mark 10:45 [cf. 1Tim 2:6]; Matt 12:15, Mark 3:10; Rom 5:12-21), with the context alone determining in each case the precise nuance. "To do"

(*poiein*) and "to teach" (*didaskein*) describe the nature of the third Gospel, combining as it does Mark's stress on the activities of Jesus and the material from the "Sayings" source (Q) about what Jesus taught. "He began to" (*erxato*), while used as something of a redundant auxiliary elsewhere in Acts (cf. 2:4; 11:4, 15; 18:26; 24:2; 27:35), probably appears here for emphasis, much as it does in 11:15. As such it serves to stress Luke's intent to show in Acts what Jesus *continued* to do and to teach through his church, just as Luke had previously presented "all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach" in his Gospel. Acts, like the Gospel, is addressed to Theophilus, who is called "most excellent Theophilus" (*kratiste Theophile*) in Luke 1:3. *Kratistos* appears in Acts in addressing the Roman governors Felix and Festus (cf. 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). This suggests that the word should be taken here as an honorific title for a highly placed Roman official. But it was often employed as a form of polite

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address, and that is probably how Luke used it of Theophilus. It is precarious to suppose (cf. Origen and others after him) that "Theophilus" (etymologically, "Friend of God" or "Loved by God") is a symbolic name for either an anonymous person or a class of people. The name occurs as a proper name at least three centuries before Luke, and the practice of dedicating books to distinguished persons was common in his day.

2 The Greek of v. 2 is awkward, chiefly because of the unnatural separation of "he was taken up" (*anelempthe*) at the end of the verse from "until the day" (*achri hes hemeras*) at its beginning and because it separates "[whom] he had chosen" (*hous exelexato*) from "the apostles" (*tois apostolois*). But the awkwardness was evidently intentional; through this awkward word order Luke highlights four important introductory matters in about the order in which he sets them out in his first two chapters and according to his priorities throughout Acts. By the placing of the adverbial participle *enteilamenos* ("after giving instructions"), Luke gives first place to Jesus' mandate to witness. The instructions he has in mind are undoubtedly those already set out in Luke 24:48-49 as the climax of Jesus' earthly teaching: "You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." In slightly revised form, Luke quotes these instructions in Acts 1:4-5 and develops them in 1:6-8 as the theme of Acts. Apparently Luke also wanted to show through the word order of v. 2 that Jesus' mandate to witness was given to the apostles, who acted through the power of the Holy Spirit, whose coming was a direct result of our Lord's ascension. Each of these four factors--the witness mandate, the apostles, the Holy Spirit, the ascended Lord--is a major emphasis that runs throughout Acts; each receives special attention in chapters 1 and 2.

3 Having stated the relation of his present book to its predecessor and shown his

interest in the four factors named above, which comprise the constitutive elements of the Christian mission, Luke turns back to the time before the Ascension. He will recapitulate and expand upon certain features in Jesus' ministry crucial to the advance of the gospel as he will present it in Acts. In view of v. 2, this is slightly redundant; but Luke wants to be very explicit. Like Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:5-7, Luke's emphasis is on the living Christ, who "after his suffering ... showed himself ... alive" and demonstrated his resurrection by "many convincing proofs." "Many convincing proofs" doubtless looks back to such things as the events in Luke 24:13ff. "Over a period of forty days" implies that during that time the risen Lord showed himself at intervals, not continuously. When he did so, he "spoke about the kingdom of God." The theme of "the kingdom of God" (*he basileia tou theou*) is a common one in the OT and NT. Primarily it refers to God's sovereign rule in human life and the affairs of history, and secondarily to the realm where that rule reigns. God's sovereignty is universal (cf. Ps 103:19). But it was specially manifested in the life of the nation Israel and among Jesus' disciples; it is expressed progressively in the church and through the lives of Christians; and it will be fully

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revealed throughout eternity. In the Gospels the kingdom is presented as having been inaugurated in time and space by Jesus' presence and ministry (cf. Mark 1:15, *passim*). ("The kingdom of heaven" is Matthew's reverential form of the same idea, adapted to Jewish sensibilities.) In Acts the phrase "the kingdom of God" usually appears as a convenient way of summarizing the early Christian proclamation (cf. 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). In this Jesus is explicitly identified as the subject (cf. 8:12; 28:23, 31). We may infer that Jesus' teaching during the "forty days" dealt in essence with (1) the validation and nature of his messiahship, (2) the interpretation of the OT from the perspective of his resurrection, and (3) the responsibility of his disciples to bear witness to what had happened among them in fulfillment of Israel's hope. This is what Luke 24:25-27, 44-49 reveals as the content of Jesus' post-resurrection teaching, and this is what Acts elaborates in what follows.

4 In vv. 4-5 Luke parallels his emphasis on the living Christ by stressing the coming and baptism of the Holy Spirit as essential to the advance of the gospel. Luke gives us an individualized scene (so the inserted connective "on one occasion," NIV) of Jesus and his disciples eating together at the time when he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, who had been promised by God the Father and spoken of by Jesus. The command not to leave Jerusalem is a repetition of the one in Luke 24:49, with *Hierosolyma*, the Hellenized name for Jerusalem, being used. This breaks the usual pattern in Acts where *Ierousalem* appears exclusively in chapters 1-7 and always on the lips of those whose native tongue was Aramaic. "The gift my Father promised" also repeats Luke 24:49 and is defined in v. 5: "You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." It is a promise that Jesus had made on behalf of the Father; its tradition has been incorporated in John's Gospel (cf. John 14:16-21, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15).

5 The statement appears to come from Mark 1:8, with parallels in Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16 (which add "and with fire"), where it is part of the message of John the Baptist. One might take

v. 5 as an explanatory comment on Luke's part, but its parallel in Acts 11:16, where it is given as the word of the Lord Jesus, suggests that here too it should be understood as being attributed to Jesus. It may be that the transferral of the *logion* ("saying") from the Baptist to the lips of Jesus occurred in the early church before Luke wrote Acts, though by the common attribution of the saying to the Baptist in the synoptic tradition (including Luke's Gospel) this seems doubtful. The ascription of the statement to Jesus is probably Luke's own doing. But this need not be considered strange, particularly for an author who can quote the same *logion* of Jesus in two such diverse forms and in two so closely connected passages as Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4.

B. The Mandate to Witness (1:6-8)

Though 1:6-8 is usually treated either as the last part of the Preface (1:1-8) or as an introduction to the Ascension narrative (1:6-11), in reality it serves as the theme, setting the

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stage for all that follows in Acts: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (v. 8). The concept of "witness" is so prominent in Acts (the word in its various forms appears some thirty-nine times) that everything else in the book should probably be seen as subsumed under it--even the primitive kerygma that, since Dodd's *Apostolic Preaching*, so many have taken as the leading theme of Acts. So as Luke begins his second book, he highlights this witness theme and insists it comes from the mandate of Jesus himself.

6 The expression *men oun* ("so," NIV) is a favorite connective of Luke's, used sometimes, as here, in beginning a new pericope (e.g., 8:4; 11:19; 12:5), at other times in conclusions (e.g., 2: 41; 5:41; 8:25; 9:31; 16:5), and frequently within the narrative to tie its various parts together. The question the disciples asked reflects the embers of a once blazing hope for a political theocracy in which they would be leaders (cf. Mark 9:33-34; 10:35-41; Luke 22:24). Now the embers are fanned by Jesus' talk of the coming Holy Spirit. In Jewish expectations, the restoration of Israel's fortunes would be marked by the revived activity of God's Spirit, which had been withheld since the last of the prophets. But though his words about the Spirit's coming rekindled in the disciples their old nationalistic hopes, Jesus had something else in mind.

7 Jesus' answer to his disciples' misguided question is not a denial of any place for the nation of Israel in God's future purposes. Paul speaks in Romans 9-11 not only of a remnant within Israel responding to God but also of the nation of Israel still being involved in some way in God's redemptive program (Rom 11:15-16) and yet to be "saved" in the future (vv. 25-29). Luke's presentation of Jesus' words here is not in opposition to that. Jesus' answer does, however, lay stress on the fact that the disciples were to revise their thinking about the divine program, leaving to God the matters that are his concern and taking up the things entrusted to them. Jesus' insistence that "it is not for you to know" echoes his teaching in

Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32, which Luke did not include in his Gospel either in 17:22-37 or 21:5-36--evidently preferring to hold that aspect of Jesus' eschatological message for this place in Acts. The "times" (*chronoi*) and "dates" (*kairoi*) refer, it seems, to the character of the ages preceding the final consummation of God's redemptive program and to the particular critical stages of these ages as they draw to a climax (cf. 1Thess 5:1). These "the Father has set by his own authority," and they are not to be the subject of speculation by believers--a teaching that, sadly, has been all too frequently disregarded.

8 Here the mandate to witness that stands as the theme for the whole of Acts is explicitly set out. It comes as a direct commission from Jesus himself--in fact, as Jesus' last word before his ascension and, therefore, as one that is final and conclusive. All that follows in Acts is shown to be the result of Jesus' own intent and the fulfillment of his express word. This commission lays an obligation on all Christians and comes to us as a gift with a promise. It concerns a person, a

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power, and a program--the person of Jesus, on whose authority the church acts and who is the object of its witness; the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the *sine qua non* for the mission; and a program that begins at Jerusalem, moves out to "all Judea and Samaria," and extends "to the ends of the earth." The Christian church, according to Acts, is a missionary church that responds obediently to Jesus' commission, acts on Jesus' behalf in the extension of his ministry, focuses its proclamation of the kingdom of God in its witness to Jesus, is guided and empowered by the self-same Spirit that directed and supported Jesus' ministry, and follows a program whose guidelines for outreach have been set by Jesus himself. Whereas the geographical movement of Luke's Gospel was from Galilee through Perea to Jerusalem, in Acts the movement is from Jerusalem through "Judea and Samaria" and on to Rome. The joining of Judea and Samaria by one article (*te*) in the Greek (*en pase te loudaia kai Samareia* , "in all Judea and Samaria") suggests a single geographical area that can be designated by its two ethnological divisions. And the fact that neither Galilee nor Perea is included in Acts 1:8 as a place to be evangelized (even though 9:31 speaks in summary fashion of a growing church in "Judea, Galilee and Samaria") probably reflects Luke's emphasis in his Gospel on Jesus' evangelization of those areas. So here Jesus' mandate to witness not only gives us the theme of Acts but also a basic table of contents by the threefold reference to "Jerusalem," "all Judea and Samaria," and "the ends of the earth." To be sure, Luke's development of this table of contents is fuller and more subtle than its succinct form here. Nevertheless, in what follows he shows through a series of vignettes how the mission of the church in its witness to Jesus fared at Jerusalem (2:42-8:3), throughout Judea and Samaria (8:4-12:24), and as it progressed until it finally reached the imperial capital city of Rome (12:25-28:31).

C. The Ascension (1:9-11)

Luke next speaks of the second constitutive factor of the Christian mission, the church's ascended Lord. The Greek of v. 2 includes this as a fourth element in its logical listing of constitutive factors, but here Luke is proceeding more chronologically. So he speaks of the Ascension before mentioning the full complement of apostles and the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Ascension, of course, has been referred to in Luke 24:50-51 and Acts 1:2, and many have questioned the appropriateness of three references to it. But each occurrence has its own purpose in Luke's writing. Here the important thing is that attention is focused on (1) the fact of Jesus' ascension and entrance "into heaven" (*eis ton ouranon*)--an expression repeated four times in vv. 10-11--and (2) on the angel's message that rebukes the disciples for their lack of understanding and assures them of their Lord's return. There is no explanation of how the Ascension occurred or of the psychological state of the disciples--features so common to legendary development. Nor are there any apocalyptic details like those in Luke 17:22-37 (also perhaps Luke 21) as to when that return might be expected. "The story," as Haenchen says, "is unsentimental, almost uncannily

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austere" (*Acts of the Apostles* , p. 151). Luke's point is that the missionary activity of the early church rested not only on Jesus' mandate but also on his living presence in heaven and the sure promise of his return. Many modern scholars have asserted that looking for the Parousia paralyzes missionary activity and inhibits Christian social action by diverting attention away from present needs to the "sweet by and by" and that the early church only turned to missions when it had to renounce its futuristic eschatology. Nevertheless, in Acts 1:9-11 Luke insists that Christian mission must be based on the ascended and living Lord who directs his church from heaven and who will return to consummate what he has begun. Rather than the missionary enterprise being a stopgap measure substituted by some sub-apostolic Christian theologians for the unrealized hope of the kingdom of God, Luke's position is, as Oscar Cullmann says, "that `missions' are an essential element in the eschatological divine plan of salvation. The missionary work of the Church is the eschatological foretaste of the Kingdom of God, and the Biblical hope of the `end' constitutes the keenest incentive to action" ("Eschatology and Mission in the New Testament," *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* , edd. W.D. Davies and D. Daube [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1964], p. 409).

9 For Jesus' ascension Luke uses the single Greek verb *eperthe* ("he was taken up"). He tells us very little else about it except that it occurred after Jesus had given his mandate to witness and while the disciples were watching. Not even the place where the Ascension occurred is mentioned in v. 9, though in v. 12 Luke says it took place on the Mount of Olives. More important for Luke than the description of the Ascension is its significance, and this he gives us in saying that "a cloud hid him from their sight." The cloud is undoubtedly meant to symbolize the shekinah, the visible manifestation of the divine presence and glory. Such a cloud hovered above the tabernacle in the wilderness as a visible token of the glory of God that dwelt within the tabernacle (cf. Exod 40:34). Such a cloud

enveloped Jesus and three of his disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration as a visible sign of God's presence and his approval of his Son (cf. Mark 9:7, 11) Something very similar is presented here: Jesus as the ascended Lord is enveloped by the shekinah cloud, the visible manifestation of God's presence, glory, and approval.

10 Luke describes the disciples as "looking intently up into the sky as he was going." The word translated "to look intently" (*atenizein*) is a favorite of Luke, who uses it in twelve of its fourteen NT occurrences, mainly for dramatic effect. So it is probably illegitimate to read too much into *atenizein* regarding the psychological state of the disciples. Perhaps some of them expected the cloud to dissipate and leave their Lord standing with them alone, as on the Mount of Transfiguration. Or, perhaps, others thought he would return momentarily. Some might have been in an attitude of Worship, though probably most were simply awestruck by the sight. But they were soon challenged by the message of the two angels "dressed in white."

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The angels' message was twofold: (1) The Jesus the disciples had known now had a heavenly existence. This is stressed by the double use of the phrase "into heaven." (2) The Jesus they had known (the emphasis is on the intensive demonstrative pronoun *houtos*)--i.e., "this same" Jesus) would return "in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." "In the same way" (*hon tropon*, which corresponds to the adverb *houtos*) probably refers to Jesus' being enveloped in the cloud of the divine presence and glory. See Jesus' description of his Parousia in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:30; Mark 13:26; cf. Luke 21:27) and his reply to Caiaphas at his trial (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62).

D. The Full Complement of Apostles (1:12-26)

Luke's third factor underlying the rise and expansion of the early Christian mission is the centrality of the apostles and their ministry. His interest in the apostles was evident in chapter 6 of his Gospel, where in reporting Jesus' choosing his twelve disciples he alone among the evangelists adds "whom he also designated apostles" (Luke 6:13). Now he resumes that interest, telling how under God's direction the apostolic band regained its full number after the defection of Judas Iscariot. Structurally, the passage appears to be the intermingling of early source material with Luke's editorial statements. Here the seams between the two are more obvious than in many other passages in Acts. They are the basic Christian tradition regarding the selection of Matthias (vv. 15-17, 21-26), Luke's own introduction to the pericope (vv. 12-14), his short comment at the end of v. 15, and a longer and particularly obvious comment in vv. 18-19. Luke's writing in Acts is usually so artistic as to make it almost impossible to separate his editorial comments from his source material. Here, however, different strands are apparent.

1. *In the upper room* (1:12-14)

12 The disciples had been instructed by Jesus to "stay in the city [of Jerusalem] until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). They were "not [to] leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised" (Acts 1:4) and begin their witness "at Jerusalem" (Luke 24: 47; Acts 1:8). So they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance Luke speaks of as being "a Sabbath day's walk from the city." The Mishnah tells us that travel on the Sabbath was limited to two thousand cubits (*Sotah* 5:3), which would be somewhere around eleven hundred meters (NIV mg.). Therefore we may estimate that the disciples' journey from the place of the Ascension on Olivet back to Jerusalem was about a kilometer, or about two-thirds of a mile.

13 Upper rooms in Palestinian cities were usually the choicest rooms because they were above the tumult of the crowded streets and beyond the prying eyes of passersby. For the wealthy, the

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upper room was the living room. Sometimes upper rooms were rented out. Often they served as places of assembly, study, and prayer (SBK, 2:594). On their return to Jerusalem, the disciples "went upstairs to the room where they were staying." The use of the definite article in speaking of "the room" (*to hyperoon*) and the emphatic place these words have at the beginning of the clause suggest that the room was well known to the early Christians--perhaps the room where Jesus and his disciples kept the Passover just before his crucifixion (Mark 14:12-16, 11) Perhaps it was the room where he appeared to some of them after he rose from the dead (Luke 24:33-43; cf. John 20:19, 26). Or, though this is more inferential, it may have been a room in the house of Mary, John Mark's mother, where the church later met (Acts 12:12). Luke has already listed the names of the Twelve in his Gospel (6:14-16). Now he lists them again--though without Judas Iscariot. This is another instance of parallelism in Luke's writings. Here, however, the list points to the incompleteness of the apostolic band and sets the stage for the account of its rectification through the choosing of Matthias. All this prepares for the coming of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the apostolic ministry. In obedience to their Lord and in anticipation of what is to follow, the apostles have returned to Jerusalem--only they lack the full complement needed for their witness within Jewry.

14 In addition to the Eleven, there were also present in the upper room "the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers." They fill out the nucleus of the early church and in some way are to be included in the apostolic witness. The reference to "the women" undoubtedly has in mind those mentioned in Luke 8:2-3; 23:49; and 23:55-24:10, who followed Jesus throughout his ministry--even to his death--and contributed out of their personal incomes to support him and his followers. The Western text (D) has "the wives and children" (*sun gynaixin kai teknois* , paralleling Acts 21:5), presumably of the apostles, and thus minimizes the independent activity of women in the early church. But Luke's mention of

"the women" fully accords with the attitude toward women as portrayed in his Gospel and the consciousness within the church of the implications of the gospel proclamation. So the Western text must be viewed as unnecessarily restrictive. The reference here to "Mary the mother of Jesus" continues Luke's interest in Mary begun in chapter 1 of his Gospel, though this is the last occasion where she is recorded as being involved in the redemptive history of the NT. The reference to Jesus' "brothers" (*adelphoi*) is particularly interesting because Mark 3:21-35 shows that during his ministry they thought him to be "out of his mind," perhaps even demon possessed, and because John 7:2-10 presupposes their disbelief. Paul, however, recounts an appearance of the risen Christ to James (cf. 1Cor 15:7), and we may infer that Joses (or Joseph), Judas (or Jude), and Simon (cf. Matt 13:55-56; Mark 6:3) likewise came to believe in Jesus and attached themselves to the congregation of early Christians. These all are depicted as being assiduous in prayer, with the article (*te*) in *te proseuche* ("the prayer") suggesting an appointed service of prayer (cf. Acts 2:42; 6:4). There must also have been others who were at various times with the Eleven, the women, Mary, and

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Jesus' brothers in that upper room, for Acts 1:15 speaks of the total number of believers at the selection of Matthias as being "about a hundred and twenty."

2. Matthias chosen to replace Judas Iscariot (1:15-26)

15 "In those days" (*en tais hemerais tautais*) marks the beginning of a self-contained unit of traditional material (cf. 6:1; 11:27), which Luke ties to his introduction in vv. 12-14 by the conjunction *kai* ("and") in the Greek text. In keeping with his character portrayal of Peter throughout his Gospel, Luke here presents Peter as taking the lead among the apostles. The Western text and the TR have him standing among and speaking to "the disciples" (*ton matheton*), and the probable reading of Bodmer P74 has him here among "the apostles" (*ton apostolon*). Both readings seem to be later attempts to clarify the possible confusion between "the brothers" of v. 14 and those of v. 15. But the better-attested reading here is "among the brothers" (*en meso ton adelphon* ; cf. also the use of *adelphoi* ["brothers"] in the salutation of v.

16), with "brothers" in Luke's source material used as a religious idiom and "brothers" in v. 14 of his own introduction referring to a blood relationship. Though evidently Luke did not anticipate any possible confusion, NIV rightly translates "brothers" in v. 15 as "believers" to bring out the religious nuance for much the same reason that later Greek texts read "disciples" and "apostles."

16-17 The Greek literally reads "Men, brothers" (*Andres, adelphoi* ; NIV, "Brothers"), which corresponds to nothing we know in the rabbinic literature stemming from the Pharisaic schools or in the nonconformist writings of either the intertestamental apocalyptic texts or the DSS. Outside of Acts, it appears only in 4Macc 8:19. On the ground of its use in Acts, where it is attributed to Peter (1:16; 2:29; 15:7), to the people of Jerusalem (2:37), to Stephen (7:2), to the synagogue rulers at Antioch of Pisidia (13:15), to James (15:13), and to Paul (13:26, 38; 22:1; 23:1, 6; 28:17)--and always in the context of a gathering of Jews--we may assume

that it represents a type of formal address found within first-century synagogues (cf. 13:15, 26, 38) and among Jewish congregations generally. Peter's words in v. 16, and again later in v. 21, speak of the "necessity" (*dei*) of Scripture being fulfilled in relation to Judas's defection and the choice of another to replace him. In Luke's writings *dei* stresses the compulsion inherent in the divine plan--a stress usually accompanied by an emphasis on man's inability to comprehend God's workings. At times that divine necessity is explained in terms of the fulfillment of Scripture (e.g., Luke 22:37; 24:26, 44). But more often that is not the case (e.g., Luke 2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 13:16, 33; 17:25; 19:5; 24:7). This suggests that the concept of "divine necessity" is broader than just "the fulfillment of Scripture" with its usual introductory formula "it is written," though it may contain the latter. Here in vv. 16 and 21 divine necessity is connected directly with the fulfillment of Scripture, "which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas." But in neither case (and particularly not in v. 21) should we say that the necessity concerns only a

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prophecy or certain prophecies of Scripture. The understanding expressed here is rather (1) that God is doing something necessarily involved in his divine plan; (2) that the disciples' lack of comprehension of God's plan is profound, especially with respect to Judas who "was one of our number and shared in this ministry" yet also "served as guide for those who arrested Jesus"; and (3) that an explicit way of understanding what has been going on under divine direction is through a Christian understanding of two psalms that speak of false companions and wicked men generally, and which by means of the then widely common exegetical rule *qal wahomer* ("light to heavy," or *a minore ad majorem*) can also be applied to the false disciple and wicked man par excellence, Judas Iscariot.

18-19 Luke now adds a parenthesis concerning the awful fate of Judas. Luke's characteristic *oun* (which is almost untranslatable here) shows that he is adding to the tradition he has received (cf. v. 6), with the purpose of emphasizing the awfulness of Judas's fate and thus suggesting a basis for the disciples' perplexity in trying to comprehend the plan of God. The difficulty of reconciling 1:18-19 with Matthew 27:3-10 is well known and often considered the most intractable contradiction in the NT. The problem chiefly concerns how Judas died. But it also involves such questions as Who bought the field? and Why was it called "Field of Blood"? These latter matters are perhaps not too difficult. Probably the common explanation suffices: The chief priests bought the potter's field in Judas's name with the thirty silver coins belonging to him, and the local Jerusalemites (particularly Christians) nicknamed it "Field of Blood" because they felt it had been purchased with "blood money." The major question as to how Judas died, however, is not so easily answered. Had he "hanged himself" (Matt 27:5)? Or was it that "he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out" (Acts 1:18)? We shall probably never know the exact answer. Augustine may have been right in saying that both were true. But though the precise solution seems imponderable, the problem is not very different from many another difference among the evangelists in presenting the words and

activity of Jesus or, within the Acts itself, in Luke's presentation of the sermons and events in the outreach of the gospel (e.g., the three reports of the conversion of Paul in Acts 9, 22, and 26). If we really believe that each writer wrote from the standpoint of his own theological purposes to the specific interests and appreciation of his audience (as redaction criticism rightly holds), it is not too difficult to believe that in the context of Matthew's fulfillment theme it was sufficient for him and his readers to portray Judas's awful end with the terse expression "he hanged himself" (*apenxato*). After all, suicide of itself was heinous for Jews. But this would hardly suffice for Luke, Theophilus, and others in the Gentile world who would read Luke's account. Gentiles under Stoic influence generally looked on suicide as morally neutral. But Luke wanted to stress the awfulness of Judas's situation in a way that would grip his readers. So he evidently took the liberty of breaking into his received tradition in order to spell out the gory details of Judas's suicide--details he had gathered from some other source (either written or oral). He did this to emphasize Judas's terrible fate and to

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highlight its relation to the divine plan. There was, then, a divine necessity, Luke is telling us, in all that happened in regard to Judas. Just how incomprehensible that was to the earliest believers he shows through details of the awful death of the betrayer.

20 The OT passages Luke uses to support the divine necessity manifest in Judas's defection and replacement are Pss 69:25 (MT= 69:26) and 109:8. These psalms speak of false companions and wicked men who have become enemies of God's servant. They lament over his condition and give us his prayers for deliverance and his desire for retribution. Dodd has shown that Psalm 69 was one of the major blocks of OT material used variously within the early church on the topic of "The Servant of the Lord and the Righteous Sufferer" and applied to Jesus the Christ, the Servant and Righteous Sufferer par excellence (C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* [London: Nisbet, 1952], esp. pp. 61-108). Psalm 69:4 is quoted in John 15:25 ("hated me without reason") as a lament of Jesus applied to himself; the first half of v. 9 is quoted in John 2: 17 ("Zeal for your house will consume me") as recalled by the disciples at the cleansing of the temple; the last half of v. 9 is quoted by Paul in Romans 15:3 ("The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me") as characterizing Jesus' ministry; and Psalm 69:22-23 is quoted in Romans 11:9-10 ("May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; may their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever") as describing Israel's present condition. Judging by frequency and variety of usage in the NT, therefore, the Christian use of Psalm 69 from the earliest days of the church is well established. So here in v. 20 we have another example of the Christian use of this block of messianic material, to which, on the commonly accepted exegetical principle of analogous subject (Hillel's sixth exegetical rule: *keyose bo bemagom aher* , "as found in another place"), Peter added the ominous words of Psalm 109:8: "May another take his place of leadership." We need not insist that the early Christians believed that the primary reference of these two psalms was to Judas, as if no one could have understood them prior to the betrayal. What they seem to be saying, however, is

that just as the psalmist's portrayals of "The Servant of the Lord and the Righteous Sufferer" can on the basis of the Semitic concept of corporate solidarity be applied to God's Messiah, Jesus, the Servant and Righteous Sufferer, so the retribution spoken of as coming upon false companions and wicked men in general is especially applicable to Judas, who above all other men was false. So Peter quotes Psalm 69:25 in a Christian context and applies it to Judas's defection. In itself, of course, this verse gives no justification for replacing Judas--in fact, it even opposes it. Therefore Peter goes on to cite Psalm 109:8 on the Jewish exegetical principle of analogous subject in order to defend the legitimacy of replacing a member of the apostolic band.

21-22 The divine necessity for filling Judas's place was supported by Psalm 109:8, as understood in a Christian manner, according to the Semitic concept of corporate solidarity (cf. above on v. 20). The twelfold witness was required if early Jewish Christianity was to

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represent itself to the Jewish nation as the culmination of Israel's hope and the true people of Israel's Messiah. The "remnant theology" of Late Judaism made it mandatory that any group that presented itself as "the righteous remnant" of the nation, and had the responsibility of calling the nation to repentance and permeating it for God's glory, must represent itself as the true Israel, not only in its proclamation, but also in its symbolism. The Qumran covenanters thought it necessary to have twelve leaders heading up their community, with three either from within the group of twelve or in addition to it forming an inner circle of authority (cf. IQS 8.1). This is an evident parallel to the twelve tribes of Israel, with a developing stress on final authority resting with a smaller body of two or three. Likewise, Jesus predicted that "at the renewal of all things," his disciples will "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:

30). And John the Seer pictures the consummation of God's redemption as a "Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God," having twelve gates with "the names of the twelve tribes of Israel" written on them and twelve foundations with "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" written on them (Rev 21:10, 12, 14). It was, then, for just such a reason that the early church found itself required to replace the defector Judas so as to have a full complement of twelve in its apostolic ranks. For a candidate to succeed Judas among the apostles, the first qualification laid down by Peter is that the man must "have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us." The expression "went in and out among us" is a Semitic idiom for familiar and unhindered association (cf. Deut 31:2; 2Sam 3:25; Ps 121:8; Acts 9:28). The length of time designated for this association was from John's baptism to Jesus' ascension. Perhaps not all the Eleven themselves could claim association with Jesus from the days of John the Baptist John 1:35-51 suggests that about half could). But they evidently wanted to make quite sure that there would be no deficiency on this first point. The second qualification was that of having been a witness to Christ's resurrection. So the candidate must be both a guarantor of the gospel tradition because he had been a companion of the earthly Jesus and a witness to Christ's

resurrection because he had been personally met by the risen Lord. It is from vv. 21-22 that we may derive a strict definition of the term "apostle" and one that determines much of what Luke presents in the remainder of Acts (though, of course, Luke also uses the word "apostle" more broadly). An apostle, then, was not an ecclesiastical functionary, nor just any recipient of the apostolic faith, nor even a bearer of the apostolic message; he was a guarantor of the gospel tradition because he had been a companion of the earthly Jesus and a witness to the reality of his resurrection because the risen Lord had encountered him.

23 The fifth-century Western text in its reading *estesēn* (in line with a growing monarchical emphasis) understood that Peter "proposed" the two candidates to succeed Judas. But by far the better reading is *estesān* , "they proposed," most likely meaning by "they" the eleven apostles

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together (note the three occurrences of the pronoun "us" with reference to the apostles in vv. 21-

22). The two men proposed were Joseph, who was called by Aramaic-speaking Jews "Barsabbas" (which means "Son of the Sabbath," presumably because he was born on the Sabbath) and who was also known by his Roman cognomen Justus, and Matthias (a shortened form of Mattathias). Perhaps more were considered, as v. 21 seems to suggest ("one of the men who have been with us"). Only two, however, had the necessary qualifications.

24-25 But it was not enough to possess the qualifications other apostles had. Judas's successor must also be appointed by the same Lord who appointed the Eleven. Likewise, though the church could not represent itself as the righteous remnant of Israel with one apostle lacking, it could hardly symbolize its consciousness as being the true Israel of God with one apostle too many. Therefore, prayer was offered to the Lord for his selection from among the two candidates. While it is not clear linguistically whether God the Father or Jesus is here being addressed in prayer by the vocative "Lord," contextually it is most natural to understand the same referent for the title here as in v. 21: "the Lord Jesus." Furthermore, the parallel seems to be consciously drawn by Luke in his use of the same verb *eklegomai* ("to choose") for those selected by Jesus in Acts 1:2 and for this man who was to be selected by "the Lord" to replace Judas. And if it was important for them to have the qualifications given in vv. 21-22, it was at least as important for them all to have been appointed by the same Lord.

Tes diakonias tautes kai apostoles is probably a hendiadys (i.e., two connotative words connected by a conjunction that are used to express a single complex idea normally expressed by an adjective and a substantive noun), with the definite article *tes* ("the") tying the two elements together, and is best translated as "this apostolic ministry." The phrase "to go where he belongs" (or, "to go to his own place") is likely a euphemism for "to go to hell" (SBK, 4.2:1097-98), which shows spiritually the awfulness of Judas's fate (cf. on vv. 18-19).

26 After determining qualifications and praying, they "drew lots, and the lot fell to Matthias." The Greek literally reads, "They gave lots to them" (*edokan klerous autois*), which is a Hebrew idiom for "casting" or "throwing" down various kinds of marked objects in order to determine God's will. The practice was common within Israel and the ancient world, generally, and is probably best illustrated by Proverbs 16:33: "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord." So by the appointment of Christ himself, the full complement of apostles was restored and the church was ready for the coming of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of its mission. This pericope on the selection of Matthias has a number of significant implications. In the first place, it shows the necessity of a hermeneutical methodology that is able to distinguish between normative principles and culturally restricted practices in the progressive revelation of the Bible. We are exhorted as Christians to "search the Scriptures" and to "know what is the will of the

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Lord"--exhortations that are normative. But the early church's midrashic exegesis and the practice of casting lots were methods for interpreting the OT and determining God's will used at that time, and we need not be bound by them today. Second, the pericope suggests that a Christian decision regarding vocation entails (1) evaluating personal qualifications, (2) earnest prayer, and (3) appointment by Christ himself--an appointment that may come in some culturally related fashion, but in a way clear to those who seek guidance. In addition, it should be noted that it was Judas's defection and not simply the fact of his death that required his replacement. While the NT lays great stress on the apostolic message and faith and Luke stresses the importance of the apostles themselves, the pericope gives no justification for the theological necessity of an apostolic succession of office, as is sometimes claimed for it. According to vv. 21-22, the task of the twelve apostles was unique: to be guarantors of the gospel tradition because of their companionship with Jesus in his earthly ministry and to be witnesses to the reality of his resurrection because they had seen the risen Christ. Such criteria cannot be transmitted from generation to generation. Thus when James the son of Zebedee was executed by Herod Agrippa in A.D. 44 (cf. 12:1-2), the church took no action to replace him. He had faithfully functioned as a guarantor of the gospel tradition and as a witness to the reality of Jesus' resurrection for some fifteen years; and now, as the church was growing, that ministry was not to be repeated. Finally, and contrary to an oft-heard claim that the apostles were wrong in selecting Matthias and should have awaited God's choice of Paul to fill the vacancy, it should be pointed out (1) that Paul had not been with Jesus during his earthly ministry--in fact, he acknowledges his dependence upon others with respect to the gospel tradition (e.g., 1Cor 15:3-5); (2) that the necessity of having exactly twelve apostles in the early church sprang largely from the need for Jewish Christians ministering within the Jewish nation to maintain this symbolic number, and, while Paul could appreciate this, he did not feel its necessity for his primarily Gentile ministry; and (3) that Paul himself recognized the special nature of his apostleship--viz., it was in line with that of the Twelve, but it also rested on a somewhat different base (cf. his reference to himself as an apostle "abnormally born" in 1Cor 15:7-8). Paul's background,

ministry, and call were in many ways different from those of the Twelve. Yet he insisted on the equality of his apostleship with that of the other apostles--an equality he never interpreted in terms of either opposition or identity.

E. The Coming of the Holy Spirit (2:1-41)

Luke's fourth constitutive factor that undergirds the expansion of the early Christian mission is the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the assembled believers at Pentecost. To this the other three factors have pointed. And now Luke gives us an extended account of it that includes the baptism of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and Peter's sermon to the multitude and welds these separate incidents into a unified whole.

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Though all four Gospels include the preaching of John the Baptist, only Matthew and Luke have preserved the Baptist's distinction between his baptism with water and the baptism to be conferred by the one to come, the "one more powerful" than he was (Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16). And Luke alone connects the Baptist's prophecy of a baptism "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" with the miracle at Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 11:16). So Luke brings John's baptism of Jesus in the Jordan and the Spirit's baptism of assembled believers at Pentecost into a parallel in which each event is seen as the final constitutive factor for all that follows in the ministry of Jesus (cf. Luke's Gospel) and the mission of the early church. (cf. Acts).

1. The miracle of Pentecost (2:1-13)

1 Luke describes the miracle of the coming of the Holy Spirit, with its accompanying signs, in four short verses, remarkable for their nuances. The miracle occurred on the festival known in Late Judaism as Pentecost (*he pentekoste* , "fiftieth"), which, according to Leviticus 23:15-16 (cf. Deut 16:9-12; Jos. Antiq. III, 252 [ix.6]; SBK, 2:597-602), was to be celebrated on the "day after the seventh Sabbath" and hence on the fiftieth day after Passover. It was originally the festival of the firstfruits of the grain harvest (Exod 23:16; Lev 23:17-22; Num 28:26-31); and it was called the Feast of Weeks because it came after a period of seven weeks of harvesting that began with the offering of the first barley sheaf during the Passover celebration and ended with the wheat harvest. By the time of the first Christian century, however, it was considered the anniversary of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai (as deduced from the chronological note at Exod 19:1) and as a time for the annual renewal of the Mosaic covenant (Jub 6:17; b *Peshaim* 68b; M *Tanchuma* 26c); and it was therefore looked upon as one of the three great pilgrim festivals of Judaism (along with Passover preceding it and Tabernacles some four months later). Now no one who had been a companion of the apostle Paul (or, for that matter, even a distant admirer, should Lukan authorship of Acts be denied) could have failed to have

been impressed by the fact that it was on the Jewish festival of Pentecost that the Spirit came so dramatically upon the early believers in Jerusalem. It is this significance that Luke emphasizes as he begins his Pentecost narrative; viz., that whereas Pentecost was for Judaism the day of the giving of the law, for Christians it is the day of the coming of the Holy Spirit. So for Luke the coming of the Spirit upon the early Christians at Pentecost is not only a parallel to the Spirit's coming upon Jesus at his baptism, it is also both in continuity with and in contrast to the law. To be sure, Luke does not draw out from this a portrayal of Jesus as either the giver of a new Torah or himself the embodiment of such a Torah (though if Matthew or John had written Acts, they might have done something like that). Rather, by paralleling Jesus' baptism with the experience of Jesus' early followers at Pentecost, Luke is showing that the mission of the Christian church, as was the ministry of Jesus, is dependent upon the coming of the Holy Spirit. And by his stress on Pentecost as the day when the miracle took place, he is also suggesting (1) that the Spirit's coming is in continuity with God's purposes in giving the law and yet (2) that the

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Spirit's coming signals the essential difference between the Jewish faith and commitment to Jesus, for whereas the former is Torah centered and Torah directed, the latter is Christ centered and Spirit directed--all of which sounds very much like Paul. As to just where the believers were when they experienced the coming of the Spirit, Luke is somewhat vague. His emphasis is on the "when" and not at all on the "where" of the event. So all he tells us is that "they were all together in one place," which he refers to in the following verse as "the house" (*ton oikon*). Many have taken this to be a reference to the Jerusalem temple because (1) *oikos* was at times used to refer to the temple (cf. Isa 6:4 LXX; Acts 7:47; Jos. Antiq. VIII, 65-75 [iii.1-3]); (2) Luke's Gospel closes with the statement that Jesus' disciples "stayed continually at the temple, praising God" (Luke 24:53); and (3) in the temple precincts they would have had the best opportunity of addressing a large crowd. Yet apart from this doubtful instance in Acts 2 and his report of Stephen's speech (ch. 7), Luke elsewhere always refers to the temple by *hieron* (twenty-two times); and where *oikos* is occasionally used by others of the Jerusalem temple, it is always in a context that leaves no doubt of what is meant. Furthermore, the articular intensive pronoun *to auto* ("in one place," NIV) is best interpreted as referring to its antecedent in 1:12-26, "the upper room" (to *hyperoon*). Therefore it is likely that Luke meant us to picture that same upper room as the setting for the miracle of the Spirit's coming and the place from where the disciples first went out to proclaim the gospel.

2 There is, of course, nothing necessarily sensory about the Holy Spirit. Yet God in his providence often accompanies his Spirit's working by visible and audible signs--particularly at certain crises in redemptive history. This he does to assure his people of his presence, and usually within the appreciation--though not always the expectation--of his own. In vv. 2-4 three signs of the Spirit's coming are reported to have appeared, each of them--wind, fire, inspired speech--being considered in Jewish tradition as a sign of God's presence. Wind as a sign of God's Spirit is rooted linguistically in the fact that both the Hebrew word *ruah*.

and the Greek word *pneuma* mean either wind or spirit, depending on the context, and this allows a rather free association of the two ideas (cf. John 3:8). Ezekiel had prophesied of the wind as the breath of God blowing over the dry bones in the valley of his vision and filling them with new life (Ezek 37:9-14), and it was this wind of God's Spirit that Judaism looked forward to as ushering in the final Messianic Age. Thus Luke tells us that as a sign of the Spirit's coming upon the early followers of Jesus, there was "a sound like the blowing of a violent wind." Just why he emphasized the "sound" (*echos*) of the blowing of the "wind" (*pnoe*) is difficult to say. Perhaps it was because he wanted to refer back later to "this sound" (*tes phones tantes*, v.

6). Perhaps, also, he wanted to retain the parallel with the Pentecost tradition of the giving of the law. In certain sectors of Judaism the events connected with the giving of the law were couched in terms of God's having caused a "sound" to arise on Mount Sinai. This "sound" then changed into a "fire," which all could perceive as a "language" (cf. Philo, *De Decalogo* 33). But whatever

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his exact rationale, Luke's main point is that this "sound like the blowing of a violent wind" that "came from heaven" and "filled the whole house" symbolized to all present--in a manner well within their appreciation--the presence of God's Spirit among them in a way more intimate, personal, and powerful than they had ever before experienced.

3 Fire as a symbol of the divine presence was well known among first-century Jews (cf. the burning bush [Exod 3:2-5], the pillar of fire that guided Israel by night through the wilderness [Exod 13:21], the consuming fire on Mount Sinai [Exod 24:17], and the fire that hovered over the wilderness tabernacle [Exod 40:38]). Also, 1 Enoch depicts God's heavenly court as "surrounded by tongues of fire" (14:8-25; cf. 71:5, though 1 Enoch 37-71 may be post-Christian). John the Baptist is reported as having explicitly linked the coming of the Spirit with fire (cf. his prophecy that the Messiah would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" [Matt 3: 11; Luke 3:16]). The "tongues of fire" (*glossai hosei pyros*) here are probably not to be equated with the "other tongues" (*heterais glossais*) of v. 4 but should be taken as visible representations, given in the context of the appreciation of those there gathered, of the overshadowing presence of the Spirit of God. Also significant is Luke's statement that these tokens of the Spirit's presence "separated and came to rest on each of them." This seems to suggest that, though under the old covenant the divine presence rested on Israel as a corporate entity and upon many of its leaders for special purposes, under the new covenant, as established by Jesus and inaugurated at Pentecost, the Spirit now rests upon each believer individually. In other words, though the corporate and individual aspects of redemption cannot actually be separated, the emphasis in the proclamation of redemption from Pentecost onward is on the personal relationship of God to the believer through the Spirit, with all corporate relationships resulting from this.

4 In OT times prophetic utterances were regularly associated with the Spirit's coming upon particular persons for special purposes (cf. Eldad and Medad [Num 11:26-29]; Saul [1Sam 10: 6-12]; et al.). In Judaism, however, the belief arose that with the passing of the last of the writing prophets in the early postexilic period the spirit of prophecy had ceased in Israel. Since then, therefore, God spoke to his people only through the Torah as interpreted by the teachers (cf. such passages as the Prologue to Sirach and ch. 1 of *Pirke Aboth*). But Judaism also expected that with the coming of the Messianic Age there would be a special outpouring of God's Spirit, in fulfillment of Ezekiel 37, and that prophecy would once again flourish. And this is exactly what Luke portrays as having taken place at Pentecost among the followers of Jesus: "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." The "tongues" here are often identified with ecstatic utterances of the sort Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians 12-14. This identification is made largely because (1) in both instances (1Cor 12- 14; Acts 2) the expression "other tongues" (*heterais glossais* , *heteroglossois*) is used and (2) because the verb translated "enabled" or "gave utterance" (*apophthengomai*) is frequently used

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in other Greek literature in connection with ecstasies, whether of the givers of oracles (cf. Diodorus of Sicily *Historical Library* 16.27.1; Plutarch *Pythiae Oraculis* 23) or of the interpreters of oracles (cf. Mic 5:12; Zech 10:2). But the words spoken at Pentecost under the Spirit's direction were immediately recognized by those who heard them as being languages then current, while at Corinth no one could understand what was said till someone present received a gift of interpretation. And the verb *apophthengomai* used by Luke in Acts (its only three NT occurrences) appears in contexts that stress clarity of speech and understanding: here in 2:4; in 2:14 of Peter's address to the crowd at Pentecost; and in 26:25 of Paul's defense before Agrippa II, where it is explicitly contrasted with *mainomai*, which speaks of babblings stemming from madness over which the speaker has no control. Therefore, the tongues in 2:4 are best understood as "languages" and should be taken in accord with Philo's reference to understandable language as one of the three signs of God's presence in the giving of the law at Mount Sinai (*De Decalogo* 33). The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was of utmost significance both theologically and practically for the early church. As for the question Was Pentecost the birthday of the Christian church? a great deal depends upon what one means by the term "church" (*ekklesia*). Amid a variety of usages, the word appears in the NT for both "the body of Christ" (meaning the redeemed of all ages) and "an instrument of service" (distinguishable from the nation Israel) used by God for his redemptive purposes. Of the first, the church as the body of Christ, it can hardly be said that it had its beginning *only* at Pentecost. What can be said, however, and what Luke seems to be stressing in reporting that the tongues of fire separated and came to rest on each believer individually, is (1) that the relationship of the Spirit to the members of the body of Christ became much more intimate and personal at Pentecost, in fulfillment of Jesus' promise (later recorded in John 14:17) that the Spirit who "lives with you" (*par hymin menei*) "will be in you"

(*en hymin estai*), and (2) that at Pentecost a new model of divine redemption was established as characteristic for life in the new covenant--one that, while incorporating both individual and corporate redemption, begins with the former in

order to include the latter. With regard to the church as an instrument of service, called by God to take up the mission formerly entrusted to Israel, Luke is certainly presenting the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost as the church's birthday. So he parallels the Spirit's coming on Jesus at his baptism with the Spirit's coming at Pentecost on the earliest followers, for neither Jesus' ministry nor the mission of the early church would have been possible apart from the Spirit's empowering. So also Luke emphasizes Jesus' explicit command to the disciples to stay in Jerusalem till they were empowered from on high by the Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8).

5 Certain "God-fearing Jews" who were residing in Jerusalem from many parts of the Diaspora, together with a number of Jews and proselytes who had returned to Jerusalem as pilgrims for the Pentecost festival, were "in bewilderment," "utterly amazed," and "perplexed" by the miraculous coming of the Spirit (vv. 6-7, 12). Others, however, mocked (v. 13).

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Aleph omits the word "Jews" (*loudaioi*), which some have considered to be a serious omission, particularly because of the importance of this MS as external evidence in establishing the text. But the word Luke uses for "God-fearing" (*eulabes*) is used in the NT only of Jews (cf. Luke 2:25; Acts 8:2; 22:12). It never connotes elsewhere in the NT a Gentile convert to Judaism (*proselytos* , "proselyte"), a near convert or so-called Proselyte of the Gate (*sebomenos* , "worshiper"), or a devout Gentile (which is often implied by *phoboumenos* , "fearer," or *eusebes* , "godly"). It is therefore highly unlikely that even if *loudaioi* were omitted from the text, that would be ground for arguing that in v. 5 Luke had Gentiles in view. Furthermore, contrary to many who have assumed that the Jews mentioned here were pilgrims to Jerusalem coming for the Pentecost festival, it is more probable that they were residents of Jerusalem who had returned from Diaspora lands ("from every nation under heaven") at some earlier time to settle down in the homeland. That is how Luke uses *katoikountes* ("staying") here, a participial form of *katoikeo* , which he uses elsewhere in Acts (cf. 1:20; 7:2, 4, 48; 9:22; 11:29; 13:27; 17:24, 26; 22:12), in contrast to the verb *epidemeo* used participially in v. 10, in the sense of "being a stranger or visitor in town."

6 What drew the crowd and caused its bewilderment? Commentators differ as to whether it was the sound of the wind or the disciples' speaking in various languages. But if we break the sentence with some kind of punctuation after *plethos* ("a crowd") rather than (as is usually done) after *synechythe* ("bewilderment"), we have two coordinate sentences with two separate yet complementary ideas: "When they heard this sound, a crowd came together. And they were bewildered because each one heard them speaking in his own language." On this reading, *tes phones tautes* ("this sound") refers back to *echos* ("sound") of v. 2 and conjures up a picture of people rushing to the source of the noise to see what is going on. When they get there, they become bewildered on hearing Galileans speaking in their own native languages. The verb for "hear" (*ekouon*) is in the imperfect tense, suggesting that their hearing took place over a

period of time--perhaps first in the upper room itself, then in adjacent lanes and courtyards, and finally in the temple precincts.

7-8 Galileans had difficulty pronouncing gutturals and had the habit of swallowing syllables when speaking; so they were looked down upon by the people of Jerusalem as being provincial (cf. Mark 14:70). Therefore, since the disciples who were speaking were Galileans, it bewildered those who heard because the disciples could not by themselves have learned so many different languages.

9-11 Why these fifteen countries and no others are named here and why they are cited in this order are questions without ready solutions. In recent decades it has frequently been argued that Luke was probably drawing on some ancient astrological treatise that correlated the then-known nations of the world with the twelve signs of the zodiac, such as the fourth-century A.D.

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Egyptian Paulus Alexandrinus included in his Rudiments of Astrology. This, however, requires pruning Luke's list of fifteen down to twelve (deleting "Judea" as the fifth in the listing and "Cretans and Arabs" at the end, though all three are well attested in the MSS), stressing a few exact parallels, and making adjustments in order. Moreover, such astrological and historical listings of nations were common in the ancient world, and Luke may only be using a current literary convention to illustrate his more prosaic statement of v. 5: "from every nation under heaven." As was probably customary, the list includes both ancient kingdoms and current political entities, moving generally from east to west and in its middle section naming first the northern and then the southern lands. The appearance of "Judea" in the listing is, admittedly, strange because (1) it hardly ranks being sandwiched between Mesopotamia to the east and Cappadocia to the north; (2) as an adjective used as a noun, it is "corrupt" without an article when used substantively; and (3) it involves the curious anomaly of inhabitants of Judea being amazed to hear the apostles speak in their own language. Suggested solutions to this problem have been legion. Perhaps the most cogent one involves viewing "Judea" here in a wider prophetic sense, wherein the reference is to "the land of the Jews" that was held to stretch from the Euphrates to the Egyptian border. This would explain its sequence in the list, the omission of Syria from the list, and would allow for a variety of dialects different from the one that was native to Jerusalem. The inclusion of "Cretans and Arabs" probably refers to seafaring peoples and to Nabatean Arabs, whose kingdom traditionally extended from the Euphrates to the Red Sea. Each area and country named had a considerable Jewish population within its borders (cf. SBK, 2:606-14). Some of these had returned to Jerusalem to take up residence there (cf. comment on *katoikountes*, "staying," v. 5). One group, however, is singled out as being religious pilgrims to the city (cf. the participle *hoi epidemountes*, "visitors," of v. 10). They are identified as being Jews and proselytes to Judaism from Rome. Undoubtedly there were other festival pilgrims in the crowd (Just as there must have been other Diaspora Jews in attendance who were residents of Jerusalem), but Luke's interest in Acts is in the gospel reaching out even to Rome, the capital of the empire. So he singles out this pilgrim contingent for special mention. It

may be that some of these "visitors" from Rome returned there and formed the nucleus of the church in that city. Ambrosiaster, a fourth-century Latin father, speaks of the church at Rome as having been founded "according to the Jewish rite, without seeing any sign of mighty works or any of the apostles" (cf. P.A. Ballerini, ed., *S. Ambrosii Opera* [Rome: Mediolani, 1877], 3: 373-74).

12-13 The miraculous is not self-authenticating, nor does it inevitably and uniformly convince. There must also be the preparation of the heart and the proclamation of the message if miracles are to accomplish their full purpose. This was true even for the miracle of the Spirit's coming at Pentecost. The Greek of v. 12 indicates that "all" of the "God-fearing Jews" (v. 5), whose attention had been arrested by the signs at Pentecost and whose own religious heritage gave

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them at least some appreciation of them, were amazed and asked, "What does this mean?" Others, however, being spiritually insensitive only mocked, attributing such phenomena to drunkenness. All this prepares the reader for Peter's sermon, which is the initial proclamation of the gospel message to a prepared people.

2. *Peter's sermon at Pentecost (2:14-41)*

Peter's sermon at Pentecost consists of (1) an apologia for the occurrence of the phenomena (vv. 14-21), (2) a kerygma ("proclamation") of the apostolic message in its most elemental form (vv. 22-36), and (3) a call to repentance with a promise of blessing (vv. 37-41). The sermon is headed by a brief introductory statement and followed by two summary sentences dealing with Peter's further preaching and the people's response. It was probably delivered in the outer court of the temple. And while the verb *apophthengomai* ("addressed") in v. 14 is the same as in v. 4, we should understand that Peter undoubtedly spoke in the local vernacular (whether some form of Aram. or koine Gr.) and not in a foreign language, for *apophthengomai* relates more to the inspired nature of the message than its mode.

a. Apologia section (2:14-21)

14 The apologia section of Peter's sermon is addressed to the "fellow Jews" and "all ... who are in Jerusalem." Later in the kerygma section these two groups are combined under the captions "Men of Israel" (v. 22) and "Brothers" (v. 29), for it is natural for them to be classed together. But here Peter apparently wanted to include particularly those who had been most bewildered by the multiplicity of the languages spoken. While undoubtedly many of the native-born Jews were awed by this, it was probably the Diaspora contingent there present that most

appreciated the incongruity of the situation and called for an explanation.

15 Peter begins negatively by arguing that the apostles could not be drunk, for it was only "nine in the morning" ("the third hour of the day," lit. Gr.). Unfortunately, this argument was more telling in antiquity than today.

16-21 Positively, Peter explains the phenomena taking place among the early Christians at Pentecost as being the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32 (MT= 3:1-5). His use of the Joel passage is in line with what since the discovery of the DSS we have learned to call a "pesher" (from Heb. *peser*, "interpretation"). It lays all emphasis on fulfillment without attempting to exegete the details of the biblical prophecy it "interprets." So Peter introduces the passage with the typically pesher introductory formula "this is that" (*touto estin to* ; NIV, "this is what"). The note of fulfillment is heightened by the alteration of the MT's and the LXX's simple "afterwards" (*ahare ken , meta tauta*) to "in the last days" (*en tais eschatais hemerais* , v. 17) and by interrupting

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the quotation to highlight the restoration of prophecy by inserting the words "and they will prophesy" (v. 18). The solemnity and importance of the words are emphasized by the addition of "God says" (v. 18) at the beginning of the quotation. The way Peter uses Joel 2:28-32 is of great significance (1) for an appreciation of early Christian exegetical practices and doctrinal commitments and (2) as a pattern for our own treatment of the OT. For Peter, we should note, what Joel said is what God says. And while what God says may have been somewhat enigmatic when first uttered, when seen from the perspective of eschatological fulfillment a great deal of what was unclear is clarified. Thus Peter can proclaim from the perspective of the Messiah's resurrection and living presence with his people (1) that "this" that he and the infant church were experiencing in the outpouring of God's Spirit "is that" prophesied by Joel, (2) that these are "the last days" of God's redemptive program, and (3) that the validation of all this is the fact of the return of prophesying. In other words, he is proclaiming that this is the time for the fulfillment of prophecy and that these are the long-awaited "last days" of the divine redemptive program; and he is also suggesting by his inclusion of the prophet's call for response that through the apostles' proclamation there will go out from Jerusalem a prophetic message of salvation and a call for repentance. Debates arise between proponents of "realized eschatology" and "inaugurated eschatology," on the one hand, and between amillennialists (including here postmillennialists) and premillennialists (cf. "The Eschatology of the Bible," Robert L. Saucy, EBC, 1:103-26), on the other hand, about how Peter and the earliest followers of Jesus understood the more spectacular physical signs of Joel's prophecy (i.e., "blood and fire and billows of smoke," "the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood"). Realized eschatologists and amillennialists usually take Peter's inclusion of such physical imagery in a spiritual way, finding in what happened at Pentecost the spiritual fulfillment of Joel's prophecy--a fulfillment not necessarily tied to any natural phenomena. This, they suggest, offers an interpretative key to the understanding of similar portrayals of natural phenomena and apocalyptic imagery in the OT. Moreover, some realized eschatologists and amillennialists, desiring to retain more than just the symbolic, suggest that these signs should be understood as

having actually taken place in the natural world "during the early afternoon of the day of our Lord's crucifixion," when "the sun turned into darkness" and "the paschal full moon ... appeared blood-red in the sky in consequence of that preternatural gloom" (Bruce, *Book of the Acts* , p. 69). On the other hand, certain features in Peter's sermon show his reason for his emphatic citation of Joel's prophecy. These features are Peter's introductory formula "this is that," his alteration of "afterward" Joel 2:28) to "in the last days," his addition of "God says" at the beginning of the quotation, and his interruption of the quotation to insert "and they will prophesy." He quotes the entire prophecy in Joel 2:28-32 because of its traditional messianic significance and because its final sentence ("And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved") leads logically to the kerygma section of his sermon. But Peter might not have known what to make of the more physical and spectacular elements of Joel's prophecy, though he probably expected them

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in some way to follow in the very near future. (Certainly he could not have foreseen a delay of many centuries before their fulfillment.) So his emphasis was on the inauguration of the Messianic Age ("the last days")--an emphasis we should see as being essential to his preaching and beyond which we are not compelled to go. God has inaugurated, Peter proclaims, the long-awaited "last days" here and now, and we know this because of the reinstatement of prophecy. Other signs, to be sure, were part of Joel's vision, but Peter does not stress them. His emphasis is entirely on prophecy as the sign of the inauguration of the last days. Even though he might have had his own personal expectations, Peter leaves all else for God to work out in the Messianic Age that had been inaugurated.

17-20 The other textual variations from the MT and LXX are rather insignificant and probably) without theological importance: (1) the rearrangement of clauses in v. 17 so that "your young men will see visions" precedes "your old men will dream dreams" and (2) the addition in v. 19 of the words "above," "signs," and "below."

b. Kerygma section (2:22-36)

In his Apostolic Preaching, Dodd identifies six themes that appear repeatedly in Peter's sermons in Acts 2-4: 1. "The age of fulfillment has dawned."

2. "This has taken place through the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, of which a

brief account is given, with proof from the Scriptures."

3. "By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God,

as

Messianic head of the new Israel."

4. "The Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory."

5. "The Messianic Age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ."

6. "The *kerygma* always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and

of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of 'salvation,' that is, of 'the life of the Age to Come,'

to those who enter the elect community" (pp. 21-24).

With the exception of the return of Christ (which appears in these early sermons only at 3:20-

21), all these themes come to the fore in Peter's Pentecost sermon: the note of fulfillment explicitly in the apologia section and inferentially throughout; the appeal for repentance and the promise of blessing at the close of the sermon; and the remaining themes in what we have designated the *kerygma* section proper, which focuses upon Jesus of Nazareth as mankind's Lord and Israel's promised Messiah. Despite its denial by certain scholars, it yet remains true to say that Peter's sermons of Acts 2-4 "represent the *kerygma* of the Church at Jerusalem at an early period" (ibid., p. 21). They are not verbatim reports, and hardly anyone has so taken them. But though they have been styled and shaped by Luke in accordance with his own purposes, they are not simply

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reproductions of his own theology or that of his spiritual mentor, Paul. They rather exhibit Semitic features and primitive characteristics that show that they come from a period earlier than the writing of Acts and stem from the earliest Christian congregation at Jerusalem. Moreover, though many have thought otherwise, the early church was interested in the life and character of Jesus--not for mere biographical reasons, but to fill out the content of its preaching--since the focus of the apostolic proclamation was on Jesus of Nazareth, mankind's Lord and Israel's Messiah (cf. Stanton). Thus Peter in his Pentecost sermon includes a brief sketch of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The early preaching of the church regarding Jesus was characterized by (1) being principally functional in nature rather than philosophical and (2) stressing ultimate causality more than secondary causes or means. Indeed, one cannot speak of what has happened redemptively without dealing with questions of "who" and "how"--questions that are bound to arise in thinking about the "that" of divine redemption. Indispensable, therefore, to all purposive thinking, such as in Peter's preaching or later on in Paul's, are nuances relating to ontology (the nature of being) and speculation about why and how things happened. Yet in presenting the earliest preaching of the apostles at Jerusalem, it is significant that Luke did not attempt to put such nuances into their mouths. Instead, he presents Peter as proclaiming our Lord as "Jesus of Nazareth," "a man accredited," "handed over," put "to death," raised "from the dead." Peter also proclaimed God as the true author of Jesus' miracles, the ultimate agent in Jesus' death, and the only cause for Jesus' resurrection. There is, to be sure, some allusion to means in the statement "and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross" (v. 23b). And there may be some ontological insight into who Jesus actually was in the statement "because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (v. 24b). Indeed, vv. 25-35 explain this "impossibility" not only in terms of what Scripture has foretold, but also in terms of who this Holy One was. Yet the emphasis in Peter's preaching of Jesus--as also in his concluding declaration (v. 36) and his call to repentance (v. 38)--is strongly functional, apart from any definite philosophical speculation and with only a minimal attention to the way in which God's purpose in Christ was carried out.

22 Peter begins the kerygma or proclamation section of his sermon with an inclusive form of address: "Men of Israel," which he parallels with the synonymous vocative "Brothers" (v. 29). (See note on v. 14.) His topic concerns "Jesus of Nazareth"--a common title used of Jesus throughout Luke's writings (cf. Luke 18:37; Acts 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9) and one by which early Christians themselves were at times called (cf. 24:5). The ministry of Jesus is characterized by "miracles, wonders and signs" that God did among the people through Jesus. The compound expression "wonders and signs" (*terata kai semeia*) appears quite often in various Greek writers, in the LXX, and in the NT itself (e.g., Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12; cf. 2:19); but the threefold "miracles, wonders and signs" is rare (cf. 2Cor 12:12b, where the order is reversed).

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23 The death of Jesus is presented as resulting from the interplay of divine necessity and human freedom. Nowhere in the NT is the paradox of a Christian understanding of history put more sharply than in this earliest proclamation of the death of Jesus the Messiah: God's purpose and foreknowledge stand as the necessary factors behind whatever happens; yet whatever happens occurs through the instrumentality of wicked men expressing their own human freedom. It is a paradox without ready solution. To deny it, however, is to go counter to the plain teaching of Scripture in both the OT and NT and to ignore the testimony of personal experience. "With the help of wicked men" points to the Roman authorities in Palestine, who carried out what had been instigated by the Jewish authorities. Gentiles are frequently referred to in Jewish literature as "wicked" (e.g., Jub 23:23-24) and "lawless" (e.g., Pss Sol 17:11, 18; cf. 1Cor 9:21), either because of their actual sins or simply because they did not possess the Mosaic law.

24 Here the resurrection of Jesus is attributed directly to God, apart from any action of men or even Jesus himself--just as elsewhere in the NT it is so attributed in quotations from early Christian hymns and catechisms (e.g., 1Cor 15:4; Philippians 2:9). The imagery is of "death pangs" (*odinas tou thanatou* ; NIV, "agony of death") and their awful clutches (cf. 2Sam 22:6; Pss 18:4-6; 116:3), from which God is "freeing" Jesus "because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

25-35 Here Peter quotes from Psalm 16:8-11 (LXX) and Psalm 110:1 in support of what he has just said about Jesus in v. 24. The quotations are brought together according to the second of the midrashic exegetical rules (*middot*) attributed by antiquity to Rabbi Hillel (viz., *gezerah sawah* , or "verbal analogy": where the same words appear in two separate passages, the same considerations apply to both). Both quotations have "at my right hand" and thus are deliberately treated together (cf. v. 33). In addition, both quotations are used in *peshar* fashion (cf.

comments on v. 16), for it is a peshet understanding that evokes the introductory statement "David said about him" and that applies the quotations wholly to Jesus. During the period of Late Judaism, both Psalm 16 and Psalm 110 were considered by Jewish interpreters to be somewhat enigmatic. Therefore they were variously understood. There was no problem with the confidence expressed in Psalm 16:8-9, 11. It was appropriate for the psalmist to whom God's love had been pledged and who had experienced God's covenant-keeping lovingkindness. (The word in v. 27 for "Holy One," *hosios*, usually translates the Heb. word *hasid* in the LXX, which is related to *hesed*, the word for "pledged love," "faithfulness to the covenant," and "lovingkindness"; cf. DNTT, 2:237.) But how could the psalmist have expected God to keep him from the grave and from undergoing decay, as in v. 10? And Psalm 110 was even more difficult, for who is this "my Lord" to whom "the Lord" has said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" (v. 34)? Some early rabbis linked the psalm with Abraham, others with David, and some even with Hezekiah; but there is no clearly attested messianic understanding of Psalm 110 in rabbinic literature until about A.D. (cf. SBK, 4:452-60;

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D.M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* [Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1913], pp. 19-33). Nevertheless, Jesus is reported in all three synoptic Gospels as having interpreted Psalm 110: 1 as a messianic passage and as applying it to himself (Mark 12:35-37, II) And it was probably Jesus' own treatment of Psalm 110:1 that (1) furnished the exegetical key for the early church's understanding of their risen Lord, (2) served as the pattern for their interpretation of similar enigmatic OT passages (e.g., 2Sam 7:6-16 with Ps 2:7 and Isa 55:3 with Ps 16:10 in Paul's Antioch address of Acts 13:16-41), and (3) anchored all other passages as could be brought together on a "verbal analogy" basis (e.g., the catena of passages in Heb 1:5-13). Therefore working from Psalm 110:1 as an accepted messianic passage and viewing Psalm 16:8-11 as having a similar reference on the basis of the hermeneutical rule of *gezerah sawah* (verbal analogy), Peter proclaims that Psalm 16:10 ("You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay") refers to Israel's promised Messiah and no other. It is an argument based on the exegetical precedent set by Jesus, inspired by the church's postresurrection perspective, and worked out along the lines of commonly accepted midrashic principles of the day. Furthermore, Peter insists, David could not have been speaking about himself, for he did indeed die, was buried, and suffered decay--as the presence of his tomb in the city eloquently testifies (v. 29). Nor did he ascend to heaven. Therefore, David must have been prophesying about the resurrection of the Messiah in Psalm 16:10 and about his exaltation in Psalm 110:1. And with God's raising of Jesus from the dead, these formerly enigmatic passages are clarified and the pouring out of the Spirit explained.

36 With the proclamation of Jesus as Lord and Messiah, Peter reaches the climax and conclusion of his sermon. The initial "therefore" shows that God's resurrection and exaltation of Jesus accredits him as mankind's Lord and Israel's Messiah. And Peter calls upon "all Israel" (lit., "all the house [*oikos*] of Israel")

to know with certainty that "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." In certain quarters it has become commonplace to assert that the church did not proclaim Jesus as Lord and Christ till *after* the Resurrection--or, as many prefer to express it, till after the rise of "the Easter faith." The implication is that only later were such names as "Lord" and "Christ" attached to Jesus' memory since he himself did not think along these lines. And this verse is often cited in support of that view. But it is more in line with the evidence to say that Jesus was acknowledged and proclaimed Lord and Christ not just after his resurrection but *because of* his resurrection. In Jewish thought, no one has a right to the title Messiah till he has accomplished the work of the Messiah--in fact, in all of life accomplishment must precede acclamation. During his earthly ministry, as that ministry is portrayed in all the Gospels, Jesus was distinctly reluctant to accept titular acclaim, probably because his understanding of messiahship had to do with suffering and because his concept of lordship had to do with vindication and exaltation by God. But now that Jesus has accomplished his messianic mission in

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life and death and has been raised by God and exalted "at his right hand," the titles Lord and Christ are legitimately his. This theme of function and accomplishment as the basis for titular acclaim is a recurring note in the christological statements elsewhere in the NT (cf. Rom 1:4; Philippians 2:9-11; Heb 2:14; 1John 5:6). The verb *epoiesen*, translated "made," has sometimes been taken as implying an adoptionist Christology, as though Jesus became ontologically what he was not before. But in functional contexts, *epoiesen* has the sense of "appointed" (cf. 1Sam 12:6 LXX; 1 Kings 12:31 LXX; Mark 3:14; Heb 3:2), and it is in just such a context that Peter uses it here. He is proclaiming not an adoptionist Christology but a functional one with ontological overtones--viz., that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is God's open avowal that the messianic work has been accomplished and that Jesus now has the full right to assume the messianic title; that the exaltation of Jesus is the proclamation of his lordship, which God calls all to acknowledge. In the twelve instances in Acts where the word "Christ" appears singly (2:31, 36; 3:18; 4:26; 8:5; 9:22; 17:3a; 26:23; and in 3:20; 5:42; 18:5, 28, where "Christ" is in apposition to "Jesus" but still "used" singly), it is used as a title--usually articular in form (except here and at 3:20)--but not as a name. And in every instance where it appears as a title, it is in an address to a Jewish audience (only 8:5 and 26:23 are possible exceptions, though both the Samaritans and Agrippa II possessed something of a Jewish background and understanding). Even where the

combination "Jesus Christ" or "Christ Jesus" appears, the original appellative idea is still reflected in the usage. Apparently, therefore, the messiahship of Jesus was the distinctive feature of the church's witness within Jewish circles, signifying, as it does, his fulfillment of Israel's hopes and his culmination of God's redemptive purposes. The title "Lord" was also proclaimed christologically in Jewish circles, with evident intent to apply to Jesus all that was said of God in the OT (cf. the christological use of Isa 45:23 in Philippians 2:10). But "Lord" came to have particular relevance to the church's witness to Gentiles just as "Messiah" was more relevant to the Jewish world. So in Acts Luke reports the proclamation of Jesus "the Christ" before Jewish audiences both in Palestine and among the

Diaspora, whereas Paul in his letters to Gentile churches generally uses Christ as a proper name and proclaims Christ Jesus "the Lord."

c. A call to repentance and a promise of blessing (2:37-41)

37 Peter's preaching had been effective. The people were "cut to the heart" at the awful realization that in crucifying their long-awaited Messiah they had rejected their only hope of salvation. So with deep anguish they cried out, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Luke uses the verb *katanyssomai* ("cut to the heart") to describe their feelings. The word may have been drawn from Psalm 109:16. It connotes a sharp pain associated with anxiety and remorse. In 1:20 Luke used Psalm 109:8 (108:8 LXX) not only to describe wicked men who oppose God's servant but also to describe the wicked man, Judas Iscariot. Now Luke

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apparently reaches back to that same psalm (v. 16) to pick up the vivid phrase for those who stand with God's servant in opposing wicked men: "those who have been cut to the heart"

(*katanenygmenon te kardia*)--or those who are "the humble of heart" because they realize their need and are open to God's working (in contrast to those Luke describes by the verb *diaprio* ["to be cut to the heart" in the sense of being "furious"] in Acts 5:33; 7:54). In fact, the way the men address the apostles, "Brothers" (lit., "men, brothers"), shows that their hearts had already been won over. Codex D and some of its Western associates omit "others" (*loipous*) in "the other apostles," thus distinguishing Peter from the apostles. But Luke's stress is on the supremacy of the apostles in the church, not on the supremacy of Peter. While in both his Gospel and his Acts he portrays Peter as taking leadership among the apostles, nowhere does Luke suggest anything more than that Peter was the natural leader and spokesman of the Twelve.

38 Peter's answer to the people's anguished cry presents interpreters with a set of complex theological problems that are often looked upon only as grist for differing theological mills. But Peter's words came to his hearers as the best news they had ever heard--far better, indeed, than they deserved or could have hoped for. So today these words remain the best of good news and should be read as the proclamation of that news and not as just a set of theological problems. Peter calls on his hearers to "repent" (*metanoesate*). This word implies a complete change of heart and the confession of sin. With this he couples the call to "be baptized" (*baptistheto*), thus linking both repentance and baptism with the forgiveness of sins. So far this sounds familiar, for John the Baptist proclaimed a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4); and Jesus made repentance central in his preaching (cf. Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15) and also baptized (cf. John 3:22, 26; 4:1-2). Judaism also had repentance at the core of its message and

emphasized baptism (at least for proselytes). But while there is much that appears traditional in Peter's exhortation, there is also much that is new and distinctive--particularly in three ways. In the first place, Peter calls on "every one" of his audience to repent and be baptized. Jews thought corporately and generally viewed the rite of baptism as appropriate only for proselytes (though some sects within Judaism baptized Jews). But like John the Baptist (cf. Matt 3:9-10)-- and probably Jesus, though in distinction to Judaism generally--Peter called for an individual response on the part of his hearers. So he set aside family and corporate relationships as having any final saving significance and stressed the response of the person himself--not, however, denying the necessity and value of corporate relationships, but placing them in a "new covenant" perspective. Second, Peter identifies the repentance and baptism he is speaking of as being specifically Christian in that it is done "in the name of Jesus Christ" (*epi to onomati Iesou Christou*). The expression was probably not at this time a liturgical formula; and it appears in Acts with the prepositions *epi* ("on") as here, though there are variations in the textual tradition, *en* ("in," 10:

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48) and *eis* ("into," 8:16; 19:5). What it means, it seems, is that a person in repenting and being baptized calls upon the name of Jesus (cf. 22:16) and thereby avows his or her intention to be committed to and identified with Jesus. A third feature in Peter's preaching at this point is the relation of the gift of the Holy Spirit to repentance and baptism. "The gift of the Holy Spirit" is another way of describing what the disciples had experienced in "the coming of the Holy Spirit," which Jesus called "the baptism of the Holy Spirit" (cf. 1:4-5, 8). All three expressions are connected with God's promise to his people and are used interchangeably in Acts 1 and 2. We need, however, to distinguish between "the gift" of the Holy Spirit and what Paul called "the gifts" (*ta pneumatika*, 1Cor 12:1; 14:1) of that self-same Spirit. "The gift" is the Spirit himself given to minister the saving benefits of Christ's redemption to the believer, while "the gifts" are those spiritual abilities the Spirit gives variously to believers "for the common good" and sovereignly, "just as he determines" (1Cor 12:7, 11). Peter's promise of the "gift of the Holy Spirit" is a logical outcome of repentance and baptism. This primary gift includes a variety of spiritual gifts for the advancement of the gospel and the welfare of God's people. But first of all, it has to do with what God's Spirit does for every Christian in applying and working out the benefits of Christ's redemptive work. In trying to deal with the various elements in this passage, some interpreters have stressed the command to be baptized so as to link the forgiveness of sins exclusively with baptism. But it runs contrary to all biblical religion to assume that outward rites have any value apart from true repentance and an inward change. The Jewish mind, indeed, could not divorce inward spirituality from its outward expression (though those of Gr. orientation often have done this). Wherever the gospel was proclaimed in a Jewish milieu, the rite of baptism was taken for granted as being inevitably involved (cf. 2:41; 8:12, 36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 18:8; 19:5; also Heb 10:22; 1 Peter 3:18-21). But Peter's sermon in Solomon's Colonnade (cf. 3:12-26) stresses only repentance and turning to God "so that your sins may be wiped out" (v. 19) and makes no mention of baptism. This shows that for Luke at least, and probably also for Peter, while baptism with water was the expected symbol for conversion, it was not an indispensable criterion for salvation. A few commentators have set Peter's

words in v. 38 in opposition to those of John the Baptist in Mark 1:8 (and 11) and those of Jesus in Acts 1:5, where the baptism of the Holy Spirit is distinguished from John's baptism and appears to supersede it. But neither the Baptist's prophecy nor Jesus' promise necessarily implies that the baptism of the Spirit would set aside water baptism. Certainly the early church did not take it that way. They continued to practice water baptism as the external symbol by which those who believed the gospel, repented of their sins, and acknowledged Jesus as their Lord publicly bore witness to their new life, which had been received through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In line, then, with the Baptist's prophecy and Jesus' promise, baptism with the Holy Spirit is distinguished from baptism with water. But baptism with the Holy Spirit did not replace baptism with water; rather, the latter was given a

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richer significance because of the saving work of Christ and the coming of the Spirit.

Again, some have observed that there is no mention in this passage, either in the report of Peter's preaching (vv. 38-40) or in the summary of the people's response (v. 41), of any speaking in tongues, as at Pentecost, or of laying on of hands, as in Samaria (8:17). From this various implications have been drawn. In a Jewish context, however, it would not have been surprising if both occurred; in fact, one is probably justified in being surprised had they not occurred. Nevertheless, that they are not mentioned implies (as with the omission of baptism in 3:19) that speaking in tongues and laying on of hands were not considered prerequisites for receiving the Spirit. A more difficult problem arises when we try to correlate Peter's words here with the accounts of the Spirit's baptism in 8:15-17 (at Samaria), 10:44-46 (in the house of Cornelius), and 19:6 (at Ephesus). In v. 38 the baptism of the Spirit is the logical outcome of repentance and water baptism; but in 8:15-17; 10:44-46; and 19:6 it appears to be temporally separated from conversion and water baptism--either following them (as at Samaria and Ephesus) or preceding them (as with Cornelius). Catholic sacramentalists take this as a biblical basis for separating baptism and confirmation; and Charismatics of various kinds see it as justification for a doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit as a second work of grace after conversion. But lest too much be made of this difference theologically, we ought first to attempt to understand the historical situation of vv. 37-41 and to explain matters more circumstantially. Assuming for the moment that Luke shared Paul's view of the indissoluble connection between conversion, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 8:9; 1Cor 6:11), the following question may be asked: What if the Pentecost experience, particularly in regard to the sequence and temporal relations of conversion, water baptism, and Holy Spirit baptism, had been fully present in each of these latter three instances? Take the Samaritans (8:4-8, 14-17), for example, who were converted through the instrumentality of Philip, one of the Hellenists expelled from Jerusalem at the time of Stephen's martyrdom. Samaritans had always been considered second-class citizens of Palestine by the Jerusalem Jews who kept

them at arm's length. What if it had been the apostles residing at Jerusalem who had been the missionaries to Samaria? Probably they would have been rebuffed, just as they were earlier when the Samaritans associated them with the city of Jerusalem (cf. Luke 9:51-56). But God providentially used Philip to bring them the gospel--Philip, who had also (though for different reasons) been rebuffed at Jerusalem. The Samaritans received him and believed his message. But what if the Spirit had come upon them at their baptism by Philip? Undoubtedly what feelings some of the Christians at Jerusalem had against Philip and the Hellenists would have rubbed off on the Samaritan believers and they would have been doubly under suspicion. But God providentially withheld the gift of the Holy Spirit till Peter and John laid their hands on the Samaritans--Peter and John, two leading Jerusalem apostles who at that time would have been accepted by the new converts of Samaria. So in this first advance of the gospel outside Jerusalem, God worked in ways conducive both to the reception of the Good

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News in Samaria and the acceptance of these new converts at Jerusalem--ways that promoted both the outreach of the gospel and the unity of the church. Or take the conversion of Cornelius (10:34-48). What if, in Peter's ministry to this Gentile, the order of events Peter had set down after his sermon at Pentecost had occurred (2:38)--viz., repentance, baptism, forgiveness of sins, reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit? Some at Jerusalem might have accused Peter of manipulating the occasion for his own ends (as his lengthy defense before the Jerusalem congregation in 11:1-18 takes pains to deny). But God in his providence gave the gift of his Spirit, coupled with such signs as would convince both Peter and his possible critics at Jerusalem, even *before* Cornelius's baptism, so that all would attribute his conversion entirely to God rather than let their prejudices make Cornelius a second-class Christian. As for the incident recorded in 19:1-4, this, along with the other two passages just mentioned, will be dealt with in loc. But enough has been said here to suggest that we should understand Peter's preaching at Pentecost as being theologically normative for the relation in Acts between conversion, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the situations having to do with the Samaritan converts, Cornelius, and the twelve whom Paul met at Ephesus (which is something of a case all to itself) to be more historically conditioned and circumstantially understood.

39 The "promise" of which Peter speaks includes both the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Both are logically and indissolubly united in applying Christ's redemptive work to the believer, and they were only separated chronologically, it seems, for what could be called circumstantial reasons. The promise, Peter declares, is not only for his immediate hearers ("for you") but also for succeeding generations ("for your children") and for all in distant places ("for all who are far off"). It is a promise, Peter concludes, that is sure; for it has been given by God and rests upon the prophetic word of Joel 2:32: "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Some prefer to see in the expression

"for all who are far off" (*pasin tois eis makran*) a temporal reference to future Jewish generations (cf. BAG, p. 488), paralleling the phrase "for your children" (*tois teknois hymon*). But *makran* ("far off") is not used temporally in the LXX or anywhere else in the NT, and therefore it is probably better interpreted more spatially than temporally. A spatial interpretation, however, raises the question of whether *makran* ("far off") refers exclusively to Diaspora Jews or also includes Gentiles. That two OT remnant passages are alluded to here (Isa 57:19 ["Peace, peace, to those far and near"] and Joel 2:32) has led some commentators to assume that *makran* refers to Diaspora Jews. On the other hand, the use of Luke's report of Paul's defense in Jerusalem (22:21; cf. Eph 2:13) has led other commentators to argue that *makran* ("far off") refers also to Gentiles. Probably this is one of those situations where a narrator like Luke has read into what the

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speaker said more than was originally there and so implied that the speaker spoke better than he knew. It seems difficult to believe that Peter himself thought beyond the perspective of Jewish remnant theology. Just as he could hardly have visualized anything beyond the next generation, so he could hardly have conceived of anything spatially beyond God's call to a scattered but repentant Jewish remnant. But Luke's desire is to show how an originally Jewish gospel penetrated the Gentile world so extensively that it came to enter "without hindrance" (cf. 28:31) into the capital of the Roman Empire. Very likely, therefore, in recounting Peter's words here in Acts, Luke meant them to be read as having Gentiles in mind, whatever one might argue Peter was thinking of at the time. So we may conclude that he used *makran* in the same sense as in 22:21.

40-41 Two summary statements conclude Luke's report of Peter's Pentecost sermon. The first has to do with Peter's further words; the second indicates the extent of the people's response. The earnestness of Peter's words is connoted by the prepositions in the verbs *diamartyromai* ("warned") and *parakaleo* ("pleaded"), which tend to strengthen the usual verbs for "witness" (*martyreo*) and "call" (*kaleo*). And his characterization of this age as a "corrupt generation" is paralleled by Jesus' words (cf. Matt 16:4; 17:17) and by those of Paul (cf. Philippians 2:15). What we have here is the vision of an evangelist--a vision that is all too often lost as the gospel is acclimated to the world and the world to the church. The Jews generally looked on baptism as a rite only for Gentile converts (i.e., proselytes), not for one born a Jew. It symbolized the break with one's Gentile past and the washing away of all defilement. So when Jews accepted baptism in the name of Jesus on hearing Peter's message, it was traumatic and significant for them in a way we in our mildly christianized culture have difficulty understanding. But as a result of Peter's preaching, "about" 3,000 took the revolutionary step of baptism. And thus, Luke tells us, the congregation of believers in Jesus came into being at Jerusalem--a congregation made up of the original 120 (1:15) and progressively augmented (as the imperfect form of the verb *prostithemi* ["added to"] seems to suggest) by about 3,000 others.

Part I. The Christian Mission to the Jewish World (2:42-12:24)

Luke gives us the theme of Acts in Jesus' words: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (1:8). Behind them stands Deuteronomy 19:15, with its requirement that every matter be established by two or three witnesses (cf. R. Morgenthauer, *Die Lukanische Geschichtsschreibung als Zeugnis*, 2 vols. [Zurich: Zwingli, 1949]; Trites, esp. pp. 128-53). In his Gospel Luke has frequently highlighted such matters as

- (1) the witness of the Scriptures coupled with the ministry of Jesus and the witness of the Spirit,
- (2) the pairings of the disciples in their journeys on behalf of Jesus (cf. 10:1), and
- (3) the two angels at the tomb (cf. 24:4, whereas Matt 28:2-5 and Mark 16:5 have only one). In his

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organization of the common tradition, he set up a number of parallels between our Lord's ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50) and his ministry in the regions of Perea and Judea (9:51-19:27). So in Acts Luke continues his pairings of apostolic men in their ministries (e.g., Peter and John in 3:1, 3-4, 11; 4:13, 19; 8:14; Barnabas and Saul in 11:25-26; 12:25; 13:2; Paul and Barnabas in 13:43, 46, 50; 15:2, 12, 22, 35; Judas and Silas in 15:32; Barnabas and Mark in 15:39; Paul and Silas in 15:40; 16:19, 25; 17:4, 10; and Silas and Timothy in 17:14-15; 18:5). Luke also sets up a number of parallels between the ministry of Peter in the first half of his work and the ministry of Paul in the last half: both heal a lame man (3:2-8; 14:8-10); both do miracles at some distance (5:15; 19:12); both exorcise evil spirits (5:16; 16:18); both defeat sorcerers (8:18-24; 13:6-11); both raise the dead (9:36-43; 20:9-12); both defend themselves against Jewish authorities (4:8-12; 5:27-32; 22:3-21; 23:1-6; 28:25-28); both receive heavenly visions (10:9-16; 16:9); both are involved in bestowing the Holy Spirit on new converts (8:14-17; 19:1-7); and both are miraculously released from prison (5:19; 12:7-11; 16:25-27). More importantly, both proclaim the same message and even use to some extent the same set of proof texts (e.g., Ps 16:10; cf. 2:27; 13:35). It is, then, from Jesus' declaration about the apostles' witness (1:8) that Luke derives the framework for his narrative of Acts. First he portrays the mission of the Jerusalem apostles and their colleagues within the Jewish world; next he portrays the mission of Paul and his companions within the Gentile world. Luke presents this material in six blocks or panels--three of them are given to the mission to the Jews, three to the mission to the Gentiles.

Panel 1--The Earliest Days of the Church at Jerusalem (2:42-6:7)

Acts 2:42-6:7 describes the earliest days of the church at Jerusalem and covers the first three to five years of the new messianic movement (i.e., from A.D. 30 to the mid-thirties). Luke deals with the events of this period by means of a thesis

paragraph followed by a series of vignettes that illustrate that paragraph. In 1:1-2:41 Luke has dealt in some detail with the constitutive events of the Christian mission. Had he continued on at that rate, his second book would have been inordinately long. So he begins to use illustrative vignettes and portrayals of representative situations drawn from many experiences within the early church to present his material more succinctly. This he does in order to help his readers feel the nature of what God was doing by his Spirit through the witness of the apostles.

A. A Thesis Paragraph on the State of the Early Church (2:42-47)

In addition to the six summary statements (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31) that respectively conclude the six panels or blocks of material, Acts also has in its first panel three short summary-like paragraphs (2:42-47; 4:32-35; and 5:12-16). Each of the latter two of these three paragraphs introduces the block of material that immediately follows it, with the specific

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details in that material directly related to the respective introductory paragraph. But the first of the three paragraphs (2:42-47) is longer than the others and introduces the entire first panel of material. Rather than credit this paragraph to some supposed "Recension B" of a Jerusalem-Caesarean source (Harnack), or partly to some older body of material and partly to Luke's redaction Jeremias, Cerfaux, and Benoit, though variously), we take vv. 42-47 to be Luke's own thesis paragraph on the state of the church in its earliest days at Jerusalem. Furthermore, we take the rest of the first panel to explicate by means of a series of vignettes the various points made in this first thesis paragraph.

42 Luke begins to describe the early church by telling us that the believers in it were distinguished by their devotion to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship with one another, to "breaking of bread," and "to prayer." The verb translated "devoted" (*proskartereo*) is a common one that connotes a steadfast and singleminded fidelity to a certain course of action. Luke uses it elsewhere in Acts to characterize the devotion of the 120 in the upper room to prayer (1:14) and the apostles' resolve in the matter of the Hellenistic widows to center their attention on prayer and the ministry of the word (6:4) "The apostles' teaching" refers to a body of material considered authoritative because it was the message about Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed by accredited apostles. It undoubtedly included a compilation of the words of Jesus (cf. 20:35), some account of his earthly ministry, passion and resurrection (cf. 2:22-24), and a declaration of what all this meant for man's redemption (cf. 1Cor 15:3-5)--all of which was thought of in terms of a Christian "tradition"

(*paradosis*) that could be passed on to others (cf. 1Cor 11:2; 1Thess 2:13; 2Thess 2:15; 3:6). The number of references to teachers, teaching, and tradition within Acts and the letters to the churches (here, as well as in Rom 6:17; 12:7; 16:17; 1Cor 11:2; 14:26; 2Thess 2:15; 3:6; James 3:1), and the frequent linking of

prophets and teachers in the NT (cf. Acts 13:1; 1Cor 12:28; 14: 6; Eph 4:11), suggest that--while not necessarily antithetical--the creative role of prophecy in the early church was balanced by the conserving role of teaching. Undoubtedly the early congregation at Jerusalem, amid differences of perspective and along with a lively eschatological expectation, had a general "sense of center" provided by the historical and doctrinal teaching of the apostles. And this, Luke tells us, was preeminently *the raison d'etre* ("reason for being") and the focus of the early Christian community. The definite article (*te*) in "the fellowship" (*te koinonia*) implies that there was something distinctive in the gatherings of the early believers. With the influx of three thousand on the Day of Pentecost and with daily increases to their number after that (cf. 2:47), they must have had some externally recognizable identity. Perhaps in those early days others thought of them as a "Synagogue of Nazarenes" (cf. Tertullus's accusation in 24:5, which links them to "the Nazarene sect") and gave them a place among other such groups within the mosaic of Judaism. But the Christian community was not just a sect of Judaism, even though they continued to observe

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Jewish rites and customs and had no intention of breaking with the nation or its institutions. They held to the centrality of Jesus of Nazareth in the redemptive program of God and in their worship. Their proclamation of Jesus as Israel's promised Messiah and mankind's Lord set them apart in Jerusalem as a distinguishable entity. Just what is meant by "the breaking of bread" in v. 42 has been vigorously debated. Was it a type of Jewish fellowship meal (like the "Haburah" meals of the Pharisees), which showed the believers' mutual love and recalled their earlier association with Jesus but was devoid of any paschal significance as Paul later "illegitimately" saw in it (as H. Lietzmann charges)? Or was it in these early years a paschal commemoration of Christ's death, in line with Paul's later elaboration (cf. J. Jeremias)? Or was it at first an agape feast that emphasized the joy of communion with the risen Lord and of fellowship with one another, which Paul later quite "legitimately" saw to have also paschal import, in line with the intention of Jesus (cf. O. Cullmann)? The matter is somewhat difficult to determine, for while 2:42 and 20:7 may very well relate to the full Pauline understanding (1Cor 10:16; 11:24), and while Luke earlier referred to "the breaking of bread" in that way in his passion narrative (Luke 22:19), elsewhere he uses it for an ordinary meal (cf. Luke 24:30, 35; Acts 20:11; 27:35) and seems to mean just that even in 2:46. Yet it is difficult to believe that Luke had in mind here only an ordinary meal, placing the expression, as he does, between two such religiously loaded terms as "the fellowship" and "prayer." Even an ordinary meal among Jews, of course, would have had something of a sacred flavor. In a Christian setting, where hearts were warmed by devotion, it would have been an occasion for joy, love, and praise connected inevitably with Jesus. Probably "the breaking of bread" should also be understood as subtly connoting the passion of Christ--though, of course, there may very well have been a deepening of understanding with regard to Christ's passion as the church's theology came more and more into focus, in accord with Paul's later elaboration of it. References to "prayer" are frequent both in the summary statements and the narrative of Acts (in addition to 2:42, see 1:14, 24; 4:24-31; 6:4, 6; 9:40; 10:2, 4, 9, 31; 11:5; 12:5; 13:3; 14:23; 16:25; 22:17; 28:8). Just as Luke has set up in Luke-Acts the parallelism between the Spirit's work in relation to Jesus and the

Spirit's work in the church, so he also sets up the parallelism between prayer in the life of Jesus and prayer in the life of the church. His use here of both the definite article and the plural in "the prayers" (*tais proseuchais*) suggest formal prayers, probably both Jewish and Christian. The earliest believers not only viewed the old forms as filled with new content, but also in their enthusiasm they fashioned new vehicles for their praise. In addition, it is not difficult to envision the earliest believers using extemporaneous prayers built on past models--such as Mary's *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), Zechariah's Song of Praise (Luke 1: 67-79), or Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis* (Luke 2:28-32).

43 Furthermore, Luke tells us that a lingering sense of awe rested on many who did not take their stand with the Christians and that miraculous things were done by the apostles. "Everyone"

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(*pase psyche*), in contradistinction to "all the believers" (*pantes hoi pisteusantes*) of v. 44, refers hyperbolically to nonbelievers in Jerusalem who knew of the events of Pentecost and were observing the life of the early congregation in the months that followed. In the expression "wonders and miraculous signs" (*terata kai semeia*), Luke picks up the phraseology of Joel's prophecy (cf. 2:19) and of Peter's characterization of Jesus' ministry (cf. 2:22). Luke probably used it to suggest that the miracles the apostles did should be taken as evidences of the presence of God with his people, just as throughout the ministry of Jesus the miracles he did showed that God was with him. The use of the verb *ginomai* ("to be") in the imperfect tense denotes that the awe "was" and the miracles "were" no momentary phenomena but continued to happen during those early days.

44-45 Within the Christian congregation at Jerusalem, the believers' sense of spiritual unity expressed itself in communal living and sharing with the needy members of their group. While Acts implies that overt persecution of Christians came somewhat later, in certain instances economic and social sanctions were undoubtedly imposed on the early believers. So the communal life described in vv. 44-45 should be understood, at least in part, as a response to these pressures. Such treatment of minority groups is not uncommon, as both ancient and contemporary history show. In addition, the analogies that exist between the early Jewish Christians and the Qumran covenanters suggest that the Jewish Christians in stressing the primacy of spiritual community reflected a practice common to various Jewish sects (of which Qumran is a prominent example) of holding possessions in community. The repeated use of the imperfect tense in these two verses (five times) shows that this was their established practice, which involved both what we would call their real estate ("possessions," *ktemata*) and their personal possessions ("goods," *hyparxeis*).

46 Here Luke shows that the early Jerusalem believers expressed their faith through daily adherence to the accustomed forms of their Jewish heritage. They

not only ate together in their homes in a spirit of gladness and sincerity but also found a large measure of favor among the people. "Every day" (*kath hemeran*) applies to the whole sentence (which NIV breaks into two sentences) as far as the words "all the people" in the middle of v. 47 and ties together a number of complementary ideas. The favorite meeting place of the early believers was in the temple (cf. Luke 24:53), at the eastern edge of the outer court called Solomon's Colonnade (cf. 3:11; 5:12). There, in typically Semitic fashion, they carried on their discussions and offered praise to God. As Jews who were Christians and also Christians who were Jews, they not only considered Jerusalem to be their city but continued to regard the temple as their sanctuary and the Law as their law. Evidently they thought of themselves as the faithful remnant within Israel for whose sake all the institutions and customs of the nation existed. As such, their refocused eschatological hopes (cf. Mal 3:1) and all their desires to influence their own people were associated with the city of Jerusalem, the

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Jerusalem temple, and the Mosaic law. For both theological and practical reasons, therefore, as well as because of the inevitable tug of the traditional, the early Christians in Jerusalem sought to retain their hold on the religious forms they had inherited and to express their new faith through the categories of the old. But while they met formally for discussion and worship in the temple precincts, they took their meals in their own homes (*kat oikon*, lit. "by households"). The noun *trophe* ("food," "nourishment") in the phrase "they were sharing in the food" (*metelambanon tropes*; NIV, "ate together") implies a substantial meal (cf. 9:19; 27:33-34), which it is said they ate with gladness and sincerity of heart.

47a In Luke's writings, "the people" (*ho laos*) usually refers to Israel as the elect nation to whom the message of redemption is initially directed and for whom (together with the Gentiles) it is ultimately intended (e.g., 3:9; 4:10; 5:13). Later in the narrative of Acts, the attitude of "the people" becomes more and more antagonistic to the Christian gospel and its missionaries. But in this first panel we have a response of the people that is largely favorable toward the early Christians and their manner of life. This cannot be said for the attitude of the Sadducees as depicted in 4:1ff. and 5:17ff. (Later in the commentary, reasons will be given for the change of attitude on the part of the people that begins with Acts' second panel and worsens as the narrative develops.) What can be said here is that Luke shows, both in his emphasis on the early Christians' meeting in the temple courts and on the favor accorded them by the people, that early Christianity is the fulfillment of all that is truly Jewish and that it directed its mission first to the Jewish world. Luke continues to stress these themes throughout his second volume.

47b Luke's thesis paragraph on the state of the early church at Jerusalem concludes with the triumphant note that "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved"--a note that runs throughout this first panel but is

not confined to it. It is the Lord himself who adds to his church, and thus the title *ho kyrios* ("the Lord") appears first in the sentence not only for grammatical reasons but also for emphasis. The force of the present participle *tous sozomenous* ("those who were being saved") is iterative, suggesting that they were added as they were being saved. For a discussion of the expression "to their number" (*epi to auto*), see note on v. 44.

B. A Crippled Beggar Healed (3:1-26)

In 2:42-47, Luke has spoken of the early Christians' continued attendance at the temple, the wonders and miracles the apostles did, the awe many of the Jews felt, and the apostles' teaching. Now he gives us a vignette illustrating these things. Much like the synoptic tradition that selected the healing of a leper as "Exhibit A" to represent the nature of Jesus' early ministry in Galilee (cf. Mark 1:40-45, II), or John's Gospel that uses the healing of a Capernaum official's son for the same purpose (cf. John 4:46-54), Luke now singles out this episode in the history of

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the early Jerusalem congregation to "bring the reader into the picture." No doubt the episode at the time was well known and frequently recounted in the early church long before Luke wrote of it.

1. *The healing* (3:1-10)

1 The story of the healing of the crippled beggar begins with the straightforward statement that Peter and John went up to the temple at the time of prayer. In the Greek the pericope begins without a strong connective (though D apparently felt the need for a stronger connective and so begins with "in these days", likewise, NIV has "one day"). This seems to suggest that the story originally circulated among Christians separately and for its own sake. That the apostles were living in Jerusalem immediately after Jesus' ascension is in accord with his instructions to "stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49), to "not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised" (Acts 1:4), and to begin their mission there (Acts 1:8, cf. Luke 24:47). But what kept these Galilean disciples in Jerusalem after Pentecost? and why did Jewish Christianity become centered in Jerusalem rather than Galilee? Lohmeyer's thesis that there were really two centers of Christianity in Palestine from the earliest days, a Galilean and a Jerusalemite one, and that Acts has blurred the situation by locating the apostles from Galilee in Jerusalem is not convincing (Ernest Lohmeyer, *Galilaa und Jerusalem* [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936]; cf. L.E. Elliott-Binns, *Galilean Christianity* [London: SCM, 1956]). While there were Christians in Galilee who formed themselves into congregations there (cf. 9:31), the earliest extant Christian writings, the Pauline letters, take into account only the Jerusalem community and associate the Galilean apostles directly with that (cf. Gal 1:18-2:10; 1Thess 2:

14). It may be said with certainty, therefore, that the early Christians looked on Jerusalem as being of central importance. As God's righteous remnant within Israel and members of the Messiah's eschatological community, the apostles,

even though originally from Galilee, centered their activities in Jerusalem. Along with that went their continued adherence to Israel's institutions and forms of worship. So Peter and John are presented as "going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon" (lit., "at the ninth hour"). The stated times for prayer in Judaism were (1) early in the morning, in connection with the morning sacrifice; (2) at the ninth hour of the day, in connection with the evening sacrifice; and

(3) at sunset (cf. SBK, 2:696-98). The imperfect verb *anebainon* ("they were going up") conveys a vivid visual impression of the apostles' movement toward Jerusalem. Going to the temple is always spoken of in terms of "going up"--principally out of reverential respect, though also because of location (Luke 18:10; John 7:14; Acts 11:2; cf. 15:2; 18:22).

2-3 The man is described as "crippled from birth" (*cholos ek koilias metros autou*, lit., "crippled from his mother's womb") and having to be carried daily "to the temple gate called

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"Beautiful" to beg for his living. Since almsgiving was classed in Judaism as a meritorious act (cf. SBK, 1:387-88), he was placed at the gate so that those coming to the temple could gain merit by giving him a coin. Just which gate is referred to as "Beautiful" is not easy to determine. Neither Josephus nor the Talmud refers to such a temple gate. And while Hellenistic Jews commonly called the entire temple complex "the temple" (*to hieron*) and reserved for the temple proper with its porch the name "Holy Place" and "Holy of Holies" (*honaos*; cf. SBK, 1:150-51), Luke did not always maintain this distinction in Luke-Acts. We cannot, therefore, depend on his use of *to hieron* as a guide to whether "the gate called Beautiful" had to do with the outer court or one of the inner courts. Since the fifth century A.D., The Eastern or Shushan Gate (so called because it portrays the palace of Shushan, or Susa), which is on the east side of the outer court and remained standing after the destruction of Jerusalem, has been identified by many as the Beautiful Gate. The weight of evidence from Josephus (Antiq. XV, 410-25 [xi.5-7]; War V, 190-221 [v.2-4]) and the Mishnah tractate *Middoth* (1:3-4; 2.3), however, favor identifying the Beautiful Gate with the Nicanor Gate (so named for a certain Nicanor, who in a perilous storm desired to be thrown overboard with the gate during its transport from Alexandria to Jerusalem and for whose sake a miracle occurred preserving both; cf. *M Yoma* 3:10). This gate led from the eastern part of the outer court (Court of the Gentiles) into the first of the inner courts (Court of the Women). Josephus describes it as having been overlaid with Corinthian bronze and says that it "far exceeded in value those plated with silver and set in gold" (War V, 201 [v.3]).

4-6 In response to the beggar's request for money, Peter fixed his eyes on him and said, "Look at us!" Thinking he had a benefactor, the beggar looked up expectantly. To his astonishment he heard the words: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." In Semitic thought, a name does not just identify or distinguish a person; it expresses the very nature of his being. Hence the power of

the person is present and available in the name of the person. Peter, therefore, does not just ask the risen Jesus to heal but pronounces over the crippled beggar the name of Jesus, thereby releasing the power of Jesus (cf. 3:16; 4:10). And the power of the risen Jesus, coupled with the man's response of faith (cf. 3:16), effects the healing.

7-10 The healing is described as an instantaneous one, accomplishing in a moment what God in his providence through the normal healing processes usually takes months to do. The effect on the man was traumatic. Some commentators have complained that structurally v. 8 is overloaded in comparison with the rest of the narrative--what with all the walking about and jumping and praising God going on. But such a comment only reflects our jaded sensibilities in the presence of divine grace. Certainly it would have been hard to convince the man himself that his response was excessive. As for the people, they were "filled with wonder and amazement." What was taking place was but a token,

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to those who had eyes to see, of the presence of the Messianic Age, of which the prophet had long ago predicted: "Then will the lame leap like a deer" (Isa 35:6).

2. *Peter's sermon in Solomon's Colonnade* (3:11-26)

Peter's sermon in Solomon's Colonnade is in many ways similar to his sermon at Pentecost (2: 14-41). Structurally, both move from proclamation to a call for repentance. The Pentecost sermon, however, is finished and polished, whereas this one is comparatively roughhewn. Thematically, both focus on the denial and vindication of Jesus of Nazareth. But the Colonnade sermon expresses more of a remnant theology than the one at Pentecost. It shows a more generous attitude toward Israel, coupled with a greater stress on the nation's responsibility for the Messiah's death, than does the Pentecost sermon; and it makes explicit the necessity of receiving God's grace by faith. Christologically, Peter's sermon here (like his defense in 4:8-12) incorporates a number of archaic and primitive titles used of Jesus within early Jewish Christianity. It seems strange, at first glance, that in his narrative Luke would place two such similar sermons of Peter so close together. But his putting the Pentecost sermon in the introductory section of Acts was evidently meant to be a kind of paradigm of early apostolic preaching--a paradigm Luke seems to have polished for greater literary effectiveness. As for the Colonnade sermon, Luke seems to have included it as an example of how the early congregation in Jerusalem proclaimed the message of Jesus to the people of Israel as a whole. Moreover, the material containing both the story of the miracle and Peter's sermon probably came to Luke as something of a self-contained unit, which he evidently was willing, for the most part, to leave in the form he found it.

11 We are not given many of the "stage directions" for Peter's Colonnade sermon. What we are told, however, is significant: (1) the healed cripple "held on to" (

kratountos) Peter and John so as not to let them get away (*krateo* is also used to describe a police arrest, as in Matt 14:3; 21: 46; 26:4, 48, 50, 55, 57); (2) "the people" came running to them in Solomon's Colonnade; and (3) they were "astonished" at what had happened. Solomon's Colonnade was a covered portico that ran the entire length of the eastern portion of the outer court of the temple precincts, along and just inside the eastern wall of the temple (cf. 5:12; John 10:23).

12-16 The proclamation section of the sermon is an exposition on "the name of Jesus" (twice repeated in v. 16). Structurally and syntactically, v. 16 is the most difficult verse in the chapter, probably because Luke chose to do less editorial polishing here since he saw that it contained the statement of Peter's theme. The sermon begins by denying that it was through the apostles' "own power or godliness" that the cripple was healed. Rather, "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" brought about the

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healing that glorified Jesus. Just as Peter earlier spoke of God as the true author of Jesus' miracles (cf. 2:22), so here he attributes solely to God such wonders as occurred in the apostles' ministries. And just as Jesus' miracles were done by God to accredit him before the people (cf. again 2:22), so miracles continued to be done through the apostles in order for God to glorify Jesus. The sermon focuses on God's Servant, Jesus, whom Israel disowned and killed but God raised from the dead. It is through his name and the faith that comes through him that the healing of the crippled beggar occurred. In speaking of Jesus, Peter uses a number of primitive and archaic christological titles. Their concentration in these few verses has rightly been considered highly significant by many. The sermon begins and ends by ascribing to Jesus the title "God's Servant" (*ho pais autou* , vv. 13, 26), which echoes the Servant theme of Isaiah 42-53--cf. "[he] has glorified his servant Jesus" (v. 13) with "my servant ... will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted" (Isa 52:13)-- and the theme of Moses as prophet (Deut 18:15, 18-19; cf. the "raising up" motif of Acts 3:22, 26 with Deut 18:15, 18). It includes the titles "the Holy One" (*ho hagios* , v. 14) and "the Righteous One" (*ho dikaios* , v. 14), the ascription "the author of life" (*ho archegos tes zoes* , v. 15), and a reference to Jesus as "a prophet like me [Moses]" (*ho prophetes hos eme* , vv. 22-23). And it stresses "the name of Jesus" as the powerful agent in the miracle--a significant fact since "the Name" (*to onoma*) was a pious Jewish surrogate for God and connoted his divine presence and power.

17-18 What strikes the reader immediately in the call-to-repentance section of Peter's sermon is its attitude toward Israel, which in its hopeful outlook is unmatched in the rest of the NT (except for certain features in Paul's discussion of Rom 9-11). In v. 12 Peter addressed his audience as "Men of Israel" and in v. 13 spoke of God as "the God of our [*hemon*] fathers." And though he had emphasized Israel's part in crucifying Jesus (vv. 13-15), he now magnanimously says that they had acted "in ignorance" and, somewhat surprisingly, includes their leaders in this. Then he mitigates their guilt still further by saying that God

himself had willed it in order to fulfill the words of the prophets.

19-21 Even more positively, Peter goes on to say that if his hearers repent, their repentance will have a part in ushering in the great events of the end time (cf. the idea of purpose expressed in the conjunction *hopos* , "that," which starts v. 20). Evidently Luke wants us to understand Peter's call to repentance here as being set within the context of a remnant theology and as being quite unlike Stephen's attitude (cf. ch. 7). Not only so, but he also wants us to view the earliest proclamation of the gospel in the Jewish world as a kind of intramural effort, with a self-conscious, righteous remnant issuing prophetic denunciations of Israel's part in the crucifixion of their Messiah and appealing to the people to turn to God in repentance for the remission of their sins.

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The call to repentance itself is tersely stated. Then it is elaborated in words unique in the NT and reflective of Jewish remnant theology. "Repent, then, and turn to God," says Peter, "so that your sins may be wiped out"--and, further, so that there may be brought about the promised "times of refreshing" and that with the coming of God's appointed Messiah (*ton prokecheirismenon Christon*, lit., "the foreordained Christ"), he may "restore everything." The expressions "times of refreshing" (*kairoi anapsyxeos*, v. 20) and "to restore everything"

(*chronoi apokatastaseos panton*, v. 21) are without parallel in the NT, though the verb *apokathistemi* ("restore"), the verbal form of *apokatastasis* ("restoration"), is often used in the LXX of the eschatological restoration of Israel (cf. Jer 15:19; 16:15; 24:6; 50:19 [27:19 LXX]; Ezek 16:55; Hos 11:11). Verses 20b and 21 present problems of interpretation because of their chronological ambiguity--viz., "that times of refreshing may come from the Lord and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets." Robinson has suggested that here we probably have "the most primitive Christology of all"

J.A.T. Robinson, "The Most Primitive Christology of All?" *JTS*, 7 [1956], 177-89; cf. also his *Twelve New Testament Studies* [London: SCM, 1962], pp. 139-53). He says this because he takes the expression "the foreordained Christ" as an affirmation that messiahship was for Jesus a matter *for the future*. As Robinson views it (setting forth a Bultmannian position), Jesus was considered by the earliest believers to be "Messiah-designate" awaiting the future coming of the Son of Man (another than Jesus), who would then appoint Jesus to be Messiah in fact. Therefore, Robinson believes that in 3:19-21 we have an outcropping of that earliest stratum of christological speculation, which must have quickly faded away and which was later replaced by the Christology of Acts 2 and the remainder of Acts 3 and by the attribution of present messiahship to Jesus found throughout the rest of the NT. In fact, Robinson insists, Jesus was first considered only as Messiah-designate in the earliest congregation at Jerusalem, though later he was elevated in the thought of Christians to the actual rank of Messiah.

Robinson's view, however, entails two exegetical difficulties. First, he imposes on vv. 20b-21 a rigid chronological structure unwarranted by the text itself. That Jesus is identified as "the foreordained Christ [Messiah]"--"the Christ who has been appointed for you" (NIV)--is clear. But the question as to when that messianic ordination was revealed or is to be revealed is not anywhere as clear as Robinson assumes. One could just as well read v. 20 as "that he may send the foreordained Christ *again* " (understanding the Gr. *palin* , "again," to be in mind) as "that he may send the foreordained *and future* Christ" (as Robinson assumes). Second, Robinson's interpretation makes Luke appear incredibly naive in placing two such distinct and differing Christologies (as Robinson would have it) side by side; for in v. 18, which immediately precedes this passage, the Messiah of God (*ton Christon autou* , "his Christ") is identified as being the one who suffered. Yet Robinson would have us believe that in vv. 19-21 Luke also inserts an affirmation that messiahship is only to be looked for in the future. To argue

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that Luke included vv. 19-21 only to refute it by the preface of v. 18, as Robinson speculates may have been the case, is absurd. Luke could better have refuted the supposedly earlier Christology of vv. 19-21, should that have been his desire, simply by omitting it. And to say that Luke did not recognize the discrepancy, as Robinson thinks more likely, is to make him astonishingly obtuse. What has happened is that Robinson, having detached vv. 19-21 from the context and played on the looseness of expression that results when they are read out of context, takes the liberty of imposing temporal strictures on the passage at the point where it is ambiguous when detached from its context. But Luke intended for it to be read in context. And when read in context, the passage sets up no contradictory messianology--though, admittedly, it may not be as chronologically precise as one might wish.

22-26 No group within Israel that considered itself to be God's righteous remnant in the inauguration of the final eschatological days could expect to win a hearing among Jews without attempting to define its position vis-a-vis Israel's great leaders of the past--particularly Abraham, Moses, and David. And that is exactly what Luke shows Peter doing as he concludes his call for repentance. In vv. 22-23 Peter does this with respect to Moses by quoting Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19 ("The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me ..."). This was a widely accepted messianic proof text of the time, one that emphasized the command to "listen to him" by the addition of the phrase "in everything he tells you." Peter's argument here, though not stated, is implicitly twofold: (1) true belief in Moses will lead to a belief in Jesus, and (2) belief in Jesus places one in true continuity with Moses. In v. 24 Peter does this with respect to David by alluding to Samuel and all the prophets who followed him and by insisting that they too "foretold these days." Now it is certainly difficult to find any prophecy of Samuel that could be applied to Jesus as explicitly as the words of Moses just quoted. But Samuel was the prophet who anointed David to be king and spoke of the establishment of his kingdom (cf. 1Sam 16:13; see also 13:14; 15:28; 28:17). Furthermore, Nathan's prophecy regarding the establishment of David's seed

("offspring," NIV) as recorded in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 was accepted in certain quarters within Late Judaism as having messianic relevance (cf. 4QFlor) and taken by Christians as having been most completely fulfilled in Jesus (cf. 13:22-23, 34; Heb 1:5). In v. 25 Peter goes on to identify commitment to Jesus as Messiah with the promise God made to Abraham, quoting Genesis 22:18 and 26:4: "Through your offspring [lit., `seed'] all nations on earth will be blessed." What exegetically ties this portion together with what has preceded it is, evidently, the word "offspring," which appears in 2 Samuel 7:12 in reference to David's descendants and in Genesis 22:18 and 26:4 in reference to the descendants of Abraham. And on the basis of the Hebrew exegetical principle *gezerah sawah* (i.e., verbal analogy: where the same words are applied to two separate cases it follows that the same considerations apply to both), Peter proclaims that the promise to Abraham also has its ultimate

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fulfillment in Christ.

Peter's call to repentance in this sermon is an expression of the remnant theology of the earliest Christian believers at Jerusalem. He addresses his hearers as "heirs of the prophets and of the covenant." He uses both a *peshar* approach (a "this is that" application) and midrashic exegesis (e.g., *gezerah sawah*) in his treatment of Scripture. And he concludes with an offer of blessing extended first to individuals of the nation Israel: "When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways" (v. 26). In the Greek, *hymin proton* ("first to you") comes first in the sentence and so occupies the emphatic position. Many have thought that this stress upon Israel "first" is merely a Pauline import by the hand of Luke (cf. 13:46; Rom 1:16; 2:9-10). But to assume this entails failure to see the remnant context of the sermon and the remnant perspective expressed throughout it. Luke, however, wants his readers to appreciate something of how the earliest Christian preaching began within a Jewish milieu. From this he will go on to tell how this preaching developed through the various representative sermons that he later includes.

C. Peter and John Before the Sanhedrin (4:1-31)

As a direct outcome of the healing of the crippled beggar and as a further illustration of the thesis paragraph (2:42-47), Luke now presents a vignette concerning the arrest, trial, and witness of Peter and John. Source criticism, as noted earlier (cf. Introduction: The Question of Sources), has usually taken the two arrests and appearances of the apostles before the Sanhedrin (4:1ff.; 5:17ff.) as simply two versions of the same event, which were somehow brought together prior to Luke's writing to form one of his sources (perhaps "Recension A" of the Jerusalem-Caesarean source, cf. Harnack) and of which 4:1ff. was probably the original and 5:17ff. a legendary expansion. Jeremias, however, has shown that far from being repetitious, and therefore artificial in their dual inclusion, the two

accounts accurately reflect a significant point in Jewish jurisprudence and complement each other Joachim Jeremias, "Untersuchungen zum Quellenproblem der Apostelgeschichte," ZNW, 36 [1937], 208-13). Jewish law, as Jeremias pointed out, held that a person must be aware of the consequences of his crime before being punished for it. This meant that in noncapital cases the common people--as distinguished from those with rabbinic training, who, presumably, would know the law--had to be given a legal admonition before witnesses and could only be punished for an offense when they relapsed into a crime after due warning. Acts 4:1ff., therefore, presents the Sanhedrin as judging that the apostles were "unschooled, ordinary men" (v. 13) and tells how they were given a legal warning not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus (v. 17). But Acts 5:17ff. tells how the Sanhedrin reminded the apostles of its first warning (v. 28) and turned them over to be flogged because they had persisted in their "sectarian" ways (v. 40). Jeremias's explanation has been rightly accepted by most commentators today.

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This does not mean, however, that Luke himself clearly grasped the precise details of Jewish jurisprudence or that he was interested in detailing them for his readers. Probably he found these two accounts in his sources; and, while they reflect the legal procedures within Judaism of the day, they appealed to him and he used them because of the development of attitudes they show. Jeremias's explanation refers to the state of the tradition before the composition of Acts, not necessarily to Luke's handling of the material. But it shows that we should not take the historicity of the narratives in Acts lightly just because Luke has used sources for his own purposes.

1. The arrest of Peter and John (4:1-7)

1 Luke has so skillfully woven his sources together that vv. 1-4 not only conclude the narrative of the crippled beggar's healing but also introduce the first appearance of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin. Linguistically, the adverbial participle *lalounton* ("while they were speaking") joins vv. 1-4 with what has gone before, and the statement "the next day" (v. 5) is better taken as beginning a new unit of material. Yet, topically, vv. 1-4 introduce what follows more than they conclude what has preceded. The early opposition against preaching the gospel is shown by Luke as arising chiefly from priestly and Sadducean ranks--viz., "the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees." "The captain of the temple guard" was the commanding officer of the temple police force. He was considered inferior in rank only to the high priest and had the responsibility of maintaining order in the temple precincts (cf. 5:24, 26; Jos. War II, 409-10 [xvii.1]; VI, 294 [v. 3]; Antiq. XX, 131 [vi.1], 208 [ix.3]). The Sadducees were descendants of the Hasmoneans, who looked back to Mattathias, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon (168-134 B.C.) as having inaugurated the Messianic Age (cf. Jub 23:23-30; 31:9-20; 1Macc 14:4-15, 41) and saw themselves as perpetuating what their fathers had begun. As priests from the tribe of Levi, they claimed to represent ancient

orthodoxy and were uninterested in innovations. Thus they opposed any developments in biblical law (i.e., the "Oral Law"), speculations about angels or demons, and the doctrine of the resurrection (cf. 23:8; Mark 12:18, ||; Jos. War II, 119 [viii.2], 164-65 [viii.14]; Antiq. XIII, 171-73 [v.9]; XVIII, 11 [i.1], 16-17 [i.4]). Likewise, they rejected what they considered to be vain hopes for God's heavenly intervention in the life of the nation and for a coming Messiah, since, as they believed, the age of God's promise had begun with the Maccabean heroes and was continuing on under their supervision. For them, the Messiah was an ideal, not a person, and the Messianic Age was a process, not a cataclysmic or even datable event. Furthermore, as political rulers and dominant landlords, to whom a grateful nation had turned over all political and economic powers during the time of the Maccabean supremacy, for entirely practical reasons they stressed cooperation with Rome and maintenance of the status quo. Most of the priests were of Sadducean persuasion; the temple police force was composed entirely of Levites; the captain of the temple guard was always a high-caste Sadducee, and so were each of the high priests.

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2-3 The priests and Sadducees were "greatly disturbed" (*diaponoumenoi* , cf. 16:18) about two matters. First, the apostles were "teaching the people," an activity those of the Sadducean ranks saw as a threat to the status quo. Like their Master, Peter and John were rallying popular support and acting unofficially in a way as to disrupt established authority--an authority vested in Sadducean hands. Second, Peter and John were annoying the Sadducees because they were "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead." This probably means they were attempting to prove from the fact of Jesus' resurrection (*en to lesou* , which suggests "in the case of Jesus") the doctrine of the resurrection (cf. 17:31-32; 23:6-8), which the Sadducees denied. So Peter and John were taken into custody by the temple guard and, since it was evening, put into prison till the Sanhedrin could be called together the next morning to judge their case.

4 Not everyone agreed with the Sadducees' view of the activities and message of the apostles. Later in Acts, Luke will speak of the general tolerance of the people, the moderation of the Pharisees, and the desire of Rome for peace in the land as each having a part in restraining the Sadducees from doing all they might have done to oppose the gospel and its early missioners. Here, however, he tells us that many who heard the message (*ton logon* , lit., "the word") believed, with the result that the Jerusalem congregation grew to a total of about five thousand.

5 Though the Sadducees had among them the nation's titular rulers, they were actually a minority party and could govern only through the Sanhedrin. Thus on the next day "the rulers" (*hoi archontes* , which is a frequent synonym for "the high priests"; cf. 23:5; Jos. War II, 333 [xv.6], 405 [xvii.1], 407 [xvii.1], 627-28 [xxi.7]), the "elders" (*hoi presbyteroi*), and the "teachers of the law" (*hoi grammateis* , usually translated "scribes") came together, with these three groups forming the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin (*synedrion* , "council") was the senate and supreme court of the nation, which had jurisdiction in all noncapital cases--though it also advised the Roman governors in capital cases--and in one case, viz., that of

Gentiles trespassing beyond the posted barriers into the inner courts of the temple, could on its own sentence even a Roman citizen to death (cf. 21:28- 29; Jos. War VI, 124-28 [ii.4]). The Sanhedrin consisted of the high priest, who by virtue of his office was president, and seventy others, made up of members of the high priestly families, a few influential persons of various formal ideological allegiances or backgrounds within Judaism, and professional experts in the law drawn from both Sadducean and Pharisaic ranks. It was dominated by the Sadducees and probably came together mostly at their request. It met in a hall adjoining the southwest part of the temple area, probably at the eastern end of a bridge spanning the Tyropean Valley and next to an open-air meeting place called the Xystos (cf. Jos. War II, 344 [xvi.3]; V, 144 [iv. 2]; VI, 354 [vi.2]).

6 6 In stressing that the early opposition to Christianity arose principally from among the

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Sadducees, Luke makes the point that the Sadducean element was especially well represented in this first trial of the apostles: "Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family."

Annas was high priest for nine years

(A.D. 6-15), though he continued to exercise great influence after that and is seen in the NT as the real power behind the throne (cf. Luke 3:2; John 18:13-24).

Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was high priest for eighteen years (A.D. 18-36).

Altogether, Annas arranged to have five of his sons, one son-in-law (Caiaphas), and one grandson appointed to the office of high priest. Just who John and Alexander were, we do not know, though the Western text suggests that the first was Annas's son Jonathan, who replaced Caiaphas in A.D. 36.

7 It was before such an assembly, which probably arranged itself in a semicircular fashion, that Peter and John were brought. The man who had been healed was also there (cf. v. 14), though Luke does not say whether he had also been imprisoned or had been called in as a witness. The apostles were called on to account for their actions, and they used the occasion for an aggressive evangelistic witness.

2. Peter's defense and witness (4:8-12)

8 In a context of prophetic description of national calamities and cosmic turmoil, Luke has quoted Jesus as saying:

But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to

synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on

account of my name. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend

yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be

able to resist or contradict (Luke 21:12-15).

Undoubtedly Luke was thinking of many incidents of opposition to the gospel message when he wrote down these words. Indeed, he records a number of such happenings in Acts. But certainly when he wrote about Peter's first defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin (and also about the apostles' second appearance before the Sanhedrin in 5:17ff.) these words were ringing in his ears. For almost every item of Jesus' oracle is exemplified in Luke's account of Peter's situation, attitude, and message here in Acts. The use of the aorist passive (*plestheis*, "filled") in the expression "filled with the Holy Spirit" denotes a special moment of inspiration that complements and brings to a functional focus the presence in every believer's life of the person and ministry of God's Spirit.

9-10 Peter's defense focuses on the healing of the crippled man as being (1) "an act of kindness," which was (2) effected "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified

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but whom God raised from the dead." Luke uses the verb *anakrinomai* ("judge," "call to account"), which in classical Greek means a preliminary inquiry and suggests something about the nature of Jewish jurisprudence. Though Luke may very well have found this suggestion in his sources, his use of the same word in 12:19; 24:8; and 28:18 shows that he had no great desire to highlight it here. Peter's message is specifically addressed to the "rulers and elders of the people," though it also has "everyone else in Israel" in mind.

11-12 The double use of the verb *sothenai* ("to be saved") to mean both "restoration to health" physically and "preservation from eternal death" spiritually allows Peter to move easily from the healing of the cripple to the salvation of mankind and, therefore, from a defensive to an aggressive witness. And in his proclamation two quite early and primitive christological motifs are employed. The first of these is that of "the rejected stone," which has become "the capstone" of the building. In Judaism there was a frequent word-play between the words for "stone" (*eben*) and "son" (*ben*)--rooted generally in the OT (cf. Exod 28:9; Josh 4:6-8, 20-21; 1 Kings 18:31; Isa 54:11-13; Lam 4:1-2; Zech 9:16)--which attained messianic expression in the combination of the stone and Son of Man imagery in Daniel 2:34-35 and 7:13-14 and continued to be used through the early rabbinic period (cf. Gen R 68.11; Exod R 29; Pseudo-Jonathan Targum on Exod 39:7). It was for this reason, evidently, that Jesus concluded his parable of the vineyard and the rejected son (Mark 12:1-12, II) with the quotation of Psalm 118:22-23: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes." And it is this motif that Peter picks up here in his quotation of Psalm 118:22, building on the associations of "stone" and "son." In the first-century A.D. Jewish *Testament of Solomon* 22:7-23:4, the expression "the stone at the head of the corner" (*ho lithos eis kephalen gonias*) unambiguously refers to the final capstone or capstone placed on the summit of the Jerusalem temple to complete the whole edifice. Peter quotes Psalm 118:22 in this connection. Yet there are also within Judaism instances of the "stone imagery" referring to a "foundation stone," a usage that employs Isaiah 28: 16 for

support (cf. 1QS 8.4; b *Yoma* 54a). Apparently the "stone imagery" was used variously in Late Judaism. This same variety is reflected in the NT, for there the three christological stone passages (in addition to Mark 12:10-11, ||; Acts 4:11; cf. Luke 20:18; Rom 9:33; 1Cor 3:11; 1 Peter 2:4-8) have varying nuances. Here, however, while elsewhere in the NT the ideas of a "foundation stone" and a "stumbling stone" based respectively on Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14 are dominant, the thought of Jesus as the rejected stone that becomes the capstone and completes the edifice is dominant (cf. Ps 118:22). The second early christological motif in Peter's proclamation is "Salvation." In the longer Isaiah scroll of the DSS, "God's Salvation" and "Salvation" appear as Jewish designations of the expected Davidic Messiah (1QIsa 51.4-5, as shown by the use of the third person masculine suffix and pronoun in connection with the expression "my Salvation"). Likewise, "Salvation" is

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used as a messianic title in other Qumran literature (cf. CD 9.43, 54; 1QH 7.18-19; 4QFlor on 2Sam 7:14 and in connection with Amos 9:11), in various intertestamental writings (cf. Jub 31: 19; also T Dan 5:10; T Naph 8:3; T Gad 8:1; T Jos 19:11, though the provenance of the Gr. Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs is debated), and in the rabbinic materials (cf. b *Berakoth* 56b-57a). Luke has already stressed this early christological motif in Zechariah's hymn of praise (Luke 1: 69, "a horn of salvation"), in Simeon's prayer (Luke 2:30, "your salvation"), and in introducing the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 3:6, "God's salvation"). Now in addressing the Sanhedrin, to whom such a messianic designation was doubtless well known, Peter proclaims, "Salvation is found in no one else [than in `Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead,' (v. 10)], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (v. 12). There was nothing of compromise or accommodation in Peter's preaching. As this magnificent declaration shows, he was wholly committed to the uniqueness of Jesus as the only Savior. Peter and the other apostles never watered down the fact that apart from Jesus there is no salvation for anyone.

3. *The apostles warned and released* (4:13-22)

13-14 While literacy was high among Jews of the first century (cf. Jos. Contra Apion II, 178 [19]; Philo *Legatio ad Gaium* 210; M *Pirke Aboth* 5:21), theological disputations required rabbinic training. Since the so-called *am ha'ares*. ("people of the land") had not had such training, they were thought to be incapable of carrying on sustained theological discussion. But here were Peter and John, whom the council observed to be "unschooled, ordinary men," speaking fearlessly and confidently before the Jewish supreme court and senate. Their judges could not but wonder at such ordinary men having such a mastery of biblical argumentation (cf. Luke's

precis of their words in 3:22-26; 4:11-12). So they had to fall back on the only possible explanation--"these men had been with Jesus," who, despite his lack of rabbinic training, taught "as one who had authority" (Mark 1:22). To this fact they directed their attention (cf. the use of the intensive verb *epeginoskon*, "took note," NIV) as an important piece of evidence in the case before them. Furthermore, just as Jesus' teaching was coupled with demonstrations of miraculous powers, which reinforced among the people the impression of authority (cf. Mark 1: 23-28; 2:1-12; etc.), now Peter and John were beginning to do the same. There was no denying that the man *had* been healed. There he stood before them, physically regenerated at an age when regenerative cures do not occur of themselves (cf. v. 22, "for the man ... was over forty years old"). But even the miraculous is not self-authenticating apart from openness of heart and mind; and the Sadducees' preoccupation with protecting their vested interests shut them off from really seeing the miracle that occurred.

15-17 Just how Luke knew what went on among the members of the Sanhedrin in closed

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session has often been debated. Was Saul (Paul) a member of the council at that time and did he later tell Luke? Or had Paul heard the gist of the discussion from his teacher Gamaliel and then told it to Luke? Were there secret sympathizers of the apostles in the council who "leaked" to them what was said and from whom Luke picked it up? Or was the substance of the discussion inferred from what was said to Peter and John when they were brought back and so became embedded in Luke's source material? While the latter seems most probable, we are too far removed from the situation itself to be certain. What is certain about the council's response, however, is that (1) they would have denied the miracle if they could, (2) they had no disposition to be convinced either by what had happened or by the apostles' arguments, and (3) they felt the need of stopping the apostles' activity and teaching and therefore proposed to take the measures allowed them by Jewish law.

18-20 The decision of the council was to impose a ban on the apostles that would both warn them and provide a legal basis for further action should such be needed (cf. 5:28). So they called in the apostles and warned them "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (*epi to onomati tou Iesou*). The prepositions *epi* ("on") and *en* ("in") are often used interchangeably in the NT, and therefore the phrase *epi to onomati tou Iesou* should probably be taken as synonymous with *en to onomati tou Iesou* ("in the name of Jesus," cf. 2:38; so also the preposition *eis* in 8:16; 19:5). But the council had before it men whose lives had been transformed by association with Jesus, by God's having raised Jesus from the dead, and by the coming of the Holy Spirit. As with the prophets of old, God's word was in Peter's and John's hearts like a burning fire; and they could neither contain it nor be restrained from speaking it (cf. Jer 20:9). They had been witnesses of Jesus' earthly ministry and resurrection (cf. 10:39-41). They had been commanded by their risen Lord to proclaim his name to the people (cf. 1:8; 10:42). When faced with this ban, their response was never in doubt: "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." Established authority

per se was not what the apostles found they must stand against, for Jewish Christianity in its earliest days often accommodated itself to the established forms and functions of Judaism as a baby to its cradle. But where that established authority stood in opposition to God's authority, thus becoming in effect demonic, the early believers knew where their priorities lay and judged all religious forms and functions from a christocentric perspective.

21-22 The Sanhedrin had given its warning. And after stressing its nature and what would happen if it went unheeded (cf. the participial form of the verb *prosapeileo* , "threaten further"), they let them go. The moderation of the people prevented them from doing more, for "all the people were praising God for what had happened." Yet a legal precedent had been set that would enable the council to take, if necessary, more drastic action in the future. Occasions for such action were soon to be multiplied, as Luke tells us in 5:12-16.

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4. *The church's praise and petition* (4:23-31)

23-30 The church's response to the apostles' release was a spontaneous outburst of praise, psalmody, and petition. It begins (v. 24) by addressing God as *Despota* ("Sovereign Lord"). This was a common title in the Greek world for rulers, and it appears occasionally in Jewish circles as a form of address to God (cf. 3Macc 2:2; Luke 2:29; Rev 6:10). It is especially appropriate here in conjunction with the servant names used of David (v. 25, *pais sou* , "your servant"), Jesus (vv. 27, 30, *ho hagios pais sou* , "your holy servant"), and believers themselves (v. 29, *hoi douloi sou* , "your servants"). Structurally, the church's response includes an ascription to God drawn from Hezekiah's prayer in Isaiah 37:16-20 (v. 24b), a quotation of Psalm 2:1-2 (vv. 25-26), the reference to Jesus' passion in terms of the psalm just cited (vv. 27-28), and a petition for divine enablement in the Christians' present circumstances (vv. 29-30).

In the prayer of the church two matters of theological interest stand out. First, there is a "pesher" treatment (cf. comments on Psalm 2:16 in which the groups enumerated in the psalm are equated with the various persons and groups involved in Jesus' crucifixion: "the kings of the earth" with King Herod; "the rulers" with the Roman governor Pontius Pilate; "the nations" with the Gentile authorities; and "the people" with "the people of Israel." The earliest extant suggestion that Psalm 2 had any messianic import in Jewish thinking is Psalms of Solomon 17:26, where "the Son of David," who is also spoken of as "the Lord's Anointed" (*ho Christos kyriou* , v. 36), is presented as acting in terms of Psalm 2:9: "He shall destroy the pride of the sinners as a potter's vessel. With a rod of iron he shall break in pieces all their substance." Of late, and more explicitly, Psalm 2:1-2 has been found as a messianic testimonia portion in the DSS 4QFlorilegium, in connection with 2 Samuel 7:10-14 and Psalm 1:1. It seems, therefore, that sometime just prior to the Christian period, Psalm 2 was beginning to be used within Jewish nonconformist circles as a messianic psalm and that the

early Jewish Christians knew of this usage and approved it--though, of course, in its application to Jesus of Nazareth (cf. also the use of Ps 2:7 in 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; and Ps 2:9 in Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). Second, in the church's prayer the sufferings of Christian believers are related directly to the sufferings of Christ and inferentially to the sufferings of God's righteous servants in the OT. This theme of the union of the sufferings of Christ and those of his own is a theme that is developed in many ways throughout the NT (cf. esp. Mark 8-10; Rom 8:17; Col 1:24; 1 Peter 2:20-25; 3: 14-4:2; 4:12-13). It reaches its loftiest expression in Paul's metaphor of the body of Christ. Most significant is the fact that these early Christians were not praying for relief from oppression or judgment on their oppressors but for enablement "to speak your word with great boldness" amid oppressions and for God to act in mighty power "through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (v. 30). Their concern was for God's word to go forth and for Christ's name to be glorified, leaving to God himself their own circumstances. With such prayer surely God is well pleased. Luke has evidently taken pains to give us this prayer so that it might serve as something

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of a pattern to be followed in our own praying.

31 As a sign of God's approval, Luke tells us that "the place where they were meeting was shaken" (cf. Exod 19:18; Isa 6:4) and "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (cf. comments on v. 8). And with such motivation and divine enablement, their prayer was answered; and they "spoke the word of God boldly" (*parresias*, "with confidence," "forthrightly").

D. Christian Concern Expressed in Sharing (4:32-5:11)

Going back to one of the themes in his thesis paragraph of 2:42-47, Luke now illustrates the nature and extent of the early believers' commitment to one another in social concern. This he does by a summary statement, then by an example of genuine Christian concern, and finally by an example of disastrous deceit. The subject of Christian social concern, which appears in 2:42- 47 quite naturally along with matters of fellowship and worship in the context of the believing community, also appears here by juxtaposition with the vignettes in 3:1-4:31 and the inclusion of v. 33 in the context of the apostles' proclamation of Jesus' resurrection. For Luke as well as for the early Christians, being filled with the Holy Spirit not only concerned proclaiming the Word of God but also sharing possessions with the needy because of believers' oneness in Christ.

1. Believers share their possessions (4:32-35)

Source critical analyses of 4:32-35 have often concluded that the material is somewhat jumbled here, with either vv. 32-33 representing one of Luke's sources

and vv. 34-35 being an editorial insertion, or vv. 32, 34-35 stemming from an early source and v. 33 being an editorial intruder. Underlying all such analyses is the assumption that v. 32 and vv. 34-35 speak of the same attitude toward property and, therefore, that either vv. 34-35 must be a repetitious editorial comment or v. 33 an editorial intrusion. In reality, however, v. 32 and vv. 34-35 express differing views of personal possessions and property; in the former these are retained and shared, whereas in the latter they are sold and the proceeds distributed to those in need. Likewise, there seems to be a difference between v. 32 and vv. 34-35 in the attitude of the believers to such practices; in the former they are presented as customary and continuous, whereas in the latter such action seems to be an extraordinary response to special needs. In this prefatory statement (vv. 32-35), Luke is, then, (1) emphasizing that both continuous and extraordinary acts of Christian social concern were occurring in the early church, and (2) tying these acts into the apostolic proclamation of the Resurrection. It was because of such acts and the recognition that they must always be an inextricable part of the Christian ministry that God's blessing rested upon the early church.

32 The designation to *plethos ton pisteusanton* (lit., "the multitude of believers") means the

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whole congregation or, as in NIV, "all the believers" (cf. 6:2, 5; 15:12, 30), whose united allegiance to Jesus and one another is described by the common Hebraic idiom "one in heart and mind" (*kardia kai psyche mia*, lit., "one in heart and soul"; cf. Deut 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10; *passim*). This sense of oneness extended to sharing their personal possessions with others in need (cf. 2:45). Theologically, the early believers considered themselves the righteous remnant within Israel. So Deuteronomy 15:4 was undoubtedly in their mind: "There should be no poor among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you." Other Jewish groups that thought of themselves in terms of a remnant theology expressed their spiritual oneness by sharing their goods, and the Jerusalem church seems to have done likewise. Practically, they had many occasions for such sharing. With the economic situation in Palestine steadily deteriorating because of famine and political unrest (cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, pp. 121-22), employment was limited--not only for Galileans and others who had left their fishing and farming for living in the city, but also for the regular residents of Jerusalem who now faced economic and social sanctions because of their new messianic faith. Experientially, the spiritual oneness the believers found to be a living reality through their common allegiance to Jesus must, they realized, be expressed in caring for the physical needs of their Christian brothers and sisters. Indeed, their integrity as a community of faith depended on their doing this. Here in v. 32 we have, therefore, Luke's illustration of his thesis statement in 2:44-45 regarding the way the believers practiced communal living. They were not monastics, for the Jerusalem apostles and brothers of Jesus were married (cf. 1Cor 9:5), and so were many of the other believers (e.g., Ananias and Sapphira, 5:1-11). Nor did the believers form a closed society like Qumran. They lived in their own homes (cf. 2:46; 12:12) and had their own possessions as any household would. In these ways the communal life of the early Christians differed from that of the Qumran covenanters. But though the Christians had personal possessions, they did not consider them private possessions (*idion einai*, "was his own," NIV) to be held exclusively for their own use and enjoyment. Rather, they shared what they had and so expressed their corporate life.

33 Because of its juxtaposition with v. 32, we must understand the "great power" that accompanied the apostles' witness "to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" not just as rhetorical, homiletical, or even miraculous power but as the power of a new life in the believing community--a new life manifest in sharing possessions to meet the needs of others. It was this kind of power Jesus had in mind when he said, "All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:35). In view of such a combination of social concern and proclamation of the Word, it is no wonder that Luke goes on to say, "And much grace was upon them all" (cf. Luke 2:40).

34-35 "From time to time" brings out the iterative force of the imperfect verbs in these two

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verses. The acts Luke alludes to here were extraordinary and voluntary acts of Christian concern done in response to special needs among the believers, and they involved both sharing possessions and selling real estate. By separating these actions from those described in v. 32 and by the way he treats them, Luke suggests that they were exceptional and were not meant to be normative for the church. The church at Jerusalem--even in its earliest days--was neither a monastic nor semimonastic community. Nevertheless, such acts were highly regarded as magnanimous expressions of a common social concern, though as with any noble deed they could be done either sincerely or hypocritically.

2. *The generosity of Barnabas (4:36-37)*

36 Luke uses the generosity of Barnabas as "Exhibit A" to illustrate the type of extraordinary social concern that was "from time to time" (v. 34) expressed by believers at Jerusalem. Joseph was the Hebrew name used at home, in the synagogue, and among Jews generally. To this the apostles added the cognomen or descriptive nickname Barnabas, which means in Hebrew "Son of Encouragement," in order to distinguish him from others of the same name (cf. 1:23). His family came from Cyprus, and he may have had ancestral property there. John Mark was his cousin (cf. *ho anepsios* , "cousin," of Col 4:10), and the home of Mark's mother was in Jerusalem (cf. 12:12).

37 Barnabas is an important figure in Luke's account of the church's expansion from Jerusalem to Rome; he appears a number of times as a kind of hinge between the mission to the Jewish world and that to the Gentiles (cf. 9:27; 11:22-30; 13:1-14:28; 15:2-4, 12, 22, 36-41; see also 1Cor 9:6). Here, however, he is introduced as one who sold a field (*hyparchontos auto agrou* , lit., "his possession of a field") and gave the money to the apostles for distribution among those in need. We are not told whether the property he sold was in Cyprus or Palestine. If his family was from Cyprus but had lived in Palestine, and if he

continued to have connections with Cyprus while living in Palestine, he could have inherited or purchased property in Cyprus, Palestine, or both. Nor are we told how the biblical prohibition against Levites owning real estate applied in Barnabas's case (cf. Num 18:20; Deut 10:9)--though such a regulation seems not always to have been observed (cf. Jer 32:7-44; Jos. Life 76 [14]). What we are told, however, is that Barnabas gave a practical demonstration of Christian social concern, undoubtedly under no compulsion of either precedent or rule (cf. 5:4).

3. The deceit of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11)

The case of Ananias and Sapphira is opposite that of Barnabas, though it was meant to look the same. No doubt the story circulated within the church as a warning of the awfulness of deceit, for at times of great enthusiasm such a warning is especially necessary. And though Luke

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has taken evident pleasure in reporting the progress of the gospel and the vitality of faith during these early days of the church in Jerusalem, he does not omit this most distressing event. It is a situation that must have lain heavily on the hearts of the early Christians, but it is also a message that needs to be constantly kept in mind by Christians today.

1-2 The details of the conspiracy are concisely stated. A certain man named Ananias (Heb., "God is gracious") and his wife, Sapphira (Aram., "beautiful"), both of whom were evidently Christians, wanted to enjoy the acclaim of the church, as Barnabas did, without making a genuine sacrifice. So they too sold a piece of real estate (*ktēma* , "property," NIV; cf. 2:45) and pretended to give the full price to the apostles for distribution to the needy, though they conspired to keep back part of the money for themselves. We could wish to know more about their purpose and expectations so that we might better understand what took place later. But not even the apostles knew all about these things, though Peter inferred the substance of what went on between them. Luke's use of the verb *nosphizo* ("kept back," "purloined," "put aside for oneself"), which in the LXX heads the account in Joshua 7:1-26 of Achan's misappropriation of part of what had been dedicated to God, implies that Luke meant to draw a parallel between the sin of Achan as the Israelites began their conquest of Canaan and the sin of Ananias and Sapphira as the church began its mission--both incidents coming under the immediate and drastic judgment of God and teaching a sobering lesson. And this is very likely how the early church saw the incident as well.

3-4 Probably no account in Acts has provoked more wrath from critics than this one has. Commentators have complained about the difficulty of accepting the death of both husband and wife under such circumstances and have questioned Peter's ethics in not giving them an opportunity for repentance and in not telling Sapphira of her husband's death. Even more difficult for many is the way the story portrays Peter, who appears to be without the compassion or restraint of his

Lord. Jesus' relations with even Judas, whose sin was a thousand times more odious, certainly were not on this level. Many have felt it impossible for a leader of the early church to have shown such harshness over a relatively "slight" offense and have doubted that the church would have wanted to preserve such an account. Many, therefore, have taken this to be a fictitious story that arose only within a certain part of the early Christian community, perhaps to explain why certain members of the community had died before the Parousia. But Peter did not view the action of Ananias and Sapphira as merely incidental. He spoke of it as inspired by Satan and as a lie to both the Holy Spirit and God. It was a case of deceit and was an affront, not just on the community level, but primarily before God. Deceit is spiritually disastrous--a sin, whatever its supposed justification, that sours every personal relationship. Where there is even the suspicion of conscious misrepresentation and deception, trust is completely violated. The Qumran community realized the seriousness of deceit and, in a situation somewhat similar

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to what we have here, ruled that "if there be found in the community a man who consciously lies in the matter of his wealth, he is to be regarded as outside the state of purity entailed by membership, and he is to be penalized one fourth of his food ration" (1QS 6.24-25). The penalty for this at Qumran was not nearly as severe as that in Acts 5. But neither were the situations exactly alike. Ananias and Sapphira were severely dealt with because of the voluntary nature of their act of pretended piety (cf. v. 4) and because the greater freedom permitted in the church at Jerusalem made the individual Christian more responsible to be honest and more culpable when dishonest. In addition, the way Ananias and Sapphira attempted to reach their goals was so diametrically opposed to the whole thrust of the gospel that to allow it to go unchallenged would have set the entire mission of the church off course. Like the act of Achan, this episode was pivotal in the life and mission of God's people, for the whole enterprise was threatened at its start. And while we may be thankful that judgment upon deceit in the church is not now so swift and drastic, this incident stands as an indelible warning regarding the heinousness in God's sight of deception in spiritual and personal matters.

5 The psychological explanations of Ananias's sudden death attribute his fatal collapse to the shock and shame of being found out. The verb Luke uses for his death, however, is *ekpsycho* ("breathe one's last," "die")--the same one used in the LXX of Sisera's death (Judg 4:21). It appears in the NT only in contexts where someone is struck down by divine judgment (Acts 5:5, 10; 12:23). Psychological and physical factors may well have been secondary causes in Ananias's death, but Luke's emphasis is on the ultimate causation of God as the agent. This is the light in which he means his readers to understand his further comment: "And great fear seized all who heard what had happened."

6 The expression "the young men" (*hoi neoteroi*), particularly in parallel construction with its synonym in v. 10 (*hoi neaniskoi*), should probably be understood as denoting age and referring to certain younger men in the Christian

community, not as designating professional buriers. The verb *systemello* ("wrap up") was frequently used by ancient Greek physicians like Hippocrates, Galen, and Dioscorides to mean "to bandage a limb" or "to compress a wound by bandaging," though it was also used more widely in the sense of "cover up," "wrap up," "fold up," "take away," and "remove" (cf. BAG, p. 802). Whether the young men covered Ananias with a shroud and carried him away or wrapped him up in some manner and then carried him away or simply picked him up from the floor and took him off for burial is impossible to say. It is understandable that burial in hot climates takes place soon after death. But just why Ananias was buried so quickly and why his wife was not told seems strange, though we are not told enough about the circumstances to offer any explanation.

7-10 "About three hours later" the tragic episode was repeated with Sapphira. Just as man and wife were united in their conspiracy, so they were united in the judgment that came upon them.

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"All this is handled," as Haenchen says of Luke's account, "without pity, for we are in the presence of the divine punishment which should be witnessed in fear and trembling, but not with Aristotelian fear and pity" (p. 239).

11 It may seem redundant that Luke closes his account of Ananias and Sapphira's deception with the statement "Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events." However, this is a vignette of warning; and in concluding it Luke wants to stress this note of reverent fear--as he expressly did in v. 5 and implicitly did throughout his account. This is the first time in Acts that the word "church" (*ekklesia*) appears, though it is the regular word for both the church universal and local congregations elsewhere in the book (cf. 7:38; 8:1; 9:31; 11:22; 13:1; 14:23; 15:22, 41; 16:5; 19:32, 40; 20:28) and throughout the NT epistles (cf. Matt 16:18; 18:17).

E. The Apostles Again Before the Sanhedrin (5:12-42)

Having apparently found both accounts of the apostles' arraignments before the Sanhedrin in his source materials, Luke now gives the second account. Whether he clearly grasped or fully appreciated the rationale in Jewish jurisprudence for two such appearances is debatable (cf. introductory comments on 4:1-31). Nevertheless, he takes the occasion in telling of the apostles' second appearance before the council to emphasize the development of attitudes in these earliest days of the Christian mission in Jerusalem; viz., the deepening jealousy and antagonism of the Sadducees, the moderation of the Pharisees, and the increasing joy and confidence of the Christians. In so doing, Luke continues the elaboration of his thesis paragraph (2:42-47).

1. Miraculous signs and wonders (5:12-16)

This paragraph, like 2:42-47 and 4:32-35, is a Lukan summary introducing the material that follows. It includes some statements that reach back to what has been narrated before-- principally vv. 12a-14, which recall the Christians' practice of meeting in Solomon's Colonnade, the reverential fear aroused by the awful end of Ananias and Sapphira, and the increasing number of people who believed. In the main, however, the paragraph introduces the story of the apostles' second appearance before the Sanhedrin by giving a reason for the Sadducees' jealousy and for their second inquisition of the apostles, the reason being the continued success of the Christian mission at Jerusalem. Source critics have been troubled by the facts that (1) there is no proper connection between vv. 14 and 15 and that (2) v. 15 links up quite nicely with v. 12a apart from the intervening material. Some commentators, therefore, have taken vv. 12-14 as a self-contained unit stemming from an earlier source with vv. 15-16 as a rather awkward editorial addition; others have taken vv. 12a and 15-16 as representative of Luke's source material and vv. 12b-14 as an

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editorial intrusion. Luke, however, was probably faced in his source materials with the juxtaposition of the vignettes about the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira and the apostles' second appearance before the Jewish Sanhedrin and thus felt the need to provide his readers with a summary paragraph as a transition from the one to the other. We may fault him for crowding too much into his summary paragraph or for arranging it in a somewhat jumbled chronological sequence. But the course he plots in moving from reverential fear on the part of the church and the people (cf. 5:5, 11) to heightened jealousy on the part of the Sadducees (cf. 5:17-33) and increased rejoicing on the part of the apostles (cf. 5:41-42) is not too difficult to follow. And his purpose in constructing such a prefatory summary here--which, in fact, parallels in both motive and pattern what he has done at 4:32-35--is understandable.

12a The reason for the Sadducees' jealousy and the apostles' second appearance before the Jewish Sanhedrin is given quite concisely. In defiance of the council's orders, the apostles continued to carry on their ministry among the people, with "many miraculous signs and wonders" being performed. And as with his summary paragraph of 4:32-35, so Luke here puts his thesis statement at the very beginning of his treatment.

12b-14 Luke now speaks resumptively of three groups of people and their response to the Sanhedrin's warning and the fear engendered by Ananias and Sapphira's fate: (1) the Christians and their continued meeting together in Solomon's Colonnade; (2) the unbelieving Jews (*hoi loipoi*, "the rest") and their reluctance to associate too closely with the Christians; and (3) the responsive Jews (*ho laos*, "the people") and their honoring the Christians--with, in fact, many men and women from this group coming to believe in the Lord and being added to the number of Christian believers. Thematically, the resume serves to support the thesis statement of v. 12a; structurally it relates to its paragraph much as 4:33 with its reference to the apostles' continued preaching relates to its own paragraph.

15-16 The material in these two verses is structurally much like that of 4:34-35, for in both cases there is a logical and linguistic connection with each thesis statement (cf. the *gar* , "for," in 4:34 and the *hoste kai* , "as a result," in 5:15). In both instances special and extraordinary expressions of the respective thesis statements are detailed. As healing virtue had flowed from Jesus just by touching in faith the edge of his cloak (cf. Mark 5:25-34, II), so Luke tells us of extraordinary situations where even Peter's shadow was used by God to effect a cure (cf. 19:11-12). Whereas, in fact, the healing of the crippled beggar had originally aroused the Sadducees' antagonism, now, Luke tells us, such a miracle was being repeated numerous times in the apostles' ministry. Thus crowds from the outlying districts around Jerusalem thronged the apostles. No wonder the Sadducees' jealousy erupted anew!

2. The arrest and trial of the apostles (5:17-33)

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Luke's narrative of the apostles' second appearance before the Sanhedrin is divided into three sections, with a typically Lukan connective beginning each section: *anastas* ("rising up") at v. 17, introducing the arrest and trial of the apostles (vv. 17-33); *anastas* ("rising up"; "stood up," NIV) at v. 34, introducing Gamaliel's wise counsel of moderation (vv. 34-40); and *men oun* ("so," "then") at v. 41, beginning the statements about the apostles' rejoicing and continued ministry (vv. 41-42). NIV treats *anastas* in v. 17 and *men oun* in v. 41 as only stylistic connectives and, therefore, does not translate them.

17-18 Again, as in 4:1-31, Luke has the early opposition to Christianity arising principally from the Sadducees. Pharisees were undoubtedly present in the Sanhedrin (cf. comments on "the full assembly of the elders of Israel," v. 21), but their presence in these earliest days of the church's existence (till, at least, the "apostasy" of Stephen and the Hellenists) is depicted as exerting a moderating influence on the antagonism of the Sadducees. Thus "the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party [*he ousa hairesis*] of the Sadducees," are presented as taking official action a second time against the apostles--arresting them and putting them "in the public jail" (*en teresei demosia*). The word *hairesis* ("party") is employed variously in the NT of Sadducees (here), of Pharisees (15:5; 26:5), of Christians (24:5, 14; 28:22), of divisions within the churches (1Cor 11:19; Gal 5:20), and of heresies (2 Peter 2:1)--either with (in varying degrees) or without a pejorative nuance. The inclusion of the participle *ousa* ("being") seems to be a Lukan mannerism drawn ultimately from Grecian jurisprudence and usually adds little to the sense (cf. 13:1; 14:13; 28:17). Here, however, it gives the sentence a somewhat official and menacing sound. The word *demosia* used as an adverb carries the meaning of "publicly" (cf. 16:37; 18:28; 20:20; 2Macc 6:10; 3Macc 2:27; 4:7; Jos. War II, 455 [xvii.10]), and therefore as an adjective with *teresis* ("prison") undoubtedly means "the public prison" or "the public jail." The word *demosion* as a substantive, in fact, in the form of the Hebrew *demos*, passed into the language of the rabbis as the term for a "common jail" (cf. SBK, 2:635).

19-21a In speaking of "The Door-Miracles of the New Testament," Jeremias has noted the widespread popularity within the ancient world of legends regarding prison doors that open of themselves under divine instigation (cf. TDNT, 3:175) and concludes the following:

The threefold repetition of the motif of the miraculous opening of prison doors in Acts, its

distribution between the apostles in Acts 5:19, Peter in 12:6-11, and Paul in 16:26f., and

the agreement with ancient parallels in many details, e.g., liberation by night, the role of the

guards, the falling off of chains, the bursting open of the doors, the shining of bright light,

earthquake, all suggest that in form at least Lk. is following an established *topos* (ibid., p.

176).

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Undoubtedly the form of such stories must be judged to have influenced Luke to some extent in the composition of his narrative here, for literary conventions and forms, as well as ideas, were certainly "in the air." Yet, as Bruce observes, "In this as in all form-critical studies it must be remembered that the material is more important than the form; meat-pies and mud-pies may be made in pie-dishes of identical shape, but the identity of shape is the least important consideration in comparing the two kinds of pies" (*Book of the Acts* , p. 120,n). The "angel of the Lord" (*angelos kyriou*) is the LXX term for the Hebrew "Angel of Yahweh" (*malak YHWH*), which denotes God himself in his dealings with men (cf. Exod 3:2, 4, 7; passim). While the Greek *angelos* , like the Hebrew *malak* , may simply mean "messenger," here it denotes the presence or agency of God himself (cf. 8:26; 12:7, 23 [probably also simply *angelos* in 7:30, 35, 38; 12:11; 27:23]; Matt 1:20, 24; 2:13, 19; 28:2; Luke 1:11; 2:9). By divine intervention, then, the apostles were released from the public jail and told: "Go, stand in the temple courts, and tell the people the full message of this new life" (v. 20). The use of the aorist passive participle *stathentes* ("stand," or more appropriately, "hold your ground," "stand firm") with the present imperative *poreuesthe* ("go") suggests that dogged steadfastness on the apostles' part was required in face of the Sadducees' opposition. The apostles' message was to continue to be directed to the nation Israel (*ho laos* , "the people") and to continue to be proclaimed fully (*panta ta rhemata* , lit., "all the words" or "things"), in spite of the Sanhedrin's attempt to silence it. The focus is on "this new life"--with "life" (*zoe*) and "salvation" (*soteria*) understood in the NT as being synonymous, since both are Greek translations of the Hebrew word *hayyah* . And since the apostles had been miraculously released and divinely commissioned, that is exactly what they began to do.

21b-27 Having (as they thought) confined the apostles in the public jail for the night, in the morning "the high priest and his associates" called together the

members of the Sanhedrin in order to make some judgment and take some action about the disturbances the Christians caused. Luke adds "the full assembly of the elders of Israel" (*kai pasan ten gerousian ton huion Israel* ; lit., "even all the senate of the sons of Israel"), probably to make clear that the Pharisees were well represented in the council at this time, though they may not have been at the first trial but became vocal through Gamaliel at the second one (cf. vv. 34-40). So the Sanhedrin sent to the jail for their prisoners--but did not find them. "The captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were puzzled," probably concluding that the escape was aided and abetted by members of the temple guard. But when they heard that the apostles were teaching the people in the temple courts, "the captain" took command of his temple police and brought the apostles in before the council to be interrogated (v. 26a). In his narrative, Luke states that no violence was used in the arrest because the captain and his guard feared the reaction of the people (v. 26b). This says something about the early Christians' response to Jesus' example of nonviolence and nonretaliation when he was arrested (cf. Mark 14:43-50, II), for they might have begun a riot and thus extricated themselves. It also continues the theme of "the favor of all the people" in 2:

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42-47.

28 As the apostles stood before the Sanhedrin, the high priest, as president of the council, began the interrogation by reminding the apostles of the council's order for them to be silent, which obviously had not been complied with. It is uncertain whether Luke had in mind Annas or Caiaphas as leading the interrogation; while the latter was officially the high priest at the time, the former is assumed in the NT to be the real power behind the throne and continues to be called the high priest (cf. Luke 3:2; John 18:13-24). Formally, the high priest's interrogation contains no question at all but only points up the apostles' refusal to obey the Sanhedrin's order (i.e., a charge of "contempt of court"). He also objects to their insistence on blaming the council for Jesus' death (cf. 4:10, "whom you crucified"). For the Sadducean leadership of the council, the uncontested charge of contempt of court was sufficient legal warrant for taking action against the apostles. With their vested interests, the Sadducees wanted only to preserve their own authority and put an end to the rising disturbance among the people. They evidently had no interest in determining the truth or falsity of the Christians' claims. Their hardened attitude is manifest in their refusal to mention the name of Jesus (cf. *epi to onomati touto* , "in this name," v. 28; contra *epi to onomati tou Iesou* , "in the name of Jesus," 4:18) and in their spitting out the epithet "this man" when they had to refer directly to him.

29-32 By saying "Peter and the other apostles replied," Luke suggests Peter was the spokesman for the group of apostles on trial, with the others in some way indicating their agreement. Their response is hardly a reasoned defense but simply a reaffirmation of their position. As at the first trial (4:19), here they voice even more succinctly the noble principle "We must obey God rather than men." And also as at the first trial, the focus is on Jesus.

"By hanging him on a tree" (*kremasantes epi xylou*) is a locution for crucifixion and stems from Deuteronomy 21:22-23. While *xylon* was used in antiquity and in

the LXX variously for "a tree," "wood" of any kind, "a pole," and various objects made of wood, including "a gallows," it is also used in the NT for the cross of Jesus (cf. 10:39; 13:29; Gal 3:13 [quoting Deut 21:23]; 1 Peter 2:24). The titles "Prince" and "Savior" are christological ascriptions rooted in the confessions of the early church and particularly associated with the NT themes of exaltation and Lordship.

33 As far as the Sadducees were concerned, the charge of contempt of court was not only uncontested but repeated. On hearing the apostles reaffirm what to them could only be considered intolerable obstinacy, the Sadducees were furious and wanted to destroy them. While the Sanhedrin did not have authority under Roman jurisdiction to inflict capital punishment, undoubtedly they would have found some pretext for handing these men over to the Romans for such action--as they did with Jesus himself--had it not been for the intervention of the Pharisees, as represented particularly by Gamaliel.

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3. *Gamaliel's wise Counsel of moderation* (5:34-40)

The portrayal of Gamaliel's counsel (vv. 34-40) is the high point of Luke's account of the apostles' second appearance before the Sanhedrin and the main reason why he included the whole vignette. Structurally, the aorist participle *anastas* ("rising up") at v. 17, used as a connective and introducing the heightened antagonism of the Sadducees to the Christians (vv. 17-33), is balanced by the same connective *anastas* at v. 34 to introduce the moderation of the Pharisees depicted in vv. 34-40 (see introduction to vv. 17-33). Apparently Luke's purpose here is to contrast the developed antagonism of the Sadducees with the moderation of Gamaliel as spokesman for the Pharisees.

34-35 The Pharisees represent the continuation of the ancient Hasidim, that group of "pious ones" in Israel who, during the Seleucid oppressions, joined the Hasmoneans (Maccabees) in the struggle for religious freedom but later opposed the Maccabean rulers in their political and territorial claims. They came from diverse family, occupational, and economic backgrounds and gave themselves to the study of the Law (Torah) in both its written and oral forms, to expounding the Law in terms of its contemporary relevance, and to preparing the people for the coming of the Messianic Age by means of education in Scripture and the oral tradition. The name "Pharisee" probably comes from the Aramaic verb meaning "to separate" (*peras*), which Pharisees themselves evidently understood in its plural participial form to mean "the separated ones," in the sense of "holy ones dedicated entirely to God." In the period before the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, they were in the minority in the Sanhedrin. But their support by the people was so great that all matters of life and ceremony were guided by their interpretations (cf. Jos. Antiq. XVIII, 15 [i.3]), and Sadducean magistrates had to profess adherence to their principles in order to hold the formal allegiance of the populace (ibid., XVIII, 17 [i.4]). Theologically, the Pharisees looked for a Messianic Age and a personal Messiah; they accepted a doctrine of the resurrection of the dead (though

they understood such a doctrine to mean either the immortality of the soul or the reanimation and resuscitation of the body); they believed in the presence and activity of angels and demons; they held in balance the tenets of God's eternal decrees and man's freedom of will; and they tried to live a life of simple piety apart from needless wealth and luxury (cf. Jos. War II, 162-63 [viii.14]; Antiq. XIII, 171-73 [v.9]; XVIII, 11-15 [i.2-3]).

The first-century Pharisee Gamaliel I, who was either the son or grandson of the famous Hillel, was himself so highly esteemed among his people that the Mishnah says of him: "Since Rabban Gamaliel the elder died there has been no more reverence for the law; and purity and abstinence died out at the same time" (*Sotah* 9:15). Here in Acts he is portrayed as having taken charge at a certain point in the council meeting and as having gained the acquiescence of those present--not through any vested authority but through personal forcefulness and respect for what

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he represented. And he addresses the council members with the traditional designation "Men of Israel" (cf. 2:22).

36-37 The most notorious historical blunder in Acts, as many see it, is Gamaliel's reference to the Jewish revolutionaries Theudas and Judas the Galilean in this speech. The major historical problems are two: (1) the conflict with Josephus as to the chronological order of these rebellions, for Josephus places that of Judas at about A.D. 6 (Antiq. XVIII, 4-10 [i.1]) with that of Theudas at about A.D. 44 (Antiq. XX, 97-98 [v.1]); and, more seriously, (2) that Gamaliel at about A.D. 34 refers to an uprising of Theudas that did not occur till a decade or so later. Nineteenth-century criticism usually explained this as a result of Luke's confused dependence on Josephus, arguing that Luke had misunderstood Josephus's later reminiscence in Antiquities XX, 102 (v. 2) of Judas's revolt with the earlier actual revolt and had forgotten some sixty years or more after the event (if indeed he had ever known) that Gamaliel's speech preceded Theudas' rebellion by a decade or so. Many contemporary scholars continue to highlight this problem as being disastrous for any confidence in Luke's historical and chronological accuracy. Haenchen, for example, insists "that Luke should have been capable of transposing Theudas' march to the Jordan--which [on Haenchen's dating of Acts] took place perhaps forty years before the composition of Acts--to the time preceding the census of Quirinius, some eighty years distant from Acts, proves that the traditions reaching him had left him in utter confusion where chronology was concerned" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 257). But the arguments for Luke's dependence on Josephus have been fairly well demolished by a number of comparative studies of the two writers; and Emil Schurer's dictum continues to hold true today: "Either Luke had not read Josephus, or he had forgotten all about what he had read" ("Lucas und Josephus," ZWT, 19 [1876], 582-3. And despite the usual caustic comment about "special pleading," it still remains true that the Theudas Gamaliel referred to may have been one of the many insurgent leaders who arose in Palestine at the time of Herod the Great's death in 4 B.C., and not the Theudas who led the Jewish uprising of A.D. 44, and that

Gamaliel's examples of Jewish insurrectionists refer to a Theudas of about 4 B.C. and to Judas the Galilean of A.D. 6 whereas Josephus focused on the Judas of A.D. 6 and another Theudas of A.D. 44. Our problem with these verses, therefore, may result just as much from our own ignorance of the situation as from what we believe we know as based on Josephus.

38-39 It has frequently been claimed that the words of Gamaliel here are "an historical mistake," for they are not in character with what we know of Pharisaism (J. Weiss, *The History of Primitive Christianity*, 2 vols., tr., ed. F.C. Grant [London: Macmillan, 1937], 1:185). Yet in characterizing the respective attitudes of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, Josephus tells us: "The Pharisees are affectionate to each other and cultivate harmonious relations with the community. The Sadducees, on the contrary, are, even among themselves, rather boorish in their behavior, and in their relations with their compatriots are as rude as to aliens" (War II, 166 [viii).

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14]). And later he says that "the Pharisees are naturally lenient in the matter of punishments" (Antiq. XIII, 294 [x.6]). Likewise, Rabbi Johanan the sandal maker, a second-century disciple of Rabbi Akiba, is quoted in *Pirke Aboth* 4:11: "Any assembling together that is for the sake of Heaven shall in the end be established, but any that is not for the sake of Heaven shall not in the end be established"--a policy of waiting to see the end result of a matter that is exactly the attitude of Gamaliel as Luke reports it here. Admittedly, both Josephus and Johanan had their own prejudices and purposes in saying what they did (this is also true of every writer and teacher, including commentators on Acts). Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that such sentiments of tolerance and moderation, with history being viewed as the final judge of whether something is of God, characterized the better Pharisees of the day and that therefore Gamaliel's response to the proclamation and activity of the apostles was not out of line for such an Hillelian Pharisee as he. Of course, later in Acts (cf. 8:1, 3; 9:1-2), Saul of Tarsus, who trained under Gamaliel I (cf. 22:3), takes a very different attitude toward the Christians, joining with the Sadducees and obtaining the high priest's authorization to track them down and imprison them. But between Gamaliel's advice in Acts 5 and Saul's action in Acts 8 and 9, there arose from the depths of Christian conviction what the Pharisees as well as the Sadducees could only have considered to be a threat of Jewish apostasy. Before Gamaliel's counsel of moderation, Luke tells us that the central issues of the church's proclamation had been the messiahship, lordship, and saviorhood of Jesus of Nazareth--his heaven-ordained death, his victorious resurrection, and his present status as exalted Redeemer. "The stream of thought," as Manson observed in characterizing the church's early functional theology, "flowed in an intense but narrow channel; carrying in its flood much that for the time remained in solution in the subconscious rather than in the conscious region of the Christian mentality" (William Manson, *Jesus the Messiah* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1943], p. 52). To the Sadducees who instigated the early suppressions, such teaching not only upset orderly rule but, more importantly, impinged upon their authority. To the more noble of the Pharisees, however, the Jerusalem Christians were yet within the scope of Judaism and not to be treated as heretics. The divine claims

for Jesus as yet lay in the subconsciousness of the church, and those who were his followers showed no tendency to relax their observance of the Mosaic law because of their new beliefs. Other sects were tolerated within Judaism. Those whom the Pharisees considered to be deluded in their messianic commitment could be countenanced as well. As Nock said, "The Pharisees might wish all men to be even as they were; but that result could be attained only by persuasion" (A.D. Nock, *St. Paul* [New York: Harper, 1938], pp. 35-36). Between Gamaliel's advice and Saul's action, however, there arose within Christian preaching something that could only be viewed within Jerusalem as a real threat of Jewish apostasy. In Acts 6-7 Stephen is portrayed as beginning to apply the doctrines of Jesus' messiahship and lordship to traditional Jewish views regarding the land, the law, and the temple. Moreover, he is seen as beginning to reach conclusions that related to the primacy of Jesus' messiahship and

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lordship and the secondary nature of Jewish views about the land, the law, and the temple. How Stephen got involved in such discussions and how he developed his argument will be dealt with in loc. For Stephen this was a dangerous path to tread, particularly in Jerusalem--a path even the apostles seemed unwilling to take at that time. Stephen's message was indeed Jewish apostasy! And had Rabbi Gamaliel the Elder faced this feature of Christian proclamation in the second Sanhedrin trial of the Jerusalem apostles, his attitude would undoubtedly have been different. With the whole basis of Judaism under attack in Stephen's preaching, as the Pharisees would have viewed it, Saul's persecution of the believers was probably undertaken later on with Gamaliel's full approval. As yet, however, that was not the situation; so Gamaliel here urges tolerance and moderation.

40 Gamaliel's wise counsel prevailed to some extent among his Sanhedrin colleagues and held back the worst of Sadducean intentions, though it did not entirely divert their wrath. Thus the apostles were flogged (probably with the severe beating of thirty-nine stripes detailed in *Makkoth* 3:10-15a), were warned that the ban against teaching in the name of Jesus was still in effect, and were then released.

4. The apostles' rejoicing and continued ministry (5:41-42)

Luke ends his account of the apostles' second appearance before the Sanhedrin with a brief summary that speaks of their rejoicing and continued ministry. It is a statement that has nuances of defiance, confidence, and victory; and in many ways it gathers together all Luke has set forth from 2:42 on. Dibelius prefers to think of these chapters as considerably exaggerated throughout and assumes the situation to have been more like the following:

A band of people had been gathered together in a common belief in Jesus Christ and in the

expectation of his coming again, and were leading a quiet, and in the Jewish sense, "pious"

existence in Jerusalem. It was a modest existence, and nothing but the victorious conviction

of the believers betrayed the fact that from this company a movement would go out which

was to change the world, that this community was to become the centre of the Church

(*Studies in Acts* , p. 124).

And Haenchen agrees, insisting that "in the quiet life of the primitive community there were no mass assemblies such as Luke places at the outset of the Christian mission, therefore no conflicts with the Sadducees arising from them," and that only with the rise of the Hellenists in the church sometime around A.D. 44 was "this secluded situation, in which the winning of souls for the Lord went on in the quiet personal encounter of man with man," brought to an end (*Acts of the Apostles* , p. 258). Ultimately, of course, we are forced to take sides, either with Luke and his claim of having

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accurate source material that stems from reliable eyewitnesses or with Dibelius, Haenchen, et al. and their claim to "expert opinion." The latter would have us believe that it boils down to a choice between tradition and scholarship. In actual fact, however, it is a choice between two quite divergent historical traditions and two quite different philosophical perspectives, each of which has become "orthodox" in its own circle, and two fairly different ways of doing tradition-historical criticism. And while his material is selective in nature, styled, fragmentary, and incomplete, it is, as this commentary attempts to demonstrate, Luke's view and understanding of events that leads us much further along the path of truth than Dibelius or Haenchen do, despite their many acknowledged excellencies of insight and skill in handling details.

41 Luke connects his summary statement with his narrative by using one of his favorite connectives-- *men oun* ("so," "then"). And he stresses the fact that just as the apostles performed miracles through the power of the name of Jesus (cf. 3:6) and proclaimed that name before the people and the council (cf. 3:16; 4:10, 12), so they rejoiced when "counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name."

42 Furthermore, Luke tells us that "they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ." In this somewhat formal statement, which comes close to concluding our author's whole first panel of material, there is both a correlation with the thesis paragraph of 2:42-47--explicitly in the phrases "in the temple courts and from house to house" (cf. 2:46), though also inferentially in the note of continuance that is sounded--and an anticipation of the final words of Luke's sixth panel at the very end of Acts: "boldly and without hindrance" (28:31).

F. The Hellenists' Presence and Problem in the Church (6:1-6)

The source or sources at Luke's disposal for his first panel of material on the earliest days of the church in Jerusalem seem to have been fairly well intact for chapters 2-5. Probably, as we have seen, Luke added 2:42-47, which serves as the thesis paragraph for the whole panel, and also inserted the two summary paragraphs 4:32-35 and 5:12-16, which provide the settings for their corresponding vignettes. Likewise, Luke's literary touch is everywhere apparent in the style and form of his presentation. In the main, it appears he had his sources fairly well in hand for most of this part of his narrative. Furthermore, his source material seems to have contained its own conclusion, which was probably very similar to what we have at 5:41-42. But in moving on from this point, Luke seems to have been faced with a real procedural problem. In the first place, his second panel (6:8-9:31) focuses upon three individuals--Stephen, Philip, and Saul of Tarsus--whose ministries were essential for his developmental thesis but who have not as yet been mentioned. Lest they be thought of as isolated figures in the development of the early church, Luke must relate them to what has gone before. Also, since these three men were in some way related to the Hellenists (though Saul of Tarsus was not himself a Hellenist),

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and since thus far in the narrative there is, aside from 2:5-12, nothing regarding these Hellenistic Christians, Luke found it necessary to tell his readers something about this element in the church. Luke might have started his second panel with discussing the presence of the Hellenistic Christians in Jerusalem, for that would have provided a good thematic introduction for the panel. To have done so, however, would have separated them from their roots in the early church and would have damaged his theme of continuity amid diversity and development. Instead, he chose to include the portrayal of the Hellenists in the Jerusalem congregation in his first panel and before the summary statement (6:7) that concludes that panel--even though the Jerusalem church itself, for reasons that will be recounted as we proceed, might not have provided him with source material on the Hellenists, and he had to ferret it out for himself.

1 Historically, this verse is not only one of the most important in Acts, it is also one of the most complicated and most discussed verses in the entire book. What one concludes regarding the identity of "the Grecian Jews" (*Hellenistai*, lit., "Hellenists"), their relation to "the Aramaic-speaking community" (*Hebraioi*, lit., "Hebraists" or "Hebraic Jews"), and their circumstances within the church largely affects how one understands the material in Luke's second panel (6:8-9:31) and the whole course of events within the Jerusalem church as well. It is important, therefore, to understand as precisely as possible what Luke says and implies in describing this group within the early church (i.e., the Hellenists--NIV, "the Grecian Jews"), a group he introduces by the phrases "in those days" and "when the number of disciples was increasing." As for differentiating the Hellenists from the believers of Hebrew background, most commentators from Chrysostom to the present have identified them by their language and geographical origin--i.e., as Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora who had settled in Jerusalem among the native-born and Aramaic-speaking populace (e.g., see BC, 5:59-74). But that such a definition lacks sufficient precision to be useful is

pointed up by the fact that Paul classed himself among the *Hebraioi* ("Hebrews," 2Cor 11:22) and a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5), though he was also fluent in Greek and came from a Diaspora city. Some interpreters, therefore, have understood Hellenists to mean Jewish proselytes (e.g., E.C. Blackman, "The Hellenists of Acts vi.1," ExpT, 48 [1937], 524-25), though the fact that only one of the seven men in v. 5 is called a proselyte seems fatal to such a position (assuming that the seven chosen to supervise the daily distribution of food are identified with the Hellenists generally). A few have even argued that the term *Hellenistes* means no more than the noun *Hellen* ("Greek") because of its derivation from the verb *hellenizo*, which means "to live as a Greek" rather than just "to speak Greek"--and therefore have taken it to refer simply to Gentiles (e.g., H.J. Cadbury, BC, 3:106). But it is difficult to visualize Gentile believers, apart from those who first were Jewish proselytes, as accepted members within the Jerusalem church at any time during the first century, much less at such an early date as Acts 6 requires. The case of Cornelius is presented in 10:1- 11:18 as quite exceptional, and this prohibits any easy assumption that such instances were common at an earlier time. Moreover, there is no indication that Cornelius actually joined the

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body of Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, though they accepted the fact of his conversion.

Of late, some have proposed that the Hellenists of Acts 6 were Jews who were related in some manner to the Essene movement in Palestine. Oscar Cullmann has urged that we view them as connected in some way with the Essenes (cf. esp. "The Significance of the Qumran Texts for Research into the Beginnings of Christianity," *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. K. Stendahl [London: SCM, 1957], pp. 18-32) and has proposed that it was just such a group that formed "the Johannine circle" responsible for both the Johannine writings and the Letter to the Hebrews (*The Johannine Circle*, tr. J. Bowden [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976], passim). Marcel Simon has spoken repeatedly of the Hellenists as a radical reforming "gentilistic" party within Essene sectarianism (passim); and Jean Danielou raised the possibility that they were a Samaritan branch of Essenism (*The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, tr. J.A. Baker [Chicago: Regnery, 1964], p. 72). To identify the Hellenists with the Essenes, however, is to presuppose a picture of Essene theology that goes much beyond the evidence now at hand and flies in the face of some of the data now available. It is difficult to see how Essene obsessions with ritual purity, strict observance of the law, and the eternal significance of the temple cultus--even though in opposition to the Jerusalem priesthood because of its secularization and impurity--can be correlated with what Acts 6 says about the Hellenists or with Stephen's message in Acts 7. And the anti-Samaritanism of the Qumran community, which comes to the fore in the various unfavorable allusions in the pesher commentaries to "the men of Ephraim and Manasseh" (cf. 4QpPs 37 on v. Ps 37:14; 4QpNah on Nah 2:13; 3:1, 6), is hard to reconcile with the proclamation of the gospel in Samaria by those who were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria by the persecution that began with Stephen's martyrdom. If the Essenes are to be brought into the discussion of Acts 6 at all, it is much more likely (as we shall suggest later) that they are to be identified in some manner and to some degree with the "large number of priests" of 6:7 who "became obedient to the faith." Nor is it likely that the Hellenists should be identified with the Samaritans, as Abram Spiro has argued on the basis

of the linguistic and conceptual parallels he finds between Stephen's speech of Acts 7 and readings in the Samaritan Pentateuch and Samaritan views of history ("Stephen's Samaritan Background," Appendix V, in Munck, Acts, pp. 285-300). Variants of the Hebrew biblical text were more widespread than has been previously realized, as the DSS have taught us, and the parallels between Stephen and the Samaritans are more analogical than strictly genealogical. Furthermore, since Samaritan theology was so thoroughly dominated by sacerdotal interests, it is very hard to believe that anyone brought up in it could have given the kind of prophetic interpretation of the OT that is expressed in Stephen's discourse. In addition, it seems quite inconceivable that Luke would not have mentioned the Samaritan connection of either the Hellenists or Stephen and Philip, if there had been such. Elsewhere, he has not hesitated to speak approvingly of certain Samaritans (cf. Luke 10:33; 17:16), and in his account of the advance of the gospel into Samaria (8:4-25) it would have been to his advantage to have

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spoken of the connection of the Samaritans with the Hellenists. And if all this does not carry conviction, it seems even more inconceivable that Luke would have a Samaritan addressing the Jewish Sanhedrin as "brothers and fathers" (22:1). C.F.D. Moule's suggestion that the Hellenists were "simply Jews (whether by birth or as proselytes) who spoke only Greek and no Semitic language, in contrast to *Hebraioi*, which would then mean the Jews who spoke a Semitic language in addition, of course, to Greek" ("Once More, Who Were the Hellenists?" *ExpT*, 70 [1959], 100) has much to commend it and seems to be an advance in the explicit meaning of the term. It hurdles the difficulty in the traditional interpretation as to how Paul could call himself an Hebraic Jew when he was from the Diaspora, it provides an explanation as to why Hellenistic synagogues were required in Jerusalem, and it offers an insight into the problem of why two of the seven men chosen in 6:5 (Stephen and Philip) appear almost immediately thereafter as evangelists within their own circle when they had actually been appointed to supervise more mundane concerns. Yet, as J.A. Fitzmyer remarks, "It should also be recalled that such a linguistic difference would also bring with it a difference in outlook and attitude" ("Jewish Christianity in Acts in Light of the Qumran Scrolls," Keck and Martyn, p. 238)--or, at least, would give rise within more Hebraic circles to suspicions and accusations of such a difference. According to the Talmud, Pharisaism made little secret of its contempt for Hellenists and, unlike those from Syria or Babylonia (regions that are often considered extensions of the Holy Land in Talmudic discussions), they were frequently categorized by the native-born and assumedly more scrupulous populace of Jerusalem as second-class Israelites (cf. *LTJM*, 1:7-9). And to judge by the claim of some in the Corinthian church that they were true Hebraic Jews as opposed to being Hellenists (cf. 2Cor 11:22a), and by the need for Paul to defend his Hebraic heritage so stoutly and so repeatedly (cf. 22:3; 2Cor 11:22; Philippians 3:5, probably in view of his Tarsian birth), it appears that this attitude of Hebraic superiority was rather widespread. Probably, therefore, any definition of the *Hellenistai* of Acts 6 based on linguistic or geographic considerations alone, while not entirely to be set aside, should be subsumed under a more primary understanding that stresses intellectual

orientation (either actual or assumed). Also, we should very likely think of this element within the early church along the lines of "Hellenized Jewish Christians" or "Grecian Jewish believers"--that is, as Jews living in Jerusalem who had come from the Diaspora and were under some suspicion by reason of their place of birth, their speech, or both, of being more Grecian than Hebraic in their attitudes and outlook but who, since coming to Jerusalem, had become Christians. Many of them, no doubt, had originally returned to the homeland out of religious ardor and today would be called Zionists (cf. B. Reicke's identification of them as "zionistischen Diasporajuden" in "Der geschichtliche Hintergrund des Apostelkonzils und der Antioch-Episode," *Studia Paulina*, ed. W.C. van Unnik and G. Sevenster [Haarlem: Bohn, 1953], p. 178). Perhaps they tended to group together because of their similar backgrounds and common language, as the many Hellenistic synagogues in Jerusalem would seem to indicate (cf. E. Schurer, JE, 1:371-72, on the Diaspora

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synagogues in Jerusalem). But since attitudes and prejudices formed before conversion are often carried over into Christian life--too often the unworthy more than the worthy ones--some of the problems between the Hebraic Jews and the Hellenistic Jews in the church must be related to such earlier differences and prejudices. In 6:1-6, Luke tells us that the Hellenists' "widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food" (v. 1). Judaism had a system for the distribution of food and supplies to the poor, both to the wandering pauper and to those living in Jerusalem itself (cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, pp. 126-34). There were also special religious communities (like the Pharisees and the Essenes) that had their own agents in every city to provide their members "a social service somewhere between the private and public services" (ibid., p. 130). The early Christian community at Jerusalem also expressed its spiritual unity in communal sharing of possessions and in charitable acts (cf. 2:44-45, 4:32-5:11). Apparently with the "increasing" number of believers and with the passing of time, the number of Hellenistic widows dependent on relief from the church became disproportionately large. Many pious Jews of the Diaspora had moved to Jerusalem in their later years in order to be buried near it, and their widows would have had no relatives near at hand to care for them as would the widows of the longtime residents. Nor as they became Christians would the "poor baskets" of the national system of relief be readily available to them. So the problem facing the church became acute. The account of the dispute cannot have been invented by Luke because to do so would have been incompatible with the development of his conciliatory purpose. If anything, Luke's desire to emphasize harmonious relations within the early Christian community (cf. his three introductory summary statements-- 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16) may have led him to downplay the details of the dispute, which is probably one reason why commentators have such a difficulty in interpreting the situation. Nor should we assume that the issue about the distribution of food was all that disrupted the fellowship. As Manson observed, "It is possible that the grievance in question was only the symptom of a larger tension between the two groups, arising from broad differences of outlook and sympathy" (William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951], pp. 27-28). Earlier prejudices and resentments of this kind

may have been reasserting themselves in the early Jerusalem church. And if the Hellenists spoke mostly in Greek, separate meetings within the Christian community may have been required for them--meetings which of themselves could have awakened old prejudices and resentments, both within the church and throughout the Jewish populace.

2-4 The apostles' response in this matter was to call the Christians together and suggest a solution. It is significant that the apostles were not prepared simply to ignore the problem; they seem to have realized that spiritual and material concerns are so intimately related in Christian experience that one always affects the other for better or worse. Similarly, there was no attempt either to assign blame or to act in any paternalistic fashion. Rather, their suggestion was that seven men "full of the Spirit and wisdom" be chosen from among the congregation (*ex hymon* ,

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"from among you," which may mean from among the Hellenists alone) who could take responsibility in the affair. The apostles sought to give their attention exclusively "to prayer and the ministry of the word." The reference to the apostles as "the Twelve" occurs only here in Acts (cf. 1Cor 15:5), though earlier Luke has spoken of "the Eleven" in such an absolute and corporate manner (cf. Luke 24:9, 33; Acts 2:14). Likewise, the references to Christians as "the disciples" (*hoi mathetai*) here and in v. 1 are the first instances of this usage in Acts, though in the remainder of the book it occurs fairly often. However, the designation is not found in the Pauline Epistles or subapostolic literature. In using both these terms, Luke has gone back to the language of the earliest Christians and tried to make idiomatic use of it, though this may not have been natural for him. The words "full of the Spirit and wisdom" evidently refer to guidance by the Holy Spirit and skill in administration and business, which, singly and together, are so necessary in Christian service. While Christian ministers wish such qualities were more characteristic of their own boards and councils, it is only fair to say that boards and councils often wish their ministers were given more "to prayer and the ministry of the word"! A pattern is set here for both lay leaders and clergy, and God's work would move ahead more efficiently were it followed more carefully.

5-6 The apostles made a proposal, but the church, the community of God's Spirit, made the decision. The apostles therefore laid their hands on the Seven and appointed them to be responsible for the daily distribution of food. The laying on of hands recalls Moses' commissioning of Joshua in Numbers 27:18-23, where through this act some of Moses' authority was conferred on Joshua (cf. Lev 3:2; 16:21 for the symbolic transference of sin). That is evidently what the laying on of hands was meant to symbolize here, with the apostles delegating their authority to the seven selected by the church (cf. 8:17; 9:17; 13:3; 19:6 for other instances of this practice). All seven men have Greek names; one of them is singled out as having been a Gentile convert to Judaism (that is, a "proselyte"). But it is

impossible to be sure from the names themselves whether all seven were Hellenists, for at that time many Palestinian Jews also had Greek names. Nevertheless, the fact that Luke gives only Greek names suggests that all seven were in fact from the Hellenistic group within the church. Likewise, the text does not directly call these seven by the ecclesiastical title "deacon" (*diakonos*), even though it uses the cognate noun *diakonia* ("distribution") in v. 1 and the verb *diakoneo* ("wait on") in v. 2 for what they were to do (though it also uses the noun *diakonia* , "ministry," in v. 4 for the apostles' proclamation). Yet the ministry to which the seven were appointed was functionally equivalent to what Paul covered in the title "deacon" (cf. 1Tim 3:8-13)--which is but to affirm the maxim that in the NT "ministry was a function long before it became an office."

Acts 6:1-6 is particularly instructive as something of a pattern for church life today. In the first place, the early church took very seriously the combination of spiritual and material concerns in carrying out its God-given ministry. In doing so, it stressed prayer and the proclamation of the

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Word, but never to the exclusion of helping the poor and correcting injustices. And even when the church found it necessary to divide internal responsibilities and assign different functions, the early believers saw these as varying aspects of one total ministry. Second, the early church seems to have been prepared to adjust its procedures, alter its organizational structure, and develop new posts of responsibility in response to existing needs and for the sake of the ongoing proclamation of the Word of God. Throughout the years various so-called restorationist movements in the church have attempted to reach back and recapture the explicit forms and practices of the earliest Christians and have tried to reproduce them as far as possible in their pristine forms, believing that in doing so they are more truly biblical than other church groups. But Luke's narrative here suggests that to be fully biblical is to be constantly engaged in adapting traditional methods and structures to meet existing situations, both for the sake of the welfare of the whole church and for the outreach of the gospel. And, finally, Luke's account suggests certain restraining attitudes that could well be incorporated into contemporary churchmanship. Among these are (1) refusing to get involved in the practice of assigning blame where things have gone wrong, preferring rather to expend the energies of God's people on correcting injustices, prayer, and the proclamation of the Word, and (2) the refusal to become paternalistic in solving problems, which implies willingness to turn the necessary authority for working out solutions over to others--even, as was possibly the case here, to those who feel the problem most acutely and may therefore be best able to solve it.

G. A Summary Statement (6:7)

7 Luke concludes his first panel of material on the earliest days of the church in Jerusalem with this summary statement, which is very much in line with his thesis paragraph (2:42-47) and his summary paragraphs (4:32-35; 5:12-16) that head

their respective units of material. His focus in this first panel has been on the advances of the gospel and the responses of the people. Therefore he concludes by saying that "the word of God spread" and "the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly." Before he leaves his first panel of material, however, Luke--almost, it seems, as an afterthought--inserts the comment that "a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." At first glance this is, to say the least, somewhat perplexing because, in view of 4:1ff. and 5: 17ff., it seems extremely difficult to believe that priests in any numbers would have become Christians. Nevertheless, as Jeremias has pointed out in detail, there were perhaps as many as eight thousand "ordinary" priests and ten thousand Levites, divided into twenty-four weekly courses, serving at the Jerusalem temple during the period of a year, whose social position was distinctly inferior to that of the high priestly families and whose piety in many cases could well have inclined them to an acceptance of the Christian message (cf. *Jerusalem* , pp. 198-213). In addition, the Qumran covenanters thought of themselves as the true sons of Zadok, as the so-called Zadokite Fragments from Caves 4 and 6 (which were formerly known as the Cairo

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Damascus Covenant) testify; and many of the common people in Israel undoubtedly respected-- even if they could not support--the claim of these Essene covenanters to the priesthood. Perhaps Luke himself was not aware of the distinctions in Palestine between high priestly families, ordinary priests, and Essene-type priests. What he evidently learned from his sources was that a great number of persons calling themselves priests became believers in Jesus and were numbered with the Christians in the Jerusalem church; and he seems to have just included that bit of information as something of an appendix to his portrayal of the church's earliest days in the city. He might also have found it a matter either difficult to believe or difficult to elaborate in view of what he had said earlier about the priests of Jerusalem. However, if he had known about the ordinary priests of the temple and the Essene-type priests at Qumran, the response of the priests might not have seemed so amazing and he may have said more.

Panel 2--Critical Events in the Lives of Three Pivotal Figures (6:8-9:31)

Luke now turns to three key events in the advance of the gospel beyond its strictly Jewish confines, that is, to the martyrdom of Stephen, the early ministries of Philip, and the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Luke's presentation is largely biographical, with the initial word of each of the three accounts being the name of its central figure (cf. *Stephanos* , 6:8; *Philippos* , 8:5 [after an editorial introduction at 8:4, containing Luke's favorite connective *men oun*]; and *Saulos* , 9:1). This is the type of material that would have circulated widely among the dispossessed Hellenistic Christians, what with its heavy emphasis upon "who said what to whom" and its detailed account of Stephen's argument before the Sanhedrin. It is also the kind of material one picks up by talking with one or more of the participants. It is not too difficult, in fact, to imagine that in addition to such source materials as may have circulated within the Hellenistic Christian communities on Stephen's martyrdom, Philip's ministries, and Saul's conversion,

Luke had also heard Philip and Paul speak together about these matters either during Paul's stay for "a number of days" at Philip's home in Caesarea (cf. 21:8-10a) or during Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea (cf. 25:27). No doubt Stephen's martyrdom was indelibly imprinted on Philip's memory; and accounts of his defense, whether written or oral, had probably become the *raison d'etre* for the Hellenists' continued ministry. Likewise, Philip must have made a lasting impression on Luke as an important figure in the advance of the Christian mission, just as he was an important person in the Christian community at Caesarea (cf. 8:40; 21:8-9). And certainly Paul was of such immense significance for Luke's narrative that an account of his conversion was inevitable--particularly because of its miraculous circumstances. When the events of Luke's second panel took place depends largely on the dates for Paul's conversion and ministry. Since Stephen's death occurred before the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (cf. 7:58; 8:1), and since Luke presents Philip's ministries in Samaria and to the Ethiopian eunuch as following on the heels of the persecution that arose with Stephen's martyrdom, the

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accounts of these two Hellenistic spokesmen are historically tied to the conversion of Saul. For the chronological issues associated with Paul, see the comments on Acts 9:1-30 and other succeeding passages. As for this second panel, it is sufficient to say that the events Luke presents in it took place somewhere in the mid-thirties, possibly as early as A.D. 33 or as late as A.D. 37.

A. The Martyrdom of Stephen (6:8-8:3)

Interpreters have varied considerably regarding the significance of Stephen in the history of early Christianity. Most have attempted to understand him as in some manner the forerunner to Paul, proclaiming an elemental form of a law-free and universal gospel. Some, however, have taken him to be a proto-Marcionite (e.g., F.C. Baur), others as an early Ebionite (e.g., H.J. Schoeps), others as a nationalistic Zealot (e.g., S.G.F. Brandon), and a few as a thoroughly Jewish member of the Jerusalem church who represented the entire church's stance in opposition to Judaism (e.g., J. Munck). And between these various positions there is no want of variant opinion.

1. Opposition to Stephen's ministry (6:8-7:1)

8 Stephen has earlier been described as being "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (6:3) and "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (6:5). Now Luke says he was "full of God's grace and power." The three descriptions are complementary, though Luke may have drawn the precise wording from different sources. The word "grace" (*charis*) was previously used by Luke to characterize both Jesus (Luke 4:22) and the early church (Acts 4:33) and connotes "spiritual charm" or "winsomeness." "Power" (*dynamis*) has already appeared in Acts in conjunction with "wonders and signs" (2:22) and "grace" (4:33) and connotes divine power

expressed in mighty works. Like Jesus and the apostles (cf. 2:22, 43; 5:12), Stephen is portrayed as having done "great wonders and miraculous signs among the people." Just what these were, Luke does not say, though we are undoubtedly to think of them as being of the same nature as those done by Jesus and the apostles. Nor does Luke tell us just when these manifestations of divine power began in Stephen's ministry. Many have insisted that they were a direct result of the laying on of the apostles' hands (cf. 6:6), though it is possible that these acts characterized Stephen's ministry before that.

9-10 Stephen soon began preaching among his Hellenistic compatriots. Many commentators have found this to be a major problem in the narrative because Stephen was appointed to supervise relief for the poor, not to perform the apostolic function of preaching. Some, therefore, have viewed this as a Lukan discrepancy (e.g., Brandon), whereas others have claimed that Stephen was not really preaching at all but only uttering the name of Jesus and providing a

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Christian rationale for his divinely empowered acts (e.g., Zahn). Most commentators, however, are prepared to accept the fact of Stephen's preaching (just as Philip, another of the seven, also preached later on). Yet they are uneasy with Luke's portrayal because of its conflict with the division of labor spelled out in 6:3-4 (e.g., Haenchen). But if we posit (1) the continuation, to some extent, of old tensions between Hebraic Jews and Hellenistic Jews in the Jerusalem church and (2) separate meetings, at least occasionally, for Aramaic-speaking and Greek-speaking believers (cf. comments on 6:1), several difficulties in the historical reconstruction of this period are partially explained. While not minimizing the importance of the apostles to the whole church, we may say that in some way Stephen, Philip, and perhaps others of the appointed seven may well have been to the Hellenistic believers what the apostles were to the native-born Christians. Philip seems to have performed such a function later on at Caesarea. And in the early church, where "ministry was a function long before it became an office," such preaching was evidently looked upon with approval. Opposition to Stephen arose from certain members within the Hellenistic community. Opinion differs widely as to just how many Hellenistic synagogues are in view in v. 9. Many have insisted that there are five: (1) those of the *Libertinoi* or Freedmen, (2) the Cyreneans, (3) the Alexandrians, (4) the Cilicians, and (5) the Asians (e.g., B. Weiss, H. Lietzmann, E. Schurer). Others have suggested that the twofold use of the article *ton* ("the") groups these five into two: (1) those of the Freedmen synagogue, made up of Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria, and (2) another synagogue composed of Jews from Cilicia and Asia (e.g., H.H. Wendt, T. Zahn). And others, emphasizing the singular form of "synagogue" in the passage (*tes synagoges*) and the epexegetical nature of the last four designations, posit only one synagogue as being in mind--viz., a synagogue of the Freedmen, made up of Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia (e.g., J. Jeremias, F.F. Bruce, E. Haenchen). NIV takes the passage in this latter sense, and that is probably how it ought to be understood. The name *Libertinoi* in our text is a Latin loan word that probably refers to Jewish freedmen and the sons of such freedmen, with the adjective *legomenes* ("so-called") perhaps included as

an apology to Grecian sensibilities for the foreign word. We have no account of the content of Stephen's preaching that so antagonized his Hellenistic compatriots. Luke labels the accusations against him (vv. 11-14) as false--though, to judge by his response of chapter 7, they seem to have been false more in nuance and degree than in kind. From the accusations and from his defense, it is clear that Stephen had begun to apply his Christian convictions regarding the centrality of Jesus of Nazareth in God's redemptive program to such issues as the significance of the land, the law, and the temple for Jewish Christians in view of the advent of the Messiah. This, however, was a dangerous path to tread, particularly for Hellenistic Jewish Christians! It was one that the apostles themselves seem to have been unwilling to explore. And it was a path that Jews who had lately returned to Jerusalem from the Diaspora would view with reticence. Having originally immigrated to the homeland out of a desire to be more faithful Jews, and

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having come under some suspicion of an inbred liberalism by the native-born populace, the Hellenistic Jewish community in Jerusalem undoubtedly had a vested interest in keeping deviations among its members to a minimum, or else exposing them as outside its own commitments, lest its synagogues fall under further suspicion. Thus the Hellenistic members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen were probably quite eager to bait Stephen in order to root out such a threat from their midst--though it is evident from the record that Stephen welcomed the challenge. But as Luke tells us, "they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by which he spoke." This fulfills Jesus' promise of the gift of "words and wisdom" in the time of persecution (cf. Luke 21:15).

11-14 The subject "they" of the verbs of these sentences refers to those members of the synagogue of the Freedman represented in v. 9 by the masculine plural indefinite pronoun *tinis* ("some"; NIV, "members"). Four things are said about them: (1) "they secretly persuaded some men to say" that Stephen had spoken blasphemy; (2) "they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law" on their trumped-up charge against Stephen; (3) "they seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin"; and (4) "they produced false witnesses" at his trial. The rumors had to do with Stephen's being "against Moses and against God"--"against Moses" because his arguments appeared to challenge the eternal validity of the Mosaic law, and "against God" because he appeared to be setting aside that which was taken to be the foundation and focus of national worship--the Jerusalem temple. In so doing, the rumors struck at the heart of both Pharisaic and Sadducean interests. Later rabbinic law held that "the blasphemer is not culpable [and therefore not subject to the penalty of death] unless he pronounces the Name itself" (M Sanhedrin 7:5, based on Lev 24:10-23). But in the first century of the Christian Era, the definition of blasphemy was more broadly interpreted along the lines of Numbers 15:30: "Anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or alien, blasphemes the Lord, and that person must be cut off from his people" (cf. G.H. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, tr. D.M. Kay [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909], p. 314). The testimony of witnesses who repeated what they had heard a

defendant say was part of Jewish court procedure in a trial for blasphemy (cf. M Sanhedrin 7:59. But this testimony against Stephen, Luke tells us, was false. "We have heard him say," they claimed, "that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us" (v. 14). Like the similar charge against Jesus (Matt 26:61; Mark 14:58; cf. John 2:19-22), its falseness lay not so much in its wholesale fabrication but in its subtle and deadly misrepresentation of what was intended. Undoubtedly Stephen spoke regarding a recasting of Jewish life in terms of the supremacy of Jesus the Messiah. Undoubtedly he expressed in his manner and message something of the subsidiary significance of the Jerusalem temple and the Mosaic law, as did Jesus before him (e.g., Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-6, 7:14-15; 10:5-9). But that is not the same as advocating the destruction of the temple or the changing of the law--though on these matters we

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must allow Stephen to speak for himself in Acts 7.

6:15-7:1 The members of the council "looked intently" at Stephen as he was brought before them and saw one whose appearance was "like the face of an angel." In Judaism very devout men were often spoken of as resembling angels. Luke here, however, probably wants us to understand that Stephen, being filled with the Holy Spirit (6:3, 5) and possessing a genuine spiritual winsomeness (6:8), radiated a presence marked by confidence, serenity, and courage. And with the question of the high priest--"Are these charges true?"--the stage is set for Stephen's defense.

2. Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin (7:2-53)

The defense of Stephen before the Sanhedrin is hardly a defense in the sense of an explanation or apology calculated to win an acquittal. Rather, it is a proclamation of the Christian message in terms of the popular Judaism of the day and an indictment of the Jewish leaders for their failure to recognize Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah or to appreciate the salvation provided in him. Before the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the three great pillars of popular Jewish piety were (1) the land, (2) the law, and (3) the temple. The Talmud shows that later on Rabbinic Judaism continued to exist apart from the Jerusalem temple and without any overriding stress on the land. And undoubtedly there were individual teachers even before the nation's calamities of A.D. 66-70 and 132-35 who thought in somewhat similar fashion. But before such a time, the land, the law, and the temple were the cardinal postulates in the religious faith of the vast majority of Jews. So it is this type of thought that Stephen confronts here, as the writer of Hebrews also did. Dibelius has argued:

The irrelevance of most of this [Stephen's] speech has for long been the real problem of

exegesis. It is, indeed, impossible to find a connection between the account of the history

of Israel to the time of Moses (7:2-19) and the accusation against Stephen; nor is any

accusation against the Jews, which would furnish the historical foundation for the attack at

the end of the speech, found at all in this section. Even in that section of the speech which

deals with Moses, the speaker does not defend himself; nor does he make any positive

countercharge against his enemies, for the words *hoi de ou sunekan* in 7:25 do not

constitute such an attack any more than does the report of the gainsaying of Moses by a

Jew in 7:27. It is not until 7:35 that we sense any polemic interest. From 7:2-34 the point

of the speech is not obvious at all; we are simply given an account of the history of Israel

(Studies in Acts, p. 167).

And Dibelius continues with such statements as the following: "The major part of the speech

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(7:2-34) shows no purpose whatever, but contains a unique, compressed reproduction of the story of the patriarchs and Moses" (ibid., p. 168); and "The most striking feature of this speech is the irrelevance of its main section" (ibid., p. 169). Just how wrong Dibelius was, however, will become evident as we proceed.

a. On the land 7:2-36

Declarations of faith within a Jewish milieu were often tied into a recital of God's intervention in the life of Israel, for God is the God who is known by his redemptive activity on behalf of his people in history. So by beginning his defense with a resume of Israel's history, Stephen is speaking in accord with Jewish form. But while Jewish in form, in content his address runs counter to much of the popular piety of the day. He argues that God's significant activity has usually taken place outside the confines of Palestine, that wherever God meets his people can be called "holy ground," that God is the God who calls his own to move forward in their religious experience, and that therefore dwelling in the land of promise requires a pilgrim lifestyle in which the land may be appreciated but never venerated. In the OT the important concepts of "rest" and "remnant" are frequently associated closely with the land. Deuteronomy 12:9-10, for example, reads: "You have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the Lord your God is giving you. But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety" (cf. Deut 3:20; Josh 1:13; Joel 2:32b; Mic 4:6-7). And in the literature of Late Judaism the linking of God's righteous remnant with the Holy Land is common (cf. 2 Esdras 9:7-8; 12:31-34; 13:48; 2 Baruch 40:2). Facing much the same problem and with much the same purpose as the writer of Hebrews (cf. Heb 4:1-13; 11: 8-16), though with a difference of method and structure in his argument, Stephen argues against a veneration of the Holy Land that would leave no room for God's further saving activity in Jesus of Nazareth, Israel's Messiah. Stephen is not renouncing Israel's

possession of the land; he makes no attempt to deny or avoid mentioning God's promise that Abraham's descendants would inherit Palestine. He is rather delivering a polemic against a veneration of the land that misses God's further redemptive work. And while his message relates to his time and situation, it also has great relevance for us. For we Christians today are constantly tempted to assert that our nation and our possessions are God-given rather than to confess our dependence on a God who is not limited by anything he has bestowed and to affirm our readiness to move forward with him at all cost.

2-8 Stephen begins by addressing the council in a somewhat formal yet fraternal manner: "Men, brothers and fathers" (*Andres adelphoi kai pateres* ; NIV, "Brothers and fathers," cf. 22:1). Then he launches into his message, taking up first the situation of Abraham. "The God of glory," Stephen says, "appeared to our father Abraham *while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he*

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lived in Haran [italics mine]." God's word to him was to move forward into the possession of a land that was promised to him and his descendants. But though he entered into his promised inheritance, he did not live in it as if living in it was the consummation of God's purposes for him. Rather, he cherished as most important the covenantal and personal relationship that God had established with him, whatever his place of residence--a relationship of which circumcision was the God--given sign. There are a number of difficulties as to chronological sequence, historical numbers, and the use of biblical quotations in Stephen's address that have led to the most strenuous exercise of ingenuity on the part of commentators in their attempts to reconcile them. Four of these difficulties appear in vv. 2-8. Verse 3 quotes the words of God to Abraham given in Genesis 12: 1 and implies by its juxtaposition with v. 2 that this message came to Abraham "while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran," whereas the context of Genesis 12:1 suggests that it came to him in Haran. Verse 4 says that he left Haran after the death of his father, whereas the chronological data of Genesis 11:26-12:4 suggests that Terah's death took place after Abraham's departure from Haran. Verse 5 uses the words of Deuteronomy 2:5 as a suitable description of Abraham's situation in Palestine, whereas their OT context relates to God's prohibition to Israel not to dwell in Mount Seir because it had been given to Esau. And v. 6 speaks of 400 years of slavery in Egypt, whereas Exodus 12:40 says 430. We need not, however, get so disturbed over such things as, on the one hand, to pounce on them to disprove a "high view" of biblical inspiration or, on the other hand, to attempt to harmonize them so as to support such a view. These matters relate to the confections and inexactitude of popular Judaism, not necessarily to some then-existing scholastic tradition or to variant textual traditions. In large measure they can be paralleled in other popular writings of the day, whether overtly Hellenistic or simply more nonconformist in the broadest sense of that term. Philo, for example, also explained Abraham's departure from Ur of the Chaldees by reference to Genesis 12:1 (*De Abrahamo* 62-67), even though he knew that Genesis 12:1-5 is in the context of leaving Haran (cf. *De Migratione Abrahami* 176). Josephus spoke of Abraham's being seventy-five years old when he left Chaldea (contra Gen 12:4, which says he was seventy-five

when he left Haran) and of leaving Chaldea because God bade him go to Canaan, with evident allusion to Genesis 12:1 (cf. Antiq. I, 154 [vii.1]). Likewise, Philo also placed the departure of Abraham from Haran after his father's death (*De Migratione Abrahami* 177). And undoubtedly the round figure of four hundred years for Israel's slavery in Egypt--a figure that stems from the statement credited to God in Genesis 15:13--was often used in popular expressions of religious piety in Late Judaism, as were also the transpositions of meaningful and usable phrases from one context to another. There is a remarkable psychological or emotional truth in Luke's report of Stephen's address. Stephen, with his life at stake, was speaking under intense emotion and with God-given eloquence. With remarkable verisimilitude Luke shows him using commonly understood language as in vivid terms and with burning eloquence he refers to Israel's history. Stephen's

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speech was not a scholarly historical survey; it was a powerful portrayal of God's dealing with Israel and it mounted inexorably to a climax that unmasked the obstinancy and disobedience of Israel and of their leaders in Stephen's time. Church history knows of few, if any, greater displays of moral courage than Stephen showed in this speech. And to dissect it on precisionist grounds shows lack of understanding of its basic truth.

9-16 Stephen's address next turns to the sons of Jacob, or "the twelve patriarchs" as they were known more popularly (cf. 4Macc 16:25 [together, of course, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as in 4Macc 7:19] and the title to T 12 Pat). Here Stephen's point is that God was with Joseph and his brothers *in Egypt* (the name itself is repeated six times in vv. 9-16), even though the only portion of the Holy Land that they possessed was the family tomb in Palestine, to which their bones were brought back later for final burial. Two further difficulties of the type noted in vv. 2-6 that seem to appear somewhat regularly in Stephen's speech are (1) the number seventy-five in v. 14 for the total number who originally went down to Egypt, whereas Genesis 46:27 (MT) sets the figure at seventy (i.e., sixty-six plus Jacob, Joseph, and the latter's two sons), and (2) the confusion in v. 16 between Abraham's tomb at Hebron, in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite (cf. Gen 23:3-20) and wherein Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were buried (cf. Gen 49:29-33; 50:13), and the burial plot purchased by Jacob at Shechem from the sons of Hamor, wherein Joseph and his descendants were buried (cf. Josh 24:32). Again, these are but further examples of the conflation and inexactitudes of Jewish popular religion, which, it seems, Luke simply recorded from his sources in his attempt to be faithful to what Stephen actually said in his portrayal. And again, they can in large measure be paralleled elsewhere. Genesis 46:27 in the LXX, for example, does not include Jacob and Joseph but does include nine sons of Joseph in the reckoning, thereby arriving at "seventy-five souls" all together who went down to Egypt. And with this number both Exodus 1:5 (LXX) and 4QExoda at 1:5 agree. Likewise, the telescoping of the two burial grounds in this verse can be compared to the similar phenomenon

with regard to Abraham's two calls in vv. 2-3. Interestingly, while the tradition in popular circles of Late Judaism was rather strong that the other eleven sons of Jacob were buried at Hebron (cf. Jub 46:8; Jos. Antiq. II, 199 [viii.2]; T 12 Pat, passim; SBK, 2:672-78), Josephus seems somewhat vague as to just where Joseph's bones were finally laid to rest apart from his rather general statement that "they conveyed them to Canaan" (Antiq. II, 200 [viii.2]).

17-36 Still on the subject of "the land," Stephen recounts the life of Moses. Incorporated into this section, largely by way of anticipation, is a Moses--rejection theme in vv. 23-29 and 35, which will later be highlighted in vv. 39-43 and then driven home in the scathing indictment of vv. 51-53. But here Stephen's primary emphasis is on God's providential and redemptive action for his people apart from and outside of the land of Palestine, of which Stephen's hearers made so much: (1) God's raising up of the deliverer Moses *in Egypt* (vv. 17-22); (2) his provision for the

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rejected Moses in Midian (v. 29); (3) his commissioning of Moses *in the desert near Mount Sinai* --the place God himself identified as being "holy ground," for wherever God meets with his people is holy ground though it possesses no sanctity of its own (vv. 30-34); and (4) Moses' resultant action in delivering God's people and doing "wonders and miraculous signs" for forty years *in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the desert*. This narration of events in Moses' life is not given just to introduce the Second Moses theme that follows in vv. 37-43, though it certainly does that. Its primary purpose seems rather to be that of making the vital point, contrary to the popular piety of the day in its veneration of "the Holy Land," that no place on earth--even though given as an inheritance by God himself--can be claimed to possess such sanctity or be esteemed in such a way as to preempt God's further working on behalf of his people. By this method Stephen was attempting to clear the way for the proclamation of the centrality of Jesus in the nation's worship, life, and thought.

b. On the law 7:37-43

Involved inevitably with the Jews' exaltation of the law were veneration of Moses the Law-giver and idealization of Israel's wilderness days. All parties within Judaism of the first century

A.D.--whether Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots, Apocalypticists, Hellenists, Samaritans, or the so-called People of the Land--were united in this veneration and idealization. So in meeting the accusation that he was speaking blasphemous words "against Moses" (6:11) and "against the law" (6:13), Stephen argues two points clearly and a third inferentially: (1) Moses himself spoke of God's later raising up "a prophet like me" from among his people and for his people, which means therefore that Israel cannot limit the revelation and redemption of God to Moses' precepts (vv. 37-38); (2) Moses had been rejected by his own people, even though he was God's appointed redeemer--which parallels the way Jesus of Nazareth was treated and explains why the majority

within the nation refused him, even though he was God's promised Messiah (vv. 39-40); and (3) even though Moses was with them and they had the living words of the law and the sacrificial system, the people fell into gross idolatry and actually opposed God (vv. 41-43).

37-38 The twofold use of *houtos estin* ("this is that") with the articular adjectival participle in these verses is an intensification of the demonstrative pronouns *touton* and *houtos* in vv. 35-36. This suggests a buildup of tension in Stephen's speech, starting from the rather placid historical narrative of vv. 2-34, moving to the more strident conclusion in vv. 35-36, and peaking with a passionate treatment of the Moses testimonium passage in Deuteronomy 18:15 and of the significance of Moses himself there. This probably reflects to some extent the type of peshet treatment of Scripture common to nonconformist Jews in general (cf. comments on 2:16) and is likely meant to point to the crux of Stephen's argument. Stephen in no way disparages Moses. Indeed, when he referred to Moses as being "in the

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congregation in the wilderness, with our fathers and with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai," he was speaking in a complimentary way. Likewise, in Stephen's statement that "he received living words to pass on to us," the expression "living words" (*logia zonta*) implies the opposite of any disparagement of the Mosaic law. But Stephen's point is that in Deuteronomy 18:15 Moses pointed beyond himself and beyond the instruction that came through him to another whom God would raise up in the future and to whom Israel must give heed and that, therefore, Israel cannot limit divine revelation and redemption to the confines of the Mosaic law. In the first century A.D., Judaism generally looked for a Messiah who would in some way be "like Moses." The inclusion of Deuteronomy 18:18-19 as the second testimonium passage in the five texts of 4QTest highlights this for us. And the degree to which a Mosaic understanding of messiahship was embedded in the first-century Jewish expectations is further illustrated by the many claimants to messiahship who attempted to validate their claims by reenacting the experiences of Moses (cf. Joachim Jeremias, "*Moses*," TDNT, 4:862). The Samaritans talked about a Moses *redivivus* ("restored," "reborn") and, like the DS sectarians, used Deuteronomy 18:15-18 to support this notion. And though later rabbinic materials--in what appears to be a conscious reaction to Christian usage--use Deuteronomy 18:15-18 in a decidedly noneschatological and nonmessianic fashion (applied to Samuel in Mid Psalms 1.3; to Jeremiah in *Pesikta de Rab Kahana* 13.6; to the whole line of prophets in *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Bah* 9.62-68 and in ZZI 175-76), a number of Talmudic passages explicitly parallel Israel's first redeemer Moses with Israel's expected Messiah-Redeemer, who will be like Moses (cf. the "like the first redeemer, so the last Redeemer" theme of the Jerusalem Targum on Exod 12:42; Deut R 2.9; Song of Songs R 2.9, Ruth R 5.6, *Pesikta Rabbati* 15.10; *Pesikta de Rab Kahana* 5.8). Stephen's argument, therefore, as based on Moses' prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15-18, was generally in accord with Jewish eschatological expectations. And he evidently used it, as Peter did before him (cf. 3:22-23), expecting it to be convincing.

39-40 But while Peter and Stephen agree in seeing christological significance in Deuteronomy 18:15-18 and in considering it a very important testimony passage for a Jewish audience, their attitudes toward Israel are shown to be very different. For Peter, his hearers are the sons of the prophets who should hear the new Moses (cf. 3:22-26); whereas for Stephen, his hearers are the sons of those who rejected Moses and killed the prophets (cf. 7:35-40, 51-53). In vv. 39- 40 Stephen specifies his rejection-of-Moses theme by picking up the awful words of Numbers 14:3, "Their hearts turned back to Egypt" (v. 39), and citing almost verbatim the people's defiance of Exodus 32:1: "Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt--we don't know what has happened to him" (v. 40). The Talmud also speaks of the people's rebellion in making the golden calf and generally views it as Israel's first, ultimate, and most heinous sin (e.g., b *Shabbath* 17a; b *Megillah* 25b; b *Abodah Zarah* 5a; b *Soferim* 35a; *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan* 18b, 21b, 30a; Exod R 48.2; Lev R 2.15; 5.3; 9.49; 27.3; Deut R 3.10, 12). Some rabbis, however, tried to shift the blame

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onto the proselytes who came out of Egypt with the people (cf. Exod R 42.6, Lev R 27.8; *Pesikta de Rab Kahana* 9.8)--or even onto God himself because he blessed Israel with all the gold they constructed the idol with (cf. b *Sanhedrin* 102a). But while the rabbis have much to say about the awfulness of the incident in Israel's history, calling it by such euphemisms as "that unspeakable deed" (cf. *Pesikta Rabbati* 33.3; Num R 5.3) and forbidding a translation of the account into the vernacular in the synagogue services (cf. b *Megillah* 25b), there is a decided difference between the way they treat the people's rebellion and the way Stephen does. The rabbis do not take the golden calf episode as the people's rejection of Moses (though Korah's later rebellion was so considered), but the rabbis emphasize Moses' successful intercession for Israel (cf. esp. b *Sotah* 14a). Stephen, however, lays all his emphasis on Israel's rejection of their deliverer, implicitly drawing the parallel between their treatment of Moses and Israel's treatment of Jesus--a parallel he will broaden and drive home in his scathing indictment of vv. 51-53.

41-43 "That was the time" (*en tais hemerais ekeinai* , lit., "in those days"), says Stephen, "they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and held a celebration in honor of what their hands had made." So detestable to God was this episode in Israel's wilderness experience that Stephen calls it a time when "God turned away and gave them over to the worship of the heavenly bodies" (cf. Rom 1:24, where the expression "God gave them over," *ho theos paredoken autous* , also occurs, though there the giving over was from idolatry to immorality). The inescapable inference from Stephen's words is that Israel's shameful behavior and God's drastic response to it find their counterparts in the nation's rejection of Jesus. To support his assertion that Israel's idolatry caused God to give them over to the worship of heavenly bodies, Stephen quotes Amos 5:25-27. In the Greek this quotation is fairly close to the LXX, which understands "Sikkuth your king" (MT) to be "the shrine of Moloch" (deriving "shrine," *skene* , from vocalizing the Heb. *sikkut* to read *sukkoth* , "booths," and "Moloch" from a misreading of the Heb. *malekkem* , "your king"; cf. LXX at 4 Kings 23:10 [MT= 2 Kings 23:

10] and Jer 31:35 [MT= Jer 32:35]) and which transliterates the Hebrew name *Kiyyun* as *Raiphan* (probably originally transliterated *Kaipan*). In context and application, however, Stephen's use of the Amos passage is very much like that found in CD 7.14-15: that rejection of God's activity in the eschatological day of salvation brings God's judgment, despite all the sacrifices and offerings that may be offered, just as Israel's idolatry of the golden calf eventuated in Israel's exile "beyond Babylon" (or as the LXX has it, "beyond Damascus").

c. On the temple 7:44-50

Stephen has met the accusation of blasphemy against the law by reassessing Moses' place in redemptive history and by countercharging his accusers with both rejecting the one Moses spoke of and turning to idolatry in their refusal of Jesus the Messiah. Stephen next proceeds to

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meet the charge of blasphemy against the temple in the same way. In form, this section of the address recalls the more placid manner of vv. 2-34. In tone and content, however, it carries on the strident and passionate appeal of vv. 35-43, which amounts to a vigorous denunciation of the Jerusalem temple and the type of mentality that would hold to it as the apex of revealed religion.

44-46 Stephen's assessment of Israel's worship experience lays all the emphasis on the tabernacle, which he eulogistically calls "the tabernacle of Testimony." It was with our forefathers, he says, during that period in the desert, which so many consider exemplary. It was made according to the exact pattern God gave Moses. It was central in the life of the nation during the conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. And it was the focus of national worship through the time of David, who found favor in God's sight. So significant was it in Israel's experience, in fact, that David asked to be allowed to provide a permanent type of "dwelling place" for God in Jerusalem. (Here Ps 132:5 is quoted and 2Sam 6:17; 1 Chronicles 15:1 are alluded to.) Like the covenanters at Qumran (cf. IQS 8.7-8) and the writer to the Hebrews (cf. Heb 8:2, 5; 9:1-5, 11, 24), and probably like many other nonconformist Jews of his time, Stephen seems to have viewed the epitome of Jewish worship in terms of the tabernacle, not the temple. Very likely this was because he felt the mobility of the tabernacle was a restraint on the status quo mentality that had grown up around the temple. But unlike the Qumranites, who desired a restoration of that classical ideal, Stephen, as well as the writer to the Hebrews, was attempting to lift his compatriots' vision to something far superior to even the wilderness tabernacle--viz., to the dwelling of God with men in Jesus of Nazareth and as expressed through the new covenant.

47 "But it was Solomon," Stephen tersely says, "who built the house for him." This brevity shows something of Stephen's pejorative attitude toward the temple. And his contrast between the tabernacle (vv. 44-46) and the temple (v. 47)

expresses his disapproval. Probably Stephen had in mind 2 Samuel 7:5-16 (cf. 1 Chronicles 17:4-14). There God speaks through the prophet Nathan of his satisfaction with his "nomadic" situation and declines David's offer to build a house for his divine presence; but he goes on to announce that David's son would build such a house and promises to build a "house" (lineage) for David. Certainly 2 Samuel 7:5-16 was a foundational passage at Qumran (cf. 4QFlor on 2Sam 7:10-14) and for much of early Christian thought (cf. Luke 1:32-33 alluding to 7:12-16; Acts 13:17-22 on 7:6:16; Heb 1:5b on 7:14; and, possibly, 2Cor 6:18 on 7:14). But obviously Stephen did not consider Solomon's temple to be the final fulfillment of God's words to David in 2 Samuel 7. Probably he understood the announcement of a temple to be a concession on God's part and laid greater emphasis on the promise of the establishment of David's seed and kingdom (cf. 2Sam 7:12-16).

48-50 Stephen reaches the climax of his antitemple polemic by insisting that "the Most High

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does not live in houses made by men"--a concept he supports by citing Isaiah 66:1-2a. Judaism never taught that God actually lived in the temple or was confined to its environs but spoke of his "Name" and presence as being there. In practice, however, this concept was often denied. This would especially appear so to Stephen, when further divine activity was refused out-of-hand by the people in their preference for God's past revelation and redemption as symbolized in the existence of the temple. As a Hellenist, Stephen may have had a tendency to view things in a more "spiritual" manner (i.e., in more inward and nonmaterial terms)--a tendency with both good and bad features. As a Christian, he could have been aware of the contrast in the primitive catechesis (oral instruction of converts) between what is "made with hands" and what is "not made with hands" (cf. esp. Mark 14:58; Heb 8:2; 9:24). But whatever its source, Stephen's assertion is that neither the tabernacle nor the temple was meant to be such an institutionalized feature in Israel's religion as to prohibit God's further redemptive activity or to halt the advance of God's plan for his people. The response Stephen wants from his hearers was what God declared to be his desire for his people in the strophe that follows the Isaiah passage just cited:

This is the one I esteem:

he who is humble and contrite in spirit,
and trembles at my word (Isa 66:2b).

To those who desired to localize God's presence and confine his working, Stephen repeated the denunciation of Isaiah 66:1-2a and left this appeal in Isaiah 66:2b to be inferred.

d. The indictment 7:51-53

The most striking feature of Stephen's speech and the one that sets it off most sharply from Peter's temple sermon of Acts 3 is its strong polemical stance toward Israel. As Stephen recounts the history of Israel, it is a litany of sin, rebellion, and rejection of God's purposes, emphasizing, as Marcel Simon rightly says, "the unworthiness and perpetual rebelliousness of the Jews who, in the long run, exhaust the immense riches of God's mercy" (p. 41). Some have supposed that the suddenness and harshness of the indictment were occasioned by an angry outburst in the court, to which vv. 51-53 are a kind of "knee-jerk" response. But there is little reason to assume that to be the case. Stephen's address has led naturally up to the invective; and after his quotation of Isaiah 66:1-2a, there was really nothing to add.

51 Stephen's description of his accusers is loaded with pejorative theological nuances. The phrase "stiff-necked" was fixed in Israel's memory as God's own characterization of the nation when it rebelled against Moses and worshiped the golden calf (cf. Exod 33:5; Deut 9:13). And the expression "with uncircumcised hearts and ears" recalls God's judgment on the apostates

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among his people as being "uncircumcised in heart" (cf. Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; 9:26). And now, says Stephen, speaking like a prophet of old, God's indictment rests upon you just as it did on your idolatrous and apostate ancestors.

52 Israel's persecution and killing of her prophets is a recurrent theme in Judaic literature. The OT not only speaks of the sufferings of individual prophets but also has a number of general statements about how the nation had persecuted and killed the prophets of God (cf. 2 Chronicles 36:15-16; Neh 9:26; Jer 2:30). Various writings from the period of Late Judaism have elaborated on this theme, particularly as a result of the idealization of martyrdom that arose in Maccabean times (cf. Ecclus 49:7; Jub 1:12; 1 Enoch 89:51-53; Liv Proph, passim). In the Talmud, while there are scattered references to all the prophets being wealthy (cf. b *Nedarim* 38a) or living to a great age (cf. b *Pesahim* 87b), there are a great many statements about Israel's persecuting and killing her prophets (cf. b *Gittin* 57b; b *Sanhedrin* 96b; Lev R 10.2; Exod R 31.16; *Pesikta Rabbati* 26.1-2). All these, though, were for the council well-learned lessons from the past. Stephen's accusation, however, was that nothing had been learned from the past, since an even more horrendous crime had been committed in the present--the betrayal and murder of "the Righteous One"--by those who were so smug about Israel's past failures.

53 Stephen's address begins with the fraternal greeting "Men, brothers and fathers" (*Andres adelphoi kai pateres*, v. 2). It affirms throughout his deep respect for such distinctly Jewish phenomena as the Abrahamic covenant (vv. 3-8), circumcision (v. 8), and the tabernacle (vv. 44-46). Stephen repeatedly refers to "our father Abraham" and "our fathers" in such a way as to stress his ready acceptance of his Israelite heritage (vv. 2, 11-12, 15, 19, 39, 44-45). Yet his repeated use of the second person plural pronoun in vv. 51-53 shows his desire to disassociate himself from the nation in its recurrent refusal of God throughout its history. Therefore, taking the offensive, Stephen drives home his point: " *Your*

fathers always resisted the Holy Spirit.... *Your* fathers persecuted the prophets.... *You* received the law put into effect through angels, but you have not obeyed it." Perhaps he jabbed with a finger at his accusers--though even a blind man would have felt his verbal blows.

3. *The stoning of Stephen* (7:54-8:1 a)

54 To interpret Stephen's address as an absolute renunciation of the land, the law, or the sacrificial system is an exaggeration. Indeed, like the Qumranites (though for different reasons), Stephen saw worship in terms of the tabernacle, not the temple, to be the ideal of Israel's worship. But that is not to say he rejected the worship of the temple, particularly as it continued the pattern of worship instituted by God in giving the tabernacle. Nor can it be said that Stephen was proclaiming a law-free and universal gospel or suggesting the futility of a Christian mission to Israel. Instead, his desire, it seems, was to raise a prophetic voice *within* Israel, pleading, as

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Filson summed up his message, for "a radical recasting of Jewish life to make Jesus, rather than these traditionally holy things, the center of Jewish faith, worship and thought" (p. 103). Certainly Stephen was more daring than the Jerusalem apostles, more ready to explore the logical consequences of commitment to Jesus than they were, and more ready to attribute Israel's rejection of its Messiah to a perpetual callousness of heart. Harnack, however, was probably right, at least in the main, to insist that "when Stephen was stoned, he died, like Huss, for a cause whose issues he probably did not foresee" (Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, 2 vols., tr. J. Moffatt [London: Williams & Norgate, 1908],1:50). Nonetheless, Stephen's message was, for his hearers, flagrant apostasy--in both its content and its tone. While his purpose was to denounce the status quo mentality that had grown up around the land, the law, and the temple, thereby clearing a path for a positive response to Jesus as Israel's Messiah, this was undoubtedly taken as a frontal attack against the Jewish religion in its official and popular forms. And in the council's eyes, its assumed prophetic stance together with its obnoxious liberal spirit must have represented the worst of both Jewish Hellenism and the beginning Christian movement. So, Luke tells us, "they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him."

55-56 While the content and tone of his address infuriated the council, Stephen's solemn pronouncement raised again the specter of blasphemy and brought his hearers to a frenzied pitch: "Look, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." Only a few years before, Jesus had stood before this same tribunal and had been condemned for answering affirmatively the high priest's question as to his being Israel's Messiah and for saying of himself: "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62). Now Stephen was saying, in effect, that his vision confirmed Jesus' claim and condemned the council for having rejected him. Unless the council members were prepared to repent and

admit their awful error, they had no option but to find Stephen also guilty of blasphemy. Had he been judged only an impertinent apostate (cf. 5:40), the thirty-nine lashes of Jewish punishment would have been appropriate (cf. *M Makkoth* 3:10-15a). To be openly blasphemous before the council as well was a matter demanding death. Luke's description of Stephen as "full of the Holy Spirit" is in line with his characterizations of him in 6:3, 5, 8, and 15. The identification of Jesus as "the Son of Man" is used outside the Gospels only here and at Revelation 1:13; 14:14 (also at Heb 2:6, though as a locution for man in line with Ps 8:4). In the Gospels Jesus alone used "Son of Man" in referring to himself (the apparent exceptions in Luke 24:7 and John 12:34 are in actuality echoes of Jesus' usage). Jesus used the expression both as a locution for the pronoun "I" and as a title reflecting the usage in Daniel 7:13-28 (esp. vv. 13-14). As a title it carries the ideas of (1) identification with mankind and suffering and (2) vindication by God and glory. The title was generally not attributed to Jesus by the church between the time when his sufferings were completed and when he would assume his full glory. Here, however, an anticipation of Christ's full glory is set within a martyr

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context (as also at Rev 1:13; 14:14); and, therefore, "Son of Man" is used as being fully appropriate.

In Stephen's vision the juxtaposition of "the glory of God" and the name of Jesus--together with his saying that he sees "heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God"--is christologically significant. Unlike the Greek understanding of *doxa* ("glory") as akin to "opinion," the Hebrew OT and the LXX viewed "the glory of God" (Heb. *kebod YHWH*, Gr. *doxa theou*) as "the manifestation or revelation of the divine nature" and as even "the divine mode of being" itself (cf. TDNT, 2:233-47). The bringing together of "the glory of God" and the name of Jesus, therefore, suggests something about his person as the manifestation of the divine nature and the divine mode of being. Likewise, inasmuch as God dwells in the highest heaven, the open heaven with Christ at God's right hand suggests something about his work as providing access into the very presence of God. Stephen's reference to Jesus "standing" at the right hand of God, which differs from the "sitting" of Psalm 110:1 (the passage alluded to here), has been variously understood. Dalman argued that it is merely "a verbal change," for both *estanei* ("to stand") and *kathesthai* ("to sit") connote the idea "to be situated" (Heb. *amad*), without any necessary implication for the configuration of posture (Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, tr. D.M. Kay [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909], p. 311). The majority of commentators, however, have interpreted the "standing" to suggest Jesus' welcome of his martyred follower, who, like the repentant criminal of Luke 23:43, was received into heaven the moment he died (cf. BC, 4:84). Dispensational commentators have taken Stephen's reference to Jesus' "standing" as supporting their view that the distinctive redemptive message for this age was not proclaimed till the Pauline gospel (either at its inauguration, its close, or somewhere in between); and, therefore, in the transitional period between Israel and the church, Jesus is represented as not yet having taken his seat at God's right hand. Others speak of Jesus as "standing" in order to enter his messianic office on earth or depict him as "standing" in line with the common representation of angels standing in the presence of God. Probably, however, Bruce is right in emphasizing the idea of

"witness" as being connoted in Jesus' "standing":

Stephen has been confessing Christ before men, and now he sees Christ confessing His

servant before God. The proper posture for a witness is the standing posture. Stephen,

condemned by an earthly court, appeals for vindication to a heavenly court, and his

vindicator in that supreme court is Jesus, who stands at God's right hand as Stephen's

advocate, his "paraclete" (*Book of the Acts* . p. 168).

Yet in accepting such an interpretation, it is well to keep Bruce's further comment in mind:

When we are faced with words so wealthy in association as these words of Stephen, it is

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unwise to suppose that any single interpretation exhausts their significance. All the meaning

that had attached to Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13f. is present here, including especially the

meaning that springs from their combination on the lips of Jesus when He appeared before

the Sanhedrin; but the replacement of "sitting" by "standing" probably makes its own

contribution to the total meaning of the words in this context--a contribution distinctively

appropriate to Stephen's present role as martyr-witness (ibid., pp. 168-69).

57-58 Haenchen has noted the progression in Luke's portrayals of the trial scenes of 4:1ff., 5: 17ff., and here, with the first ending in threatenings (4:17, 21), the second with flogging (5:40), and the third with stoning (7:58-60). He concludes the following from the pattern: "It goes without saying that in the circumstances the moderating Gamaliel and the Pharisees who (according to Luke!) to some extent sympathized with the Christians do not make themselves heard--Luke possessed the happy gift of forgetting people when they might interfere with his literary designs" (*Acts of the Apostles* , p. 274). But while Haenchen rightly stresses Luke's developmental theme at this point, he fails to appreciate the historical interplay of divergent ideological factors that gave rise to Judaism's united stance against the Hellenists. The message of Stephen, it seems, served as a kind of catalyst to unite Sadducees, Pharisees, and the common people against the early Christians. Had Gamaliel been confronted by this type of Christian preaching earlier, his attitude as reported in 5:34-39 would surely have been different. The Pharisees could tolerate Palestinian Jewish believers in Jesus

because their messianic beliefs, though undoubtedly judged terribly misguided, effected no change in their practice of the Mosaic law: the Pharisaic and priestly devotees of the new movement continued their scrupulous observance of the law, and the Hebraic Christians continued to live in accordance with at least its minimal requirements. But the Hellenistic Christians, who had probably entered Palestine avowing their desire to become stricter in their religious practice, were now beginning to question the centrality of Israel's traditional forms of religious expression and to propagate within Jerusalem itself a type of religious liberalism that, from a Pharisaic perspective, would eventually undercut the basis for the Jewish religion itself. They might have been able to do little about such liberalism as it existed throughout the Diaspora and in certain quarters within Palestine. But they were determined to preserve the Holy City from further contamination by such outside elements and thus, as they saw it, best prepare the way for the coming of the Messianic Age. It is not easy to determine whether the stoning of Stephen was only the result of mob action or whether it was carried out by the Sanhedrin in excess of its jurisdiction. Josephus recounts a somewhat parallel instance when the high priest Ananus killed James the Just during the procuratorial interregnum between Festus's death and Albinus's arrival in A.D. 61 (Antiq. XX, 200 [ix.1]). The reference to "the witnesses" in v. 58, whose grisly duty it was to knock the offender down and throw the first stones, suggests an official execution. This hardly correlates, of course, with the stipulation in *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 4:1 that "in capital cases a verdict of

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acquittal may be reached on the same day [as the trial], but a verdict of conviction not until the following day." Nor is it in accord with the Roman regulation that death sentences in the provinces could not be carried out unless confirmed by the Roman governor. But if--as we believe--Stephen's martyrdom occurred sometime in the mid-thirties and during the final years of Pilate's governorship over Judea (A.D. 26-36), and if--as we have argued--the Pharisees were not prepared to come to his defense in the council, conditions may well have been at a stage where the Sanhedrin felt free to overstep its legal authority. Pontius Pilate normally resided at Caesarea, and the later years of his governorship were beset by increasing troubles that tended to divert his attention (e.g., the Samaritan affair where he killed a number of Samaritan fanatics, an action that ultimately resulted in his removal from office). "The witnesses," Luke tells us, in preparing for their onerous work of knocking Stephen down and throwing the first stones, "laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul." This suggests that Saul had some official part in the execution. "Young man" (*neanias*) is used in Greek writings of the day for those from about twenty-four to forty years old (cf. BAG, p. 536; see also 20:9; 23:17-18, 22). Some have argued from the action of the witnesses and from Saul's age that he was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin at the time, though he may also have been exercising only delegated authority.

59-60 As Stephen was being stoned (note the imperfect verb *elithoboloun* , "they were stoning," which suggests a process), he cried out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." The cries are reminiscent of Jesus' words from the cross in Luke 23:34, 46, though the parallelism of sequence and wording is not exact. It is probably going too far to say that Luke meant Stephen's execution to be a reenactment of the first great martyrdom, that of Jesus, as many commentators have proposed (e.g., Charles H. Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1966], p. 76). Certainly, however, the parallelism here is not just inadvertent; and it was probably included to show that

the same spirit of commitment and forgiveness that characterized Jesus' life and death was true of his earliest followers. The expression "fall asleep" (*koimao*) is a common biblical way of referring to the death of God's own (cf. Gen 47:30 LXX; Deut 31:16 LXX; John 11:11; Acts 13:36; 1Cor 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 51; 2 Peter 3:4); and while the nuances of a doctrine of "soul sleep" are incompatible with the biblical message, the word "sleep" suggests something as to the nature of personal existence during that period of time theologians call "the intermediate state."

8:1a Again, as in 7:58, Luke makes the point that Saul was present at Stephen's death and approved of it. Because of the verb *syneudokeo* ("approve of," "consent to") and its parallel usage in 26:10, some have taken the reference here to be to Saul's official vote as a member of the Sanhedrin. But that is not necessarily implied. Nor is it possible to argue from v. 1a that the seeds of Saul's later Christian teaching on the law were implanted either through the force of Stephen's preaching or the sublimity of his death. Paul himself credits his conversion and

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theology to other factors. All Luke wants to do here is provide a transition in the developing Christian mission.

4. *The immediate aftermath* (8:1b-3)

1b Taken in the broader context of Luke's presentation, we should probably understand the persecution recorded here as directed primarily against the Hellenistic Christians of Jerusalem rather than chiefly against the whole church (as, e.g., Leitzmann, p. 90, and Filson, pp. 62-64; though roundly denied by G.W.H. Lampe, *St. Luke and the Church of Jerusalem* [London: Athlone, 1969], pp. 20-21). A certain stigma must also have fallen on the native-born and more scrupulous Jewish Christians, and they probably became as inconspicuous as possible in the countryside and towns around Jerusalem. The Hellenistic Jews of the city had been able to disassociate themselves from the Hellenistic Jewish Christians among them. Probably the Jewish leaders made a somewhat similar distinction between the Hellenistic and the more Hebraic Christians within the Jerusalem church, though not nearly so sharply. We are told by Luke in a somewhat sweeping statement that "all" (*pantes*) the Christians of Jerusalem "except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria." Apparently, however, only the Hellenistic believers felt it inadvisable to return. So while we should not minimize God's protecting power or the apostle's courage, their remaining in Jerusalem in order to preserve the continuity of the community might not have been impossible. As a result of the persecution that began with the martyrdom of Stephen, the gospel was carried beyond the confines of Jerusalem, in initial fulfillment of Jesus' directive in 1:8: "And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." From this time onward (till 135, when Hadrian banished all Jews from the city and refounded Jerusalem as the Roman colony Aelia Capitolina), the Jerusalem church seems to have been largely, if not entirely, devoid of Hellenistic believers. With the martyrdom of Stephen, the Christians of Jerusalem learned the bitter

lesson that to espouse a changed relationship to the land, the law, and the temple was (1) to give up the peace of the church and (2) to abandon the Christian mission to Israel (cf. Walter Schmithals, *Paul and James*, tr. D.M. Barton [London: SCM, 1965], pp. 44-45). The issues and events connected with Stephen's death and the expulsion of those who shared his concerns would stand as a warning to the Jerusalem congregation throughout its brief and turbulent history and would exert mental pressure upon Christians in the city to be more circumspect in their future activities within Judea.

2 Luke has already used "godly men" (*andres ealabeis*) of the Jews at Pentecost who were receptive to the working of God's Spirit (cf. 2:5). He has also used the adjective *eulabes* ("devout") of the aged Simeon in the temple (cf. Luke 2:25), and he will use it of Ananias of Damascus (cf. Acts 22:12). Therefore, when Luke says that "godly men buried Stephen," he apparently means that certain devout Jews who were open to the Christian message volunteered

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to ask for Stephen's body and bury him, much as Joseph of Arimathea did for Jesus (cf. Luke 23:50-53). The Mishnah speaks of "open lamentation" being inappropriate for one who has been stoned, burned, beheaded, or strangled under Sanhedrin judgment but allows "mourning, for mourning has place in the heart alone" (cf. Sanhedrin 6:6). And Luke tells us that those who buried Stephen "mourned deeply for him," which may well be Luke's way of suggesting their repentance toward God as well as their sorrow for Stephen.

3 Haenchen takes the occasion here to mock Luke's portrayal: "The transformation in the picture of Saul is breathtaking, to say the least. A moment ago he was a youth looking on with approval at the execution. Now he is the arch-persecutor, invading Christian homes to seize men and women and fling them into gaol" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 294). But, as we have noted, the Greek expression *neanias* in 7:58 signifies a man between the age of twenty-four and forty (hardly a youth in our modern sense); and the description of Saul's presence at the execution suggests some official capacity on his part, even though only that of a delegated authority. Saul, therefore, appears in 7:58 and 8:1 to have hardly been a casual onlooker. And while Luke reserves the fuller account of Saul's persecuting activities and his conversion for the narrative in 9:1-30 and the speeches in 22:1-21 and 26:2-23, here Luke introduces those accounts and ties them in with Stephen's martyrdom by using the inceptive imperfect verb *elymaineto* to tell us that at this time "Saul began to destroy the church."

B. The Early Ministries of Philip (8:4-40)

The accounts of Philip's ministries in Samaria and to the Ethiopian minister of finance are placed in Acts between the Hellenists' expulsion from Jerusalem and the outreach of the gospel to Gentiles--an outreach prepared for in Saul's conversion and first effected through the preaching of Peter to Cornelius. As such, Luke uses these accounts of Philip's ministries as a kind of bridge in

depicting the advance of the church. Each account represents a further development in proclaiming the gospel within a Jewish milieu: the first, an outreach to a dispossessed group within Palestine who were often considered by Jerusalem Jews as "half-breeds," both racially and religiously; the second, an outreach to a proselyte or near-proselyte from another land.

1. The evangelization of Samaria (8:4-25)

Historically, the movement of the gospel into Samaria following directly on the heels of the persecution of Hellenistic Jewish Christians in Jerusalem makes a great deal of sense. Doubtless a feeling of kinship was established between the formerly dispossessed Samaritans and the recently dispossessed Christian Hellenists because of Stephen's opposition to the mentality of mainstream Judaism and its veneration of the Jerusalem temple--an opposition that would have

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facilitated a favorable response to Philip and his message in Samaria. Redactionally, the thrust of the church into its mission after the persecution of the Christian community in Jerusalem is parallel with Luke's portrayal in his Gospel of the spread of Jesus' fame after the devil's assault in the wilderness. The Tübingen school of "tendency criticism" focused upon this account of the Christian mission to Samaria as a prime example of Luke's tendentiousness in Acts, arguing that Luke's sources must originally have used Simon Magus as a cover figure for Paul who was bested by Peter (cf. the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies and Recognitions*) and that Luke has recast Simon as an entirely different person with an entirely different history, in an endeavor to protect his hero Paul. Modern "source criticism" tends to see two or three separate stories intertwined here, which Luke has somewhat confusedly worked, together: that of Philip in Samaria, that of Peter and John in Samaria, and an account of the early "Christian" experience of the arch-Gnostic Simon Magus. Earlier source critics, however, following out the hypothesis of Harnack, viewed the intermeshing of these stories as the type of thing that results from an oral recounting of experiences on the part of an enthusiastic storyteller and suggested that Philip himself may have been the source of Luke's narrative here. We believe there is much in the narrative to support this suggestion, whether such a recounting was given him orally or came to him through some written form.

4 Luke connects his account of the evangelization of Samaria by his favorite connective *men oun* (Gr., "then," "so"; often untranslated in NIV), which he also uses in v. 25 to conclude the narrative. Between the twofold use of this connective, he inserts the mission to Samaria as inaugurated by Philip and carried on by Peter and John as "Exhibit A" for his thesis that "those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went." Luke does this because in the mission to Samaria he sees in retrospect a significant advance in the outreach of the gospel.

5 Philip, the second of the seven enumerated in 6:5 (cf. 21:8), and one of the Hellenistic believers expelled from Jerusalem in the persecution directed against Hellenistic Christians, traveled to the north and proclaimed "the Christ" (*ton Christon*) to Samaritans. The text is uncertain as to which city of Samaria Philip preached in, for every direction from Jerusalem is "down" (note the adverbial participle *katelthon*). The MS evidence varies regarding the inclusion of the article *ten* to read either "the city of Samaria" or "a city of Samaria." Some commentators, following the better-attested reading, insist that "the city of Samaria" can mean only the capital city of the province, which in OT times bore the name "Samaria." Herod the Great, however, rebuilt it as a Greek city and renamed it "Sebaste" in honor of Caesar Augustus (*Sebastos* is the Gr. equivalent to the Lat. *Augustus*). But Sebaste was a wholly pagan city in NT times, and it seems somewhat strange for it to be referred to here by its archaic name. Other commentators, accepting either the articular reading or preferring the less-well-attested one of "a city of Samaria" (RSV, NEB, NIV), believe that Shechem is the city in mind because during the

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Greek period it became the leading Samaritan city (cf. Jos. Antiq. XI, 340 [viii.6]) and was brought within the Jewish orbit of influence by the conquest of John Hyrcanus (ibid., XIII, 255 [ix.1]). Others prefer to think of the Samaritan city of Gitta as in view here because Justin Martyr says that Simon Magus was a native of Gitta (*Apology* 1.26). Still others think of Sychar, for it was near Shechem (being even, at times, identified with Shechem) and is the Samaritan city in the gospel tradition (cf. John 4:5). But Luke, while he probably had some particular city in mind when he wrote, was evidently not interested in giving us a precise geographical identification (as his general reference to "many Samaritan villages" in v. 25b also shows). So we shall have to leave it at that. Animosity between Judeans and Samaritans stemmed from very early times and fed on a number of incidents in their respective histories. The cleavage began in the tenth century B.C. with the separation of the Ten Tribes from Jerusalem, Judah, and Benjamin in the disruption of the Hebrew monarchy after Solomon's death. It became racially fixed with Sargon's destruction of the city of Samaria in 722 B.C. and the Assyrians' policy of deportation and mixing of populations. It was intensified in Judean eyes by the Samaritans' opposition to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple in the fifth century (cf. Neh 2:10-6:14; 13:28; Jos. Antiq. XI, 84-103 [iv.3-6], 114 [iv.9), 174 [v.8]), by their erection of a schismatic temple on Mount Gerizim sometime around the time of Alexander the Great (cf. Jos Antiq. XI, 310-11 [viii.2], 322-24 [viii.4]; XIII, 255-56 [ix.1]), and by their identification of themselves as Sidonians and joining with the Seleucids against the Jews in the conflict of 167- 164 B.C. (cf. ibid., XII, 257-64 [v.5]). It was sealed for the Samaritans by John Hyrcanus's destruction in 127 B.C. of the Gerizim temple (cf. ibid., XIII, 256 [ix.1]) and the city of Samaria (ibid., XIII, 275-77 [x.2]). The intensity of Samaritan feelings against Jerusalem is shown by the Samaritans' refusal of Herod's offer of 25 B.C. to rebuild their temple on Mount Gerizim when it was known that he also proposed to rebuild the Jerusalem temple--a rebuilding begun about 20- 19 B.C. (ibid., XV, 280-425 [viii.3-xi.1]). The Judean antagonism to Samaria is evident as early as Ecclesiasticus 50:25-26, which lumps the Samaritans with the Idumeans and the Philistines as Israel's three

detested nations and then goes on to disparage them further by the epithets "no nation" and "that foolish people that dwell in Shechem." Many such pejorative references to the Samaritans appear elsewhere in writings reflecting or reporting a Judean stance (e.g., 4QPs 37 on v. Ps 37:14; 4QpNah on Nah 3:6; John 8:48). Nevertheless, while Jeremiah and Ezekiel treated the northern tribes as an integral part of Israel, there were always a few in Samaria who viewed Judean worship with respect (cf. 2 Chronicles 30:11; 34:9); and Samaritans accepted the Pentateuch as Holy Writ and looked for a coming messianic Restorer (the *taeb*) who would be Moses redivivus.

6-8 The equation of the Hellenists of Acts 6-7 with the Samaritans of Acts 8 is much too superficial (see comments on 6:1). Likewise, Cullmann's thesis of a "triangular relationship" between (1) his so-called Johannine Circle (which includes John, the Hellenists of Acts 6-7, and the writer of Hebrews), (2) the Samaritans, and (3) the Qumranites is much too specific for the

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data at our disposal (Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle*, tr. J. Bowden [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976]). Nevertheless, it remains true that in the highly fluid and syncretistic atmosphere of first-century Palestine a number of analogical parallels of outlook and ideology existed between various nonconformist groups generally looked upon as being Jewish. Stephen, the covenanters of Qumran, and the Samaritans, for example, all had an antitemple polemic, which, at least superficially, could have drawn them together, though, in actuality, their positions were each based on quite different rationales. In addition, as the antagonism of Jerusalem Jews was focused upon the Hellenistic Christians, these lately dispossessed Jewish believers undoubtedly found something of a welcome among the Samaritans, who had felt themselves the objects of a similar animosity for so long. Philip's preaching has been defined in v. 5 as being a proclamation of "the Messiah" (*ton Christon*), with its content further specified in v. 12 as being "the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." Undoubtedly he used Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19 as a major testimonium passage in his preaching, as Peter and Stephen had done. With the Pentateuch as their Scriptures, and looking for the coming of a Mosaic Messiah, the Samaritans were open to Philip's message. Furthermore, God backed up his preaching by many "miraculous signs" (*ta semeia*), with many demoniacs, paralytics, and cripples healed. Thus Luke summarizes the response of these Samaritans to Philip's ministry by saying, "So there was great joy in that city."

9-13 Simon the sorcerer, or Simon Magus as he is called in postapostolic Christian writings, was a leading heretic in the early church. Justin Martyr (died c.165), who was himself a Samaritan, says that nearly all his countrymen revered Simon as the highest god (*Apology* 1.26; *Dialogue* 120). Irenaeus (c.180) speaks of him as the father of Gnosticism and identifies the sect of the Simonians as being derived from him (*Contra Haereses* 1.23). The second-century Acts of Peter has extensive descriptions of how Simon Magus corrupted Christians in

Rome by his teachings and how he was repeatedly bested by Peter in displays of his magical powers. These themes were picked up by the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies and Recognitions* of the third and fourth centuries, though in them Simon was used as a cover figure for Paul in a radically Ebionite manner. Hippolytus (died c.236) outlines Simon's system, which he avers was contained in a Gnostic tractate entitled *The Great Disclosure*, and tells how he allowed himself to be buried alive in Rome with the prediction that he would rise on the third day (*Refutation of All Heresies* 6. 2-15). And Justin Martyr (*Apology* 1.26), as followed by Tertullian (c. 197 in his *Apology* 13.9), tells of Simon's being honored with a statue in Rome on which was written "To Simon the Holy God"--probably a misreading either by Justin or the Simonians of an inscription beginning SEMONI SANCO DEO ("To the God Semo Sancus," an ancient Sabine deity), which either he or they read as SIMONI SANCTO DEO. Just exactly how Simon of Acts 8 is related to Simon Magus of later legend is not clear. They may have been different men, though the church fathers regularly equated them. And Luke's statement about the Samaritans' veneration of Simon--that they said, "The man is the divine

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power known as the Great Power"--seems to support the Fathers' identification. Likewise, what exactly is meant by the title "the Great Power" (v. 10) is uncertain. It may mean that Simon was acclaimed to be God Almighty (as Gustaf Dalman insisted, *The Words of Jesus*, tr. D.M. Kay [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909], p. 200) or the Grand Vizier of God Almighty (as J. De Zwaan argued, BC, 2:58). At any rate, he claimed to be some exceedingly great person and supported his claim by many acts of magic. Nevertheless, as the gospel advanced into Samaria, Simon believed and was baptized. His conversion must have greatly impressed the Samaritans, and their evangelist Philip must have long remembered it. But Simon himself, to judge by the narrative that follows, was more interested in the great acts of power accompanying Philip's preaching than God's reign in his life or the proclamation of Jesus' messiahship. Simon's belief in Jesus seems to have been like that spoken of in John 2:23-25--i.e., based only on miraculous signs and thus inferior to true commitment to Jesus.

14 For the early church the evangelization of Samaria was not just a matter of an evangelist's proclamation and people's response. It also involved the acceptance of these new converts by the mother church in Jerusalem. So Luke takes pains to point out here (see also his account of Cornelius's conversion in 10:1-11:18) that the Jerusalem church sought to satisfy itself as to the genuineness of Philip's converts and that they did this by sending Peter and John to Samaria. Along with his thesis about development and advance in the outreach of the gospel, Luke is also interested in establishing lines of continuity and highlighting aspects of essential unity within the church. Therefore, in his account of Philip's mission in Samaria, he tells also of the visit of Peter and John. Instead of minimizing Philip's success in Samaria, as some have proposed, it is more likely that Luke wants us to understand Peter and John's ministry in Samaria as confirming and extending Philip's ministry. Just as in Romans 15:26 and 2 Corinthians 9:2, where a whole province is regarded as acting in a Christian manner when represented by only

one or two congregations located there, so Luke here speaks sweepingly of the Jerusalem church hearing "that Samaria had accepted the word of God," even though in v. 25 he refers to further evangelistic activity in other Samaritan villages.

15-17 When Peter and John arrived (lit., "went down," *katabantes*), they prayed for the Samaritan converts, laid their hands on them, and "they received the Holy Spirit." Before this, Luke tells us, "The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus." We are not told just how the coming of the Holy Spirit upon these new converts was expressed in their lives, but the context suggests that his presence was attended by such external signs as marked his coming on the earliest Christians at Pentecost--probably by some form of glossolalia. The temporal separation of the baptism of the Spirit from commitment to Jesus and water baptism in this passage has been of paramount and perennial theological interest to many.

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Catholic sacramentalists take this as a biblical basis for the separation between baptism and confirmation. Charismatics of various denominational persuasions see in it a justification for their doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit as a second work of grace following conversion. But before making too much of this separation theologically, it is well, as we have noted earlier (cf. comments on 2:38), to look at the circumstances and ask what may seem an elementary question, yet one of immense importance: What if both the logical and the chronological relationships of conversion, water baptism, and the baptism of the Spirit as proclaimed in Peter's call to repentance at Pentecost (cf. 2:38; see also Rom 8:9; 1Cor 6:11) had been fully expressed in this case? The Jerusalem Jews considered the Samaritans to be second-class residents of Palestine and kept them at arm's length religiously. And on their part, the Samaritans returned the compliment. It is not too difficult to imagine what would have happened had the apostles at Jerusalem first been the missionaries to Samaria. Probably they would have been rebuffed, just as they were rebuffed earlier in their travels with Jesus when the Samaritans associated them with the city of Jerusalem (cf. Luke 9:51-56). But God in his providence used as their evangelist the Hellenist Philip, who shared their fate (though for different reasons) of being rejected at Jerusalem; and the Samaritans received him and accepted his message. But what if the Spirit had come upon them at their baptism when administered by Philip? Undoubtedly what feelings there were against Philip and the Hellenists would have carried over to them, and they would have been doubly under suspicion. But God in his providence withheld the gift of the Holy Spirit till Peter and John laid their hands on the Samaritans--Peter and John, two leading apostles who were highly thought of in the mother church at Jerusalem and who would have been accepted at that time as brothers in Christ by the new converts in Samaria. In effect, therefore, in this first advance of the gospel outside the confines of Jerusalem, God worked in ways that were conducive not only to the reception of the Good News in Samaria but also to the acceptance of these new converts by believers at Jerusalem. The further question as to how far in practice this acceptance by the Jerusalem church would have gone had Samaritan Christians actually traveled to Jerusalem to meet and worship with the Jerusalem believers is left unanswered. Nor does Luke tell

us anything about how these Samaritan believers expressed their commitment to Jesus in their Samaritan cultural and religious milieu. These are matters that would be of great interest to us today but which did not concern Luke. What he does tell us, however, is that in such a manner as this vignette shows, God was working in ways that promoted both the outreach of the gospel and the unity of the church. And rather than trying to extract from the account further theological nuances of a deeper kind, we would better expend our energies in trying to work out in theory and practice the implications of such a divine interest in outreach and unity for the church today.

18-24 Simon's response to the presence of God's Spirit and the evidences of God's power is one of those tragic stories that accompany every advance of the gospel. Whenever and

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wherever God is at work among people, there are not only genuine responses but also counterfeit ones. Simon "believed" and "was baptized," Luke has reported. Evidently Simon was included among those Peter and John laid their hands on. But the NT frequently reports incidents and events from a phenomenal perspective without always giving the divine or heavenly perspective. For this reason the verb "believe" (*pisteuo*) is used in the NT to cover a wide range of responses to God and to Christ (e.g., John 2:23; James 2:19). Neither baptism nor the laying on of hands conveys any status or power of itself, though Simon with his shallow spiritual perception thought they could. Simon's offer to pay for the ability to confer the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands evoked Peter's consignment of Simon and his money to hell. Simon regarded the bestowal of the Spirit as a specially effective bit of magic, and he had no idea of the spiritual issues at stake. Peter's analysis of the situation, however, is that Simon's heart was "not right before God" because it was still "full of bitterness and captive to sin." So Peter urges him, "Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart." But Simon, preoccupied with external consequences and physical effects, asks only and rather lamely, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me." We would like to know more from this narrative. Did Simon later become the heretic Simon Magus of ecclesiastical legend? Or did he repent and genuinely respond to God, thereby becoming a true Christian? How did the Samaritan Christians respond to Simon's perverse request and to his possible later heretical activity? But beyond what Luke tells us, we can only speculate. Instead of such speculations, it is better to allow the sobering truth of what Luke does tell us to penetrate deeply into our consciousness: It is all too often possible to make a counterfeit response to the presence and activity of God's Spirit.

25 Luke closes his account of the evangelization of Samaria with a transitional sentence that uses the same connective he began with-- *men oun* ("when," NIV).

And here he tells us that on the apostles' return journey to Jerusalem, further evangelization of Samaria took place. The "they" of the third person pronominal suffix in the verb *hypestrephon* ("they returned") refers primarily to Peter and John, but it may also refer to Philip for part of the journey, as they evangelized together in the southern regions of Samaria.

2. *An Ethiopian eunuch converted* (8:26-40)

This account of Philip's ministry to a high-ranking Ethiopian government official represents a further step in the advance of the gospel from its strictly Jewish confines to a full-fledged Gentile mission. Though a Gentile, the official was probably a Jewish proselyte or near-proselyte (a so-called Proselyte of the Gate) and was therefore viewed by Luke as still within a Jewish religious milieu. He had been to Jerusalem to worship, was studying the prophecy of Isaiah, and was open to further instruction from a Jew. The "enthusiastic historiography" that many have detected

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in the narrative may well reflect Philip's enthusiasm in telling the story, which Luke may have captured either directly or from some written source. In any event, here was a notable instance of providential working that carried the development of the gospel proclamation even beyond Samaria.

26 We are not told just where Philip was when he received his divine directive to go south to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. Most have assumed he was at the Samaritan city referred to in v. 5, whether Sebaste, Samaria, Gitta, or Sychar. Some have seen him at Jerusalem because of the *eis Hierosolyma--apo Ierousalem* ("into Jerusalem--from Jerusalem") couplet in vv. 25-26, while others think of him as already at Caesarea. It is also possible that Philip was at the time in one of the Samaritan villages alluded to in v. 25, if he is included in the pronominal suffix "they" of that verse. But Luke is not interested in the specifics of geography here, and it is idle to speculate further. What he is interested in is highlighting for his readers the fact that Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch was especially arranged by God and providentially worked out in all its details. When Luke desires to stress the special presence and activity of God in his narrative, he frequently uses the expression "the angel of the Lord" (*angelos kyriou*) for the more normal reference to "the spirit of the Lord" (*pneuma kyriou*), as in Luke 1:11; 2:9; Acts 8:26; 12:7, 23 (cf. also *angelos tou theou* ["angel of God"] in 10:3 and simply *angelos* ["angel"] in 7:30, 35, 38; 10:7, 22; 11:13; 12:11; 27:23). Here Luke begins in just such a way and with such a purpose, telling us that "an angel of the Lord" began the action by giving instructions to Philip-- and also sustained it throughout, though the more usual "the Spirit" and "the Spirit of the Lord" are used in vv. 29, 39. In the LXX the word *mesembria* usually means "midday" or "noon," and it is used that way in Acts 22:6. Here, however, as in Daniel 8:4, 9 LXX, *mesembria* probably means "south," with *kata mesembrian* meaning "southward." The clarifying phrase *haute estin eremos* ("this is desert") can refer grammatically either to "the road" (*ten hodon*, as RSV, NEB, JB, NIV) or to the city of Gaza itself. This was the southernmost of the five chief Philistine cities in southwest Palestine and the last settlement before

the desert waste stretching away to Egypt. The fifty-mile journey from Jerusalem to Gaza trailed off at its southwestern terminus into patches of desert, and most commentators believe that the expression "this is desert" has reference to that portion of the road. Sometime around 100-96 B.C., however, Gaza was destroyed by the Maccabean priest-king Alexander Jannaeus (cf. Jos. Antiq. XIII, 358-64 [xiii.3]), being literally laid waste, while about 57 B.C. a new city was built under Pompey's orders by Gabinius (ibid., XIV, 76 [iv.4], 88 [v.31]). Strabo and Diodorus of Sicily seem to refer to this new Gaza as located a bit to the south of the old site and to distinguish it from a "Desert Gaza" or "Old Gaza" (cf. HJP, 2.1:71). Therefore, some commentators understand the expression to specify the old city of Gaza ("Desert Gaza") rather than the new city.

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27-28 It is difficult to determine from the text itself how Luke wanted his readers to understand the Ethiopian eunuch's relation to Judaism. Furthermore, it is uncertain how first-century Judaism would have viewed a eunuch coming to worship at Jerusalem. While Deuteronomy 23:1 explicitly stipulates that no emasculated male could be included within the Jewish religious community, Isaiah 56:3-5 speaks of eunuchs being accepted by the God of boundless lovingkindness. Likewise, it is not at all as clear as it might appear what was the Ethiopian official's physical condition, for the word eunuch (*eunouchos*) frequently appears in the LXX and in Greek vernacular writings "for high military and political officials; it does not have to imply emasculation" (TDNT, 2:766). Therefore, we are probably justified in taking "eunuch" to be a governmental title in an Oriental kingdom and in emphasizing two facts when considering the Ethiopian's relation to Judaism: (1) he had been on a religious pilgrimage to Jerusalem and (2) he was returning with a copy of the prophecy of Isaiah in his possession, which would have been difficult for a non-Jew to get. Admittedly, Luke leaves us in some doubt when he might well have used some such expression as *proselytos* ("proselyte," "convert"; cf. 6:5; 13:43), *sebomenos ton theon* ("God-fearer," "Proselyte of the Gate," "near convert"; cf. 13:50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7), *phoboumenos ton theon* ("reverent," used in 13:16, 26, equivalent to *sebomenos ton theon* , though in 10:2, 22, 35 with no necessary relation to Judaism involved), or even *eusebes* ("pious," with no relation to Judaism necessarily involved; cf. 10:2, 7). Nevertheless, judging by what Luke does tell us and by the placement of this vignette in his overall plan, we are probably to understand that this Ethiopian government official was a proselyte or near-proselyte to Judaism. The ancient kingdom of Ethiopia lay between Aswan and Khartoum and corresponds to modern Nubia (not Abyssinia). It was ruled by a queen mother who had the dynastic title Candace and ruled on behalf of her son the king, since the king was regarded as the child of the sun and therefore too holy to become involved in the secular functions of the state (cf. Bion of Soli *Aethiopica* 1; Strabo *Geography* 17.1.54; Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 6.186; Dio Cassius *History of Rome* 54.5.4; Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.1.13). One of the ministers of the Ethiopian government--in fact, the minister of finance--

having become either a full proselyte or a Proselyte of the Gate, had gone to Jerusalem to worship at one of the Jewish festivals and was now returning home reading Isaiah. It might even have been Isaiah 56:3-5 that first caught his attention and caused him to return to Isaiah again and again:

Let no foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say,

"The Lord will surely exclude me from his people."

And let not any eunuch complain,

"I am only a dry tree."

For this is what the LORD says:

"To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,

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who choose what pleases me
and hold fast to my covenant--
to them I will give within my temple and its walls
a memorial and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that will not be cut off."

If he had begun reading here, he would doubtless have gone on to read what immediately follows (56:6-8):

"And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD
to serve him,
to love the name of the LORD,
and to worship him,
all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it
and who hold fast to my covenant--
these I will bring to my holy mountain
and give them joy in my house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house will be called
a house of prayer for all nations."

The Sovereign LORD declares--
he who gathers the exiles of Israel:
"I will gather still others to them
besides those already gathered."

But whatever got him into Isaiah's prophecy, the interpretation of the Servant passage of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 troubled him.

29-30 Having been directed to the desert road on the way to Gaza, Philip is again directed by the Spirit to the carriage the Ethiopian minister of finance is traveling in. As Philip approaches, he hears the minister reading from Isaiah, for reading aloud to oneself was "the universal practice in the ancient world" (Cadbury, *Book of Acts*, p. 18). So while running along beside the Ethiopian's carriage, Philip asks, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (*ginoskeis ha anaginoskeis* --a play on words).

31-34 The Ethiopian, being open to instruction from a Jew, invites Philip into his carriage to

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explain Isaiah 53:7-8 to him. His problem, it seems, concerns the suffering and humiliation references, and his question is "Who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Perhaps he had heard an official explanation of this passage at Jerusalem, but he still had questions about its meaning. While in Late Judaism the concept of God's Servant carried messianic connotations in certain contexts and among certain groups, there is no evidence that anyone in pre-Christian Judaism ever thought of the Messiah in terms of a Suffering Servant. The Talmud, indeed, speaks of suffering sent by God as having atoning efficacy (cf. Davies, *Paul*, pp. 262-65); and there are many indications that "humility and self-humiliation, or acceptance of humiliation from God's hand, were expected of a pious man and thought to be highly praiseworthy" (E. Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship* [London: SCM, 1960], p. 23; cf. also pp. 23-31). But there is no explicit evidence that this general attitude toward suffering was ever consciously carried over to ideas regarding the Messiah, God's Servant par excellence. Klausner's dictum continues to hold true: "In the whole Jewish Messianic literature of the Tannaitic period there is no trace of the `suffering Messiah'" Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, tr. W.F. Stinespring [New York: Macmillan, 1955], p. 405). The Targum on the earlier and later prophets (so-called Pseudo-Jonathan), which stems from a Palestinian milieu, consistently applies all mention of suffering and humiliation in Isaiah 52:13- 53:12 either to the nation Israel (at 52:14; 53:2, 4, 10) or to the wicked Gentile nations (at 53:3, 7-9, 11). Nor can it be said that the DSS have a suffering messianology. The Hymns of Thanksgiving, it is true, bring us somewhat closer to such a concept than anything extant from the world of Judaism, chiefly in their association of suffering and the Servant of God with ideas about the coming Messiah(s): (1) that the psalmist (the Teacher of Righteousness himself?) was conscious of being God's servant (cf. 1QH 13.18-19; 14.25; 17.26); (2) that persecution and suffering were the lot of both the Teacher and the community in following God's will (cf. 1QH 5.15-16; 8.26-27, 35-36); and (3) that the group at times expressed itself in language drawn from the Servant Songs of Isaiah (cf. 1QH 4.5-6, which is an expanded paraphrase of Isa 42: 6). But that these ideas were ever brought together at Qumran to form a Suffering

Servant messianology is at best quite uncertain. It may be that rabbinic Judaism later purged a Suffering Servant messianology based on the Isaian Servant Songs from its own traditions because of the use made of such a doctrine and these passages by Christians, as Joachim Jeremias has argued (cf. TDNT, 5:695-700). More likely, however, it seems that the lack of clarity regarding such a connection of concepts at Qumran--from whence we might reasonably expect greater precision on this point, had it existed in Late Judaism--points to the conclusion that, while the individual elements for a suffering conception of the Messiah may have been in process of being formed in certain quarters, a doctrine of a suffering Messiah was unheard of and considered unthinkable in first-century Jewish religious circles generally.

35 At a time when only what Christians call the OT was Scripture, what better book was there

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to use in proclaiming the nature of divine redemption than Isaiah, and what better passage could be found than Isaiah 52:13-53:12? Thus Philip began with the very passage the Ethiopian was reading and proclaimed to him "the good news about Jesus," explaining from Isaiah 53:7-8 and its context a suffering messianology. Of the evangelists, Matthew and John apply Isaiah 53 to Jesus' ministry of healing (cf. Matt 8:17 on 53:4; John 12:38 on 53:1; see also Matt 12:18-21 on 42:1-4). Luke, however, alone among the evangelists, portrays Jesus as quoting Isaiah 53 as being fulfilled in his passion (cf. Luke 22:37 on 53:12). In his volumes, therefore, Luke sets up a parallel between Jesus' use of Isaiah 53 and Philip's preaching based on Isaiah 53 and implies in that parallel that the latter was dependent upon the former (cf. also 1 Peter 2:22-25 on 53:4-6, 9, 12). But Philip, we are told, only began his preaching about Jesus with Isaiah 53. Probably he went on to include other passages from that early Christian block of testimonium material that has been dubbed "Scriptures of the Servant of the Lord and the Righteous Sufferer" that also included Isaiah 42:1-44:5; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; and Pss 22, 34, 69, 118 (cf. C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* [London: Nisbet, 1952], pp. 61-108).

36-38 The eunuch responded to Philip by asking for baptism. As a Jewish proselyte or near-proselyte, the eunuch probably knew that water baptism was the expected external symbol for a Gentile's repentance and conversion to the religion of Israel. Therefore, it would have been quite natural for him to view baptism as the appropriate expression for his commitment to Jesus, whom he had come to accept as the fulfillment of Israel's hope and promised Messiah. Or perhaps Philip closed his exposition with an appeal similar to Peter's at Pentecost (cf. 2:38) and his own in Samaria (cf. 8:12). But however the subject of baptism arose, "both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him." Traditionally, Wadi el-Hesi that runs northeast of Gaza has been identified as the place of the eunuch's baptism. But Luke's interest here is not geography but the fact that in baptism the Ethiopian minister of finance proclaimed his commitment to Jesus. That is the climax Luke has been building up to.

39-40 The account of the Ethiopian's conversion ends as it began--with a stress on the special presence of God and his direct intervention. We are told that the Spirit of the Lord "suddenly took" (*herpasen*) Philip from the scene. The verb *harpazo* connotes both a forceful and sudden action by the Spirit and a lack of resistance from Philip. With our Western interest in cause-and-effect relations and our modern understanding of historiography, we would like to know more about what exactly happened between the eunuch and Philip and more about their subsequent lives. Irenaeus writes that the eunuch became a missionary to the Ethiopians (*Contra Haereses* 3.12), though we do not know whether he only inferred that from this account or whether he had independent knowledge about it. All that Luke tells us about the eunuch is that his conversion was a significant episode in the advance of the gospel and that he "went on his way rejoicing." Likewise, all Luke tells us about Philip is that his early ministries in Samaria and to the eunuch

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were important features in the development of the Christian mission from its strictly Jewish confines to its Gentile outreach. He refers to further evangelistic activity on the part of Philip in the maritime plain of Palestine and to a final ministry at Caesarea. Later he mentions Philip and his four prophetess daughters at Caesarea in connection with Paul's last visit to Jerusalem (cf. 21:8-9). Beyond these meager references, however, Luke tells us nothing because he is interested in the advances of the gospel proclamation and not in what happened after that.

C. The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus (9:1-30)

There are three accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts: the first here in chapter 9 and two more in Paul's defenses in chapters 22 and 26. Source criticism has had a field day with these accounts, often attributing the repetitions to a plurality of sources and the differences to divergent perspectives among the sources. Haenchen, however, rightly says, "Luke employs such repetitions only when he considers something to be extraordinarily important and wishes to impress it unforgettably on the reader. That is the case here" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 327). The major charge against Paul was his willingness to carry the gospel directly to Gentiles, refusing to be confined to a mission to Israel. His defense before the people of Jerusalem in chapter 22 ends with him quoting his divinely given commission to go to the Gentiles and the people's fervent objection to it (cf. 22:21-22). Paul's defense before Agrippa II in chapter 26 also ends on this same note and is followed by Festus's comment that he was mad (cf. 26:23-24).

Paul would have had no great problem with either Judaism or Rome had he contented himself with a mission to Jews, and Christianity would have been spared the head-on collision with both Judaism and Rome. But Luke's point in chapter 9--one he makes twice more in chapters 22 and 26--is that Christ himself brought about this change in the strategy of divine redemption. It was not a strategy Paul thought up or a program given to him by another; it was a

compelling call that came directly from Christ himself. Nor can it be explained psychologically or as an evolution of ideas whose time was ripe. Instead, it came to him by revelation and he had no choice but to obey. Luke, therefore, climaxes his portrayals of three pivotal figures in the advance of the gospel to the Gentile world by an account of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus that emphasizes the supernatural nature of the call and the miraculous circumstances of the conversion. With these emphases, though with inevitable variations in detail, Paul himself was in full agreement (cf. Gal 1:1-24).

1. The Christ encounter on the Damascus road (9:1-9)

1-2 The account of Saul's conversion opens with the picture of him "still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples." The adverb *eti* ("still") ties the narrative into what has gone before (cf. 8:3) and denotes that even after the death of Stephen and the expulsion of the

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Hellenistic Christians from Jerusalem, Saul saw it was necessary to continue the persecution in places outside the Sanhedrin's immediate jurisdiction. The expression *apeiles kai phonou*, which NIV (together with Ph and NEB) treats as a hendiadys and translates as "murderous threats," may very well have connoted in Luke's source material the dual ideas of a legal warning (*apeile*) and a judicial punishment (*phonos*), as were inherent in Jewish jurisprudence (cf. Dupont, p. 44, n.43)--though Luke himself probably only took them as a hendiadys, without any desire to reflect the exact nuances of Jewish legal procedure. The past generation of commentators, particularly those of the English-speaking world, often read into such passages as Romans 7:14-25, Galatians 1:13-14, Philippians 3:4-6 and the portrayals of Acts 9, 22, and 26 a mental and spiritual struggle on the part of Saul that was, either consciously or unconsciously, fighting fervently against the logic of the early Christians' preaching, the dynamic quality of their lives, and their fortitude under oppression. Therefore his "breathing out murderous threats" was taken as his attempt to slay externally the dragons of doubt he could not silence within his own heart and to repress "all humaner tendencies in the interests of his legal absolutism" (C.H. Dodd, *The Mind of Paul: Change and Development* [Manchester: John Rylands Library, 1934], p. 36; cf. also Dodd's companion lecture of the same year entitled *The Mind of Paul; A Psychological Approach*, esp. pp. 12-13). But the day of the psychological interpretation of Paul's conversion experience appears to be over, and deservedly so. Indeed, Luke connects historically the martyrdom of Stephen, the persecution of the Hellenistic Jewish Christians, and the conversion of Saul. But the argument for a logical connection is not as certain. It is, of course, impossible today to speak with certainty about what was going on in Saul's subconscious mind at the time, for psychoanalysis two millennia or so later is hardly a fruitful exercise. His own references as a Christian to this earlier time in his life, however, do not require us to view him as struggling with uncertainty, doubt, and guilt before becoming a Christian. They rather suggest that humanly speaking he was immune to the Christian proclamation and immensely satisfied with his own ancestral faith (cf. my *Paul*, pp. 65-105). While he looked forward to the full realization of the hope of Israel, Paul seems from his reminiscences of those earlier days to

have been thoroughly satisfied with the revelation of God that was given through Moses and to have counted it his chief delight to worship God through those revealed forms. Nor need we suppose that the logic of the early Christian preachers greatly affected Paul. His later references to "the offense of the cross" show that for him the cross was the great stumbling block to any acknowledgment of Jesus of Nazareth as Israel's Messiah--a stumbling block no amount of logic or verbal gymnastics could remove (cf. 1Cor 1:23; Gal 5:11; note also Justin Martyr, *Dialogue* 32, 89). It is probable that Saul took up his brutal task of persecution with full knowledge of the earnestness of his opponents, the stamina of the martyrs, and the agony he would necessarily cause. Fanaticism was not so foreign to Palestine in his day as to leave him unaware of these things, and it is quite possible that he was prepared for the emotional strain involved in

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persecuting those he believed to be dangerous schismatics within Israel.

More important, however, in days when the rabbis viewed the keeping of the Mosaic law as the vitally important prerequisite for the coming of the Messianic Age (cf. b *Sanhedrin* 97b-98a; b *Baba Bathra* 10a; b *Yoma* 86b), Paul could validate his actions against the Christians by reference to such godly precedents as (1) Moses' slaying of the immoral Israelites at Baal-peor (cf. Num 25:1-5); (2) Phinehas's slaying of the Israelite man and Midianite woman in the plains of Moab (cf. Num 25:6-15); and (3) the actions of Mattathias and the Hasidim in rooting out apostasy among the people (cf. 1Macc 2:23-28, 42-48). Perhaps even the divine commendation of Phinehas's action in Numbers 25:11-13 rang in his ears:

Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the

Israelites; for he was as jealous as I am for my honor among them, so that in my zeal I did

not put an end to them. Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him He

and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous

for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites.

2Macc 6:13 counsels that "it is a mark of great kindness when the impious are not let alone for a long time, but punished at once." The DSS define a righteous man as one who "bears unremitting hatred toward all men of ill repute" (1QS 9.22). They speak of unswerving allegiance to God and his laws as alone providing a

firm foundation for the Holy Spirit, truth, and the arrival of Israel's hope (cf. 1QS 9.3-4, 20-21) and call for volunteers who are blameless in spirit and body to root out apostasy in the final eschatological days (cf. 1QM 7.5; 10.2-5). The Qumran psalmist, in fact, directly associates commitment to God and his laws with zeal against apostates and perverters of the law when he says:

The nearer I draw to you, the more am I filled with zeal against all that do wickedness and

against all men of deceit. For they that draw near to you cannot see your commandments

defiled, and they that have knowledge of you can brook no change of your words, seeing

that you are the essence of right, and all your elect are the proof of your truth (1QH 14.13-

15).

With such precedents and parallels, coupled with the rising tide of messianic expectation within Israel, Saul could very well have felt justified in mounting a further persecution against the Christians. Probably he felt that in light of Israel's rising messianic hopes the nation must be united and faithful in its obedience to the law and kept from schism or going astray. In his task, he doubtless expected to receive God's commendation. According to 1 Maccabees, Judah, Jonathan, and Simeon (the three great Hasmonean rulers) established friendly relations with Rome (cf. 1Macc 8:17-32; 12:1-4; 14:16-24), a reciprocal

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extradition clause being included in Rome's reply to Simeon (cf. 1Macc 15:15-24). And the decrees of the Roman senate that Josephus records appear to indicate that the treaties of friendship between Rome and the Jewish people were renewed in the time of John Hyrcanus (cf. Antiq. XIII, 259-66 [ix.2]; XIV, 145-48 [viii.5]). While the Sadducean high priests of Jerusalem no longer exercised the civil authority of their predecessors, they were, it seems, recognized by Rome as the titular rulers of their people in most internal matters; and evidently they retained the right of extradition in strictly religious situations. Therefore Saul, seeking the return of Jewish Christians, "went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem" (cf. 22:5; 26:12). Damascus was a large and thriving commercial center at the foot of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range. Since 64 B.C. it had been part of the Roman province of Syria and was granted certain civic rights by Rome as one of the ten cities of eastern Syria and the Transjordan called the Decapolis (cf. Mark 5:20; 7:31). It had a large Nabatean Arab population, and possibly was ruled by the Nabatean king Aretas IV (9 B.C.-A.D. 40) at some time during this period (cf. 2Cor 11:32). It also had a large Jewish population, 10, 500 of whom Josephus reports were killed by the people of Damascus at the outbreak of Jewish-Roman hostilities in A.D. 66 (cf. War II, 561 [xx.2]; though in War VII, 368 [viii.7] the figure is 18,000). It was to this city that Saul went with the authority of the Jewish Sanhedrin, seeking to return to Jerusalem those Christians who had fled the city--chiefly the Hellenistic Jewish Christians--in order to contain the spread of what he considered to be a pernicious and deadly contagion within Israel. While we have spoken repeatedly of the early believers in Jesus as Christians, the term "Christian" (*Christianos*) was first coined at Antioch of Syria (cf. 11:26) and appears only three times in the entire NT (11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). Before being named at Syrian Antioch and during the early existence of the church, those who accepted Jesus' messiahship and claimed him as their Lord called themselves those of "the Way" (*he hodos* , as here and at 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24: 14, 22; cf. also 16:17; 18:25-26), while their opponents spoke of them as members of "the sect of the Nazarenes" (*he hairesis ton Nazoraion* ; cf. 24:5, 14; 28:22). The origin of the

absolute use of "the Way" for Christians is uncertain, though it surely had something to do with the early believers' consciousness of walking in the true path of God's salvation and moving forward to accomplish his purposes. In the vignette of 9:1-30, it is synonymous with such self-designations as "the disciples of the Lord" (vv. 2, 10, 19), "saints" (v. 13), "all who call on your [Jesus'] name" (v. 14), and "brothers" (vv. 17, 30).

3-6 As he approached Damascus, Saul saw a light from heaven and heard a voice from heaven. In 9:3 the light is described as simply "a light from heaven," while in 22:6 it is "a bright light from heaven" and in 26:13 it is "a light from heaven, brighter than the sun." In 9:3 and 22:6 the light is spoken of as shining around Saul alone, whereas in 26:13 it includes his companions as well. But these are matters of small consequence in any threefold telling of an event. Haenchen notes, "It is

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open to a narrator [whether Paul himself or Luke] to counter the lulling effect of repetition by reinforcing the emphasis of salient features" (*Acts of the Apostles* , p. 321, n.3). Likewise, in 9:4 it is reported that Saul heard the voice (*ekousen phonen*) and in 9:7 that his companions also heard the voice (*akouontes men tes phones*), whereas in 22:9 it is said that his companions did not hear the voice (*ten phonen ouk ekousan*) and in 26:14 that only Saul heard the voice (*ekousa phonen*). Some commentators have seen here a flagrant contradiction in Luke's source materials, which he unwittingly incorporated into his finished product. But since the Greek noun *phone* means both "sound" in the sense of any tone or voice and "articulated speech" in the sense of language, undoubtedly it was understood by all concerned (as the respective contexts suggest) to mean that while the whole group traveling to Damascus heard the sound from heaven, only Saul understood the spoken words. As Saul fell to the ground, the voice from heaven intoned his name in solemn repetition: "Saul, Saul." It was common in antiquity for a person in a formal setting to be addressed by the repetition of his name (cf. Gen 22:11; 46:2; Exod 3:4; 1Sam 3:10; Luke 10:41; 22:31; 2Esd 14: 1; 2 Baruch 22:2). The fact that here the transliterated form Saoul (from the Heb. and Aram. *saul*) was used in addressing Saul, rather than the Grecianized vocative Saule, suggests that the words came to him in either Hebrew or Aramaic (cf. 26:14). Of more significance is the fact that Saul understood the voice to be a message from God himself, for in rabbinism to hear a voice from heaven (a *bat qol* , lit., "a daughter of the voice" of God) never meant either a lower deity in the pantheon of gods speaking, as in Greek speculations, or some psychological disturbance, as many would presume today. On the contrary, it always connoted a rebuke or a word of instruction from God. Therefore when the voice went on to ask the question "Why do you persecute me?" Saul was without doubt thoroughly confused. He was not persecuting God! Rather, he was defending God and his laws! Some have translated Saul's reply in v. 5 as "Who are you, sir?" since the Greek title *kyrios* was used in the ancient world not only as an ascription of worshipful acclaim but also as a form of polite address and since the context indicates that Saul did not know whom he was speaking to. But he did know that he had been struck down by a light from heaven and had been addressed by a voice from heaven, both of

which signaled the divine presence. So his use of the term "Lord" was probably meant in a worshipful manner--even though he was thoroughly confused as to how he could be rebuked by God for doing the will and service of God. Unable even to articulate his confusion, though realizing the need for some response in the presence of the divine, he cries out in stumbling fashion, "Who are you, Lord?" In what must have been for Saul almost total disbelief, he hears the following reply: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Then in a manner that throws him entirely upon the guidance of Jesus, apart from anything he could do or work out for himself, the voice continues: "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." Such a confrontation and such a rebuke must have been traumatic for Saul. Time would be needed to heal his emotions and work out the implications of his experience, and both Acts and his later Christian letters reveal

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something of the process of development throughout the rest of his life. But in this supreme revelational encounter, Saul received a new perspective on divine redemption, a new agenda for his life, and the embryonic elements of his new Christian theology. Once Saul had been encountered by Christ on the Damascus road, a number of realizations must have begun to press in upon his consciousness--each of which was to receive further explication in his thought and life as time went on, though here in their elemental form they could not be evaded. First, Saul began to understand that despite his zeal and his sense of doing God's will, his previous life and activities in Judaism lay under God's rebuke. A voice from heaven had corrected him, and there was nothing more to be said. Second, Saul could not escape the fact that the Jesus whose followers he had been persecuting was alive, exalted, and in some manner to be associated with God the Father, whom Israel worshiped. He, therefore, had to revise his whole estimate of the life, teaching, and death of the Nazarene because God had beyond any question vindicated him. Thus he came to agree with the Christians that Jesus' death on the cross, rather than discrediting him as an impostor, fulfilled prophecy and was really God's provision for man's sin and that Jesus' resurrection confirmed him as being the nation's Messiah and mankind's Lord. Third, Saul came to appreciate that if Jesus is the nation's Messiah and the fulfillment of Israel's ancient hope, then traditional eschatology, rather than merely dwelling on the future, must be restructured to emphasize the realized and inaugurated factors associated with Jesus of Nazareth and focus on the personal and transcendent dimensions instead of just the historical. Fourth, in the question "Why do you persecute me?" Saul came to realize something of the organic and indissoluble unity that exists between Christ and his own. For though he believed he was only persecuting the followers of Jesus, the heavenly interpretation of his action was that he was persecuting the risen Christ himself. Fifth (though hardly "final"), Saul came to understand that he had a mission to carry out for Christ. Its details, to be sure, were first given in general terms by Ananias of Damascus (vv. 15-16) and only later set forth more fully by various visions and providential circumstances (cf. comments on chs. 13-28). But though it was not till later that Saul understood that his mission involved the equality of both Jews and Gentiles

before God and the legitimacy of a direct approach to the Gentile world, it was his constant habit to relate his Gentile commission firmly and directly to his encounter with Christ on the Damascus road.

7-9 The effect on Saul's traveling companions of his encounter with Christ was dramatic. Acts 26 says that they fell to the ground at the flash of heavenly light. Here we are told that after getting up they "stood there speechless." Evidently they were able to regain a semblance of composure and thus lead Saul into Damascus. For Saul, however, for whom the spoken message was even more traumatic than the light and the sound, the experience was overpowering. Physically, as his system reacted to the emotional shock, he became blind for three days, during which time he neither ate nor drank as he waited in Damascus for further

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instructions.

2. *Ananias's ministry to Saul* (9:10-19a)

10-16 Ananias was a Jew of Damascus and a believer in Jesus. Here (v. 10) he is called a "disciple" and presented as one who immediately recognizes the Lord Christ, who speaks to him in a vision, while in 22:12 he is called "a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews." From Ananias's statement that he had heard reports about Saul's persecutions in Jerusalem (v. 13), it may be inferred that he was not one of the Hellenistic Christians who had formerly lived in Jerusalem but that he lived in Damascus. We are not, however, told anything about how he became a Christian or about the Jewish Christian community of Damascus. The Lord Jesus directed Ananias: "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying." The street called Straight was an east-west street that is still one of the main thoroughfares of Damascus, the *Derb el-Mustaqim*. It had colonnaded halls on either side and imposing gates at each end (cf. BC, 4:102) and presumably was as well known in antiquity as Regent Street in London or Michigan Avenue in Chicago today. The directions included not only the name of the street but also the house where Saul could be found. More significantly, Jesus' words to Ananias identified Saul as one who was praying. For Luke, his hero Paul was a man of prayer (cf. 16:25; 20:36; 22:17), as was Jesus in his earthly ministry (cf. Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 22:41). Probably in the religious experience of Paul, as Stanley has suggested, "the most important link between his Christian life and Pharisaism was that devotion to prayer for which the Pharisees were rightly celebrated and held in esteem among their people" (David M. Stanley, *Boasting in the Lord: The Phenomenon of Prayer in Saint Paul* [New York: Paulist, 1973], p. 42). Stanley goes on to say, "If one may conjecture about Paul's preparation for the overpowering event which changed his life, surely the chief element was prayer" (ibid., p. 42). It takes no great imaginative power to appreciate the

reasons for Ananias's hesitation in going at once to meet Saul, and it is not at all difficult to sympathize with Ananias. Even the prophets of old had doubts about the appropriateness of what they understood to be God's will, particularly when it seemed so contrary to what might be expected. But Luke lays emphasis on Ananias's hesitancy, not just to humanize his narrative, but also to impress on his readers the magnitude of the change in Saul's life and to highlight the heaven-ordained nature of his later Christian mission: (1) that instead of a persecutor, he is Christ's "chosen instrument"; (2) that instead of a concern for Israel alone, his mission is "to carry my [Jesus'] name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel"; and (3) that instead of prominence and glory, it is necessary for him "to suffer for my [Jesus'] name." In highlighting these features of being a "chosen instrument," sent to "the Gentiles," and to "suffer for my [Jesus'] name," Luke has, in effect, given a theological precis of all he will portray historically in chapters 13-28--a

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precis that also summarizes the self-consciousness of Paul himself as reflected in his own letters.

17-19a Ananias was obedient to his Lord and followed the directions given in the vision. He was undoubtedly comforted by knowing that Saul too had been given a vision about his coming (v. 12), though he must have proceeded with some trepidation. Going to the house of Judas on Straight Street, he entered and laid his hands on Saul. Ananias greeted him, evidently in Hebrew or Aramaic (note the transliterated *Saoul* ; cf. comments on v. 4 above), with the fraternal greeting "brother"--believing, it seems, that whoever Jesus had accepted was his brother, whatever he might think about such a person himself, and that all further relationships between them must be built on that basis. He spoke about Jesus, who had appeared to Saul on the Damascus Road, and about the restoration of Saul's sight and his being filled with the Holy Spirit. And "immediately," Luke tells us, "something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength." There is much more we would like to know about the persons and details of this event. What was the Jewish Christian community of Damascus like? What was Ananias's background, and whatever happened to him after this incident? When did Saul receive his vision regarding Ananias's coming and how? What was the "scaly substance" that fell from Saul's eyes? Where and how was Saul baptized? Were there any immediate evidences in Saul's life of his being filled with the Holy Spirit, such as appeared among believers at Jerusalem and in Samaria? On some of these matters (e.g., water baptism and the baptism of the Spirit), Luke probably means us to understand his presentation here in terms already given in his earlier portrayals and therefore feels no need to repeat himself. On other matters, though, he seems to have had no interest, and so we should not seek to squeeze anything more from the text. What Luke does tell us, however, is significant. In the advance of the gospel to the Gentiles, the main missionary in that advance was converted to Christ and given his commission in a manner that fully showed the heaven-ordained nature

of his conversion and call--a manner that did not make him dependent on the Jerusalem church for either his conversion or call, yet brought him into essential unity with all those who are Christ's and call themselves those of "the Way."

3. Saul's conversion evidenced in Damascus (9:19b-25)

It may seem strange, at first glance, for Luke to include in his account of Saul's conversion a sketchy report of his preaching Christ in Damascus and the unceremonious exit from the city it brought about. The material is so undeveloped that it raises more historical problems than it answers. Therefore, many source critics have viewed it as extraneous to the substance of vv. 1- 19a, and many commentators have treated it apart from the story of Saul's conversion. On closer inspection, however, we can discern a distinctly Lukan rationale for the inclusion of this

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material--viz., to emphasize the unprecedented nature of Saul's about face and the genuineness of his conversion. In clarifying his purpose, Luke (1) presents Saul as proclaiming Jesus as both "Son of God" and "Messiah," (2) depicts his hearers as being so astonished that they had to ask themselves if this was indeed the same man who had been persecuting Christians, and (3) highlights the fact that the persecution he once headed was now directed against him.

19b-22 Luke's references to Saul after his conversion--viz., his being "several days with the disciples in Damascus" (*meta ton en Damasko matheton hemeras tinas*) and his beginning "at once" (*eutheos*) to preach in the synagogues of the city--are, when compared with Paul's own account of his conversion and the immediately subsequent events, so general and ambiguous as to set up all sorts of historical problems for commentators today. No one familiar with Paul's precise delineation of chronology and personal relationships in Galatians 1:15-24 could have written the narrative here with such disregard for the emphases laid out there. Certainly no later admirer of Paul would have written it, disregarding, as it does, the most important autobiographical statement about Paul's conversion and commission and giving a portrayal that can be taken as ambiguous and contradictory. But if we are correct in holding to Luke's authorship of Acts and in understanding the "we" sections of the work as reflecting his times of personal association with Paul (see Introduction: The Question of Sources; also, Authorship), and, further, if we postulate an early date for the composition of the Letter to the Galatians (as we do) at a time before Luke himself became a Christian and joined Paul's missionary team, then it may very well have been the case that Luke was unfamiliar with the specific contents of Paul's earlier Galatian letter. If he knew of its existence, perhaps he believed that its essence appears in more finished form in Romans and therefore felt no need to interact with it. Of more importance, however, is the fact that the purposes of Paul in Galatians 1:15-24 and Luke here are different, with these purposes affecting to a considerable extent the selection and shaping of each writer's presentation. Thus with his desire to assert the revelational nature of his Gentile ministry, Paul emphasized in

Galatians that he was not dependent upon "any man" (cf. *sarki kai haimati* , lit., "flesh and blood," Gal 1:16) for his distinctive gospel, and particularly not upon the Jerusalem apostles. Luke, however, while also interested in depicting the heaven-ordained nature of Paul's conversion and commission, is concerned in 9:19b-25 to stress the genuineness of Saul's conversion and call. This he does by speaking of the new convert's distinctly Christian proclamation in the synagogues of Damascus and his being persecuted by the Jews of the city because of his preaching. Neither this preaching nor the persecution is necessarily ruled out by Galatians 1:15-24, though the intermeshing of historical details between the two accounts may be lacking. But such a failure of historical synchronization is fairly common between two narratives of the same set of circumstances where neither author seems to have read the other and where both have their own distinctive purposes. It is not going beyond a reasonable historical reconstruction to suggest that the actual order of events was probably as follows: (1) Saul's conversion and commission (9:1-19a); (2) his

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preaching in the synagogues of Damascus for a time immediately following his conversion (9: 19b-22); (3) his prolonged residence in Arabia (Gal 1:17); (4) his return to Damascus (9:23-25); and, as we must consider later, (5) his first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian some three years after his conversion, with his subsequent travel to Caesarea, Syria, and Cilicia (9:26-30; Gal 1:18-24). The content of Saul's preaching in the Damascus synagogues focused on Jesus: "Jesus is the Son of God" (v. 20) and "Jesus is the Christ" (v. 22), i.e., the "Messiah." That Saul could preach such a message immediately after his conversion is not impossible because the certainty of Jesus' messiahship was deeply implanted in his soul by his experience on the Damascus road. And while he had much to understand and appreciate about the implications of commitment to Jesus as Israel's Messiah, he was certainly in a position to proclaim with conviction and enthusiasm the "thatness" of Jesus' messianic status. Nor is it surprising that Saul also spoke of Jesus as "the Son of God," though this is the only occurrence in Acts of this christological title. In a number of NT passages the titles "Messiah" and "Son of God" are brought together (cf. Matt 16:16; 26:63; Luke 4:41; John 11:27; 20:31), for the Anointed One par excellence expressed uniquely that loving obedience inherent in the Hebraic understanding of sonship. That is how the concepts of Messiah and Son are used in 4QFlorilegium on 2 Samuel 7:14 and in 2 Esdras 7:28-29; 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9, and how Paul used the titles "Son" and "Son of God" some fifteen times later in his own letters (cf. Rom 1:3-4, 9; 5:10; 8:3, 29, 32; 1Cor 1:9; 15:28; 2Cor 1:19; Gal 1:16; 2:20; 4:4, 6; 1Thess 1:10). Those who heard Saul preach, Luke says, were "astonished" and "baffled." But with his interest in advance and growth (cf. Luke 2:52), Luke also says that "Saul grew more and more powerful," suggesting by that a growth in his understanding of the meaning of commitment to Jesus as Messiah and Son of God and also an increasing ability to demonstrate the validity of his proclamation.

23-25 Luke's expression "after many days had gone by" must be taken with Paul's statement in Galatians 1:18 that his first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian was three years after his conversion. Also, the description here of the plot against him and his escape from Damascus must be compared with Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 11:32-33: "In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands." A number of details in the accounts, whether taken singly or conflated, are unclear to us. What is clear, however, is that Saul's preaching stirred such opposition that plans were laid to kill him; but rather ingeniously, though also somewhat ignominiously, he was able to elude his opponents' designs. What is also clear is that Luke recounts this episode in order to emphasize the genuineness of Saul's conversion, for now he too has become the object of persecution directed against believers in Jesus. Luke credits the Jews of Damascus as being the perpetrators of the plot to kill Saul, whereas

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in 2 Corinthians 11:32 that honor is given to "the governor [*ho ethnarches* , lit., 'the ethnarch'] under King Aretas." The situation presupposed in the narrative is unclear chiefly because the status of the governor (or ethnarch) is uncertain. Did he have jurisdiction over the city of Damascus itself as the viceroy of the Nabatean king Aretas? This has often been argued on the ground that Damascus was at this time ruled by Aretas IV (9 B.C.-A.D. 40) and considered part of Nabatean Arabia (cf. HJP, 2.1:98). Or did the governor have jurisdiction to some extent over the Damascus suburbs where many Nabateans would have lived, serving as Aretas's representative to Arabs living under Roman rule (cf. BC, 5:193)? In either case, the city gates would have been strategic locations for an ambush of the Christian preacher and would have been closely watched. Also certain Jews and an Arab governor might have seen fit to join in common cause against Saul--particularly if Saul had also preached in Nabatean Arabia during this three-year period and stirred up opposition there as well, as some commentators have proposed. Luke just does not tell us enough of the situation to enable us to piece the story together historically. But then his purpose was not to enlighten us about the political and historical circumstances of the day but to support his portrayal of the genuineness of Saul's encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road. Acts uses "disciple" (*mathetes*) almost exclusively to denote the members of the Christian community (e.g., 6:1-2, 7; 9:19; 11:26, 29; 13:52; 15:10). The one exception to the normal usage in Acts is here in v. 25, where it is used of followers of Saul and suggests that his proclamation of Jesus had a favorable response among at least some. One of these converts, it seems, had a home situated on the city wall (or, perhaps, was able to arrange for the use of such a home for a night), from whose window Saul was let down in a basket outside the wall and was thus able to elude his opponents. From there, evidently, he made his way directly to Jerusalem.

4. Saul's reception at Jerusalem (9:26-30)

As in his narrative concerning the evangelization of Samaria (8:4-25), as well as in his later accounts of the conversion of Cornelius (10:1-11:18) and the founding of the church at Antioch of Syria (11:19-30)--in which he not only stresses features of advance and development but also shows continuity with the mother church at Jerusalem--Luke ends his account of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus by telling of his reception by the Christians at Jerusalem. As in Luke's depiction of Saul's preaching in Damascus (vv. 19b-25), here the material, when compared with Paul's own account in Galatians 1:18-24 of his first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian, entails a number of problems relating to historical correlations--probably for much the same reasons as in vv. 19b-25, though heightened here by Paul's purpose in Galatians to stress his lack of dependence upon the Jerusalem church whereas Luke's purpose is to trace out lines of continuity.

26-28 Saul's arrival at Jerusalem as a Christian, according to his own reckoning in Galatians 1:

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18, was three years after his conversion. Being persona non grata among his former associates and suspected by Christians, he probably stayed at his sister's home in the city (cf. 23:16). We can understand why his reception by his former colleagues might have been less than welcome. But that the apostles and other Christians in Jerusalem were leery of him does raise questions. Certainly they must have heard of his conversion and his preaching in Damascus. Yet, it seems, they never knew him personally, either as a persecutor or as a Christian; and stories about his motives and activities during a three-year period might well have become distorted. Many might, in fact, have asked why, if Saul had really become a Christian, he remained aloof from the Twelve and the Jerusalem congregation for such a long time. We may wish, and might even have expected, that there had been more openness toward Saul the convert on the part of the Jerusalem Christians. History, however, has shown that minority movements under persecution frequently become defensive and suspicious of news that sounds too good. It was Barnabas, Luke says, who was willing to risk accepting Saul as a genuine believer and who built a bridge of trust between him and the Jerusalem apostles. Just why Barnabas alone showed such magnanimity, we are not told, though this is in character with what is said about him elsewhere in Acts (cf. 4:36-37; 11:22-30; 13:1-14:28; 15:2-4, 12, 22). In presenting Saul to the apostles, Barnabas told of what Saul had seen and heard on the Damascus Road and of his preaching "in the name of Jesus" in Damascus itself--thus summarizing Luke's account of Saul's conversion and explicitly using his activity in Damascus to support the genuineness of his conversion. So with Barnabas's help, Saul and the Jerusalem apostles were brought into fellowship. In light of Paul's own insistence in Galatians 1:18-20 that he saw only Peter and James on this first Jerusalem visit, Luke's use of the term "apostles" must be considered a generalizing plural to be taken more broadly than "the Twelve." Likewise, in view of Paul's statement in Galatians 1:18 that he stayed with Peter for fifteen days, Luke's claim that he "stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem" must be seen as somewhat overstated. Probably we are not far wrong in reconstructing the situation as follows: Saul resided with his sister's family on his first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian; through the aid of Barnabas he came to

visit with Peter for fifteen days and to meet James as well; and, broadly speaking, his reception by the Christians he met was cordial, though there undoubtedly still existed some fears about him within the Christian congregation (which after the Hellenists' expulsion was made up entirely of native-born and more Hebraic types) and though his own activity within the city was largely within the Hellenistic Jewish synagogues.

29-30 At Jerusalem Saul took up a ministry to Jews in the Hellenistic synagogues there. It was a ministry that had been neglected, it appears, since Stephen's death and the expulsion of the Hellenistic Jewish Christians. But it was one Saul may have felt himself particularly suited to, coming as he did from Tarsus in Cilicia and having probably carried on such a ministry at Damascus (and, perhaps, in Nabatean Arabia). In so doing, however, he soon faced the same

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opposition Stephen had faced, and he seems to have gotten into the same difficulty Stephen did. The Jerusalem church apparently did not care to again go through the same kind of thing that followed Stephen's preaching. So when they realized what was taking place in Saul's newly begun ministry in Jerusalem, "they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus." Saul might have taken such a departure as a personal rebuff. But he took it as by divine approval, for in his defense in Acts 22 he speaks of having received a vision in the Jerusalem temple that not only confirmed his apostleship to the Gentiles but also warned him to flee Jerusalem (22:17-21). Saul is not mentioned in the period between these experiences in Jerusalem and his ministry at Antioch (11:25-30), though from his words in Galatians 1:21-24 it seems fairly certain that he continued his witness to Diaspora Jews in Caesarea and his hometown of Tarsus. The cordiality of the Christians in Caesarea at the end of his third missionary journey may imply that Saul had an earlier association with Philip and the believers there. Many of the hardships and trials he enumerates in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 may stem from situations in Caesarea and Tarsus during those days, for they find no place in the records of the later missionary journeys in Acts. Perhaps the ecstatic experience of 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 also comes from this period in his life.

D. A Summary Statement (9:31)

31 Luke's second panel of material on the martyrdom of Stephen, the early ministries of Philip, and the conversion of Saul ends with a summary statement that speaks of the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoying a time of peace after the turbulence resulting from what happened to Stephen, Philip, and Saul. Though in the first two panels there has been nothing about any advance of the Christian mission into Galilee, Luke's Gospel, in line with the synoptic tradition, has emphasized Galilee; and certainly there were believers in Jesus there. Here, however, Luke's reference to Judea, Galilee, and Samaria

probably means all the Jewish homeland of Palestine. Here also he insists that the church in the homeland, instead of being torn apart by what God was doing in the advance of the gospel through these three pivotal figures, "was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord," despite a certain lack of discernment and openness.

Panel 3--Advances of the Gospel in Palestine-Syria (9:32-12:24)

In his portrayal of the gradual widening of the Christian mission from its strictly Jewish beginnings to its ultimate Gentile outreach, Luke presents in this third panel three episodes of the gospel's advance, then two vignettes giving a further glimpse of the Spirit's working on behalf of his people in Jerusalem, and finally a summary statement. The three episodes of advance concern (1) the ministry of Peter in the maritime plain of Palestine (9:32-43), (2) the conversion of a Roman centurion and his friends at Caesarea (10:1-11:18), and (3) the founding of the church at Antioch of Syria (11:19-30). Two notes are sounded in these episodes of advance.

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The first has to do with geography and stresses the spread of the gospel into areas more distant from Jerusalem than before. The second, and undoubtedly the more important, has to do with the attitude of the converts and that of the missionaries. Then, before moving on to speak of the distinctive advances of the gospel within the Gentile world through the ministry of his hero Paul, Luke again returns to an account of the circumstances at Jerusalem and God's continued working on behalf of his people there (12:1-23). In returning to Jerusalem at this stage in his overall picture, Luke seems to be trying to make the point that though his interest is in tracing the movement of the early Christian mission from Jerusalem to Rome, his readers are not to assume that God was finished with Jerusalem Christianity or that his divine activity within the Jewish world had come to an end--a point all too often ignored by Christians since then. Finally, in summation of all he has presented in this third panel of material, Luke appends the following statement: "But the word of God continued to increase and spread" (12:24).

A. The Ministry of Peter in the Maritime Plain of Palestine (9:32-43)

Luke's rationale for the inclusion of Peter's miracles at Lydda and Joppa has often been debated. Did Luke use the vignettes of the healing of Aeneas and the raising of Dorcas to shift the focus of his narrative from Jerusalem to the west country of Palestine, thereby setting the stage for the conversion of Cornelius at Caesarea? Or did he include them to suggest that with Peter's ministry in the maritime plain the evangelization of Palestine was completed and that it was therefore time to look farther afield? Or, since the maritime plain of Palestine was populated by both Jews and Gentiles, was Luke here depicting a further ideological widening of the range of the Christian mission--one having to do both with an outreach of the gospel to Jews living in a not entirely Jewish area and with the nonlegalistic attitude of Peter their Christian missionary? All three explanations can be supported from the text. But from the developing presentation in Acts, we should probably judge that geographical and ideological concerns were uppermost in

Luke's mind here.

1. Aeneas healed at Lydda (9:32-35)

32 Lydda (the OT Lod, cf. 1 Chronicles 8:12; Ezra 2:33; Neh 11:35) was located twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem, at the intersection of the highways from Egypt to Syria and from coastal Joppa to Jerusalem. Josephus calls it "a village that was in size not inferior to a city" (Antiq. XX, 130 [vi.2]). It had been restored to the Jews in the time of John Hyrcanus by Julius Caesar (cf. Antiq. XIV, 208 [x.6]), and later it became a center for both Pharisaic studies (prior to Jamnia) and Christian activity. Lydda was the legendary locale of Saint George's slaying of the dragon and of his later martyrdom in A.D. 303. In the fourth century, Lydda was the seat of episcopal authority for the Syrian church; and in the fifth century the council that tried Pelagius for heresy met there (A.D. 415). It appears in the NT only here.

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At this time Peter was engaged in an itinerant ministry in the western part of Palestine--a ministry somewhat like his earlier preaching in Samaria (cf. 8:25). In the course of his travels, he visited "the saints" in the important commercial center of Lydda. We are not told how they had become believers. Perhaps they received the gospel from some who were originally at Pentecost (cf. 2:5-41), or from some who were forced to flee Jerusalem during the persecution of the Hellenistic Christians (cf. 8:1, 4, 40). But however they came to commit themselves to Jesus as God's Messiah, Peter viewed them as within the sphere of his ministry--even though many of them were probably less scrupulous in keeping the Mosaic law than Jews of the capital city.

33 At Lydda Peter came upon Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. Luke does not say that Aeneas was a Jew nationally or a Christian by profession, though presumably, despite his thoroughly Greek name, he was both. It would hardly have been consistent with Luke's purpose to show Peter ministering to a Gentile before his encounter with Cornelius, and the "there" (*ekei*) of the sentence has as its antecedent the community of saints at Lydda and not just the city itself.

34 Peter's words, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat," are recorded in the present tense by Luke. They should be understood neither as a consummative perfect ("Jesus Christ has healed you") nor as a durative present ("Jesus Christ is engaged in healing you") but as an aoristic present ("this moment Jesus Christ heals you"). The expression *stroson seauto* ("prepare yourself"; NIV, "take care of your mat"), usually employed with the noun *king* ("bed," "sleeping mat," "cushion used at mealtimes"), may mean either "make up your bed [or mat]" or "prepare a meal for yourself" (cf. Mark 14:15). The latter would go well with the interest shown elsewhere by the evangelists in nourishment for convalescents (cf. Mark 5:43; Luke 8:55). But in the case of a paralytic for whom immobility not nourishment was the problem, getting up and taking care of his

mat is probably in view.

35 News of Aeneas's healing spread throughout Lydda and into the Plain of Sharon to the north. Rather hyperbolically Luke says that "all those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord." The Plain of Sharon is the largest of the maritime plains of northern Palestine, stretching from Joppa to Mount Carmel and with Caesarea on the coast at its geographic center. So, Luke tells us, there was a further widening of the Christian mission within the Jewish nation, preparing the way geographically and ideologically for the accounts of Peter's ministry at Joppa in 9:36-43 and at Caesarea in 10:1-48.

2. Dorcas raised at Joppa (9:36-43)

36-39 Joppa (modern Jaffa, also called *Yapo* in Josh 19:46) was the ancient seaport for Jerusalem. Situated on the coast thirty-five miles northwest of the capital city and ten miles

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beyond Lydda, it possesses the only natural harbor on the Mediterranean between Egypt and Ptolemais (the OT city of Acco). Through Joppa Solomon brought cedar beams from Lebanon to build the temple (2 Chronicles 2:16); from it Jonah sailed for Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). Its rival in NT times was Caesarea, thirty miles to the north, which Herod the Great, because the people of Joppa hated him, built into a magnificent new port city and provincial capital. At Joppa lived a woman called Tabitha (Heb.) or Dorcas (Gr.); both names mean "gazelle." She was a "disciple" (the only instance in the NT of *mathetria*, the feminine form of the word) and "was always doing good and helping the poor." Verse 39 indicates that her energies were devoted chiefly to helping destitute widows. When she died, the Christians at Joppa sent this message to Peter at Lydda: "Please come at once." Luke does not say what they expected from him or asked him to do. But since (1) Tabitha's body was washed but not anointed for burial (cf. *M. Shabbath* 23:5) and (2) her good deeds were told Peter when he arrived, they apparently wanted him to restore her to life. Having heard of Aeneas's healing, they seem to have thought it merely a slight extension of divine power to raise the dead.

40-42 Peter had been instrumental in a number of physical healings (cf. 3:1-10; 5:12-16; 9:32-35), and even pronounced the death sentence on Ananias and Sapphira (cf. 5:1-11). Yet raising people from the dead was hardly a common feature of his ministry. Nevertheless, knowing himself to be an apostle of Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit--and probably remembering his lord's raising of Jairus's daughter (cf. Mark 5:21-24, 35-43, ||)--Peter responded to the urgent call. As he had seen Jesus do in the case of Jairus's daughter, he ordered the mourners out of the room and prayed. Then he spoke these words: "Tabitha, get up" (which in its Aram. form *Tabitha kumi* would have differed in only one letter from Jesus' command *Talitha kumi* ["Little girl, get up"] in Mark 5:41). When she opened her eyes and sat up, he took her by the hand, helped her to her feet, and presented her alive to the Christians who stood by. It was an exceptional exhibit of God's mercy and the

Spirit's power, and "many people believed in the Lord."

43 This verse serves as a geographical and ideological hinge between the accounts of Peter's miracles in the maritime plain and the account of Cornelius's conversion at Caesarea. Instead of returning ten miles to Lydda, Peter remained at Joppa "for some time" (cf. 8:11), where the messengers from Cornelius later found him. Of greater significance, however, is the fact that Peter stayed there with a man called Simon, a tanner who was presumably working in his own home. The rabbis considered tanning an unclean trade (cf. SBK, 2:695), and Peter's lodging with such a man suggests that Peter himself was not overly scrupulous in observing Jewish ceremonial traditions (cf. Gal 2:14). This may not tell us anything more about Peter than can be easily inferred from the evangelists' representations of him in their Gospels. But Luke's stress on this feature of Peter's lifestyle provides a significant preface to 10:1-11:18.

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B. The Conversion of Cornelius at Caesarea (10:1-11:18)

With the range of the Christian mission steadily broadening, the time had come for the gospel to cross the barrier that separated Jews from Gentiles and to be presented directly to Gentiles. Thus Luke next takes up the story of the conversion of Cornelius, the importance of which in his eyes can be judged in part by the space he devotes to it--sixty-six verses in all. Four matters in the account of Cornelius's conversion receive special emphasis and in turn provide insight into Luke's purpose for presenting this material. The first has to do with the early church's resistance to the idea of Gentiles being either directly evangelized or accepted into the Christian fellowship apart from any relationship to Judaism (cf. 10:14, 28; 11:2-3, 8). The second is the demonstration that it was God himself who introduced the Gentiles into the church and miraculously showed his approval (cf. 10:3, 11-16, 19-20, 22b, 30-33, 44-46; 11:5-10, 13, 15-17). The third is that it was not Paul but Peter, the leader of the Jerusalem apostles, who was the human instrument in opening the door to the Gentiles (cf. 10:23, 34-43, 47-48; 11:15-17). The fourth has to do with the Jerusalem church's subsequent acceptance of a Gentile's conversion to Jesus the Messiah, apart from any allegiance to Judaism, for God had so obviously validated it (cf. 11:18). Under the spell of the Tubingen school (cf. Introduction), many earlier commentators declared the Cornelius episode to be an unhistorical fabrication because it gives Peter the glory of the Gentile mission. But though Peter is presented as the first to go directly to a Gentile, he is not depicted in any way as an "Apostle to the Gentiles." "In fact," as Weiss has observed, "the story in no way settles the issue of whether the mission to the Gentiles is either lawful or obligatory, as it was considered to be a quite exceptional divine intervention that compelled Peter to preach the gospel to Cornelius" (Bernhard Weiss, *A Manual of Introduction to the New Testament*, tr. A.J.K. Davidson [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1887], 1:169-70; 2:329).

Other commentators, influenced by Dibelius, treat the account of Peter's

converting a "God-fearing Gentile" by the name of Cornelius as a pious "conversion legend" that must have sprung from some traditional story preserved in a Hellenistic Christian community but which by its use in 15:7-11, 14 is manifestly a Lukan creation in its present form (Dibelius, *Studies in Acts*, pp. 109-22). But this confuses the issues (related yet distinguishable) faced by the Jerusalem church in chapters 11 and 15 (cf. comments there). And as Williams observes, "Behind Dibelius' analysis there seems to lie a desire to reduce the supernatural element in Acts to nothing" (p. 134).

1. Cornelius's vision (10:1-8)

1 Caesarea is in the center of the coastal Plain of Sharon in northern Palestine, on the shores of the Mediterranean, some sixty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was named in honor of

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Augustus Caesar (Caius Octavianus, later called Augustus), the adopted heir of Julius Caesar. Formerly it was called Strato's Tower and was considered a second-class harbor because of its shallow entrance and openness to the strong southern winds. But in carrying out his pro-Roman policy, Herod the Great changed all that by making the harbor into a magnificent seaport and the village into a provincial capital. He deepened the harbor, built a breakwater against the southern gales, constructed an imposing city with an amphitheater and a temple in honor of Rome and Augustus, brought in fresh water through an aqueduct that ran over stately brick arches, and established a garrison of soldiers to protect not only the harbor and city but also the fresh water supply. The magnificence of the port dwarfed the splendor of the city, which is probably why a Neronian coin bears the inscription "Caesarea by Augustus's Harbor." Nevertheless, in the NT period the city was the Roman capital of the province of Judea. Here Rome had a safe haven for its administration of Palestine, though after Roman times the city fell into decay. The name Cornelius was common in the Roman world from 82 B.C. onwards, when Cornelius Sulla liberated ten thousand slaves, all of whom took their patron's name as they established themselves in Roman society. Probably, therefore, Cornelius of Acts 10-11 was a descendant of one of the freedmen of Cornelius Sulla's day. He is identified as a centurion of the Italian cohort (NIV, "regiment"). A centurion was a noncommissioned officer who had worked his way up through the ranks to take command of a group of soldiers within a Roman legion, and would therefore be roughly equivalent to a captain today. A cohort was a tenth of a Roman legion and numbered anywhere from three hundred to six hundred men in size, being officially always the latter. Commentators have frequently proposed that the Italian cohort mentioned here was probably the *Cohors II Miliaria Italica Civium Romanorum*. This consisted of archers who were freedmen originally from Italy, upon whom citizenship had been conferred. It was known to have been transferred to Syria sometime before A.D. 69 and remained in Palestine-Syria during the troublesome times associated with the two destructions of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and 135 (cf.

T.R.S. Broughton, "The Roman Army," BC, 5:427-45). On the basis of this identification, together with the suggestion that during the administration of

Herod Agrippa I over Judea in

A.D. 41-44 there would have been no need for a Roman occupying force in Palestine, Luke is frequently charged with error in speaking of a Roman cohort and its captain in Caesarea during the early or mid-forties. But surely the objection is unwarranted, for throughout Caesarea's history there was always the need for protection--particularly of its elegant but extremely vulnerable water supply, as well as of both the port and the city. While in times of nationalistic tumult a much larger garrison was required, that does not minimize the need for Rome's continual protection of Caesarea as its bridgehead of authority on alien soil.

2 Luke describes Cornelius as being "devout and God-fearing" *eusebes kai phoboumenos ton theon*). These characteristics are also attributed to all his household, which probably refers not only to his immediate family but also to his personal servants. Perhaps we are to understand by

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phoboumenos ton theon (lit., "one who fears God") that Cornelius was a near-proselyte to Judaism or a so-called Proselyte of the Gate (cf. comments on 8:27-28). And while *sebomenos ton theon* (lit., "one who worships God") is Luke's usual way of identifying this special class of Gentile followers in Acts (cf. 13:50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7), at times he also uses *phoboumenos* synonymously (cf. 13:16, 26). Here in Acts 10, however, we should probably understand *phoboumenos ton theon* not as a technical term for this special class associated loosely with Judaism but more broadly as meaning something like "a religious man" (NEB, TEV) or "a deeply religious man" (Ph). The fact that Luke adds *eusebes* ("devout," "pious") to his assessment of Cornelius here and *dikaios* ("righteous") in repeating his spiritual qualities in v. 22 suggests that he meant *phoboumenos ton theon* to be taken not technically but generally. And from his report of Peter's use of this expression for Cornelius in v. 35 ("men from every nation who fear him [God] and do what is right"), it seems that we must understand Cornelius to have been a Gentile who, having realized the bankruptcy of paganism, sought to worship a monotheistic God, practice a form of prayer, and lead a moral life, apart from any necessary association with Judaism. Probably we should view him as a pious and intensely religious man who might have known very little about the Jewish religion but in his own way "gave generously to those in need" (lit., "to the people," *to lao*, which suggests "the Jewish people") and "prayed to God regularly." In sum, Cornelius was a noble and spiritually sensitive Roman army officer, who seems to fit Virgil's picture of the Gentile world as one that "stretched out its hands in longing for the other shore" (*Aeneid* 6.314). It was, then, to such a spiritually minded Gentile, Luke tells us, that God first reached out his hand in the advance of the Christian mission.

3 "One day about three in the afternoon" (lit., "about the ninth hour of the day"), an angel of God appeared to Cornelius in a vision and called him by name. While

the ninth hour was the second of the set times during the day for prayer in Judaism (see comments on 3:1), here the expression is used with *phaneros* ("plainly," "distinctly") to emphasize that the vision happened in broad daylight.

4 Cornelius's response was that he "stared [participial form of *aterliz*] in fear" and could only blurt out the words "What is it, Lord?" (*Ti estin, kyrie?*). While the Greek title *kyrios* was used in antiquity for everything from polite address to worshipful acclamation, Cornelius undoubtedly meant it in some sense of worshipful acclaim--even though he might not have had any firm idea of whom he was addressing (cf. 9:5). He would hardly have been so blase in the face of this heavenly vision as to have meant by the title only "Sir." In his consternation he heard the reassuring words that his prayers and alms had arisen as a memorial (*eis mnemosynon* , or "remembrance") before God (cf. Lev 2:2; Tobit 12:12; Philippians 4:18; Heb 13:15-16)--a biblical and traditional way of saying that he was commended before God and that God was attentive to his situation.

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5-6 Cornelius was told to send to Joppa for Simon Peter. The surname Peter distinguishes the apostle from his host Simon the tanner, whose house was by the sea, probably in order to use the sea water in his trade. No indication is given as to why Peter was to be summoned. Instead, the emphasis is on the fact that Cornelius was prepared to respond to God.

7-8 Cornelius's response was immediate. Calling two of his household servants and one of his soldiers and telling them what had occurred and what he had been told to do, he sent them to Joppa to bring back Peter. The servants were probably two of those already mentioned in v. 2 as part of Cornelius's household; and the soldier is identified as being also "pious" or "devout"

(*eusebes*), one to whom the full characterization of v. 2 (also vv. 22 and 35) also applied.

2. *Peter's vision* (10:9-16)

9-13 Though Peter was not by training or inclination an overly scrupulous Jew, and though as a Christian his inherited prejudices were gradually wearing thin, he was not prepared to go so far as to minister directly to Gentiles. A special revelation was necessary for that, and Luke now tells how God took the initiative in overcoming Peter's reluctance. The revelation came to him on the day following Cornelius's vision (or, perhaps, the day after the messengers' start, if that was later), as the three from Caesarea were approaching Joppa. About noon Peter went to the roof of the tanner's house to pray, apparently looking not only for solitude but also for shade under an awning and a cooling breeze from the sea. Noon was not one of the stated times for prayer among the Jews, and some have viewed Peter as here engaging in a belated morning prayer or an early evening ("ninth hour," afternoon) prayer. Yet pious Jews on the basis of Psalm 55:17 (cf. Dan 6:10; *Didache* 8:3) often prayed at noon as well. Moreover, the stated hours

for prayer, while prescriptive, were not restrictive. While in prayer, Peter became very hungry and, it seems, somewhat drowsy. As he was waiting for food, he fell into a trance (*ekstasis*) and saw a vision (cf. *horama* in 10:17, 19; 11:5) of "something like [*skeuos ti hos* ; lit. `a certain object like'] a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners" on which were "all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air." Then he heard a voice say, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." Psychologically, the details of the vision may be explained in terms of (1) Peter's increasing perplexity about Jewish-Gentile relations within various Christian congregations of the maritime plain, (2) the flapping awning over him (or, perhaps, the full sail of a boat out on the sea), and (3) his gnawing hunger. God frequently reveals himself not only in but also by means of our human situations. And Peter took what the voice said as a message from God--a message in the form of an almost inscrutable riddle, but one soon to be clarified by both word and event.

14 Peter's shock and repugnance are expressed in his words: "Surely not, Lord." This response

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is in word and content like that of the prophet Ezekiel when called upon by God to eat unclean food among the Gentiles (Ezek 4:14). While not overly scrupulous, Peter nonetheless had always observed the basic dietary restrictions of Leviticus 11, which distinguished the clean quadrupeds (chewed the cud and had cloven hooves) that were fit for food from animals considered unclean. And while clean animals were represented in the sheet, Peter was scandalized by the unholy mixture of clean and unclean and by the fact that no distinctions were made in the command to "kill and eat." Indeed, it was a command given him by one he acclaimed as "Lord" --perhaps recognizable to him as the voice of Jesus (cf. Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 220). But that did not leave him any less repelled by the idea.

15-16 The voice told Peter, "Do not call anything impure [*koirlos* ; lit., 'common,' a synecdoche for the dual expression *koinos kai akathartos* , 'impure or unclean,' of v. 14] that God has made clean." The particular application had to do with nullifying Jewish dietary laws for Christians in accord with Jesus' remarks on the subject in Mark 7:17-23. But Peter was soon to learn that the range of the vision's message extended much more widely, touching directly on Jewish-Gentile relations as he had known them and on those relations in ways he could never have anticipated. Three times this interchange took place, with the message being three times indelibly impressed on Peter's subconscious. Luke then says, "The sheet [*skeuos* ; lit., 'the object'] was taken back to heaven."

3. *Messengers from Cornelius arrive at Joppa (10:17-23a)*

17-18 While Peter was recovering from the shock of the vision and its message, the men from Cornelius had found the tanner's house. It was nothing like a patrician's home, with a gatehouse and courtyard separating the living quarters from the street, but rather a craftsman's quarters, with immediate access from the street through a gateway or vestibule (*pylon*). Thus at the gate the messengers

shouted out their inquiry for anyone within earshot to hear: "Is Simon who is known as Peter staying here?"

19-20 But on the roof of the tanner's house, Peter was still so deep in thought about the vision that even their shouting and calling out his name failed to rouse him. Rather, the Spirit told him of the messengers' presence and then urged him to go with them, "For I have sent them," he said. A question naturally arises about the relation of the "angel of God" that appeared to Cornelius (10: 3-6, 22, 30; 11:13), "the voice" that spoke to Peter (10:13-15; 11:7-9), and "the Spirit" who urges him to go with the messengers from Cornelius. But the question, though legitimate, is almost unanswerable because it is by the Holy Spirit that the ascended Christ manifests his presence to his own. Thus it is both exegetically and experientially difficult, if not impossible, to draw any sharp lines between "an angel of God," the Holy Spirit, and the ascended Christ. This is the same phenomenon that appeared in 8:26, 29, and 39 ("an angel of the Lord" and "the

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Spirit" directing Philip, with "the Spirit of the Lord" taking him away) and that will appear again in 16:6-7 ("the Holy Spirit" and "the spirit of Jesus" forbidding Paul). It crops out in even such closely reasoned didactic statements on the relation of Christ and the Spirit as Romans 8:9-11 and 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. Whereas Codex Bezae (D) is lacking for Acts 8:26-10:14, here it adds its testimony to a number of the church fathers (e.g., Cyril, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Augustine) and various Western uncial and minuscule texts for the omission of any number (i.e., either "two" or "three") in v. 19. Codices ^l, A, C, E, together with P74 and various other textual traditions, read that Peter was told by the Spirit: "Three [*treis*] men are looking for you." Yet Codex Vaticanus (B) speaks here of only "two [*duo*] men." The reading "three" is supported by the majority of the early MSS and conforms nicely with the description in 10:7 and Peter's words of 11:11. The reading "two," however, is supported by the very important fourth-century witness Codex B and is the "harder reading" and therefore on internal grounds probably to be preferred--evidently understanding 10:7 as speaking of the two servants as the messengers and the soldier as their guard. Either reading would allow Peter in 11:11 to refer later to three men coming from Caesarea for him. But the determination of the exact number is extremely difficult and probably beyond final resolution. It is not too difficult, however, to understand why Codex D and its Western associates decided to cut the Gordian knot by omitting any reference to a specific number in v. 19 rather than trying to untie it.

21-23a In response to the Spirit's urging, and probably by means of an outside stairway, Peter went down to meet the messengers. After he identified himself and asked why they had come, they told him of their master, Cornelius, of the angel's visitation, and of their mission to bring Peter back so that he might tell their master what he had to say. In doing so they characterized Cornelius as not only "a righteous and God-fearing man" (cf. comments on 10:2) but also as one

whose personal qualities are witnessed to "by all the Jewish people" (lit., "the whole nation of the Jews," *holou tou ethnous ton Ioudaion* ; here non-Jews refer to Jews by the term *ethnos* , "nation," rather than *laos* , "people"). Then Peter, in obedience to the command of the vision, received these Gentiles into the house as his guests, acting, no doubt with the tanner's permission, more as a host than a lodger.

4. Peter's reception by Cornelius (10:23b-33)

23b-24 The conversation in the tanner's house that evening must have been a lively one, with many of the Joppa believers joining in the discussion of the strange visions. Six of the Joppa believers accompanied Peter to Caesarea the next day (cf. 11:12)--a wise action in view of the questions that would later be raised at Jerusalem. So the party of ten set out for Caesarea. It apparently took them longer to cover the thirty miles than the messengers had taken earlier because they did not get to Caesarea till the following day. Cornelius was expecting them and

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had drawn together a group of relatives and close friends to hear Peter.

25-26 As Peter was brought into the centurion's home past the gatehouse and then into the courtyard, Cornelius came from his living quarters to meet him. Cornelius fell at Peter's feet and offered him "reverence" (*proskyneo*, a word used for homage offered to deity, to angels, and to men)--doubtless an expression of his belief that there was something supernatural about Peter. But Peter, not only unaccustomed to such honors but brought up to consider them blasphemous, ordered him to stand up and assured him: "I am only a man myself" (cf. 14:14-15; Rev 19:10; 22:8-9).

27-29 In Cornelius's living quarters Peter found a large group waiting to hear what he had to say. Perhaps self-consciously, he began by saying that Jewish law prohibited a Jew from associating with Gentiles. Admittedly, this was an ideal representation of the Jewish position (as so often happens in the Tal.), for Jewish ethical law contains a number of provisions for Jewish- Gentile business partnerships (e.g., b *Shabbath* 150a) and even for Jews' bathing with Gentiles (ibid., 151 a). But such contacts made a Jew ceremonially unclean, as did entering Gentiles' buildings or touching their possessions (cf. M *Abodah Zarah*, passim). Above all, it was forbidden to accept the hospitality of Gentiles and eat with them, particularly because Gentiles did not tithe. Scrupulous Jews were not even permitted to be guests of a Jewish commoner (cf. M *Demai* 2:2-3), much less of a Gentile (ibid., 3:4). But God in a vision, Peter said, had taught him not to call anyone impure or unclean; so now he was associating with them without traditional scruples. Then he asked, "May I ask why you sent for me?"

30-33 Cornelius told all about his vision and described how he sent for Peter and invited him to relate "everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us." Few preachers have ever had a more receptive audience than Peter had on this occasion. The reference to the "ninth hour" (or "three in the afternoon") is

probably not meant to specify the time of evening prayer in Judaism (see comments on 10:3) but to express a circumstance of importance to Cornelius--viz., that the vision happened "at this very hour" (*mechri tantes tes horas*). Also significant is that Luke's repetition of the details of Cornelius's vision and of the details of Peter's vision (11:4-10) serve an important function in the doublet structure of his whole presentation (cf. comments introducing Part I: The Christian Mission to the Jewish World).

5. Peter's sermon in Cornelius's house (10:34-43)

Peter's sermon in Cornelius's house is a precis of the apostolic kerygma. It is similar structurally and in content to his earlier sermons in 2:14-40 and 3:11-26, though it contains more information about Jesus' precrucifixion ministry than those two sermons (cf. also 4:8-12; 5:29-

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32). Dibelius complains that "a speech which is so long, relatively speaking, cannot have had any place in a legend told among Christians about the conversion of a centurion" (*Studies in Acts* , p. 110). But surely a Gentile audience, even though knowing something about Jesus of Nazareth from living in Palestine, would require more details of Jesus' life and work than a Palestinian Jewish audience would. Peter's more lengthy account of Jesus' ministry here must therefore be considered particularly appropriate, considering his audience. Furthermore, the sermon is sprinkled with Semitisms, which show its rootage in history (cf. the discussion of Semitisms in the Introduction: The Question of Sources) and is comparable in both scope and emphasis to Mark's Gospel, which may very well reflect Peter's preaching (cf. Papias) in Rome (cf. C.H. Dodd, "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative," *ExpT*, 43 [1931-32], 396-400).

34-35 The sermon is prefaced by the words "opening his mouth, Peter said" (*anoixas de Petros to stoma eipen*). This was one way to introduce a weighty utterance (cf. Matt 5:2; 13: 35 [quoting Ps 78:2]; Acts 8:35). And in Luke's eyes what Peter was about to say was indeed momentous in sweeping away centuries of racial prejudice. It begins by Peter's statement that God does not show racial "favoritism" *prosopolemptes* , which appears only here in the NT [*a hapax legomenon*], but whose synonym *prosopolempsia* appears in Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; James 2:1; 1 Peter 1:17) "but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." While some consciousness of this may be implicit in Israel's history and at times may have been expressed by her prophets (cf. Amos 9:7; Mic 6:8), it was only by means of a revelational clarification (a *peshet*) of what was earlier considered to be highly enigmatic (a "mystery"; cf. Eph 3:4-6) that Peter came to appreciate the racial challenge of the gospel.

36 Peter captions his sermon as "The message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all." The

Greek of vv. 36-38 is syntactically awkward, suggesting either a translation from an earlier written Semitic source (C.C. Torrey), a Septuagintal "archaizing" on Luke's part (H.F.D. Sparks), or the reproduction of speech patterns of one who thought more in Semitic fashion even while speaking Greek. Interestingly and, I believe, significantly, Raymond A. Martin's study on *Syntactical Evidence of Semitic Sources in Creek Documents* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1974) does not credit the syntax of Peter's sermon here either to Lukan ingenuity or to written Semitic sources, though he includes Peter's defense of Cornelius's conversion in 11:1-18 among those portions that reflect an earlier written Semitic source. We may conclude, therefore, that the awkwardness of the syntax in the account of this sermon probably stems from Peter himself as he spoke before his Gentile audience in somewhat "broken" Greek. Had it been Luke's own composition, it would have been much clearer. The caption of Peter's sermon contains three emphases that set the tone for what follows. First, there is the revelational emphasis. While the caption begins elliptically by omitting the understood subject and verb "this is" (*touto estin*), it nonetheless expresses in form and content

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a pesher type of revelational understanding so common in early apostolic Christianity (cf. *touto estin to* in 2:16). Second, there is the emphasis on the proclamation of the gospel "to the people of Israel," its immediate recipients. Joined with this is a third emphasis relating to bringing that gospel to the Gentile world in terms comprehensible to Gentiles--an emphasis characterized by the expression "Lord of all." This was properly a pagan title for deity (cf. Cadbury, BC, 5:361-62), but it was rebaptized by the early Christians to become an appropriate christological title (cf. Col 1:15-20). So Peter's sermon in Cornelius's house concerns (1) a new revelational understanding of God's message of peace, (2) which is given the sons of Israel as its primary recipients, but (3) which also includes Gentiles under the rubric of Christ as "Lord of all," with "all" understood personally as connoting Christ's lordship over both Jews and Gentiles.

37-41 Peter begins his sermon with a resume of Jesus' life and work during his earthly ministry. Though Peter assumes that his hearers already know something about this ministry through living in Palestine, he proceeds to summarize it in greater detail than anywhere else in his recorded preaching. In scope and emphasis, the account is much like the portrayal of Jesus' ministry in Mark's Gospel. It begins with John the Baptist, moves on to Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit, refers to Jesus' many acts of divine power in Galilee, alludes to his continued ministry throughout Palestine and in Jerusalem, stresses his crucifixion, and concludes with a declaration of his resurrection and its verification by his appearances to chosen followers. As it stands before us, the sermon is only a summary of what Peter actually said at the time. Originally it may have contained a number of examples of Jesus' acts of kindness and healing, such as those recorded in the synoptic Gospels. In addition, as a precis of what Peter said, it shows the interests of Luke who put the sermon into its present form--viz., the influence of Isaiah 61:1 in v. 38, an OT passage Luke highlighted in his theme paragraph of Luke 4:14-30 at the start of his two-volume writing (cf.

Introduction: The Structure of Acts). Also, the importance of the apostolic witness in establishing the Christian tradition comes to the fore in vv. 39-41, as it does elsewhere throughout Luke-Acts. Furthermore, Luke's interest in Jesus' postresurrection eating and drinking with his disciples is evident in v. 41. Only Luke records this (Luke 24:41-43) as a convincing proof of Jesus' physical presence (since in Jewish thinking angels and apparitions are unable to eat or drink, being without digestive tracts).

42-43 Peter ends his sermon by stating that the risen Christ has commanded his apostles to preach "to the people" (*to laos*) and to testify about his divine appointment as "judge of the living and the dead." By his use of *ho laos* ("the people"), Peter probably had in mind "the Jewish people." And till then the early church knew no other mission. But then Peter went on to speak of the OT prophets testifying about this risen Lord and saying that "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." It was this reference to "everyone who believes in him" that seems to have broken through the traditional barrier between Jews and Gentiles and to

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have encouraged Cornelius and those in his house to be bold enough to think that they together with Jews could receive the blessings promised to Israel.

6. *Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit* (10:44-48)

44 As Peter was "speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message." "These words" (*ta rhgmata tauta*) may refer to the entire sermon just delivered, as epitomized in the expression "the message" (*ton logon*) in the predicate of this verse. Probably, however, "these words" have in mind the statement "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (v. 43)--particularly "everyone who believes in him" (*panta ton pisteuonta eis auton*), which appears at the end of v. 43 in the Greek, probably for emphasis. If this is true, then Luke is saying that it was this phrase that struck like a thunderbolt into the consciousness of the assembled Gentiles, releasing their pent-up emotions and emboldening them to respond by faith. With the promise of forgiveness offered "through his name" and to "everyone who believes in him," they were given a reason for hoping beyond their fondest hopes. And with their reception of that inclusive message, the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentile congregation gathered there just as he had come upon the disciples at Pentecost. In fact, this was, as F.H. Chase called it, "the Pentecost of the Gentile world" (*The Credibility of the Acts of the Apostles* [London: Macmillan, 1902], p. 79).

45-46 The six Jewish believers (*hoi ek peritomes pistoi* , "the circumcised believers") who were there with Peter were astonished at what they saw and heard. For in accepting these Gentiles and bestowing his Holy Spirit on them, God had providentially attested his action by the same sign of tongues as at Pentecost. The gift of tongues at Pentecost should probably be understood as distinguishable languages because they were immediately recognized as dialects then current (cf. comments on 2:4). Here, however, an outburst of foreign

languages would have fallen on untuned ears and failed to be convincing. So we should probably view what was here expressed as being ecstatic utterances such as Paul later described in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Undoubtedly the sign of tongues was given primarily for the sake of the Jewish believers right there in Cornelius's house. But it was also given for Jerusalem believers, who would later hear of what happened, so that all would see the conversion of these Gentiles as being entirely of God and none would revert to their old prejudices and relegate these new converts to the role of second-class Christians.

47-48 Peter may not have been much of an abstract thinker. But to his great credit he was ready to follow the divine initiative, if only he could be sure that God was really at work. So, convinced by God and consistent with his conviction about the logical connections between Christian conversion, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (cf. comments on 2:38), Peter calls for the Gentiles who have received the baptism of the Spirit to be baptized with water

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"in the name of Jesus Christ." While Acts 2 and 8 indicate that water baptism does not take the place of the Spirit's baptism but that the two go hand-in-hand with conversion, so vv. 47-48 speak of the baptism of the Holy Spirit not as supplanting baptism with water but rather as being the spiritual reality to which water baptism testifies. Thus the baptism of these Gentile converts pointed to a new spiritual reality in their lives. But it also had immense significance for Peter and his six companions. For in baptizing these Gentiles, Peter and those with him confessed that God in his sovereignty does bring Gentiles directly into relationship with Jesus Christ, apart from any prior relationship with Judaism. Peter may have remained uncertain as to just how Cornelius's new-found faith should be expressed in worship and service and how it would be related to the Roman social order and to Judaism. But now that God had broken down the traditional barriers between them, Peter was content to stay with them in Caesarea "for a few days."

7. The response of the Jerusalem church (11:1-18)

The conversion of Cornelius was a landmark in the history of the gospel's advance from its strictly Jewish beginnings to its penetration of the Roman Empire. True, it did not settle any of the issues relating to Jewish-Gentile relations within the church, nor did Jewish believers take it as a precedent for a direct outreach to Gentiles. But it did show that the sovereign God was not confined to the traditional forms of Judaism and that he could bring a Gentile directly into relationship with himself through Jesus Christ and apart from any prior commitment to distinctive Jewish beliefs or lifestyle. Cornelius's conversion is important to Luke not only because of the gospel's advance but also because of the response of the Christians in Jerusalem to it. Amid his thesis of development and advance, Luke is interested in emphasizing lines of continuity and areas of agreement within the early church. So he takes pains to point out here, as in his account of the conversion of the Samaritans (cf. 8:14-25), that--though there were

objections--the leadership of the Jerusalem church accepted the validity of Cornelius's conversion apart from any prior affiliation with Judaism. And that acceptance was of as great importance in validating a later Gentile mission as the event itself.

1-3 News of Peter's activity at Caesarea reached Jerusalem and the believers there before Peter himself did. Codex D and its Western associates expand v. 2 to read that he stayed in Caesarea "for a considerable time" and that "he did a great deal of preaching throughout the regions" around Caesarea after that. But however long it took to reach the apostles and brothers in Jerusalem, news of Peter's direct approach to Gentiles and his acceptance of them apart from the strictures of Judaism caused great alarm both within the church and among the Jewish populace generally. The Hellenistic believers had stirred up much antagonism by their liberal attitudes toward the tenets of Jewish popular piety (cf. 6:8-7:56). The immediate consequences were the martyrdom of Stephen and the expulsion of the believers from areas under Sanhedrin

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control (cf. 7:57-8:3). Now if it were really true that Peter, the leading member of the apostolic band, had gone further in disregarding the traditional laws of Judaism in favor of a direct association with Gentiles, what good will still remained toward believers in Jerusalem would be quickly dissipated. The practical implications for the existence and the mission of the Christian church in Jerusalem were grave, and such practical considerations undoubtedly led to principal questions. Peter's return to Jerusalem, therefore, was hardly to a more comfortable situation after a strenuous journey. Instead, it was more like lighting a match in highly combustible air. "The circumcised believers" (*hoi ek peritomes* ; lit., "those of the circumcision," usually meaning only "the Jews," but in context certainly connoting "Jewish Christians" here) immediately confronted Peter and charged, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." This charge, while traditionally worded, was tantamount to saying that Peter had set aside Christianity's Jewish features and thereby seriously endangered its relation with the nation.

4-17 Peter defended his actions by recounting his experiences at Joppa and Caesarea, with an emphasis on (1) the divine initiative in all that transpired and (2) his inability to withstand God. Thus he recounts the details of the vision that came to him at Joppa (vv. 5-10), of his reception by Cornelius (vv. 11-14), and of the Spirit's coming upon the group gathered in Cornelius's house (vv. 15-17). It was the Lord, insisted Peter, who gave him the vision and who explained its meaning. It was the Spirit who told him to have "no hesitation" (*meden diakrinanta* ; lit., "making no distinction") to go with the messengers to Caesarea and enter Cornelius's house. And it was God who took the initiative by baptizing Cornelius and his companions with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, concluded Peter, "Who was I to think that I could oppose God?" Of interest in this account are the many Semitic features incorporated into its present Greek form-features that have led a number of scholars to postulate a written Aramaic source Luke drew on at

this point. While Peter's sermon in Cornelius's house was probably delivered in "Semitized" Greek, his defense at Jerusalem may very well have been delivered in Aramaic and circulated at first among Jewish Christians in that form. Likewise of interest is the narrative's vividness here compared with the colorless third-person style in chapter 10. While in structure and content the two accounts are very similar, the retelling of Peter's experiences in chapter 11 has a freshness and vitality to it that make it more than a mere resume of events related in chapter 10. This may only reflect the literary genius of Luke. But perhaps it points to a use of differing sources for chapters 10 and 11: the one of Caesarean origin narrating the events in Greek; the other of Jerusalem origin containing Peter's defense in Aramaic. With his stress on a twofold witness to truth (cf. comments introducing Part I: The Christian Mission to the Jewish World), Luke probably viewed them as together providing greater support for his presentation and therefore brought them together in the manner presently before us.

18 On hearing about Peter's experiences, the Christians at Jerusalem "remained silent"

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(*hesychasan* ; NIV, "had no further objections") and "praised God." This probably means that his critics, at least for the moment, were silenced, while those more receptive to God's working acknowledged that Peter was right and credited God rather than human ingenuity for what had happened. In view of what Peter reported, the Jerusalem church could come to no other conclusion than that "God has even granted the Gentiles repentance unto life." This was a response of momentous importance by the church at Jerusalem, and Luke meant his readers to appreciate it as being as significant in validating a later Gentile mission as Cornelius's conversion itself. But while of vital significance for the acceptance of Gentiles, it said nothing about the many related questions that were bound to arise soon. For example, what lifestyle was appropriate for Gentiles coming to Christ directly out of paganism? How should they relate themselves as Christians to Jewish Christians and to Jews, who both followed a Jewish lifestyle? And how should the Jerusalem church relate itself in practice to these new Gentile believers it had in theory accepted? These are matters the Jerusalem church did not address itself to in chapter 11. Yet such matters were logically involved in its response and were to be taken up again later (cf. 15:1-35). And just as there were ideological issues left unresolved in the response of the church in chapter 11, so there are also a number of historical matters about which Luke gives us no information, though we would like very much to know. For example, whatever happened to Cornelius and his fellow Gentile Christians after Peter left them? Did they troop en masse up to Jerusalem to worship with the Jewish believers there? For a number of reasons, this hardly seems likely. Or did they join with Philip and his converts in Caesarea (cf. 8:40) to form a worshipping community there? Or did they somehow inaugurate a distinctive form of Gentile Christian worship? Or, being doubtless all associated in one way or another with the Roman army and the Roman administration in Palestine, were these Gentile believers in Jesus transferred to other posts in the empire by Rome, either through due course or because of their recent alignment with a minority group within Palestine? Luke does not tell us. Neither does Luke tell us how such a response affected the Jerusalem church itself. Did it lose some good will among its Jewish compatriots because it accepted Cornelius? Were there believers within its ranks

who felt badly about this decision and who expressed their dissatisfaction--or would later express it--in ways disruptive for a further Gentile outreach? Was this one reason why the church soon found it appropriate to have as its leader the Pharisaically trained and legally scrupulous James the Just rather than one or more of the apostles (cf. comments on 12:2)? Again, Luke does not tell us, though some of these matters will come to the fore later in Acts.

C. The Church at Antioch of Syria (11:19-30)

Antioch of Syria was founded about 300 B.C. by Seleucus I Nicator, who named it after either his father or his son, both of whom bore the name Antiochus. It was situated on the Orontes River about three hundred miles north of Jerusalem and twenty miles east of the

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Mediterranean, at the joining of the Lebanon and Taurus mountain ranges where the Orontes breaks through and flows down to the sea. To distinguish it from some fifteen other Asiatic cities built by Seleucus and also named Antioch, it was frequently called "Antioch-on-the-Orontes," "Antioch-by-Daphne" (Daphne, the celebrated temple of Apollo, was nearby), "Antioch the Great," "Antioch the Beautiful," and "The Queen of the East." During the first Christian century, it was, after Rome and Alexandria, the third largest city in the empire, having a population of more than 500,000. In A.D. 540, Antioch was sacked by the Persians, a calamity it never recovered from. Today Antakiyeh (ancient Antioch) is a poor place of about 35,000 inhabitants. First-century Antioch was a melting pot of Western and Eastern cultures, where Greek and Roman traditions mingled with Semitic, Arab, and Persian influences. The Jewish population is estimated to have been about one-seventh of the total population and had vested rights to follow its own laws within its three or more settlements in and around the city. During the reign of Caligula (A.D. 37-41), however, many Jews were killed; and during the tumultuous period of the middle and late 60's, Jewish acceptance and prosperity in Antioch came to an end. The city was not only known for its sophistication and culture but also for its vices. The beautiful pleasure park of Daphne was a center for moral depravity of every kind, and the expression *Daphnici mores* became a proverb for depraved living. The Roman satirist Juvenal (A.D. 60-140) aimed one of his sharpest gibes at his own decadent Rome when he said that the Orontes had flowed into the Tiber (*Satirae* 3.62), flooding the imperial city with the superstition and immorality of the East. In Christian history, apart from Jerusalem, no other city of the Roman Empire played as large a part in the early life and fortunes of the church as Antioch of Syria. It was the birthplace of foreign missions (13:2) and the home base for Paul's outreach to the eastern half of the empire. It was the place where those of "the Way" (9:2) were first called "Christians" (11:26) and where the question as to the necessity for Gentile converts to submit to the rite of circumcision first arose (15:1-2; cf. Gal 2:11-21). It had among its teachers such illustrious persons as Barnabas, Paul, and Peter (cf. Gal 2:11-13) in the first century; Ignatius and Theophilus in the second; and Lucian, Theodore, Chrysostom, and Theodoret (as well as a host of others,

including Nestorius) at the end of the third and throughout the fourth centuries. In the light of its great importance for both the empire and the early church, it is somewhat surprising that Luke's account of the founding of the church at Syrian Antioch and of the progress of the gospel there is so compressed. Adolf Harnack proposed that 11:19-30 was part of a Jerusalem-Antiochean source that included 12:25-15:35 and was related to the source for 6:1-8:4 (see Introduction: The Sources of Acts). But the narrative here clearly differs in style from that which Luke has already used in his account of Stephen and the Hellenists or that which he will use in writing about Paul and his first missionary journey. Also, it is devoid of Semitisms, whereas 6:1-8:4 and 12:25-15:35 contain many (cf. Martin, *Semitic Sources* , passim), and it has a number of favorite Lukan expressions (e.g., *lalountes ton logon* , "speaking the word" [v. 19]; *polys arithmos* , "a great number" [v. 21]; *aner agathos* , "a good man" [v. 24a];

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prosetethe ochlos hikanos , "a great crowd was added" [v. 24b; cf. v. 26]) as well as the repeated use of Luke's favorite christological title "Lord" (five times in vv. 20-24). Probably, therefore, we should view 11:19-30 as a free Lukan summary of certain items of information known to him--perhaps as the way Luke wrote when not having detailed, written source material at his disposal (such as seems to underlie much of the first half of Acts) and when not himself an eyewitness of the events (as seems to be the rationale for the "we" sections of the last half of Acts).

1. The founding of the church (11:19-26)

19 Luke opens his account of the gospel's proclamation at Antioch of Syria with the same words with which he began the story of the mission to Samaria in 8:4--a fact that suggests he wanted to reach behind his accounts of Peter's ministries at Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea and start a new strand of history beginning with the death of Stephen. From such an opening we should probably understand that the Hellenistic Christians' outreach to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch was (1) logically parallel to that in Samaria and not a continuation of Peter's outreach at Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea and (2) chronologically parallel, at least in its early stages, to the accounts in 8:4-11:18. Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch had large Jewish populations; and Syria, like Babylonia, was often considered an integral part of the Jewish homeland because of the many scrupulous Jews living there. Thus since this mission to the north was carried on within areas roughly considered to be Jewish terrain, was mounted by Hellenistic Jewish believers in Jesus, and was directed, at least at first, "only to Jews," Luke presents it here as still being part of the Christian witness to the Jewish world, even though the account speaks of a time when the categories "Jew" and "Gentile" were beginning to break down.

20-21 At Antioch, however, some of the Hellenistic Jewish Christians "began to

speak to Greeks also." Some MSS read *Hellaenas* ("Greeks") while others read *Hellenistas* (possibly "Grecian Jews"). The external evidence for the text is somewhat difficult to weigh at this point (see Notes). But while the textual evidence may be somewhat indeterminate, certainly the contrast drawn between the "Jews" of v. 19 and those who receive the gospel here in v. 20 makes it all but impossible to understand those referred to in v. 20 as anything other than Gentiles. Thus it is necessary to read the text as meaning "Greeks" and as probably originally using the word *Hellenas*. Actually, the problem with reading "Greeks" here is more interpretative than textual. Did Luke have in mind Gentiles who had no affiliation whatever with Judaism, or did he have in mind Gentiles who had some kind of relationship with Judaism--perhaps "Proselytes of the Gate," or something like that? Usually Luke speaks of such near-proselytes as "God-fearers" (*sebomenoi ton theon* , cf. 13:50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7; see also *phoboumenoi ton theon* in 13:16, 26), which is not his expression here. Yet judging by his evident purpose in Acts to present Paul as

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the first to inaugurate a deliberate policy of a direct approach to Gentiles, it is extremely difficult to view these Greeks apart from the ministrations of Judaism. Peter's activity in Caesarea was indeed a direct approach to Gentiles, but it set no precedent and established no policy for such an outreach. If that is what Luke is saying happened at Antioch of Syria, he has nullified the point that he makes later in chapters 13-15. On the other hand, by the way Luke treats these Greeks as being both a part of the mission to Jews and yet distinct from the Jews, probably we are to view them as having become Christians "through the door of the synagogue" (Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 41) and thought of by the early church as an adjunct in its ministry to the Jewish nation. With the merging of cultures and blurring of distinctives that was taking place in Antioch generally, perhaps even Judaism faced some problems in drawing a sharp line between Gentiles who had some minimal relationship with the synagogue and those who were considered near-proselytes. But whatever their exact status, it seems fair to say that Luke did not look on the Greeks in v. 20 as simply Gentiles unaffected by the influence of Judaism and that he did not view the Hellenistic Christians' approach to them as preempting the uniqueness of Paul's later Gentile policy. All we are told about the identity of the Jewish-Christian missionaries to Antioch is that they were from Cyprus and Cyrene. Perhaps Simeon Niger and Lucius of Cyrene were two of them (cf. 13:1), though Barnabas of Cyprus according to Luke's reckoning was not. But Luke does say that to the missionaries' proclamation of "the good news about the Lord Jesus" there was a significant response so that "a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord." And since among that "great number" were both Jews and Gentiles, the Antioch church, though born within the synagogue, took on a decidedly different complexion from that of other early Christian congregations spoken of thus far. It was a mixed body of Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles meeting together for worship and fellowship in common allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Gal 2:12).

22-24 News of the situation at Antioch was of definite concern to believers in Jerusalem. With the conversion of Samaritans, the conversion of some Gentiles in Caesarea, and now the report of a mixed congregation in Syrian Antioch, many in

Jerusalem were doubtless fearful that the Christian mission was moving ahead so rapidly as to be out of control. The Jerusalem church, therefore, as in the case of the Samaritan conversions, decided to send a delegate to Antioch, probably in order to regularize whatever had gone awry and report back to the mother church. The man chosen for this task was Barnabas, a Jew from Cyprus who had gained an outstanding reputation for piety and generosity among the believers at Jerusalem (cf. 4:36-37). In all likelihood, it was the fact that Barnabas was both a Diaspora and "Zionistic" Jew coupled with his piety and generosity that qualified him in the eyes of the Jerusalem church for this mission to Antioch. In addition, the high esteem in which he was held made it certain that both his counsel and his report would be received with all seriousness. The Jerusalem church could hardly have selected a better delegate, particularly from Luke's

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point of view. His generous spirit was gladdened by what he saw of the grace of God at work among the believers at Antioch, and, true to his nickname "Son of Encouragement" (Barnabas, or *huios parakleseos* [4:36]), he "encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts." Here was a crisis point in the history of the early church, for much depended on Barnabas's reaction, counsel, and report--not only at Antioch itself, but also at Jerusalem and in the later advance of the gospel through Paul's missions. With evident feeling, therefore, Luke says of him, "He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith." And as a result of his response, the work that was started at Antioch was enabled to go on, with many being brought to Christ.

25-26 Sometime after reaching Antioch, Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Saul to help him in the ministry back in Syria. We have no record of what Saul was doing between the time when he left Jerusalem (cf. 9:30) and when Barnabas found him in Tarsus. From Galatians 1:21-24 (cf. also Gal 2:2, 7), it is certain that in some way Saul continued preaching after leaving Jerusalem and that this was known back in Jerusalem. Perhaps the five lashings he received at the hands of the synagogue authorities (2Cor 11:24), together with some of his other afflictions and hardships enumerated in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, occurred during those days in Tarsus, for they find no place in the records of his later missionary endeavors. If so, this might indicate that in Tarsus and its environs he was trying to carry on a Gentile ministry within the Cilician synagogues and was getting into trouble for it. It also may have been during this period that he began to experience the loss of all things for Christ's sake (cf. Philippians 3:8) through being disinherited by his family. Perhaps the ecstatic experience of 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 should also be associated with this period of his life as well. It was Barnabas who had supported Saul when there was suspicion at Jerusalem about his conversion (cf. 9:27). And now, knowing of Saul's God-given commission to minister to the Gentiles, recalling his testimony at Jerusalem, and needing help for the work among the Gentiles, Barnabas involved Saul in the ministry at Antioch where they served together "for a whole year" and taught "a great crowd of people." Also, Barnabas

may have heard of Saul's growing interest in the Gentiles and his effective work with them in Cilicia. In joining Barnabas at Antioch, Saul may have thought he was carrying out the mandate received at his conversion to take the message of the risen Christ to Gentiles. Probably, however, the Antioch mission in those days was confined to the synagogue, the Antiochan Jews being more tolerant of Saul's activities than were those at Tarsus. It may also have been viewed as part of the ministry to Jews, without any thought of the propriety of appealing more widely and directly to Gentiles. All the early believers at Antioch, whether Jews or Gentiles, may well have been related in some way to the synagogue. Thus in the eyes of many Jewish Christians, the conversion of Gentiles who had to some extent come under the ministry of Judaism before they believed in Jesus would not have been thought exceptional. But others within the city--evidently nonbelievers who were more perceptive in this matter

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than the church itself--nicknamed this group of Jewish and Gentile believers "Christians" (*Christianoi* , i.e., "Christ followers," or "those of the household of Christ"). They saw that the ministry to Gentiles and the fellowship of Jews with Gentiles went beyond the bounds of what was usually permitted within Judaism. They also voiced an insight that the Christians themselves only saw clearly later on: Christianity is no mere variant of Judaism. The new name doubtless helped develop the self-consciousness of the early Christians, despite its having first been given in derision. Later the early Christians accepted it and used it of themselves (cf. 26:28; 1 Peter 4: 16; Jos. Antiq. XVIII, 64 [iii.3]) along with their earlier self-designation of "the Way" (9:2; cf. 19:9, 23). But the use of the name "Christian" posed two great problems for the church. For one thing, Christians began to risk losing the protection Rome gave to a *religio licita* (i.e., a legal religion; cf. Introduction: Luke's Purposes in Writing Acts), which they had enjoyed when considered only a sect within Judaism. Furthermore, being now in some way differentiated from Judaism Christians were faced with how to understand their continuity with the hope of Israel and the promises of the Jewish Scriptures. As we shall see, these problems were to loom large as the Christian mission moved onto Gentile soil.

2. *The famine relief for Jerusalem* (11:27-30)

27-28 Here Luke uses the connective "in those days" (*en tautais de tais hemeraiis* ; NIV, "during this time"), just as he does at 1:15 and 6:1, to link parts of his narrative. Now he tells of certain "prophets" who "came down from Jerusalem to Antioch." Among them was Agabus, with his dire prediction of impending famine in Jerusalem (cf. 21:10). The Jews believed that with the last of the writing prophets, the spirit of prophecy had ceased in Israel; but the coming Messianic Age would bring an outpouring of God's Spirit, and prophecy would again flourish. The early Christians, having experienced the inauguration of the Messianic Age, not only proclaimed Jesus to be the Mosaic eschatological

prophet (cf. 3:22; 7:37) but also saw prophecy as a living phenomenon within the church (cf. also 13:1; 15:32; 21:9-10) and ranked it among God's gifts to his people next to that of being an apostle (cf. 1Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). Agabus's prediction was of a "severe famine" affecting "the entire Roman world" (*holen ten oikoumenen*), which took place, Luke notes, during the reign of the emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54). The word *oikoumene* (lit., "inhabited world") was commonly used in exaggerated fashion by Romans to refer to the empire (Lat., *orbis terrarum*) and probably has this meaning here. Although there is no record of a single famine that ravaged the whole empire in the time of Claudius, various Roman historians referred to a series of bad harvests and famine conditions during his reign (cf. Suetonius *Vita Claudius* 18:2; Tacitus *Annales* 12.43; Dio Cassius *History of Rome* 60.11; Orosius *History* 7.6.17). Josephus tells of a particularly severe famine in Palestine about A.D. 45-47 (Antiq. XX, 51-53 [ii.5]; perhaps also idem, III, 320-21 [xv.3], if the mention of Claudius is not in error). Josephus's reference to a famine is in his account of the conversion to Judaism of Helena and

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Izates, the queen mother and the king of Adiabene in northern Mesopotamia, who provided food and money for the people of Jerusalem. As Josephus tells it, Helena's coming to Jerusalem as a pilgrim sometime around A.D. 46

was very advantageous for the people of Jerusalem, for at that time the city was hard

pressed by famine and many were perishing from want of money to purchase what they

needed. Queen Helena sent some of her attendants to Alexandria to buy grain for large

sums and others to Cyprus to bring back a cargo of dried figs. Her attendants speedily

returned with these provisions, which she thereupon distributed among the needy. She has

thus left a very great name that will be famous forever among our whole people for her

benefaction (Antiq. XX, 51-52 [ii.5]).

Josephus goes on to say, "When her son Izates learned of the famine, he likewise sent a great sum of money to the leaders of the Jerusalemites [*tois protois ton Hierosolymiton*]. The distribution of this fund to the needy delivered many from the extremely severe pressure of famine" (Antiq. XX, 53; [ii.5]; cf. b *Baba Bathra* Ila, which refers to Izates's successor Monobazus as also supplying such famine relief, probably also to Jerusalem, "in years of scarcity" later on).

29-30 Similarly, though doubtless not so extravagantly, the Christians (*hoi mathetai* ; lit., "the disciples") at Antioch, in response to Agabus's prophecy, decided to provide help for their fellow believers at Jerusalem, whose plight as a minority group within the nation would be particularly difficult at such a time. Ramsay speculated that the arrangements for such a mission must have taken a good deal of time and the relief given only as the famine worsened, because "the manner of relief must, of course, have been by purchasing and distributing corn, for it would have shown criminal incapacity to send gold to a starving city; and the corn would not be given by any rational person until the famine was at its height" (*St. Paul the Traveller* , p. 50). But the text does not demand this reading, nor does the analogy of the action of Helena and Izates require it. We are not given any details as to how the relief was collected, how it was administered, or when it was delivered. All we know from the text is that it was an expression of Christian concern by the Antioch church "for the brothers (*adelphois*) living in Judea" and was taken by Barnabas and Saul "to the elders" (*pros tous presbyterous*) of the Jerusalem church. And while the term "elders" (*presbyteroi*) may indicate that at that time the Jerusalem church had a structured presbyterate, here we should probably understand it as somewhat parallel to Josephus's "leaders" (*protoi*) (in *Antiq.* XX, 53 [ii.5]) and in line with Luke's nontechnical usage of "disciples" (*mathetai*) in v. 29. The "famine visit" of Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem of 11:27-30 should probably be dated about A.D. 46. That date, even though tentative and general, presents commentators with their first real date for working out a Pauline chronology (cf. comments on the reign of Herod

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Agrippa I at 12:1-23, the Edict of Claudius at 18:2, and Gallio's proconsulate at 18:12). But as to how we are to reconcile this date with what Paul tells us in his letters and how we are to fit it into an overall chronology depends largely on the answer to the conundrum of the relation of Paul's two Jerusalem visits mentioned in Galatians to his three Jerusalem visits reported in Acts. While most accept the correlation of Galatians 1:18-20 with Acts 9:26-29 and count that as the first visit, many feel that Galatians 2:1-10 should be identified with the Jerusalem Council of Acts

15. But this makes Acts 11:27-30 either a fabrication on Luke's part or a doublet of the Acts 15 material placed here by Luke for his own purposes. The issues are complex and have far-reaching consequences. (See comments on Acts 15 in the context of 12:25-16:5.) Here it is sufficient to say that the simplest solution that provides the most satisfactory and convincing reconstruction and leaves the fewest loose ends is that Galatians 2:1-10 corresponds to the famine visit of Acts 11:27-30. On such an understanding, and taking the temporal conjunctions "then" (*epeita*) of Galatians 1:18 and 2:1 as referring back to Saul's conversion (A.D. 33, allowing some flexibility in rounding off the years), his first visit to Jerusalem can be dated about 36, and his famine visit some fourteen years after his conversion, about 46. On such a basis, the reference in Galatians 2:2 to Saul's having gone to Jerusalem "in response to a revelation" (*kata apokalypsin*) should probably be related to Agabus's prophecy of 11:28.

D. Divine Intervention on Behalf of the Jerusalem Church (12:1-23)

With its acceptance of the conversion of "half-Jews" in Samaria, a Gentile centurion and his friends at Caesarea, and Gentiles who were only loosely associated with the synagogue at Antioch of Syria, the Jerusalem church was straining the forms and commitments of Judaism almost to the breaking point. There was hardly any further room for expansion within the traditions of Judaism,

and soon the Christian mission would break out of those limits to embrace a direct mission to the Gentile world. In fact, the preparations for this had begun with Saul's conversion and with his early attempts to carry on a Christian ministry, even though not till later would he formally espouse and explicitly carry out a direct mission to Gentiles. But before Luke turns to his portrayal of the Christian mission to the Gentile world, he takes the opportunity of presenting two further glimpses of God's working on behalf of the believers at Jerusalem. Just as his mentor Paul, while arguing for the legitimacy of a direct outreach to Gentiles, continued to characterize Jewish Christianity as "the church of God" (Gal 1:13; cf. 1Thess 2:14) and to respect God's ongoing activity within the Jewish world (cf. Rom 9-11), so Luke seems desirous of making the point that, though he is about to portray the advances of the gospel within the Gentile world, it should not be assumed that God was finished with Jerusalem Christianity or that his activity within the Jewish world was finished. Luke has portrayed the Christian mission to the Jewish world that had its center at Jerusalem. Now he prepares to present the Christian mission to the Gentiles as a kind of ellipse emanating from that same center.

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Before doing so, however, Luke gives us two further vignettes relating to God's intervention on behalf of the Jerusalem church so that his readers might more fully appreciate the fact that while the Christian mission within the Jewish world and the Christian mission to the Gentiles differed, in many ways they possessed a common focus and also had many similarities. Or, like the analogy of a circle and ellipse that share a common center but extend to somewhat different areas, they should be seen as complementary and not contradictory. Divine activity on behalf of the Gentiles, Luke appears to be insisting, does not mean divine inactivity on behalf of Jewish Christians or unconcern for Jews--which is a heresy that has often afflicted Gentile Christians and resulted in horrendous calamities.

1. *The deliverance of Peter* (12:1-19a)

1-4 The narrative of Peter's miraculous deliverance from prison and death really begins at v. 5, with Luke's favorite connecting phrase *men oun* signifying its start (see comments and note on 1:

6). Probably Luke's source material for his narrative covered what we now have in vv. 5-19, to which he has added an historical introduction in vv. 1-4. The narrative is introduced as having taken place "about this time," which probably refers to the events of the famine visit to Jerusalem of 11:27-30. But if the famine visit occurred about

A.D. 46 and Herod Agrippa I died in A.D. 44 (as will be seen below), 11:27-30 and the material of 12:1-23 are chronologically reversed. Yet we must remember that ancient historians frequently grouped their materials per species, without always being concerned about chronology (see Introduction: Historical Writing in Antiquity). So Luke having begun his account of Christianity in Antioch by speaking of the founding of the church tied into that narrative a further vignette about the famine relief Antiochan believers sent to Jerusalem. As a result, his full account of the church at Antioch of Syria (11:19-30) reaches back behind Peter's ministries at Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea at its start (cf. 11:19) and goes beyond

the accounts of Peter's deliverance and Herod Agrippa I's death at its close. It is because he is working per species within a broad chronological framework that Luke begins the narrative of Peter's deliverance with just a general temporal statement. If we were to seek more chronological exactness, we might say that the events of chapter 12 occurred between those of 11:19-26 and 11:27-30. But Luke seems to have wanted to close his portrayals of the Christian mission within the Jewish world (2:42-12:24) with two vignettes having to do with God's continued activity on behalf of the Jerusalem church. Therefore he closes with chapter 12 and uses "about this time" to connect it with what has already been presented. The Herod of Acts 12 is Agrippa I (born in 10 B.C.), the grandson of Herod the Great and the son of Aristobulus. After his father's execution in 7 B.C., he was sent with his mother Bernice to Rome, where he grew up on intimate terms with the imperial family. In his youth he was something of a playboy, and in A.D. 23 he went so heavily into debt that he had to flee to Idumea to escape his creditors. Later he received asylum at Tiberias and a pension from his

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uncle Herod Antipas, with whom, however, he eventually quarreled. In 36 he returned to Rome but offended the emperor Tiberius and was imprisoned. At the death of Tiberius in 37, he was released by the new emperor Caligula and received from him the northernmost Palestinian tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias (cf. Luke 3:1) and the title of king. When Herod Antipas was banished in 39, Agrippa received his tetrarchy as well. And at the death of Caligula in 41, Claudius, who succeeded Caligula and was Agrippa's friend from youth, added Judea and Samaria to his territory, thus reconstituting for him the entire kingdom of his grandfather Herod the Great, over which he ruled till his death in 44. Knowing how profoundly the masses hated his family, Herod Agrippa I took every opportunity during his administration in Palestine to win their affection. When in Rome, he was a cosmopolitan Roman. But when in Jerusalem, he acted the part of an observant Jew. So careful were both he and his wife Cypros regarding Jewish traditions that a Gemara says of them: "The King is guided by the Queen, and the Queen is guided by Gamaliel" (b *Pesahim* 88b). In the pilgrim procession bearing firstfruits into the temple, the Mishnah records that "when they reached the Temple Mount even Agrippa the king would take his basket on his shoulder and enter in as far as the Temple Court" (M *Bikkurim* 3:4). And of the Festival of Tabernacles (*Sukkoth*) in A.D. 41, in accordance with the biblical prescription given in Deuteronomy 17:14- 20 ("The Law of the Kingdom") that the king was to read in public, the Mishnah says,

King Agrippa received it standing and read it standing [signs of respect, contrary to the

practice of previous Roman rulers], and for this the Sages praised him. And when he

reached "Thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee which is not thy brother"

[Deut 17:15],

his eyes flowed with tears [because of his Edomite ancestry]; but they called out to him,

"Our brother art thou! Our brother art thou! Our brother art thou!" (M *Sotah* 7:8).

Such a Jewish show of affection for a Herodian may seem inconceivable. In reality, however, it was the response of a grateful nation for benefits received. In A.D. 40 Agrippa had cajoled Caligula not to carry out his insane plan of erecting a statue to himself as a god in the Jerusalem temple and had intervened on behalf of the Jews in Alexandria for their more humane treatment. When Judea came under his jurisdiction, he moved the seat of government from Caesarea to Jerusalem. This established the holy city in Jewish eyes as the political capital of the country. He also began to rebuild the city's northern wall and fortifications, thus enhancing both its security and its prestige (cf. Jos. Antiq. XIX, 326-27 [vii. 2]; War II, 218 [xi.6]; V, 151-62 [iv. 2]). Many Jews viewed these days as the inauguration of a better era--perhaps even the Messianic Age--as their grief and prayers during Agrippa's fatal illness at Caesarea suggest (cf. Jos Antiq. XIX, 349 [viii.2]). Agrippa himself, however, seems to have been primarily interested in a successful reign through the cooperation of loyal subjects, and his expressions of concern for the people and their religion were probably more pragmatically based than sincere.

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Agrippa's policy was the Pax Romana through the preservation of the status quo. He supported the majority within the land and ruthlessly suppressed minorities when they became disruptive. He viewed Jewish Christians as divisive and felt their activities could only disturb the people and inflame antagonisms. So he arrested some of the believers in Jesus and had James, one of Jesus' original disciples, beheaded by the sword. According to *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 9:1, murderers and apostates ("people of an apostate city") were to be beheaded--a form of execution probably ordered by Agrippa to show his Jewish subjects his evaluation of the embryonic Christian movement. Finding that this pleased the Jewish leaders, he then took Peter during Passover Week ("the Feast of Unleavened Bread") and imprisoned him till he could bring him out for public trial after the Jewish holy days. While in prison, the apostle was guarded by "four squads of four soldiers each," probably on shifts of three hours each (cf. Vegetius *De Re Mili* 3.8), with two soldiers chained to him on either side and two standing guard at the inner entrance to the prison (cf. v. 6). Evidently Agrippa planned to make of Peter a spectacle and warning at a forthcoming show trial. And he did not want to be embarrassed by Peter's escape.

5 Most commentators speculate that the place of Peter's imprisonment was somewhere within the Fortress of Antonia, which overlooked the temple area to the north and had entrances to both the temple courts and the city (cf. BC, 4:136). Of more importance to Luke, for whom prayer is the natural atmosphere of God's people and the normal context for divine activity (cf. 1:14, 24; 2:42; 4:24-31; 6:4, 6; 9:40; 10:2, 4, 9, 31; 11:5; 13:3; 14:23; 16:25; 22:17; 28:8), is the fact that "the church was earnestly praying to God for [Peter]."

6-9 On the night before Agrippa's show trial, "an angel of the Lord" appeared in the apostle's cell and began to take charge of affairs. The designation "angel of the Lord" (*angelos kyriou*) stems from the LXX and signifies God himself in his dealings with men (cf. Exod 3:2, 4, 7, passim; Matt 1:20, 24; 2:13, 19; 28:2; Luke

1:11; 2:9; Acts 5:19; 8:26; 12:23 [also *angelos* in 7:30, 35, 38; 12:11; 27:23]). The angel awoke Peter, and as he stirred, the chains by which he was bound fell from his wrists. Then the angel, like a parent with a child awakened from sound sleep, carefully instructed the groggy apostle to get dressed. Then he ordered Peter to follow him, and they left the cell. But Peter, too sleepy to grasp the reality of what was happening, thought he was dreaming. Herod Agrippa I had planned to try Peter as the leader of the divisive minority in Palestine that identified itself with the crucified Jesus of Nazareth and then execute him as a warning to other followers of Jesus to stop their activities. Usually a prisoner was chained to only one guard (cf. Seneca *Epistulae* 5.7); but in view of Agrippa's intentions, the guard was doubled. The Christians in Jerusalem understood Agrippa's intentions because he had earlier imprisoned some of them and killed James the son of Zebedee. Neither Peter nor his fellow believers were in any doubt about what the king had in mind. It was a crisis of great magnitude for the life of the early Christian community at Jerusalem. But while God does not promise deliverance from

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persecution and death, at crucial times he often steps in to act for the honor of his name and the benefit of his people. In fact, Luke insists, this was what now happened: God acted directly in delivering Peter from Agrippa's designs. Peter's deliverance must be ascribed entirely to God, for it was in no way due to the apostle's own efforts or those of the Christian community--apart, of course, from their prayers.

10-11 Passing the two guards at the inner entrance to the prison, Peter and the angel came to the main iron gate, which opened automatically (automate) as they approached. Then the angel left Peter a block away from the prison. Stories about prison doors opening of their own accord and of miraculous escapes from imprisonment were popular in the ancient world, and the form of such legends undoubtedly influenced to some extent Luke's narrative here (cf. comments on 5:19). But as C.S.C. Williams notes, "The `form' of an escape story cannot of course decide the problem of its historicity" (p. 148). Some may prefer to believe, as did F.C. Burkitt, "that Peter's escape was contrived by human means"--"that some human sympathizer [unbeknown to Peter himself or the early church] was at work, who had drugged the guards and bribed the turnkey" (pp. 103-4). That the story is not told in much detail may lead to such a conjecture. God certainly has acted in history on behalf of his people through human agents. Yet for Peter, standing there alone in the street and brought to his senses by the cool night air, there was no doubt that "the Lord sent his angel and rescued [him] from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating." So quite apart from philosophical skepticism, there is no reason to doubt that his deliverance was miraculous and not arranged by human means.

12 Realizing where he was and the danger he faced if Herod's soldiers should find him there, Peter went to one of the meeting places of the early Jerusalem Christians, the home of Mary, John Mark's mother. A number of people were praying there. Luke's identification of Mary by her son implies that her son's

name was better known to his readers than hers (cf. Mark 15:21, 40). It also suggests that the John Mark referred to here was the one who was with Paul and Barnabas on a portion of the first missionary journey (Acts 13:5, 13)--viz., a cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10) who returned with him to Cyprus after the falling out with Paul (Acts 15:37-39), a later companion of both Paul (Col 4:10; Philem 24) and Peter (1 Peter 5:13), and the writer of the second Gospel.

13-16 Mary's house must have been of some size, with a vestibule opening onto the street, an intervening court, and rear living quarters. Not only were "many people gathered" there, but Luke says that Peter was knocking at the door of the vestibule (*ten thyran tou pylonos* ; NIV, "the outer entrance") and Rhoda the servant girl was rushing back and forth for joy. The unfolding scene is one of confusion and joyful humor, which must have led to hilarity every time it was repeated among the early believers. There was Peter's knocking, becoming more and more urgent as he beat on the door; Rhoda's losing her wits for joy and forgetting to open the door;

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the Christians' refusal to believe it was Peter, even though they had just been praying for him; their belittling of Rhoda ("You are out of your mind" [*maine*]) and of her saying she had heard Peter's voice at the door ("It must be his angel"); Rhoda's frantic persistence; and their utter astonishment when they finally opened the door and let him in.

17 On entering, Peter "motioned with his hand for them to be quiet." This was not the time for celebration--what with Herod's soldiers doubtless prowling about the streets and the city silent in sleep. Peter had to be moving on to escape being recaptured. So he gave them a quick summary of "how the Lord had brought him out of prison" and instructed them to tell James and the other brothers what had happened. And with that, Luke tells us, Peter left "for another place." The James mentioned here is, of course, James the Lord's brother, not James the brother of John and son of Zebedee who was earlier beheaded by Herod Agrippa I (cf. v. 2). Undoubtedly Peter was the leader of the first Christian community at Jerusalem, as the early chapters of Acts presuppose. But from the mid-thirties through the mid-forties James seems also to have exercised some form of administrative leadership along with Peter and the apostles (cf. Gal 1:19; 2:9), and he presided at the Jerusalem Council of A.D. 49 (cf. 15:13-21). Later still Luke refers to him as head of the Jerusalem church (cf. 21:18). In 62 he was martyred by the younger Ananus (cf. Jos. Antiq. XX, 200 [ix.1]). Luke does not state how or why the shift in leadership of the church from Peter to James came about, nor what qualified James for such a position. Apparently it had to do with (1) external pressures on the Jerusalem congregation to demonstrate its Jewishness and (2) the need within the church for someone who could lead the growing number of scrupulously minded converts drawn from Pharisaic and priestly backgrounds (perhaps Essene; cf. comments on 6:7). After the expulsion of the Hellenists, both the Jews and the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem felt the need for the community of believers in Jesus to demonstrate more actively their continued respect for the traditions of Israel. Peter and his fellow apostles, all being *am haares* Jewish Christians; lit., "people of the land"), would hardly have been the best ones to head such an

endeavor--in fact, Peter's association with the Samaritans and Cornelius may have made him particularly suspect in certain quarters. It is therefore not improbable that as the pressures mounted, the Jerusalem church found it advantageous to be represented in its leadership by one whose legal as well as spiritual qualifications were above reproach. Such a person, it seems, was James, the Lord's brother, whom Hegesippus (a second-century Christian of Aelia, the renamed Gentile Jerusalem) described as a Pharisee and ascetic so pious that his knees were like camel's knees from frequent praying in the temple on behalf of the people (cf. Epiphanius *Contra Haereses* 78.6-7; Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.1.23; 23.4-7) and who was not only physically related to Jesus but also had seen the risen Jesus (1Cor 15:7). Furthermore, the missionary activities of Peter and the apostles would require some kind of arrangement for the continuance of administrative authority at Jerusalem. That the apostles

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considered themselves to be something other than ecclesiastical functionaries has already been shown in Acts 6:2-6. And it is not too difficult to imagine that with the dispersion of the Hellenists and the Seven who were appointed to supervise the distribution of food within the community, the church turned to James for administrative leadership--not only, as has been suggested, to demonstrate its Jewishness, but also to free the apostles for their "ministry of the word." The writings of postapostolic Jewish Christianity speak of Peter and his fellow apostles remaining in Jerusalem for twelve (or seven) years and after that engaging in missionary activity throughout the Jewish Diaspora (cf. Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 6.5.43, citing an earlier but now extinct work called *The Preaching of Peter*; *Acts of Peter* 5; *Clementine Recognitions* 1.43; 9.29; note also 1Cor 9:5; 1 Clement 5; Justin *Apology* 1.50.12; *Dialogue* 53.5; 109.1; 110.2). Many of the details of this tradition are undoubtedly apocryphal. Yet the fact that the apostles carried on missionary activities away from Jerusalem and outside Palestine cannot be doubted. For these reasons administrative leadership within the Jerusalem church seems to have gradually shifted to James, the Lord's brother. The mention of "another place" to which Peter went after his miraculous deliverance has led to all kinds of comment. Roman Catholicism has frequently asserted that this place was Rome, where, on the basis of the apocryphal Acts of Peter, the Clementine Recognitions, and the Clementine Homilies, it has been claimed that Peter arrived in A.D. 42 and remained for twenty-five years. This assertion, however, is improbable and has been abandoned by many Roman Catholic scholars today. If 12:1-19 precedes 9:32-11:18 chronologically, as some insist (see comments on 12:1), this other place may refer to the maritime plain of Palestine, with its cities of Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea. But such a region, though geographically removed from Jerusalem, would hardly be separated from Herod Agrippa's jurisdiction. More likely Antioch of Syria is the place Luke had in mind--a place where Peter had fellowship with a mixed body of Jewish and Gentile believers till "certain men came from James," and where he suffered the rebuke of Saul of Tarsus (cf. Gal 2:11-21). Later on Peter appears at Jerusalem in connection with the Jerusalem Council (cf. 15:7-11, 14), though presumably only in transit.

18-19a In Roman law, a guard who allowed his prisoner to escape was subject to the same penalty the escaped prisoner would have suffered (cf. *Code of Justinian* 9.4.4). No wonder that in the morning when Peter's escape was discovered, "there was a great [*ouk oligos* ; lit., `not a little'] commotion among the soldiers." When Herod heard of Peter's escape, he instituted a search and cross-examined the guards. Frustrated by his lack of success, he ordered the guards "to be led away" (*apachthenai*)--probably an idiom for being taken out to execution (as NIV; cf. Luke 23:26).

2. *The death of Herod Agrippa I* (12:19b-23)

Peter had been miraculously delivered from prison and death, but the tyrant Herod Agrippa

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was still at large, continuing his oppression of the church. Therefore Luke gives us a second scene in his account of God's intervention on behalf of the Jerusalem church. Luke does this not only to show how far-reaching this intervention was but also to reinforce by a second witness the theme of God's continued interest in Jewish Christianity (cf. comments in introduction to Acts 2:42-12:24).

19b-20 The situation Luke describes in these verses is not entirely clear. Caesarea, with its excellent manmade harbor (see comments on 10:1), was still nominally the provincial capital of Palestine. Tyre and Sidon were important Phoenician seaport cities incorporated into the Roman Empire about 20 B.C. There is nothing in Josephus about any trouble between Caesarea and the seaports to the north at this time, though competition for trade between them was probably always fierce and the cities of the Phoenician seaboard were heavily dependent on Galilee for much of their food supply. Nevertheless, whatever the cause, Herod became enraged with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and they, in turn, sent a delegation to ask for peace, using in some way the good offices of Blastus, King Agrippa's personal servant, for their purposes. By his use of *kai* ("and"; NIV, "then") and the participle *katelthon* ("he went down") in v. 19b, Luke implies that Agrippa left Jerusalem for Caesarea shortly after the Jewish Passover, perhaps because of frustration over Peter's escape.

21-23 Luke's account of Agrippa's death is paralleled by Josephus:

After the completion of the third year of his reign over the whole of Judaea, Agrippa came

to the city of Caesarea, ... [where] he celebrated spectacles in honour of Caesar. On the

second day of the spectacles, clad in a garment woven completely of silver so that its

texture was indeed wondrous, he entered the theatre at daybreak. There the silver, illumined by the touch of the first rays of the sun, was wondrously radiant and by its glitter

inspired fear and awe in those who gazed intently upon it. Straightway his flatterers raised

their voices from various directions--though hardly for his good--addressing him as a god.

"May you be propitious to us," they added, "and if we have hitherto feared you as a man,

yet henceforth we agree that you are more than mortal in your being." The king did not

rebuke them nor did he reject their flattery as impious. But shortly thereafter he looked up

and saw an owl perched on a rope over his head. At once, recognizing this as a harbinger

of woes just as it had once been of good tidings [cf. *Antiq.* XVIII, 195, 200 (vi.7)], he felt

a stab of pain in his heart. He was also gripped in his stomach by an ache that he felt

everywhere at once and that was intense from the start. Leaping up he said to his friends:

"I, a god in your eyes, am now bidden to lay down my life, for fate brings immediate

refutation of the lying words lately addressed to me. I, who was called immortal by you,

am now under sentence of death. But I must accept my lot as God wills it. In fact I have

lived in no ordinary fashion but in the grand style that is hailed as true bliss." Even as he

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was speaking these words, he was overcome by more intense pain. They hastened,

therefore, to convey him to the palace; and the word flashed about to everyone that he was

on the very verge of death.... Exhausted after five straight days by the pain in abdomen, he

departed this life in the fifty-fourth year of his life and the seventh of his reign (Antiq. XIX,

343-50 [viii.2]).

These two accounts of Herod Agrippa's death--that of Luke and that of Josephus--differ enough from one another that neither can be dependent on the other. Luke sets the scene by referring to a quarrel between the king and the people of Tyre and Sidon, whereas Josephus speaks of a festival in honor of Caesar--either the quinquennial games inaugurated by Herod the Great at the founding of Caesarea to honor Augustus (cf. War. I, 415 [xxi.8]) or a festival instituted by Agrippa to honor his patron Claudius. Josephus makes no mention of a delegation from Tyre and Sidon. Furthermore, Luke's account, though more concise, gives us the physical cause of Agrippa's death--his being "eaten by worms." On the other hand, the two accounts are so similar in outline that we may assume that we know in general how and when Herod Agrippa I died. Agrippa I's death occurred in A.D. 44, "after the completion of the third year of his reign over the whole of Judea" Jos. Antiq. XIX, 343 [viii.2]; War II, 219 [xi.6]) and in the fourth year of the emperor Claudius Jos. Antiq. XIX, 351 [viii.2]). Luke's reference to worms suggests an infection by intestinal roundworms (*Ascaris lumbricoides*), which grow as long as ten to sixteen inches and feed on the nutrient fluids in the intestines. Bunches of roundworms can obstruct the intestines, causing severe

pain, copious vomiting of worms, and death. But whatever its physical details, both Luke and Josephus attribute Agrippa's death to the king's impiety and God's judgment. Moreover, Luke sees it as part of God's activity on behalf of the Jerusalem church.

E. A Summary Statement (12:24)

24 Luke's third panel on the Christian mission within the Jewish world ends with a summary statement comparable to the summaries that conclude the two preceding panels (cf. 6:7; 9:31). In its context, v. 24 contrasts the progress of the gospel to the awful end of the church's persecutor Herod Agrippa I. More broadly, it implies that though in the remainder of Acts Luke's attention will be focused on the advances of the gospel to Gentiles, within the Jewish world "the word of God continued to increase and spread." In other words, God was still at work on behalf of the Jerusalem church and its ministry and was still concerned for his ancient people Israel.

Part II. The Christian Mission to the Gentile World (12:25-28:31)

In the Nazareth pericope (Luke 4:14-30), Luke has set the main themes for all that follows in

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Luke-Acts (cf. Introduction: The Structure of Acts). And in his presentation of the themes, two features of particular relevance stand out. First, Luke presents Jesus' reading of Isaiah 61 as ending in mid-sentence at Isaiah 61:2a, thereby emphasizing grace ("to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor") without sounding the note of judgment ("and the day of vengeance of our God"). The omission of the judgment theme underscores the fact that the period of the gospel is a time characterized by grace, when the offer of deliverance is freely extended. To such a message of salvation, as they understood it, the residents of Nazareth responded positively. They failed to see any other implication in a message of free grace than God's messianic blessings poured out on Israel. So they spoke well of Jesus and commented favorably about his "gracious words" (Luke 4:22). Second, Luke shows Jesus as indicating that the blessings of the Messianic Age were not intended for Israel alone but were for Gentiles as well as Jews--with the blessings of God's grace extending even to a Phoenician widow and a Syrian leper. Here was a repudiation of the Jewish concept of exclusive election. At it Jesus' townsmen were furious, driving him out of the synagogue and trying to do away with him. Jesus' own earthly ministry was, of course, limited almost entirely to Jews. Luke's Gospel depicts only one healing of a centurion's servant (7:1-10) and two very brief contacts with Samaritans (9:52-55; 17:11-19). Moreover, it even omits the pericope about the Syro- Phoenician woman of Mark 7:24-30 (cf. Matt 15:21-28), though it contains several intimations of a later inclusion of Gentiles (cf. Luke 2:30-32; 3:6; 11:31; 13:29; 14:16-24). Also, in the first half of Acts, Luke presents the Jerusalem church's ministry as focused primarily on the Jewish world, with such outreaches as at Samaria, Caesarea, and Syrian Antioch understood as being in some ways exceptional. In effect, then, Luke has reserved for Paul the mission to the Gentiles that Jesus saw as inherent in the Servant theology of Isaiah 61. And now as Luke turns to a portrayal of how the gospel advanced among the Gentiles through Paul, he is also concluding his two-volume work by explicating Jesus' promise of the universal extension of God's grace. This Luke does (1) by building on what Jesus accomplished in his earthly ministry, death, and resurrection, as presented in his Gospel, and (2) by paralleling in its Gentile advances many features of the extension of God's grace within the Jewish

world, as presented in the first half of Acts.

Panel 4--The First Missionary Journey and the Jerusalem Council (12:25-16:5)

Luke's fourth panel, the first of his three on the Christian mission to the Gentile world, embodies both Paul's first missionary journey and the Jerusalem Council. It concludes by telling how believers in Syria, Cilicia, and Galatia received the decisions of the council. Luke presents his material more thematically than geographically. Therefore, before closing with the summary in 16:5, he draws together several matters: (1) a report of events on the first missionary journey that led up to the Jerusalem Council; (2) an account of the debate and decisions reached at the

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council; and (3) a precis of how those decisions were received in areas of Gentile outreach. Most commentators have tended to treat these topics as practically separate and distinguishable. But to judge by the way Luke groups his material thematically within his various panels, he evidently meant these topics to be taken together and understood as having some integral relation to one another. Taken by themselves, chapters 13 and 14 are sometimes viewed as a "filler" inserted by Luke to get from the situation of the church under Agrippa I to the Jerusalem Council--or, worse yet, relegated to the status of either a Lukan invention or some misplaced aspect of the Pauline mission that probably occurred later (e.g., Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 400-404, 438-39; idem, "The Book of Acts as Source Material for the History of Early Christianity," Keck and Martyn, p. 271). But to look on these chapters in that way is to miss Luke's point about an important advance in the Christian mission and to be left without an adequate rationale for the Jerusalem Council. In reality, however, Paul's first missionary journey began a radically new policy for proclaiming the gospel and making converts: namely, the legitimacy of a direct approach to the Gentile world apart from any prior commitments to Judaism on the part of the converts or any Jewish stance on the part of the missionaries, and the legitimacy of Gentile Christians expressing their faith in Jesus apart from a Jewish lifestyle and distinctive Jewish practices (cf. 14:27b; 15:

3). For the early church with its Jewish roots such a policy was revolutionary. It had enormous significance and many implications for the Christian movement that, not having been foreseen, required a full discussion and decision at the Jerusalem Council.

A. The Missioners Sent Out (12:25-13:3)

25 For the important textual question relating to the reading "Barnabas and Saul from Jerusalem," see Notes. Verse 25 reaches back behind the events of chapter 12 to connect 13:1-3 with the account of the Antioch church (11:19-30). And,

indeed, 12:25-13:3 exhibits the same terse and somewhat colorless style of 11:19-30, which suggests a topical as well as a literary connection. So Luke uses v. 25 as a kind of bridge statement before turning to whatever source materials he has for the missionary journey itself (cf. the connective *men oun* of 13:4). Thus he shifts his readers' attention from Jerusalem to Antioch of Syria and tells of John Mark's return with his cousin Barnabas (Col 4:10) and with Saul from Jerusalem to Antioch.

13:1 At Antioch there were five "prophets and teachers" in the church. The Greek particle *te* (untranslatable) was used in antiquity to connect word pairs, coordinate clauses, and similar sentences, thereby often distinguishing one set of coordinates from another. Probably, therefore, we should understand Barnabas, Simeon, and Lucius, who are introduced by the first *te*, as the prophets, and Manaen and Saul, who are grouped by the second *te*, as the teachers--with prophecy here understood to include "forthtelling" as well as "foretelling" and teaching having to

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do with showing OT relationships and implications.

We know Barnabas as a Levite from Cyprus who resided in Jerusalem and became a leading figure in the Jerusalem church (4:36-37; 9:27; 11:22-30). He was, as Luke tells us, "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith" (11:24) and undoubtedly served as a channel for the truth of the gospel direct from the Jerusalem congregation. As for Lucius and Manaen, however, we know nothing certain apart from this verse. Simeon Niger (a Lat. loan word meaning "black") may have been from Africa. He was possibly the Simon from Cyrene of Luke 23:26, whose sons Alexander and Rufus were later known to be among the Christians at Rome (cf. Mark 15: 21; also possibly Rom 16:13). If he was made to carry Jesus' cross on the way to Golgotha, what a story he would have had to tell! Lucius of Cyrene was frequently identified in the postapostolic period with Luke the evangelist and author of Acts. But the Roman praenomen Lucius (Luke) was common in the empire. And if Luke has refrained from identifying himself with Paul's missionary journeys, except through the occasional use of the pronoun "we," it is hardly likely that he would point to himself by name. Nor should Luke be equated with the Lucius of Romans 16:21. Manaen (the Gr. form of the Heb. Menahem) is identified as a *syntrophos* (lit., a "foster brother" or "intimate friend") of Herod the Tetrarch. This suggests that he had been raised as an adopted brother or close companion of Herod Antipas. As for Saul, we know him from 7:58-8:3; 9:1-30; and 11:25-30.

2-3 While Barnabas and Saul were carrying out their activities at Antioch, the Holy Spirit directed that they should be set apart for a special ministry. Luke says, "After they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (*apelysan* ; lit., "released them" from their duties at Antioch). Luke's literary style in these verses is somewhat clipped, and we could wish that he had given us more details. Luke does not tell us how the Spirit made his will known, though we may assume that it was through a revelation given to one of the believers. Neither does he tell us the nature of the special ministry the two were set apart

for, though from what follows it is obvious that we are meant to understand that it was to be a mission to Gentiles. Nor do we have the antecedent of the third person verbal suffix "they" (*apelysan*), and so we do not have the precise identification of the sentence's subject. Still, we may infer from the parallel usage in 15:2 (*etaxan* , "they appointed," where the antecedent is relatively clear from the context) and from the descriptions of early church government in 6:2-6 and 15:4-30 (cf. note on *to plethos* ["the whole number"; NIV, "all"] at 6:2) that the whole congregation, together with its leaders, was involved in attesting the validity of the revelation received, laid hands on the missionaries, and sent them out. This is confirmed by the reference to the whole church in 14:27. For just as it was the whole church that sent them out, so it was the whole church the missionaries reported to on returning to Antioch. Nevertheless, however we view the details of their call and commission, ultimately, Luke insists, Barnabas and Saul were "sent on their way by the Holy Spirit" (13:4).

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B. The Mission on Cyprus and John Mark's Departure (13:4-13)

The first major outreach of the gospel from Antioch soon encountered the false prophet Bar-Jesus in Cyprus, just as the first major outreach from Jerusalem ran afoul of Simon the sorcerer in Samaria (cf. 8:9-24). By the manner in which he narrates both events, Luke apparently wanted his readers to see the parallel. Moreover, not only does Luke seem to have been interested in this parallel between these two episodes, he was also interested in showing how great a step forward the mission on Cyprus really was--with its revolutionary implications for the Christian mission to Gentiles and its radical effect on the missionaries themselves.

4 Having brought his readers back to Syrian Antioch and shown how Barnabas and Saul were directed to undertake a mission to Gentiles, Luke now begins the account of the missionaries' outreach to Cyprus, Pamphylia, and the southern portion of Galatia. That his descriptions of events on this first missionary journey are fuller and more detailed than the description of the church at Antioch (cf. 11:19-30; 12:25-13:3) suggests that here Luke was working from written source materials. And he links his portrayal of the first missionary journey to his summary introduction (12:25-13:3) by his favorite connective *men oun*. Furthermore, his use of the personal pronoun *autoi* ("they") at 13:4 and 14 seems to signal some distinction in his source materials concerning the ministry on Cyprus (13:4-12) and the ministry at Antioch of Pisidia (13: 14-52).

While the church confirms in its own experience the divine will, identifies itself with God's purposes and those whom he has called for specific tasks, and releases them from their duties for wider service (cf. v. 3), it is God who by his Spirit is in charge of events and sends out his missionaries. Thus being "sent on their way by the Holy Spirit," they went down to Seleucia on the Mediterranean and sailed from there to the island of Cyprus. Just why they thought of going to Cyprus first

in carrying out their mandate we don't know. But Barnabas was from Cyprus (4:36); and knowing generally the will of God, he and Saul were ready to move from the known to the unknown. Seleucia was the port city of Antioch of Syria, some sixteen miles west of Antioch and four or five miles northeast of the mouth of the Orontes River. It was founded by Seleucus I Nicator, the first king of the Seleucid dynasty, about 300 B.C. in conjunction with the founding of Antioch. Cyprus was an island of great importance from very early times, being situated on the shipping lanes between Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece. In 57 B.C. it was annexed by Rome from Egypt and in 55 B.C. incorporated into the province of Cilicia. In 27 B.C. it became a separate province governed on behalf of the emperor Augustus by an imperial legate. In 22 B.C. Augustus relinquished its control to the senate, and, like other senatorial provinces, it was administered by a proconsul.

5 Leaving the mainland of Syria, the missionary party sailed to Salamis on the eastern coast of

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Cyprus, about 130 miles from Seleucia. Salamis was the most important city of the island and the administrative center for its eastern half, though the provincial capital was 90 miles southwest at Paphos. The population of Cyprus was dominantly Greek, but many Jews lived there as well (cf. Philo *Legatio ad Gaium* 282; Jos. Antiq. XIII, 284, 287 [x.4]). Thus Barnabas and Saul began their mission in the synagogues of the city, and John Mark was with them as their helper

(*hyperetes*). Jewish grave inscriptions and various papyri use the word *hyperetes* in the sense of a synagogue attendant, as does Luke also in his Gospel (4:20). This has caused many to view John Mark's responsibilities within the missionary party as related to caring for the scrolls (the Scriptures, together with a possible "Sayings of Jesus" collection) and serving as a catechist for new converts. Yet in Luke 1:2 and Acts 26:16 Luke also uses the term more broadly to mean a servant of Christ and in Acts 5:22, 26 to designate members of the temple guard. Here it probably should be understood in its broader sense.

6-11 From Salamis, Barnabas and Saul traveled throughout the island of Cyprus, continuing to preach within the Jewish synagogues to both Jews and "God-fearing" Gentiles. But when they reached Paphos--or, more exactly, New Paphos, the Roman provincial capital seven miles northwest of the old Phoenician city of Paphos--their ministry definitely changed. At Paphos the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus asked them to present their message before him. This was probably meant to be an official inquiry into the nature of what the missionaries were proclaiming in the synagogues so that the proconsul might know how to deal with charges already laid against these wandering Jewish evangelists and head off any further disruptions within the Jewish communities. Like a "command performance," the invitation could not have been refused. But neither the proconsul nor the missionaries could have anticipated what actually happened at the inquiry. Luke describes Sergius Paulus as a man of discernment (*aner synetos* ; lit., an "intelligent," "sagacious," or "understanding man"), which he proved to be in accepting the Christian message. Possibly he was the Lucius

Sergius Paulus known to have been one of the curators of the Tiber during the reign of Claudius (cf. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 6.4.2, No. 31545). If so, he probably went to Cyprus as proconsul after his curatorship in Rome (cf. BC, 5:458). Within his court at Paphos was a certain Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus (*Bariesou* , which is Aram. for "Son of Jesus" and comes from a Semitic root meaning "to be worthy"). In assuming to be the Jewish spokesman in opposition to these Christian evangelists, this man probably wanted to enhance his own reputation. While sorcery and magic were officially banned in Judaism, there were still Jews who practiced it, both under the guise of Jewish orthodoxy and as renegades (cf. Luke 11:19; Acts 19:13-16). Barlesus is also called Elymas ("sorcerer," "magician," "fortune-teller"), which cannot be a translation of the name Barlesus. There is some evidence in the Western text for the spellings Etymas or Hetoimas, both of which mean something like "to be ready" and are therefore partly parallel to the root meaning of Barlesus, which is "to be worthy." If either Etymas or Hetoimas was originally in his text, Luke may have

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been referring to a Jewish magician of Cyprus named Atomos, who, according to Josephus, was employed by Felix to procure Azizus's wife Drusilla for himself (cf. Antiq. XX, 142 [vii.2]). In all of Saul's activities thus far, nothing had happened to suggest that he was anything but "a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents" (cf. Philippians 3:5). He was interested in an outreach to Gentiles but made no special appeal to them directly. Nor did he approach them as being on an equal footing with Jews or apart from the synagogue. Though his preaching aroused strong feelings within certain Jewish communities, it engendered no more ill will than had been directed against the other apostles before him. Here in the hall of the proconsul, however, Saul was in new surroundings as he presented his message before a leading member of the Roman world, a world he himself was a member of. As a Jew, he proudly bore the name of Israel's first king, Saul. As a Roman citizen (cf. 16:37-38; 25:10-12), he undoubtedly had two Roman names, a praenomen and a nomen, though neither is used of him in the NT. But as a Jew of the Diaspora, who must necessarily rub shoulders with the Gentile world at large, he also bore the Greek name Paul (*Paulos*, meaning "little"), which became his cognomen in the empire and was used in Gentile contexts. So at this point in his narrative Luke speaks of "Saul, who was also called Paul," and hereafter refers to him only by this name. As the gospel was being proclaimed to Sergius Paulus, Bar-Jesus tried to divert the proconsul from the faith. But Paul turned on the sorcerer and pronounced a curse upon him. In highly biblical language--which was what Paul used for solemn adjurations and curses--he denounced Bar-Jesus as "a child of the devil," "an enemy of every thing that is right," one "full of all kinds of deceit and trickery," always "perverting the right ways of the Lord," and pronounced a curse of temporary blindness upon him. "Immediately," Luke tells us, "mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand."

12 The nature of the proconsul's response has often been debated, chiefly because

the text says nothing about his being baptized when he believed. Ramsay suggested that for Luke "belief" was only the first step in a process of conversion, with the second being "turning to the Lord," and therefore our author's reference to his believing (*episteusen*) should not be taken to mean that at this time he became a Christian (*Trustworthiness of the New Testament* , p. 165). Lake and Cadbury, on the other hand, proposed that the missionaries "may have mistaken courtesy for conversion" and warned their readers not to take Luke's words in v. 12 too seriously (cf. BC, 4:

147). But the statement that Sergius Paulus believed can hardly be taken with any less significance than Luke's use of the same word in 14:1; 17:34; and 19:18, where baptism is also not mentioned yet where we might well assume it was performed. The conversion of Sergius Paulus was, in fact, a turning point in Paul's whole ministry and inaugurated a new policy in the mission to Gentiles--viz., the legitimacy of a direct approach to and full acceptance of Gentiles apart from any distinctive Jewish stance. This is what Luke clearly sets forth as the great innovative development of this first missionary journey (14:27; 15:3). Earlier Cornelius had been converted apart from any prior commitment to Judaism, and the

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Jerusalem church had accepted his conversion to Christ. But the Jerusalem church never took Cornelius's conversion as a precedent for the Christian mission and apparently preferred not to dwell on its ramifications. However, Paul, whose mandate was to Gentiles, saw in the conversion of Sergius Paulus further aspects of what a mission to Gentiles involved and was prepared to take this conversion as a precedent fraught with far-reaching implications for his ministry. It is significant that from this point on Luke always calls the apostle by his Greek name Paul and, except for 14:14; 15:12; and 15:25 (situations where Barnabas was more prominent), always emphasizes his leadership by listing him first when naming the missionaries. For after this, it was Paul's insight that set the tone for the church's outreach to the Gentile world.

13 Verse 13 has puzzled many commentators. Pamphylia was a geographically small and economically poor province on the southern coast of Asia Minor, with the mountains of Lycia to the west, the foothills of Pisidia to the north, and the Taurus range to the east. It contained a mixed population and seems to have been as open to the gospel as any other province. Yet Luke gives us no account of evangelization in Perga or its environs at this time, though he expressly states that the missionaries "preached the word in Perga" on their return to Syrian Antioch (14:25). And it was at Perga that John Mark left the group to return to Jerusalem. The usual explanation for the missionaries' initially bypassing Perga and moving on to Antioch of Pisidia is that Paul may have been ill with a case of malaria and that this forced redirecting the mission to gain the higher ground to the north. As for John Mark's departure, it is usually explained as a combination of homesickness, the rigors of travel, dissatisfaction with Paul's assuming leadership over Mark's cousin Barnabas, and unhappiness at leaving Cyprus so soon. But discussion among the missionaries after Paphos and during their stay at Perga may very well have focused on the implications of Sergius Paulus's conversion for their ministry. And it can plausibly be argued that (1) the lack of preaching in Perga at this time was due primarily to uncertainty within the missionary party itself about the validity of a direct approach to and full acceptance of Gentiles and that (2)

John Mark's departure was because he disagreed with Paul. While this is only conjecture, Mark may have been concerned about the effect news of a direct Christian mission to Gentiles would have in Jerusalem and on the church there and may have wanted to have no part in it. It was his return to the Christian community in Jerusalem that may originally have stirred the "Judaizers" in the church to action. Other explanations for Mark's defection are at best only partial and at worst rather thin. They fail to account for Paul's strong opposition to Mark in 15:37-39, an opposition that suggests that Mark's departure on this first missionary journey may have been for reasons more than merely personal.

C. At Antioch of Pisidia (13:14-52)

At Pisidian Antioch the typical pattern of the Pauline ministry was established: an initial proclamation in the synagogue to Jews and Gentile adherents and then, when refused an

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audience in the synagogue, a direct ministry to Gentiles. This pattern is reproduced in every city visited by Paul with a sizable Jewish population--except Athens. As he later declares in Romans, there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles in condemnation (Rom 2:1-3:20) or access to God (Rom 3:21-31); so his ministry at Pisidian Antioch began to express this equality. Historically, of course, Israel had been tremendously advantaged (Rom 3:1-2; 9:4-5). Paul himself had a great desire to see his nation respond positively to Christ (Rom 9:1-3; 10:1). But while the synagogues were appropriate for beginning his ministry in the various cities, offering as they did an audience of both Jews and Gentiles theologically prepared for his message, the synagogues were not the exclusive sphere of Paul's activity. Since Jews and Gentiles stood before God on an equal footing, they could be appealed to separately if need be. This understanding of the validity of a direct approach to Gentiles and their full acceptance as Christians is what Paul speaks of as "my gospel" (Rom 16:25; cf. Gal 1:11-2:10). It was a gospel not different in content from the earliest gospel (1Cor 15:1-11) but a gospel distinct in strategy and broader in scope. By revelation, the nature of Paul's Christian ministry had been given; by providential action at the beginning of his first missionary journey, its specifics were spelled out. This was, as Paul says later on, "the mystery made known to me by revelation, ... which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:2-6).

1. A welcome extended at Antioch (13:14-15)

14a Pisidian Antioch was in reality not in Pisidia but in Phrygia near Pisidia (cf. Strabo *Geography* 12. 577). But to distinguish it from the other Antioch in Phrygia it was popularly called "Antioch of Pisidia." It was founded by Seleucus I

Nicator about 281 B.C. as one of the sixteen cities he named in honor of either his father or his son, both of whom bore the name Antiochus. It was situated a hundred miles north of Perga on a lake-studded plateau some thirty-six hundred feet above sea level. The foothills between Perga and Pisidian Antioch largely ruled out any extensive east-west traffic till one reached the plateau area, but following the river valleys one could move northward from the Pamphylia area. On the plateau Antioch stood astride the Via Sebaste, the Roman road from Ephesus to the Euphrates. The city had been incorporated into the expanded Roman province of Galatia in 25 B.C. by Augustus, who at that time imported into it some three thousand army veterans and their families from Italy and gave it the title of Colonia Caesarea. Antioch was the most important city of southern Galatia and included within its population a rich amalgam of Greek, Roman, Oriental, and Phrygian traditions. Acts tells us that it also had a sizeable Jewish population.

14b-15 Arriving at Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue on the Sabbath.

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A typical first-century synagogue service would have included the Shema, the Shemoneh Esreh (the liturgy of "The Eighteen Benedictions," "Blessings," or "Prayers"), a reading from the Law, a reading from one of the prophets, a free address given by any competent Jew in attendance, and a closing blessing (cf. SBK, 4.1:153-249; also BC, 4:148). The leader of the synagogue (*archisynagogos* --equivalent to the Heb. *ros hakeneset* , "head of the synagogue") took charge of the building and made arrangements for the services (Luke 8:41, 49). He was usually one of the elders of the congregation. Generally there was only one leader in each synagogue (cf. 18:8, 17), but at times two or more made up the synagogue chapter. The office was sometimes held for life and passed on within a family, and occasionally the title was given honorifically to women and children. Perhaps Paul's dress proclaimed him a Pharisee and thereby opened the way for an invitation to speak.

2. *Paul's synagogue sermon at Antioch (13:16-41)*

Three missionary sermons of Paul are presented in Acts: the first here in 13:16-41 before the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, the second in 14:15-17 to Lystrans assembled outside the city gates, and the third in 17:22-31 before the Council of Ares at Athens. Each sermon as we have it is only a precis of what was said, for the longest in its present form would take no more than three minutes to deliver and the shortest can be read in thirty seconds or less. But there is enough in each account to suggest that whereas Paul preached the same gospel wherever he went, he altered the form of his message according to the circumstances he encountered.

16 When Jesus addressed the congregation at Nazareth, he read the lesson standing and then sat down to speak (cf. Luke 4:16, 20). Luke, however, portrays Paul as "standing" (*anastas*) to address the synagogue worshipers at Pisidian Antioch. Indeed, Philo speaks of members of the synagogue as standing (*anastas*

) to address the congregation (*De Specialibus Legibus* 2.62). Greek orators also stood to speak. But probably the difference here is best explained by postulating that Jesus' address at Nazareth was an exposition of Isaiah 61, whereas Paul's at Pisidian Antioch was an exhortation not arising from the passages read that day from the Law or the Prophets (cf. I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* , 2 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1917], 1:9). In Paul's audience were both Jews and "God-fearing" Gentiles. So he addressed them: "Men of Israel" (*Andres Israelitai*) and "you who worship God" (*hoi phoboumenoi ton theon* , see also v. 26). With a gesture of his hand (typically Jewish, though some commentators prefer to see it only as a Greek affectation inserted by Luke) and with his words, he invites them to listen to him.

17-22 Paul's exhortation begins with a resume of Israel's history that emphasizes the pattern of God's redemptive activity from Abraham to David. It is an approach in line with Jewish interests and practices and can be paralleled by Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin, by the argument

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of the Letter to the Hebrews, and by the underlying structure of Matthew's Gospel.

Highlighted in this resume is a four-point confessional summary that for Jews epitomized the essence of their faith: (1) God is the God of the people of Israel; (2) he chose the patriarchs for himself; (3) he redeemed his people from Egypt, leading them through the wilderness; and (4) he gave them the land of Palestine as an inheritance (cf. G.E. Wright, *God Who Acts* [London: SCM, 1952], p. 76). To such a confessional recital, Jews often added God's choice of David to be king and the promises made to him and his descendants (cf. Pss 78:67-72; 89:3-4, 19-37). Paul proclaims these great confessional truths of Israel's faith, which speak of God's redemptive concern for his people and undergird the Christian message. Of importance also is the fact that underlying Paul's treatment of David is 2 Samuel 7:6-16 (cf. J.W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1954], p. 172; E. Lovestam, *Son and Saviour: A Study of Acts 13, 32-37*, tr. M.J. Petry [Lund: Gleerup, 1961], pp. 6-15), the passage that speaks of David's descendant as God's "son" (cf. 2Sam 7:14, "I will be his father, and he will be my son") and was understood in at least one Jewish community to have messianic significance (cf. 4QFlor on 2Sam 7:10-14). By anchoring Israel's kerygma in the messianically relevant "son" passage of 2 Samuel 7, Paul has begun to build a textual bridge for the Christian kerygma--which kerygma he will root in the messianic "son" passage of Psalm 2:7. And by drawing these two passages together on a *gezerah sawah* (verbal analogy) basis, he will draw together Israel's confession and the church's confession, thereby demonstrating both continuity and fulfillment.

23 Paul's Christian proclamation begins by announcing that God has brought forth the messianic Deliverer from David's line in the person of Jesus. The promise Paul alludes to is in Isaiah 11:1- 16, a messianic passage of special

import for Judaism because it speaks of the Messiah's descent from David ("A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit"), of his righteous rule, of his victories, and of the establishment of his kingdom.

24-25 The announcement of Jesus as the Messiah is put in the usual form of the apostolic proclamation, beginning with John the Baptist and his ministry (cf. Mark 1:2-8). John's preaching and baptism of repentance paved the way for the public ministry of Jesus. John was the forerunner of the Messiah, as he himself confessed: "I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie" (cf. Luke 3:15-18).

26-31 As Paul comes to the heart of his sermon, he appeals respectfully and urgently for a hearing. "Men, brothers [*Andres adelphoi*], children of Abraham [*hui oi genous Abraam*], and you God-fearing Gentiles [*hoi en hymin phoboumenoi ton theon*]," he says, "it is to us [*hemin*] that this message of salvation has been sent." Then he presents a four-point Christian confession like that in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5: (1) Jesus was crucified; (2) they "laid him in a tomb"; (3) "God raised him from the dead"; and (4) "for many days he was seen by those who

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had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem," who are "now his witnesses to our people." Also significant is the clear note of fulfillment explicitly sounded in v. 27 ("in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath") and implied throughout the whole presentation.

32-37 To support this four-point confession, and to demonstrate the fulfillment of what God has promised, Paul cites three OT passages fraught with messianic meaning for Christians and also for some Jews. The first is Psalm 2:7 ("You are my Son; today I have become your Father"), which Paul uses to bind together Judaism's confession and Christianity's confession by juxtaposing it with 2 Samuel 7:6-16 underlying vv. 17-22. Both 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2:7 portray God as speaking of his "son," and it was undoubtedly this that brought the two passages together. Linking passages on the basis of their verbal analogies was common in Judaism. Furthermore, the evidence from Qumran suggests that these two passages were also brought together by the Dead Sea covenanters before Christianity and understood to have messianic relevance at Qumran, for 4QFlorilegium is a pesher commentary on 2 Samuel 7:10-14; Psalm 1: 1; and Psalm 2:1-2 (though with the remainder of the scroll unfortunately broken off); and Psalm 2:7 has been found in the material designated 3Q2 (though without an accompanying commentary). Knowledge of how Judaism viewed these two passages is not as full as one might desire, though their union and treatment at Qumran is suggestive. But whatever is concluded as to the pre-Christian union and usage of these two passages, this seems clear: (1) Paul is bringing these two "son" passages together as the substructure of his argument in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch; (2) in so doing he is joining OT redemptive history and the history of Jesus, understanding both as having messianic significance; and (3) his approach and method were highly appropriate to his synagogue audience. In addition to his use of 2 Samuel 7:6-16 and Psalm 2:7 as the textual substructure for his argument and to support Christ's resurrection, Paul quotes in tandem Isaiah 55:3 ("I will give you the holy blessings promised to David") and Psalm 16:10 ("You will not let your Holy One see decay"), joining his biblical testimonia

passages again on the *gezerah stawah* (verbal analogy) principle of verbal similarities between *ta hosia* ("the holy blessings") and *ton hosion* ("the Holy One"). The messianic treatment of Psalm 16:10 stemmed from the earliest Christian preaching at Pentecost (cf. 2:27), if not also from pre-Christian Judaism.

38-41 Having begun his sermon by addressing his audience as "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God" (v. 16), and having focused it by his appeal "Men, brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles" (v. 26), Paul now uses the simpler and broader appellation "Men, brothers" (*andres adelphoi*, v. 38; NIV, "my brothers") in his application and call to repentance. Through Jesus, Paul declares, are "forgiveness of sins" and "justification" for "everyone who believes." The awkward sentence construction of v. 38b-39 in the Greek has led some interpreters (e.g., B.W. Bacon, *The Story of St. Paul* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.,

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1904], p. 103, echoing various German commentators of his day) to read Paul as saying here that the Mosaic law could set free from some sins while belief in Jesus would do so for the rest. This, however, is not only incompatible with Paul's teaching in Galatians and Romans, it would also be inconceivable for Luke--or any Pauline disciple drawing up a precis of his preaching--to put it on his lips. Haenchen is right to insist that "anyone who, like H.J. Holtzmann, Harnack, Preuschen, Vielhauer, makes the author here develop a doctrine that an incomplete justification through the law is completed by a justification through faith imputes to him a venture into problems which were foreign to him" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 412, n.4). What we have in the application of Paul's message (despite its cumbersome expression in its precis form) are his distinctive themes of "forgiveness of sins," "justification," and "faith," which resound in this first address ascribed to him in Acts just as they do throughout his extant letters. The call to repentance is cast in terms of Habakkuk 1:5, a passage we now know was accepted at Qumran as having messianic significance (cf. IQHab) and which may also have been so considered more widely in other circles of Late Judaism. In effect, then, Paul concludes by warning the congregation that Habakkuk's words apply to all who reject God's working in Jesus' ministry and who refuse Jesus as the divinely appointed Messiah: "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you."

3. *Varying responses to the sermon (13:42-45)*

42-43 The brevity of Luke's report of the responses to Paul's sermon has raised some questions in the minds of modern interpreters. Who are the "they" (*auton*; NIV has "Paul and Barnabas" here) and the "them" of v. 42? Where did the action take place, inside or outside the synagogue? How was it that the apostles were favorably received, yet rejected? And what does our author mean by the expression *hoi sebomenoi proselytoi* (NIV, "devout converts to Judaism") in v.

43? Many commentators have expressed their perplexities over these things, often proposing various source-critical explanations or deleting what appear to be the more difficult statements. But if we take the account to be an abbreviated summary of what happened and allow for the generalizations that invariably appear in any such summary, Luke's comments about the varying responses to Paul's sermon are not too difficult to understand. Evidently the pronouns in v. 42 refer to Paul and Barnabas, who were requested by those who heard Paul's sermon "to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath." More than likely the synagogue authorities took a less favorable view of the sermon. But "many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism" (*polloi ton Ioudaion kai ton sebomenon proselyton*) were interested and after the service followed the apostles to hear more. And "some" (*hoitines* , here used as a sweeping relative pronoun) of those who did this were "persuaded" (*epeithon* , "urged") by the apostles to continue "in the grace of God"--which, to judge by Paul's usual understanding of grace, must connote continuance in the Good News about salvation through

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Jesus.

44-45 "Almost the whole city," Luke says rather hyperbolically, gathered on the following Sabbath to hear "the word of the Lord" (*ton logon tou kyriou*)--an expression suggesting the christological content of Paul's preaching. But "when the Jews saw the crowds," their initial interest turned to antagonism. Not only was the synagogue being flooded by Gentiles as though it were a common theater or town hall, but, even more, it became clear that Paul and Barnabas were ready to speak directly to Gentiles without first relating them in some way to Judaism. The majority of the Jews, including undoubtedly the leaders of the Jewish community, were apparently unwilling to countenance a salvation as open to Gentiles as it was to Jews. So in their opposition they not only "talked abusively" (NIV) but "they were blaspheming"

(*blasphemountes*), because from Luke's perspective opposition to the gospel is directed not so much against the messengers as against the content of the message--Jesus himself (cf. 26:11).

4. To the Jews first, but also to the Gentiles (13:46-52)

46-47 In response to the Jews' abuse and blasphemy, Paul and Barnabas asserted their new policy "To the Jews first, but also to the Gentiles" that began with the conversion of Sergius Paulus and had evidently been discussed by the missionaries on the way from Paphos to Pisidian Antioch. It is significant that in his commentary on Isaiah (c. A.D. 403), Jerome refers five times to an interpretation of Isaiah 9:1-2 (about the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali seeing a great light) that he found among the Nazoreans of Syria. This Nazorean interpretation, Jerome tells us, went beyond the use of Isaiah 9:1-2 in Matthew 4:13-16 in establishing the priority of the gospel outreach as being first to Jews and then to Gentiles. Since, according to Jerome, the Nazoreans as Jewish Christians had an uninterrupted tradition stretching back to the very beginning of the Christian

church, we may fairly claim that the policy of preaching first to Jews and then to Gentiles, though initiated on Paul's first missionary journey and not in Jerusalem, was acknowledged very early even among certain Jewish Christians at Jerusalem.

As Paul and Barnabas saw it, the Jews of Pisidian Antioch in their exclusiveness had rejected the very thing they were looking for: "The Life of the Age to Come" (Heb., *hayye haolam habba*)--i.e., "eternal life" (Gr., *he aionios zoe*). Now, however, the gospel must be directed to the Gentiles, for included in its mandate is the promise of Isaiah 49:6, that God's servant will be "a light for the Gentiles" and a bringer of salvation "to the ends of the earth"(cf. Luke 2:28-32). It was, of course, Jesus of Nazareth who was uniquely God's Servant and who was at work through his Spirit in the church, completing what he had begun and also making the missionaries God's servants and inheritors of the promise in Isaiah 49:6.

48-49 Many of the Gentiles responded with thanks for the apostles' ministry and with openness to their message (*ton logon tou kyriou* , "the word of the Lord").
"All who were appointed for

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eternal life believed" suggests that belief in Christ is not just a matter of one's faith but primarily involves divine appointment (cf. SBK, 2:726, on Jewish concepts of predestination). And through the conversion of many of the Gentiles, who brought the message of salvation to others, "the word of the Lord spread through the whole region." This spreading of the word, along with the apostles' own outreach to the cities named in chapters 13 and 14, probably led to the agitation of the so-called Judaizers that resulted in the problem Paul dealt with in Galatians.

50 Unable to confine the ministry of Paul and Barnabas to the synagogue, the Jews stirred up trouble against them and brought pressure on the city's magistrates (*tous protous tes poleos* ; lit., "the leading men of the city") through their "God-fearing" wives (*tas sebomenas gynaikas tas euschemonas* ; lit., "the God-fearing women of high standing"). Since Luke speaks of the persecution as expulsion rather than mob action, it probably took the form of a charge that Christianity, being disowned by the local Jewish community, was not a *religio licita* in Rome's eyes and therefore must be considered a disturbance to the Pax Romana. Later in Acts, Luke will show how the agitation against the gospel usually arose from within the Jewish community, not from the Roman authorities, and that the charge was that Paul was preaching an illegal religion (cf. 16:20-21; 17:7; 18:13)--a charge Luke insists was unfounded. This is part of the fabric of his apologetic argument (see Introduction: Luke's Purposes in Writing Acts), and he probably meant to suggest it here as well.

51-52 Having been expelled from Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas "shook the dust from their feet in protest against them"--a Jewish gesture of scorn and disassociation, which was directed at the city's magistrates and the Jewish leaders. Then they went southeast on the Via Sebaste, heading for Iconium some eighty miles away. The new "disciples" left behind at Pisidian Antioch and environs, far from being discouraged at this turn of events, were "filled with joy and with the

Holy Spirit."

D. At Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe and the Return to Antioch (14:1-28)

The great Roman road from Ephesus to the Euphrates, which had been extended into the heart of the south Galatian plateau by Augustus's engineers in 6 B.C. and named Via Sebaste in his honor (Sebastos is the Gr. equivalent of Augustus), became two roads at Pisidian Antioch. One went north through mountainous terrain to the Roman colony of Comana about 122 miles away. The other moved southeast across rolling country, past the snow-capped peaks of Sultan Dag, to terminate at the important Greek city of Iconium, some 80 miles distant from Antioch. A few years later this road was extended another 24 miles southwest to reach the Roman colony of Lystra. As Paul and Barnabas left Pisidian Antioch, therefore, they were faced with a choice as to the future direction of their mission. Choosing the southeastern route, they headed off to what would become a ministry to people of three very different types of cities in the southern

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portion of the Roman province of Galatia.

1. *The ministry at Iconium* (14:1-7)

1 Iconium, an ancient Phrygian town, had been transformed by the Greeks into a city-state. Situated in the heart of the high and healthy plateau of south-central Asia Minor, it was surrounded by fertile plains and verdant forests, with mountains to its north and east. With Augustus's reorganization of provinces in 25 B.C., Iconium became part of Galatia. But while Rome chose Antioch of Pisidia and Lystra as bastions of its authority in the area, Iconium remained largely Greek in temper and somewhat resistant to Roman influence, though Hadrian later made it a Roman colony. As a Greek city, it was governed by its assembly of citizens (the *Demos*) and held itself aloof from interference by the praetorian legate. Greek was the language of its public documents, and during the NT period it attempted to retain the ethos of the old city-state. "Iconium" is probably a Phrygian name, but a myth was invented to give it a Greek meaning. According to the myth, Prometheus and Athena recreated mankind in the area after a devastating flood by making images of people from the mud and breathing life into them. The Greek for "image" is *eikon* (*ikon* in modern Gr.), hence the name Iconium. Ramsay called Iconium the Damascus of Asia Minor, for like Damascus it was blessed with abundant water, a genial climate, rich vegetation, and great prosperity (*Cities of St. Paul*, pp. 317-19). It was a place of beauty and a natural center of activity, as its survival into modern times as the thriving town of Konya shows. Entering Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue. The phrase *kata to auto* literally suggests that the apostles went into the synagogue "together" (so KJV, RSV). But since to say that they entered the synagogue together belabors the obvious, many commentators prefer to read it as "after the same manner" (i.e., as at Pisidian Antioch) and to translate it with some such expression as "similarly" (NEB), "as usual" (NIV), or "as they had at Antioch" (JB) At Iconium, therefore, as they proclaimed the same gospel in the same way

as at Pisidian Antioch, a great number believed, both Jews and Gentiles.

2 Opposition to the gospel soon arose. The Western text recasts v. 2 to read: "But the leaders of the synagogue and the rulers [of Iconium] brought persecution against the righteous and made the minds of the Gentiles hostile against the brothers, though the Lord soon gave peace." The Western text presupposes that the opposition against Christianity followed the normal pattern in Acts of Jewish agitation and local Roman action against a *religio illicita* , whereas Iconium was a Greek city governed by its assembly of citizens. And the Western revisers had trouble seeing how the apostles could continue an extensive ministry in the city, as v. 3 presents, after such an official judgment; so they added the clause "though the Lord soon gave peace." But if we recognize that opposition to the gospel arose here within a city governed by Greek

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jurisprudence, and if we take the aorist verbs of v. 2 to be ingressive, Luke's portrayal of Jews "stirring up" the Gentiles and "poisoning their minds" may be both appropriate and meaningful, without the addition of a qualifying clause (as D and its associates inserted) or reversing the order of vv. 2 and 3 (as some commentators think necessary).

3 To judge by his use of the connective *men oun*, Luke is here returning to some written source for his account of the ministries of Paul and Barnabas in southern Galatia. He tells us that the apostles ministered for a "considerable time" in the city and preached boldly "for the Lord," with God confirming "the message of his grace" by "miraculous signs and wonders" (*semeia kai terata*). The mention of "the Lord" undoubtedly refers to Jesus the Lord, thus showing the Christocentric nature of the missionaries' preaching. And the couplet "miraculous signs and wonders" places the ministry of Paul and Barnabas directly in line with that of Jesus (cf. 2:22) and the early church (cf. 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36) in fulfillment of prophecy (cf. 2:19)--as it does also in 15:12. Later when writing his Galatian converts (assuming a "South Galatian" origin for the letter), Paul appeals to these mighty works performed by the Spirit as evidence that the gospel as he preached it and they received it was fully approved by God (cf. Gal 3:4-5). In the latter half of the second century (perhaps as late as 185-95), a presbyter of Asia Minor (perhaps from Iconium) wrote a lengthy tract entitled *The Acts of Paul* that sought to fill in the details of Paul's ministries in the eastern part of the empire and for which, Tertullian tells us, he "was removed from his office after he had been convicted and had confessed that he did it out of love for Paul" (*De Baptismo* 17). The work has numerous legendary stories, only a few of which may be based on fact. But in the section of Paul's ministry at Iconium (the longest section of the work, often circulated separately as *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*), we have a picture of Paul that may rest on more-or-less accurate local tradition, for it does not read like a later idealization: "a man small of stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness; for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the

face of an angel."

4-5 Luke tells us that there was a division among "the people" (*to plethos* , "the population," "assembly") of the city regarding the apostles and their message, with some siding with the Jews and others with the apostles. Interpreted broadly, *to plethos* denotes no more than the populace of the city (so KJV, RSV, NEB, JB, NIV, et al.). On the other hand, the word was also used of a stated assembly (cf. 23:7) and may denote an assembly of prominent citizens that met to conduct the business of a Greek city-state. If this is its meaning here, then Luke is telling us that the official response to Paul and Barnabas in Iconium was mixed. While there may not have been any official action taken against them, there was a "plot" (*horme*) brewing among some of the Gentiles and Jews to mistreat and stone them. The word *horme* connotes impulsiveness and suggests an action not controlled by reason, which is exactly how Luke viewed the opposition at Iconium against the gospel and its missionaries.

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Also significant is Luke's calling Barnabas an apostle (cf. also v. 14) and lumping him with Paul in the phrase *syn tois apostolois* ("with the apostles"). While Barnabas was neither one of the Twelve nor a claimant to any special revelation, he was probably one of the 120 (cf. 1:15) and may have been a witness of Jesus' resurrection. Yet as with most titles of the NT (e.g., "disciple," "prophet," "teacher," "elder"), Luke, like Paul himself (cf. 2Cor 8:23; Gal 1:19; Philippians 2:25), not only used "apostle" in the restricted sense of a small group of highly honored believers who had a special function within the church but also in the broader sense of messengers of the gospel.

6-7 The opposition to the ministry of Paul and Barnabas must have grown to sizable proportions, for they took it seriously enough to leave Iconium and travel to Lystra and Derbe. By referring to Lystra and Derbe as Lycaonian cities, Luke implies that Iconium belonged to a different region from Lystra and Derbe. All three, of course, were part of the Roman province of Galatia. But in the administration of so large a province, the Romans subdivided Galatia into various regions (*regiones* or *chorai*), four of which have come down to us by name: Isauria, Pisidia, Phrygia, and Lycaonia. The fourth-century B.C. Greek general and writer Xenophon called Iconium "the last city of Phrygia" (Anabasis 1.2.19), though later Roman authors frequently referred to it as a Lycaonian city (e.g., Cicero *Ad Familiares* 15.4.2; Pliny *Natural History* 5.25). Ramsay, however, has shown that between A.D. 37 and 72--and at no other time under Roman rule--Iconium was on the Phrygian side of the regional border between Phrygia and Lycaonia, not only linguistically but also politically (*Trustworthiness of the NT* , pp. 39-114; idem, *St. Paul the Traveller* , pp. 110-12). In fleeing to Lystra and Derbe, therefore, Paul and Barnabas were leaving one political region to start afresh in another. Thus in that Lycaonian region they continued preaching the gospel, both in the cities of Lystra and Derbe and in the surrounding countryside, as Luke now tells us in a general way and as he will explain in the following verses.

2. *The ministry at Lystra* (14:8-20)

8-10 Lystra was an ancient Lycaonian village whose origins are unknown. Caesar Augustus turned it into a Roman colony in 6 s.c. and, by bringing army veterans and their families into it, made it the most eastern of the fortified cities of Galatia. Its population was mostly uneducated Lycaonians, who came from a small Anatolian tribe and spoke their own language. The ruling class was made up of Roman army veterans, while education and commerce were controlled by a few Greeks. Jews also lived there (16:1-3), but their influence seems to have been minimal. A secondary military road was built between Lystra and its more powerful sister colony Pisidian Antioch in 6 s.c., and a few years later an extension of the Via Sebaste also joined Lystra to Iconium. That Paul began the ministry at Lystra by preaching to a crowd may imply that no synagogue

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was available for him to preach in. While he was speaking, Paul saw "a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked" (the triple stress on his condition may reflect the pattern of a frequently told story) and who was listening to him attentively. Seeing "that he had faith to be healed," Paul commanded him to stand up, and the man jumped up and walked about. Luke undoubtedly wanted his readers to recognize the parallel between the healing of this crippled man and the healing of another one by Peter (cf. 3:1-8), for the expressions "lame from birth" (*ek koilias metros autou* ; lit. "from his mother's womb"), "looked directly at him"

(*atenisas auto*), and "walking about" (*periepatei* ; NIV, "began to walk") are common to both accounts. The Western text, in fact, heightens the parallel by inserting "I say to you in the name of the Lord Jesus" before Paul's command (cf. 3:6) and by adding "and immediately he leaped up and walked" after it (cf. 3:7-8). But the sequel to the healing of the crippled man here differs from that of Peter's miracle, and it is narrated by Luke with much local color.

11-13 The healing amazed and excited the crowd, and they shouted out in Lycaonian: "The gods have come down to us in human form!" (cf. 28:6). Barnabas they identified as Zeus, the chief of the Greek pantheon, probably because of his more dignified bearing. It was evidently because Luke wanted to reflect this esteem by the people that he lists him first in his pairing of the apostles here, as he does also in another context at 15:12, 25. Paul they identified as Hermes, Zeus's son by Maia and the spokesman for the gods, since "he was the chief speaker" (*ho hegoumenos tou logou* --see Iamblichus's description of Hermes as "the god who leads in speaking" [*theos ho ton logon hegemon*] in *On the Egyptian Mysteries* 1). Two inscriptions discovered at Sedasa, near Lystra, dating from the middle of the third century A.D., identify the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes as being worshiped in Lycaonian Galatia. On one inscription recording the dedication to Zeus of a statue of Hermes along with a sundial, the names of the dedicators are Lycaonian; the other inscription mentions "priests of

Zeus" (cf. W.M. Calder, "Acts 14:12," ExpT, 37 [1926], 528). Also found near Lystra was a stone altar dedicated to "The Hearer of Prayer [presumably Zeus] and Hermes" (ibid.). Approximately half a century before Paul's first missionary journey, Ovid (c. 43 B.C.-A.D.

17) in the *Metamorphoses* (8.626-724) retold an ancient legend that may have been well known in southern Galatia and may in good part explain the wildly emotional response of the people to Paul and Barnabas. According to the legend, Zeus and Hermes once came to "the Phrygian hill country" disguised as mortals seeking lodging. Though they asked at a thousand homes, none took them in. Finally, at a humble cottage of straw and reeds, an elderly couple, Philemon and Baucis, freely welcomed them with a banquet that strained their poor resources. In appreciation, the gods transformed the cottage into a temple with a golden roof and marble columns. Philemon and Baucis they appointed priest and priestess of the temple, who, instead of dying, became an oak and a linden tree. As for the inhospitable peoples the gods destroyed their houses. Just where in "the Phrygian hill country" this was supposed to have taken place, Ovid does not say. But it appears that, seeing the healing of the crippled man and remembering the

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legend, the people of Lystra believed that Zeus and Hermes had returned and wanted to pay them homage lest they incur the gods' wrath. That the people shouted in Lycaonian explains why the apostles were so slow to understand what was afoot till the preparations to honor them as gods were well advanced. But when the priest of Zeus--whether for principal or pragmatic reasons--joined the crowd and began to do them homage, Paul and Barnabas realized what was about to happen. Temples situated outside city gates were common in the ancient world, and therefore Luke's phrase "Zeus ... just outside the city" (*Dios ... pro tes poleos*) probably refers to the Temple of Zeus just outside the gates of Lystra. We can visualize the priest of Zeus bringing out sacrificial oxen (*taurous* , "bulls") draped in woolen "wreaths" (*stemmata*) and preparing to sacrifice at an altar that stood in front of the Temple of Zeus, hard by the city gates. And as the idolatrous worship proceeded, Paul and Barnabas began to see that they were the object of it.

14-18 When they finally realized what was going on, Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes in horror at such blasphemy and rushed out into the crowd--shouting their objections and trying to make the people understand them. There is no reason to think that the majority of the Lystrans knew anything of Jewish history or of the Jewish Scriptures, or that they were vitally affected by Athenian philosophies. Culturally, they were probably peasants living in the hinterland of Greco- Roman civilization, with all of the lack of advantages of people in their situation. Such is the context of Paul's second missionary sermon. By far the briefest of the three (cf. 13:16-41; 17: 22-31), its brevity reflects its confused setting. Negatively, Paul's sermon at Lystra has to do with the futility of idolatry; positively, it is a proclamation of the one true and living God. Its language, particularly in its denunciation of paganism, is biblical. Indeed, Paul knows no other (cf. 13:10). But its argument is suited to its hearers. And despite the brevity with which Luke reports it, two features stand out in the development of Paul's argument. First, his

demonstration of the interest and goodness of God is drawn neither from Scripture (as at Pisidian Antioch) nor from philosophy (as later at Athens) but from nature: "He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." It is an approach to theism that peasants would understand. Here at Lystra Paul used it for all it was worth. A second feature is the claim that "in the past, he [God] let all nations go their own way," which suggests that at Lystra Paul spoke of a progressive unfolding of divine redemption. While the sermon does not explicitly refer to salvation through Christ, it is hard to believe that it was not meant to point to Jesus Christ and his work as the divine climax of history. "We too are only men, human like you," Paul and Barnabas insisted. But we are men with a message from God, they went on to say, "bringing you good news"--the best news possible--of the unity and character of the one true God (for it would not have truly been good news in the Christian sense apart from this) and of redemption through the person and work of Jesus his Son. Yet for most of the Lystrans, the message fell on deaf ears and they tried to carry on the sacrifices in honor of

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the visitors.

19-20 Later on certain Jews from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium, disaffected with Paul and Barnabas, came to Lystra to spread their views. Complaining first among the Jewish residents of the city, they managed to gain a hearing with the people. The fickle Lystrans, thinking that if the apostles were not gods they were impostors, stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city for dead. But with the aid of those who had accepted the gospel, he revived; and, with great courage, that evening he returned to the city where he had almost been killed. The next day, Paul and Barnabas left for the border town of Derbe. Some months later, when Paul wrote the believers in Galatia (again, we assume a "South Galatian" destination for the letter), he closed by saying, "Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks [*ta stigmata*] of Jesus" (Gal 6:17). Apparently he interpreted these marks as showing that he belonged to Jesus and as protecting him from unjust accusations. Some of the marks may well have been scars caused by the stoning at Lystra. And when still later he wrote the Corinthians of his having been stoned (2Cor 11:25), it was Lystra he had in mind (cf. also 2Tim 3:11). Perhaps, as Chrysostom proposed, we should see in Paul's reference to his "thorn in the flesh" (2Cor 12:7) an allusion to the persecutions he suffered and their lingering effects, of which those at Lystra were by no means least.

3. The ministry at Derbe and the return to Antioch (14:21-28)

21a Derbe was situated in the southeastern part of the Lycaonian region of Galatia, about sixty miles southeast of Lystra. According to the lexicographer Stephen of Byzantium, its name in the Lycaonian dialect meant "juniper tree." In 25 B.C. Augustus incorporated it into the province of Galatia, making it a

provincial border town on the eastern edge of the southern Galatian plateau. During A.D. 41 through 72 it bore the prefix Claudia in recognition of its strategic position as a frontier town. For some time its exact location was disputed by archaeologists but has now been established as being at Kerti Huyuk (cf. M. Ballance, *The Site of Derbe: A New Inscription*, Anatolian Studies VII [London: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankora, 1957]). Luke's account of the ministry at Derbe is very brief. All he says is that the apostles "preached the good news" there and "won a large number of disciples." Evidently Luke was more interested in the illustrious Phrygian cities of Antioch and Iconium than in the smaller Lycaonian towns of Lystra and Derbe. Probably the larger and more influential churches were in Antioch and Iconium as well, though the congregations in the smaller and more rural towns seem to have contributed more young men as candidates for the missionary endeavor (e.g., Timothy from Lystra [16:1-3; 20:4]; Gaius from Derbe [20:4])--a pattern not altogether different from today, where the larger churches often capture the headlines and the smaller congregations provide much of the personnel.

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21b-23 Having preached at Derbe, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch. Why they did not push further eastward through the passes of the Taurus range into Cilicia, Luke does not tell us. Perhaps Cilicia was considered already evangelized through Paul's earlier efforts (cf. comments on 9:30 and 11:25), which would also explain why the apostles began their missionary outreach on Cyprus and not in Cilicia (cf. 13:4). Undoubtedly their concern for the new converts in the Galatian cities led them to return by the same road. But this raises a question about how they could gain entrance into these cities after having so lately been forced to leave them. Here again Luke is silent. Ramsay suggests that "new magistrates had now come into office in all the cities whence they had been driven; and it was therefore possible to go back" (*St. Paul the Traveller* , p. 120). Yet in each of these cities the circumstances of their forced departure differed; and even with an annual change of administrators, it would have taken considerable courage to return. Probably in returning to Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, they confined their ministries to those already converted, and therefore did not stir up any further opposition (cf. 16:6; 18:23; 20:3-6). While returning through the Galatian cities, Paul and Barnabas tried to strengthen their converts personally and corporately. They encouraged them to remain in the faith, telling them that many persecutions must necessarily (*dei*) be the lot of Christians in order to enter into the kingdom of God--that is, that the same pattern of suffering and glory exemplified in Jesus' life must be theirs as well if they are to know the full measure of the reign of God in their lives (cf. Mark 8:31-10:52; Rom 8:17; Philippians 3:10-11; Col 1:24). And "they appointed [*cheirotonesantes*] elders for them in each church," thus leaving them with suitable spiritual guides and an embryonic ecclesiastical administration. In the early Gentile churches (as also undoubtedly at Jerusalem), the terms "elders" (*presbyteroi*) and "bishops" or "overseers"

(*episkopoi*) were used somewhat interchangeably and functionally rather than as titles. (See Acts 20, where Paul calls for the "elders" of the Ephesian church [v. 17] and exhorts them: "Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" [v. 28].) The elders were the "rulers" (

proistamenoï) at Thessalonica (1Thess 5:12) and at Rome (Rom 12:8). They were associated with the "deacons" as the constituted officials (Philippians 1:1; 1Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).

24-25 Directly south of Phrygia was the region of Pisidia and south of that the province of Pamphylia. In Pamphylia the apostles preached at Perga, the chief city of the province, thus beginning the kind of witness in Perga they had been unable to begin on their first visit (cf. comments on 13:13). Of its results we know nothing, nor do we know the nature of their visit to the port of Attalia (modern Antalya), some eight miles further south on the Mediterranean coast at the mouth of the Cataractes (modern Ak Su) River. Ports in antiquity were often satellite towns of larger and more important cities situated some distance inland for protection from pirates. So Luke's mention of Attalia here probably has no more significance than his mention of Seleucia (13:4), the port of Syrian Antioch, and merely identifies the place of embarkation for

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the voyage back to Syria.

26-28 On returning to Antioch of Syria and to the congregation that had sent them out, Paul and Barnabas "reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles." They had gone out under divine ordination, and their report stressed the fact that God himself had brought about the new policy for evangelizing the Gentiles, which was inaugurated at Paphos and followed throughout the cities of southern Galatia--a claim that was called into question by some believers in Jerusalem and was soon to be tested at the Jerusalem Council. So having returned from a missionary journey that occupied the best part of a year, the apostles remained at Syrian Antioch ministering in the church there for approximately another year.

E. The Jerusalem Council (15:1-29)

The convening of the council of apostles and Christian leaders at Jerusalem in approximately A.D. 49 was an event of greatest importance for the early church. That Gentiles were to share in the promises to Israel is a recurring theme of the OT (cf. Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Isa 49:6; 55: 5-7; Zeph 3:9-10; Zech 8:22). It was the underlying presupposition for Jewish proselytizing (cf. *M Pirke Aboth* 1:12; Matt 23:15) and was implicit in the sermons of Peter at Pentecost (2:39) and in the house of Cornelius (10:35). But the correlative conviction of Judaism was that Israel was God's appointed agent for the administration of these blessings--that only through the nation and its institutions could Gentiles have a part in God's redemption and share in his favor. And there seems to have been no expectation on the part of Christians at Jerusalem that this program would be materially altered, though they did insist that in these "last days" God was at work in and through Jewish Christians as the faithful remnant within the nation. In the experience of the church, all Gentiles--with but one exception--who had come to

acknowledge Jesus as Messiah had been either full proselytes or near proselytes ("God-fearers"). Only Cornelius's conversion did not fit into the pattern (cf. 10:1-11:18). But it was viewed as exceptional and not an occasion for changing policy. The practice of preaching directly to Gentiles begun by Paul in his mission on Cyprus and throughout southern Asia Minor, however, was a matter of far-reaching concern at Jerusalem, especially in view of the tensions that arose within Palestine after the death of Herod Agrippa I in A.D. 44. As the faithful remnant, the Jerusalem church naturally expected the Christian mission to proceed along lines God laid down long ago. It could point to the fact that, with few exceptions, commitment to Jesus as Israel's Messiah did not make Jews less Jewish. Indeed, it sometimes brought Gentiles who were only loosely associated with the synagogues into greater conformity with Jewish ethics. The Christian movement had always insisted on its integral relation to the religion and nation of Israel, even though this relation contained some unresolved ambiguities and was defined in various ways within the movement. But Paul's new policy for reaching Gentiles,

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despite his claim of the authority of revelation and providence for it, seemed to many Jewish Christians to undercut the basis and thrust of the ministry of the Jerusalem church. It stirred serious questions within Jerusalem, for it seemed to give the lie to the stance of Jerusalem Christianity--particularly if condoned by believers of Jerusalem.

Excursus

Any discussion of Jerusalem's attitude toward the Pauline mission that seeks to go beyond generalities is immediately faced with the thorny question of the relation of Paul's "second visit" to Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10) to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). The literary and historical issues are complex (cf. comments on 11:29-30). But one point drawn from the polemic in Galatians needs to be made here: Paul's silence in Galatians as to the decision of the Jerusalem Council forces the irreconcilable dilemma of saying either (1) that Luke's account in Acts 15 of a decision reached in Paul's favor at Jerusalem is pure fabrication or (2) that Galatians was written before the Jerusalem Council. That Paul felt obliged to explain his visits to Jerusalem shows that his adversaries had been using one or both of these visits in a manner detrimental to his position and authority. But that he should recount his contacts with the Jerusalem leaders and fail to mention the decision regarding his mission reached at the Jerusalem Council (accepting for the moment the veracity of Acts 15 and a late date for Gal) is entirely inconceivable. His lack of reference to the idolatry clause of the "decrees" in writing the Corinthians (cf. 1Cor 8:1-11:1) may be explained on other grounds (cf. comments on 15:31). But in the context of the Judaizing problem at Galatia, the decision of the Jerusalem Council would have been the coup de grace to the whole conflict. Some commentators argue that Galatians 2:1-10 is the account of the Jerusalem Council from Paul's perspective. But if this is true, it is exceedingly strange that the decision of the council is so muted (if, indeed, "muted" is not too strong a word) in Paul's account. One would have expected him to have driven

the decision home more forcefully in his debate with the Judaizers had he known about the council's decision when writing Galatians. He certainly did not withhold his punches when speaking elsewhere in the letter. Others suggest that since there is a possibility of the "decrees" being promulgated apart from Paul's knowledge (a possibility I consider highly improbable), there is a similar possibility of an early formulation of the council's primary decision without Paul's being aware of it--allowing Paul to write his Galatian converts at a later time without any mention of the Jerusalem decision, yet retaining the basic veracity of the account in Acts 15. But whatever is said of the decrees, the major decision of the Jerusalem Council was so overwhelmingly in Paul's favor that there is little likelihood of his not knowing about it and no reason for its having been kept from him. We cannot get out of the problem so easily. We are still faced with the dilemma that either Paul did not know of the council's decision when he wrote Galatians because he wrote before such a decision had been reached or that the decision in question has no basis in fact. And while others

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often assert this, I do not believe our only recourse is to discredit Luke's account in Acts.

Likewise, assuming that Paul's clash with Peter at Antioch took place after the Jerusalem Council, Paul's account of the clash between Peter and himself at the arrival of "certain men from James" (Gal 2:12) undercuts his whole argument and turns to the advantage of his Judaizing opponents. Indeed, it would reveal Paul's recognition of a chasm between himself and the Jerusalem apostles, which was only superficially bridged at the Jerusalem Council. Including the incident in his argument at a time before the council is understandable. But to use it in support of his polemic after the decision at Jerusalem, and without reference to that decision, casts doubt on Paul's logical powers. Of course, one might try to support Paul's rationality by reversing the order of events in Galatians 2, thus making Galatians 2:11-21 refer to a time before the Jerusalem Council and Galatians 2:1-10 reflect Paul's version of the council itself. But "the most natural interpretation of the biographical statements in Galatians i and ii," as many have insisted, "is that they were written before the 'Council' of Jerusalem" (Burkitt, p. 116). And while there are difficulties in an early dating of the Galatian letter, Carrington was right in asserting that "the arguments which perplexed the older theologians and still go on in the schools were due in no small degree to the fact that they accepted the late date of Galatians, which was traditional in their time" (Philip Carrington, *The Early Christian Church*, 2 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1957], 1:91). Accepting Galatians, then, as having been written before the Jerusalem Council, we have some idea from Paul himself concerning repercussions in Jerusalem in regard to his Gentile ministry, both as it was carried on in the synagogues at Antioch of Syria and as it was further developed in Cyprus and southern Asia Minor. On his second visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, which was evidently the "famine visit" of A.D. 46 (cf. 11:27-30 and comments on 11:29-30), the issue came to a head in the case of the uncircumcised Titus who accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem. And Paul says that there were two responses to Titus's presence at Jerusalem: (1) that of "some false brothers" who "had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to

make us slaves" (Gal 2:4-5); and (2) that of James, Peter, and John, the so-called pillar apostles (cf. Gal 2:6-10). It is somewhat difficult to say whether the "false brothers" were Jewish spies sent to see what treachery the Christians were next planning in conjunction with Gentiles or angry Jewish Christians who threatened to publish what was happening in the church unless Titus was circumcised. Nor can we tell whether Paul brought Titus to Jerusalem as a test case, or whether, having included him in the group from Antioch for some other reason, Paul underestimated the pressures a certain segment in the Jerusalem congregation would put on him. But the extremely important point here is that in spite of pressures and some uncertainty the Jerusalem apostles stood with Paul on the validity of a Gentile mission and the inappropriateness of making circumcision a requirement for Gentiles--though probably neither Paul nor they at that time saw that a direct ministry to Gentiles was in the offing. From Galatians 2:1-10, therefore, we learn that as early as the mid-forties there was concern

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among Jerusalem Christians regarding the ministry to "God-fearing" Gentiles at Antioch of Syria and that there were pressures exerted by some to bring it more into line with strict Jewish practice. Likewise, Paul's account of the Antioch episode in Galatians 2:11-21 clearly shows that the Gentile ministry was causing repercussions at Jerusalem and that pressures were being exerted on the Jerusalem congregation because of it. Just who "those who belonged to the circumcision group" were, who were feared by Peter, is difficult to say with any certainty. And just why Peter, together with the Antioch Jewish Christians and "even Barnabas," separated themselves from Gentile believers is difficult to determine precisely. It may be that they viewed such an action as a necessary, temporary expedient in order to avoid dangerous practical consequences for Jewish believers at Jerusalem and to quell rising demands for the circumcision of Gentile believers at Antioch, thus preserving both the Jewish mission of the church and Gentile freedom (cf. Dix, p. 44). However that may be, Galatians 2:11-21 points out that there were rising pressures at Jerusalem against an outreach to Gentiles and that these pressures were felt at Syrian Antioch. Furthermore, the passage suggests that the rationale for a separation of Jewish and Gentile believers was at times based on expediency rather than unmixed principle. And it was this issue of expediency versus theological principle that required clarification in the early church and lent urgency to the Jerusalem Council.

1. The delegation from Syrian Antioch (15:1-4)

1 The immediate occasion for the Jerusalem Council was the visit to Syrian Antioch of some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem and their teaching that circumcision was essential to salvation. These became known as "Judaizers," and their comrades were promoting similar teaching among Paul's converts in Galatia. They may have been incited by the return of John Mark and his unfavorable report (cf. comments in 13:13). That James and Peter stood behind these Judaizers is a

fiction without factual support (contra Baur, et al.), though the other extreme--that the Jerusalem church was devoid of any Judaizing element--is just as erroneous (contra Munck). Both James and Peter were interested in minimizing conflicts between Judaism and Jewish Christianity. Yet neither was prepared to sacrifice the principles of the gospel to expediency when the implications of doing this became plain. The Judaizers, on the other hand, while probably first justifying their legalism on practical grounds, were arguing as a matter of principle for the necessity of circumcision and a Jewish lifestyle. 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 shows that Paul recognized nonbelieving Jews as the ultimate source of opposition to the mission among the Gentiles. Therefore, when he says in Galatians 6:13 that the Judaizers "want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh," he probably means so that they could "point out to *non* --Christian Jews that conversion to Christianity does in fact *transfer Gentiles from the `Greek' to the `Jewish' cause* , in that wider conflict of the Two Cultures which is daily growing more intense [*italics his*]" (Dix, pp. 41-42). Undoubtedly the Judaizers thought of

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themselves as acting conscientiously and on sound theological principles (cf. comments on v. 5 below). But as Paul saw it, they sought "a good impression outwardly ... to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ" (Gal 6:12).

2 With the issues highlighted by the "sharp dispute and debate" that followed, Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with certain others from the Antioch congregation, to go up to Jerusalem to meet with "the apostles and elders" about the matter. The antecedent of the third person plural verb *etaxan* ("they appointed") is not specified here. The Western text assumes the hierarchical authority of the mother church in its reading, "those who had come from Jerusalem charged Paul and Barnabas and certain others to go up to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem that they might be judged before them about this question." But that reflects a later ecclesiastical situation. Probably the reference in v. 3 to being sent "by the church" (*hypo tes ekklesias*) gives the context for Luke's use of *etaxan*, so that we should understand "they" as signifying the involvement of the entire congregation at Antioch and its leaders in the appointment (cf. 13:3). The church at Antioch was concerned with the Judaizers' challenge to the legitimacy of a direct ministry to Gentiles and to the validity of the conversion of Gentiles to Christ apart from any commitment to Judaism. The Jerusalem leaders had some practical concerns about Paul's new policy and were prepared to let some measure of expediency affect their relations with Israel. But the Judaizers had shifted these practical concerns over into the area of principle. Antioch Christians were therefore desirous for the relation between the Jerusalem church's policy of cautious expediency and the Judaizers' argument founded on theological principle to be clarified. Outside Judea there was growing confusion because of the Judaizers' equation of expediency with theological principle and their claim to be supported by the church's leaders at Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Christians, for their part, undoubtedly welcomed an opportunity to air their concerns--particularly the impasse created for them by Paul and Barnabas through their Gentile policy. For while there may have been general agreement on the validity of evangelizing Gentiles (cf. Gal 2:7-10), recent events opened that

agreement for reconsideration.

3-4 The *men oun* ("so," RSV; untranslated in NIV) may mark off Luke's source material from his own introduction. As the delegation from Antioch journeyed to Jerusalem, they told the believers in Phoenicia and Samaria the news of "the conversion of the Gentiles" (*ten epistrophen ton ethnon*). This undoubtedly means that Gentiles were converted on a direct basis apart from any necessary commitment to Judaism, because the presence of proselytes and "God-fearing" Gentiles in the church was hardly newsworthy in A.D. 49. The Phoenician and Samaritan Christians, being themselves converts of the Hellenists' mission after Stephen's martyrdom (cf. 8:4-25; 11:19), probably took a broader view than that which prevailed at Jerusalem and rejoiced at the news. Believers at Jerusalem also were interested, but their interest by no means involved whole-hearted approval.

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2. *The nature and course of the debate* (15:5-12)

5 In the ensuing debate among believers in general and in the council itself, some Christian Pharisees, in support of the Judaizers, insisted that it was necessary for Gentile Christians to "be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses." And by "necessary" (*dei*) they meant that these things were not only expedient but principally required by the revealed will of God. Indeed, the prophets spoke of the salvation of the Gentiles as an event of the last days (cf. Isa 2: 2; 11:10; 25:8-9; Zech 8:23) through the witness of a restored Israel (cf. Isa 2:3; 60:2-3; Zech 8:23). Thus a believer could hardly oppose reaching Gentiles through the ministry of the church. But for these overscrupulous Christians in Jerusalem, the outreach to Gentiles was to come from within their group and to follow a proselyte model, not to come from outside their group and be apart from the law. In the last days, all nations are to flow to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem (cf. Isa 2:2-3; 25:6-8; 56:7; 60:3-22; Zech 8:21-23), not depart from it.

6 While Luke says only that the apostles and elders met to consider these questions, his mention of "the whole assembly" (*pan to plethos*) in v. 12 and "the whole church" (*hole te ekklesia*) in v. 22 shows that other members of the congregation were also present. The discussion was undoubtedly heated, but Luke centers on its Pauline aspect.

7-11 Peter was no longer the chief figure of the Jerusalem church. James had at some time earlier assumed that role (cf. comments on 12:17). But Peter was dominant in the Jewish Christian mission and responsible to the Jerusalem church. And it is as a missionary, not an administrator, that Peter spoke up and reminded the council that God had chosen to have the Gentiles hear the gospel from him and accept it. He argued that since God had established such a precedent within the Jewish Christian mission some ten years earlier--though it had not been recognized by the church as such--God has already indicated his

approval of a direct Gentile outreach. Thus Paul's approach to the Gentiles could not be branded as a deviation from the divine will. Peter had evidently completely recovered from his temporary lapse at Syrian Antioch. Now he saw matters more clearly and was ready to agree with Paul's position that there is "no difference" between Jews and Gentiles and that the Mosaic law was a "yoke."

12 Luke's reference to the silence of the assembly after Peter spoke implies that the turning point had come. Though resisted at Jerusalem for almost a decade, the precedent of Cornelius's conversion had opened the way for Barnabas and Paul's report of God's validation of their missionary policy through "miraculous signs and wonders" (*semeia kai terata*). It was a report not of their successes but of how God had acted, and its implication was that by his acts God had revealed his will. As at Lystra, where Barnabas was taken to be the greater of the two (cf. 14:12, 14), so here Barnabas is mentioned first (cf. also v. 25), probably because he enjoyed greater confidence at Jerusalem.

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3. *The summing up by James (15:13-21)*

13 James, the Lord's brother, presided at the Jerusalem Council. Known as "James the Just" because of his piety, he was ascetic and scrupulous in keeping the law. The Judaizers within the church looked to him for support, knowing his legal qualifications as well as his personal qualities (cf. comments on 12:17). But while rigorous and scrupulous in his personal practice of the faith, James was more broad-minded than many of his followers. After calling the council to order by using the formal mode of address "Men, brothers" (*Andres adelphoi*), he went on to sum up the emerging view of the council in a way that linked it to what had already been said.

14 If, as Luke's account implies, James in summing up made no reference to Paul and Barnabas's report, this was probably more for political reasons than any of principle. After all, it was the work of Paul and Barnabas that was on trial, and James wanted to win his entire audience to the position he believed to be right without causing needless offense. Therefore, he began by reminding the council of Peter's testimony, whom he called by his Hebrew name, "Simon" (cf. 2 Peter 1:1). And he showed how he felt about the question at issue by speaking of believing Gentiles as a "people" (*laos*) whom God has taken "for himself" (*tonomati autou*; lit., "for his name")--thus (1) applying to Gentile Christians a designation formerly used of Israel alone and (2) agreeing with Peter that in the conversion of Cornelius God himself had taken the initiative for a direct Gentile ministry.

15-17 James's major contribution to the decision of the council was to shift the discussion of the conversion of Gentiles from a proselyte model to an eschatological one. Isaiah had expected Gentile converts to come to Jerusalem to learn God's ways so that they might walk in them. But Isaiah also spoke of the Gentiles' persistence as nations whose salvation did not destroy their national

identities (cf. Isa 2:4; 25:6-7). Likewise, Amos spoke of "the remnant of men" (LXX, DSS) in the last days when "David's fallen tent" would be rebuilt as being "all the Gentiles who bear my name" and whose continuance as Gentiles was understood. In the end times, James is saying, God's people will consist of two concentric groups. At their core will be restored Israel (i.e., David's rebuilt tent); gathered around them will be a group of Gentiles (i.e., "the remnant of men") who will share in the messianic blessings but will persist as Gentiles without necessarily becoming Jewish proselytes. It is this understanding of Amos's message, James insisted, that Peter's testimony has affirmed, the result being that the conversion of Gentiles in the last days should be seen not as proselytizing but in an eschatological context. James's quotation of Amos 9:11-12 is both textually and exegetically difficult. As given in Acts, the text of v. 12 deviates from the MT and agrees with the LXX in reading "they will seek" (*ekzetesosin*) for "they will inherit" (*yiresu*), in reading "of men" (*ton anthropon*) for "of Edom"

(*edom*), and in treating "the remnant" (*hoi kataloipoi*) as the subject of the sentence rather than

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its object. It would have been impossible, in fact, for James to have derived his point from the text had he worked from the MT. On the other hand, the text of v. 11 here differs from the LXX in reading "after this" (*meta tauta*) for "in that day" (*en te hemera ekeine*), in reading "I will return and rebuild" (*anastrepso kai anoikodomeso*) for "I will raise up" (*anasteso*), in reading "I will restore" (*anorthoso*) for "I will raise up" (*anasteso*), and in omitting the clause "and I will rebuild it as in the days of old" (*kai anoikodomeso auten kathos hai hemerai tou aionos*). Focusing on the quotation's difference from the MT and essential agreement with the LXX, many commentators have complained that "the Jewish Christian James would not in Jerusalem have used a Septuagint text, differing from the Hebrew original, as scriptural proof," and have therefore concluded, "It is not James but Luke who is speaking here" (Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles* , p. 448). But while the text of Amos 9:11-12 differs from the MT in meaning and the LXX in form, "it is exactly identical with that of 4QFlor," as de Waard has shown (pp. 24-26, 47, 78-79). And it is not too difficult to visualize James as using a Hebrew variant of Amos 9: 11-12 then current, as incorporated in 4QFlorilegium 1.12, in arguing his point with the scrupulous Jewish Christians in the council--particularly if among those most concerned for Jewish legalities were some drawn from an Essene background (cf. comments on 6:7).

18 The interpretation of v. 18 is notoriously difficult. Aleph, B, and C, together with the Coptic and Armenian versions, read "that have been known for ages" (*gnosta ap aionos*). To accept this reading is to understand the clause as part of a conflated biblical citation that extends from v. 16 through v. 18 (as RSV, NEB, JB, TEV, NIV), probably alluding to Isaiah 45:21. But A and D, together with Bodmer P74 and the major Latin and Syriac versions, read "known to the Lord from eternity is his work" (*gnoston ap aionos estin to kyrio to ergon autou*); and E and P, together with the Byzantine text, read "known from eternity to God are all his works" (*gnosta ap aionos esti to theo panta ta erga au tou*). To read the

text in either of these latter two ways tends to separate the clause from the preceding biblical quotation, viewing it as a comment by James himself. It was not unusual in the Jewish world to express such a sentiment when the content of a passage seemed obvious but the logical connections were obscure. So it is perhaps best to interpret the words here as a comment by James to this effect: We cannot be in opposition to the express will of God, as evidenced by Peter's testimony and the prophets' words--but only God himself knows for certain how everything fits together and is to be fully understood!

19 On the basic issue that brought the members of the first ecumenical council together--that of the necessity of relating Gentiles to Judaism in the Christian mission--James refused to side with the Judaizers. He may not have been prepared to endorse openly all the details of Paul's Gentile policy. Certainly there is no indication that he expected the Jerusalem church to do that. But he could not be in opposition to the express will of God, and therefore his advice was that Jewish Christianity should not take any stance against the promotion of the Gentile mission. In so

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concluding, he swept aside the obstacles that had arisen to Paul's Gentile mission among believers at Jerusalem and left it free for further advances within the empire. It is significant that while many insist that "what circumcision meant under the old dispensation, that and no less, is the meaning of baptism for those living in the new age" (W.F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* [London: SPCK, 1948], p. 62), James made no mention at the council of baptism superseding circumcision--something that, had he advocated it, would have forever silenced the Jewish-Christian critics of Gentile salvation. Nor does Paul either in Galatians or Romans, where it might have been expected, make any such mention. Moreover, had Paul believed that baptism superseded circumcision, his circumcision of Timothy would have been nonsense (cf. 16:3).

20-21 On the practical question that troubled many Christians at Jerusalem and that originally gave rise to the Judaizers' assertion--viz., the question of fellowship between Jews and Gentiles in the church and of tolerance for the scruples of others--James's advice was that a letter be written to the Gentile Christians. This letter should request them to abstain "from food polluted by idols" (*ton alisgematon ton eidolon* ; lit., "from pollutions of idols"), "from sexual immorality" (*tes porneias* , which probably means here "from marriage in prohibited degrees of relationship"; cf. SBK, 2:729), "from the meat of strangled animals" (*tou pniktou* ; lit., "from things strangled"), and "from blood" (*tou haimatos* , i.e., "from eating blood"). These prohibitions have often been viewed as a compromise between two warring parties, which nullified the effect of James's earlier words and made the decision of the Jerusalem Council unacceptable to Paul. But in reality they should be viewed not as dealing with the principal issue of the council but as meeting certain practical concerns; not as being primarily theological but more sociological in nature; not as divine ordinances for acceptance before God but as concessions to the scruples of others for the sake of harmony within the church and the continuance of the Jewish

Christian mission. Therefore James added the rationale of v. 21: "For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath"--that is to say, since Jewish communities are to be found in every city, their scruples are to be respected by Gentile believers. To sum up, we may say that two types of "necessary" questions were raised at the Jerusalem Council. The first had to do with the theological necessity of circumcision and the Jewish law for salvation, and that was rejected. The second had to do with the practical necessity of Gentile Christians abstaining from certain practices for the sake of Jewish-Gentile fellowship within the church and for the sake of the Jewish Christian mission throughout the Diaspora, and that was approved. The major work of the council had to do with the vindication of Gentile freedom, while a secondary matter was concerned with the expression of that freedom in regard to the scruples of others (cf. M. Luther, "On the Councils and the Churches," *Works of Martin Luther*, 6 vols., tr. C.M. Jacobs [Philadelphia: Holman, 1915-32], esp. 5:150-54, 188, 193-95).

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4. *The decision and letter of the Council (15:22-29)*

22 With James's judgment "the apostles and elders, with the whole church," agreed, deciding to send their decision back to Antioch of Syria not only by Paul and Barnabas but also by two leaders of the Jerusalem congregation, Judas Barsabbas and Silas, whose presence would assure reception of the decision and who could interpret the feelings of the council from a Jerusalem perspective. The reference to "the apostles" (*hoi apostoloi*), "the elders" (*hoi presbyteroi*), and "the whole church" (*hole he ekklesia*) is comparable to the Qumran structure of authority where executive action for religious matters was in the hands of the priests, other matters were in the hands of an "overseer" or "guardian," an advisory council of twelve to fifteen persons was apparently active, and all the mature members of the community (*harabbim*, "the many") gave their approval to the decisions of the priests, overseer, and council. Other models of organization were undoubtedly used among other groups within Palestine, and the lines of demarcation between officials were evidently quite flexible. But it seems clear that at Qumran and within the Jerusalem church, the congregation, while not equivalent to the Greek assembly (*demos*) in its governmental powers, was involved in the deliberations of its leaders. When one considers the situation of the Jerusalem church in A.D. 49, the decision reached by the Jerusalem Christians must be considered one of the boldest and most magnanimous in the annals of church history. While still attempting to minister exclusively to the nation, the council refused to impede the progress of that other branch of the Christian mission whose every success meant further difficulty for them from within their own nation. Undoubtedly there was some uncertainty among the council's leaders about details of the decision. Certainly they reached it only after much agonizing. Likewise, there probably remained in the Jerusalem church a recalcitrant group that continued to predict ominous consequences. But the decision was made and the malcontents silenced--at least for a time. The effects of the decision were far-reaching. In the first place, it freed the gospel from any necessary entanglement with Judaism and Israelite

institutions, though without renouncing the legitimacy of continued Christian activity within them. Thus both Paul's mission to the Gentiles and the various Jewish Christian missions were enabled to progress side by side without conflict. Second, attitudes to Paul within Jewish Christianity were clarified. While some of the Jewish believers probably became even more opposed to Paul, others--e.g., John Mark (15:37-39)-- seem to have become more reconciled to him. Also, as a result of the council, some felt happier in a Gentile ministry than at Jerusalem (Silas; cf. 15:40, *passim*). Third, the decision of the council had the effect of permanently antagonizing many Jews. From this time onward, the Christian mission within the nation--particularly in and around Jerusalem--faced very rough sledding (cf. Rom 11:28). And when coupled with the zealotism within the nation during the next two decades, this antagonism proved fatal to the life and ministry of the Jerusalem church.

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23-29 With Judas, Silas, Paul, and Barnabas, who were going to Antioch, the Jerusalem church sent a letter. At the end of the second century, Clement of Alexandria spoke of this letter as "the Catholic epistle of all the Apostles" that was "conveyed to all the faithful by the hands of Paul himself" and was later incorporated into the Book of Acts (*Stromata* 4.15). And by the appearance of such expressions as "the apostles and elders, brothers" (*hoi apostoloi kai hoi presbyteroi adelphoi* , v. 23), "our beloved Barnabas and Paul" (*tois agapetois hemon Barnaba kai Paulo* , v. 25), and "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (*edoxen to pneumati to hagio kai hemin*)--all of them phrases more characteristic of Jerusalem than of Luke--it may be postulated that here "we are dealing with an original document copied by Luke more or less verbatim" (W.L. Knox, *Acts of the Apostles* , p. 50). The placing of "brothers" in apposition to "the apostles and elders" (or, perhaps, to "the elders" alone) in the salutation is most unusual. Some commentators have attempted to read it as "the apostles and elders and brothers" (adding an "and") or as "the apostles and elders" (deleting "brothers") or as "the brothers" (deleting "apostles and elders"). But it should probably be understood as reflecting a form of expression used within the Jerusalem congregation, similar to "Men, brothers" (*Andres adelphoi*) of 1:16; 2:29, 37; 7:2; 13:15, 26, 38; 15:7, 13; 22:1; 23:1, 6; and 28:17--and almost as untranslatable. Likewise, the address "to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia" is surprising, for though Paul refers to spending some time in Syria and Cilicia, Luke has not spoken of any mission outside of Antioch in these areas. Yet 15:36, 41 assume that churches were established in these areas with Paul's assistance. And 16:4 shows that the content of the letter from the council was meant not only for congregations in the areas listed in 15:23 but that it applied to Gentile believers generally (cf. 15:19; 21:25). The body of the letter encapsulates the problem confronted by the churches because of the Judaizers' claims and the Jerusalem Council's reaction to it, commending to the churches Barnabas and Paul (cf. comments on 14:14 and 15:12 for this order) and the Jerusalem emissaries Judas and Silas. On the fundamental matter of the theological necessity of circumcision and a Jewish lifestyle for Gentile Christians, the letter rebukes the Judaizers for going beyond their authority and assures the churches

that there are no such requirements for salvation. On the practical issues of fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers in the churches and of preventing needless offense to Jews throughout the empire, the letter asks Gentile Christians to abstain from "idolatry" (*eidolothyton*), "blood" (*haimatos*), "things strangled" (*pnikton*), and "sexual immorality" (*porneias*)--which four prohibitions are given in a slightly different order and more abbreviated fashion than in v. 20, but with the same sense. Then in closing there is the perfect passive imperative "Farewell" (*errosthe*)--a typical way of ending a letter, as so many of the contemporary nonliterary papyri show.

F. The Reception of the Council's Decision and of the Letter (15:30-16:4)

Luke describes the aftermath of the Jerusalem Council in three vignettes that all relate to the

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reception of the council's decision and letter in three localities of earlier Gentile outreach: Antioch of Syria (15:30-35), Syria and Cilicia (15:36-41), and the southern part of Galatia (16:14). Other items of information are also included, as Luke uses these final scenes of his fourth panel of material to prepare for the extensive outreach of the gospel through Paul's second and third missionary journeys.

1. At Antioch of Syria (15:30-35)

30-32 The connective *men oun* (untranslated in NIV) opens this new section on the reception of the council's decision and letter. At Antioch of Syria the delegation on returning from Jerusalem "gathered the church [*to plethos*] together and delivered the letter," with Judas and Silas saying "much to encourage and strengthen the brothers." And the believers, Luke tells us, "were glad." Some commentators have complained that Luke's account here is pure idealization, for the fourfold decree of the supposed Jerusalem letter "was by no means an insignificant requirement" and cannot be seen as acceptable to Paul, who "undisturbedly ... pushed along the straight road of freedom from the law" (Leitzmann, p. 142). But if we view the Jerusalem Council's decision and letter as dealing with two matters--the first a matter of principle and the second a practical matter--it is not difficult to believe that, having gained a decided victory in the first matter, Paul and the existing Gentile churches were prepared to accept the so-called decrees as a *modus operandi* for reducing friction between two groups of people drawn from two different ways of life. Such an attitude is quite in accord with an apostle who could proclaim:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as

many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the

law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win

those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law

(though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not

having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to

all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the

gospel, that I may share in its blessings (1Cor 9:19-23).

James's later reference to the decree (cf. 21:25) is not because it was then first promulgated but probably because James was reminding Paul of their agreed-on basis of fellowship and because Luke was reminding his readers of what they had already read. The fact that nothing is said of the decree in either Galatians or 1 and 2 Corinthians is no proof that Paul knew nothing about it or could not wholeheartedly accept it. If Galatians was written before the Jerusalem Council, reference to the Jerusalem decree in Galatians would have been miraculous. And while the reference to "food sacrificed to idols" (*eidolothyton*, v. 29) exactly fits the problem at

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Corinth (cf. 1Cor 8:1-11:1), Paul may not have been able to quote any type of ecclesiastical statement to his supraspiritual Gentile converts at Corinth if he desired to win them over to a truer understanding and expression of their Christian freedom. In fact, as many have suggested, it could just as well be argued that Paul's problems with the ultraspiritual segment of the Corinthian church arose, at least in part, because he had originally delivered the Jerusalem letter to them and thus in correcting them was forced to argue on different grounds, as that his silence regarding the decrees is incriminating.

33, 35 After some time, Judas and Silas returned to Jerusalem with the commendation of the Antioch believers. The Western and Byzantine texts add v. 34, "But it seemed good to Silas to remain there" (*edoxe de to Sila epimeinai autou*), no doubt to explain why Silas appears again at Antioch in v. 40. But the addition contradicts the plain sense of v. 33 and fails to take into account that Paul could have sent for Silas after the latter's return to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas, however, remained at Syrian Antioch and joined others in carrying on the ministry there.

2. *Disagreement and two missionary teams* (15:36-41)

36 Beginning at this point in Acts, the preposition *meta* with a time designation (i.e., *meta tinas hemeras*, "after some days"; *meta tauta*, "after these things"; or *meta tas hemeras tauta*, "after these days"; see Notes for instances in the remainder of Acts) vies with the connective *men oun* (see Notes for instances in the remainder of Acts) to mark off the beginning of a new section and join it with what has gone before. So Luke now presents Paul as taking the initiative for another missionary journey. In Paul's mind, of course, it was no new outreach but only a revisiting of believers converted on the first missionary journey. Nevertheless, God was to bring the second missionary journey out of it. Actually, this section provides something of a bridge between the completion of the

advances reported in panel 4 and the beginning of those reported in panel 5.

37-39 John Mark, Barnabas's cousin (cf. Col 4:10), probably became convinced of the appropriateness of Paul's Gentile policy by the action of the Jerusalem Council, despite earlier qualms about it (see comments on 13:1-3). Barnabas had evidently called him back to Syrian Antioch to minister in the church there. Barnabas's earlier involvement in the dispute at Antioch showed that his natural sympathies lay principally with Jewish Christians (cf. Gal 2:13), and it was also natural for him to want to take Mark with them in revisiting the churches. Paul, however, for what seem to have been reasons of principle rather than personal ones, did not want to have so unreliable a man with them day after day (note the present infinitive *symparalambanein*). The scar tissue of the wounds Paul suffered in establishing his missionary policy was still too tender for him to look favorably on Mark's being with them--particularly if,

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as we have assumed, Mark was in some way responsible for inciting the Judaizers to action.

The fact that Luke does not gloss over the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas shows his honesty. The Greek word for "disagreement" (*paroxysmos*) is so neutral as not to touch upon the question of responsibility, and it is idle for us to try to apportion blame. Yet far from letting the disagreement harm the outreach of the gospel, God providentially used it to double the missionary force, with Barnabas taking Mark and returning to Cyprus (cf. 13:4-12). Acts tells us nothing more about the mission to Cyprus or the missionaries there, though Paul's letters refer in cordial terms to both Barnabas (cf. 1Cor 9:6; perhaps also, as Luther and Calvin suggested, 2Cor 8:18-19) and John Mark (cf. Col 4:10; 2Tim 4:11; Philem 24).

40-41 Paul's selection of Silas (or "Silvanus," as he is referred to more formally by his Latinized name in 2Cor 1:19; 1Thess 1:1; 2Thess 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12) to accompany him on his return visit to the churches was wise. He had evidently come to appreciate Silas in their contacts at Jerusalem and Syrian Antioch and concluded that he would make a congenial colleague. More than that, Silas was a leader in the Jerusalem congregation (15:22) and was explicitly identified in the Jerusalem letter as one who could speak with authority on the attitude of the Jerusalem church (15:27). He was also, it seems, a Roman citizen who could claim, if need be, the privileges of such citizenship along with Paul (16:37). This was not true of Barnabas. Likewise, Silas was a prophet (15:32), who appears to have been fluent in Greek (15:22, 32) and a helpful amanuensis (1Thess 1:1; 2Thess 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12). Thus Paul and Silas set out with the blessing of the Antioch congregation. The churches in Syria and Cilicia they revisited and strengthened were presumably founded through the efforts of Paul (15:23, 36). As such, they would be receptive to the decision and letter of the Jerusalem Council.

3. *Paul adds Timothy to the team in Galatia (16:1-4)*

1-2 Pushing on through the Cilician Gates (modern Gulek Bogaz) in the Taurus mountains, Paul and Silas came to the Galatian border town of Derbe and then moved on to Lystra. At Lystra (note the use of *ekei* , "there") he found a young man who was highly spoken of by believers in both Lystra and the neighboring city of Iconium. The Jewish community at Lystra seems to have been small and without influence (cf. comments on 14:8-10). Probably for that reason Timothy's mother, a Jewess, was allowed to marry a Greek. Timothy, however, had never been circumcised. In Jewish law, a child takes the religion of its mother; so Timothy should have been circumcised and raised a Jew. But in Greek law the father dominates in the home. Apparently the Jewish community at Lystra was too weak or lax to interfere with Greek custom. 2 Timothy 1:5 speaks of the sincere Jewish faith of Timothy's grandmother Lois and of his mother, Eunice, and 2 Timothy 3:15 speaks of Timothy's early instruction in the Hebrew Scriptures. Here Eunice is identified as a Jewess as well as a Christian believer, who had probably been converted during the first visit of Paul and Barnabas to Lystra. From the imperfect verb *hypgrchen* ("he

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was") in v. 3, it may be reasonably conjectured that her husband was now dead. Likewise, from Paul's reference to Timothy in 1 Corinthians 4:17 as his son, we may assume that Timothy's conversion to Christ also dates from the proclamation of the gospel on that first missionary journey.

3-4 Most scholars accept at face value the statements in vv. 1-2 and the statement about Paul's desire to take Timothy along with him on his journey (v. 3a). Many, however, question what is said about Paul's circumcising Timothy and delivering the Jerusalem decisions to the Galatian Christians. The hand of a redactor has often been seen in vv. 3-4 and Luke accused of perpetuating gross confusion--e.g., attributing to Paul's relations with Timothy an erroneous tradition concerning Titus (cf. BC, 4:184, citing Gal 2:3) or inadvertently taking over some slanderous rumor that Paul did on occasion circumcise his converts (cf. Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 482, citing Gal 5:11). But while Paul stoutly resisted any imposition of circumcision and the Jewish law upon his Gentile converts, he himself continued to live as an observant Jew and urged his converts to express their Christian faith through the cultural forms they had inherited (cf. 1Cor 7:17-24). As for Timothy, because of his Jewish mother, he was a Jew in the eyes of the Jewish world. Therefore, it was both proper and expedient for Paul to circumcise him. As Paul saw it, being a good Christian did not mean being a bad Jew. Rather, it meant being a fulfilled Jew. Paul had no desire to flout Jewish scruples in his endeavor to bring both Jews and Gentiles to salvation in Christ. Similarly, there is no reason to think he would have refused to deliver the decision of the Jerusalem Council to his Galatian converts and every reason to believe he would--particularly if he had written Galatians to them earlier and was now able to say that the Jerusalem leaders supported his position, and if, as Luke shows, he thought of the Galatian Christians as within the scope of the mission from Syrian Antioch.

G. A Summary Statement (16:5)

5 This summary statement concludes what F.F. Bruce calls "perhaps the most crucial phase of Luke's narrative" (*Book of the Acts* , p. 324). It is comparable to the summary statements of 6: 7; 9:31; and 12:24 that culminate their respective panels of material (cf. also 19:20 and 28:31 later). Introduced by Luke's favorite connective *men oun* (see comments on 1:6), it stresses the strengthening and growth of the churches as a result of Paul's missionary policy and the response of the Jerusalem church to it.

Panel 5--Wide Outreach Through Two Missionary Journeys (16:6-19:20)

Panel 5 presents the wide outreach of the Christian mission through two further missionary journeys of Paul in the eastern part of the empire. Having described the gradual extension of the gospel to new groups of people and through a new missionary policy, Luke now shows its

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entrance into new areas. Notable in this panel are Luke's emphases upon (1) God's direction in and supervision of the gospel's outreach, (2) Christianity's right to be considered a *religio licita*, and (3) Paul's circumstantial preaching in terms of proclamation and persuasion. Also of interest is the fact that the missionary outreach was confined to the major cities of the Aegean coastline connected by the main Roman roads, and that at the beginning of this panel we have our first "we" section (16:10-17) of the latter half of Acts (cf. 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). Temporal references in the panel are fairly general, even when datable e.g., the Edict of Claudius (18:2) and Gallio's proconsulate (18:12) leave some margin for dispute. Generally, however, the material given here covers the years A.D. 49-56, with the first journey into Macedonia and Achaia taking place about 49-52 and the second centered in Ephesus during 53-56.

A. Providential Direction for the Mission (16:6-10)

6 The missionary journeys of Paul reveal an extraordinary combination of strategic planning and sensitivity to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in working out the details of the main goals. This is especially noticeable here. Having revisited the churches at Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, Paul evidently expected to follow the Via Sebaste westward to the important coastal city and capital of the Roman province of Asia, Ephesus. But he was "kept by the Holy Spirit" from entering Asia and so continued to travel throughout "the region of Phrygia and Galatia." The heightening of terminology in vv. 6-10 from "the Holy Spirit" to "the Spirit of Jesus" to "God" is not just stylistic but an unconscious expression of the early church's embryonic trinitarian faith. All three terms refer to God by his Spirit giving direction to the mission. But just how the Holy Spirit revealed his will we are not told. Perhaps in one or more instances Silas had a part, for he was a prophet (15:32). Likewise, we are left somewhat uncertain as to what Luke meant by "the region of Phrygia and Galatia" (*ten Phrygian kai Galatiken choran*). Many are of the opinion that the reference to

Galatiken choran must be taken to mean that "Galatia" is "a second country named beside Phrygia" (Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles* , p. 483, n.2), and that therefore Galatia cannot here be equated with Phrygia--thus ruling out a continued ministry around Iconium and "Pisidian" Antioch and suggesting a journey into northern Galatia (cf. also 18:23). But as E.D. Burton insisted: "The most obvious and, indeed, only natural explanation of the phrase *ten Phrugian kai Galatiken choran* in v. 6 is that *Phrugian* and *Galatiken* are both adjectives and both limit *choran* "; and, further, that "the joining of the words *Phrugian* and *Galatiken* by *kai* , with the article before the first one only, implies that the region designated by *choran* is one, Phrygian and Galatian" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921], pp. xxxi-xxxii). There is no linguistic support here for a so-called North Galatian theory. We are rather left to explain this juxtaposition of adjectives either (1) politically, meaning not the entire province of Galatia but only the Phrygic region of Galatia, or, possibly, (2) ethnologically and popularly, meaning a district adjoining the region of Phrygia

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in the southern portion of the Roman province of Galatia where both Phrygian and Celtic (Galatic or Gaulish) dialects could be heard.

7-8 Mysia was a region in northwest Asia Minor that lacked precise boundaries because it never was an independent political entity. It was generally considered to be bounded by the Aegean Sea on the west; the Hellespont (or Dardanelles), Propontis (or Sea of Marmara), and Bithynia along its northern extremities from west to east; Galatia on the east and southeast; Phrygia to the south; and the area of Lydia to the southwest. It included the historic Aegean seaport of Troas and the site of ancient Troy some ten miles inland. As Paul's party moved northwest along the borders of Mysian territory, they decided to go on into the Thracian area of Bithynia in order to evangelize the strategic cities and important Black Sea ports there, all of which were interconnected by an elaborate Roman road system. But, Luke tells us, "the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to" (v. 7). Later, Christians in Bithynia were included in the salutation of 1 Peter (1:1). Also, Pliny the Younger, who was governor of Bithynia under Trajan in A.D. 110-12, spoke of Christians in the province who, though a minority, had to be taken into account (cf. Pliny Letters 10. 96-97). But Paul was not directed by God to evangelize in Bithynia. Instead, the missionary party turned westward again, traveling through Mysia till they reached Troas on the Aegean coast. The participle *parelthontes* literally means "they passed by" Mysia and at first glance seems somewhat out of place since one could not get to Troas without passing through Mysia. Probably, however, Luke used *parelthontes* instead of *dielthontes* ("they passed through") to indicate that they did not stay in Mysia to evangelize.

9-10 Troas became an important Greek port about 300 B.C. and was named Alexandria Troas. After the break-up of Alexander the Great's short-lived empire, Troas was ruled for a time by the Seleucids from Syrian Antioch, but it soon became an independent city-state. To the Greeks, mountains protected but

separated people, whereas the sea, while frightening, united people. Therefore Troas, at the mouth of the Dardenelles, was the pivotal port between the land masses of Europe and Asia Minor and the great waterways of the Aegean and Black seas. When Rome annexed Anatolia, Julius Caesar seriously considered making Troas the governmental center of the entire area (cf. Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 79; Horace *Odes* 3.3). At Troas Paul had a vision of a Macedonian asking for help. He took this as a divine call to evangelize Macedonia. Many commentators have suggested that Paul met Luke at Troas, perhaps initially for medical reasons, and that Luke impressed upon him during their conversations the need for the preaching of the gospel in Macedonia--an encounter God used in a vision to direct Paul and his colleagues to Macedonia. And perhaps that is how it happened. Luke gives us none of the psychological details, though it must be said that Paul's recognition of the man as being a Macedonian could as easily have been gained from his message as from any prior acquaintance or knowledge. But whatever secondary means God may have used to

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convey the vision, Paul and his party responded to it at once (*eutheos* , "immediately") by making preparations to leave for Macedonia. Such preparations would have required finding passage on a ship sailing for Neapolis. Authentic turning points in history are few. But surely among them that of the Macedonian vision ranks high. Because of Paul's obedience at this point, the gospel went westward; and ultimately Europe and the Western world were evangelized. Christian response to the call of God is never a trivial thing. Indeed, as in this instance, great issues and untold blessings may depend on it. It is at Troas that the first of the "we" sections of Acts appears (16:10-17). Because (1) this "we" section stops at Philippi, (2) the second "we" section (20:5-15) begins when the missionaries revisit Philippi after the third missionary journey, and (3) the ministry at Philippi receives the greatest attention (thirty verses) in this fifth panel, we may reasonably suppose that the use of "we" points to a resident of Philippi who traveled from Troas to Philippi with Paul and Silas and that this person was Luke himself (cf. Introduction: The Sources of Acts).

B. At Philippi (16:11-40)

Luke devotes more space to the mission in Philippi than he does to any other city on Paul's second and third missionary journeys--and he does this despite the brief stay there. Philippi is the only city Luke describes as a Roman colony. When he calls it "the leading city of the district of Macedonia" (see comments below on v. 12), he seems to be reflecting local pride. To judge by the way the "we" sections in 16:10-17 and 20:5-15 focus on Paul's visits to Philippi, it may be that Luke had some part in the founding and growth of the church there.

1. Arrival in the city (16:11-12)

11 Samothrace is an island in the northeastern part of the Aegean Sea, lying between Troas and Philippi. The most conspicuous landmark in the North Aegean, it is mountainous and was also called Poseidon's Island because from the top of Mount Fengari (5, 577 feet) Poseidon, the Greek god of the waters, earthquakes, and horses, was said to have surveyed the plains of ancient Troy (cf. Homer *Iliad* 13.12). It became a stopover for ships plying their trade in the North Aegean, as captains preferred to anchor there rather than face the hazards of the sea at night (cf. Pliny *Natural History* 4.23). Neapolis on the northern coast of the Aegean was the port for the commercial center of Philippi, which lay ten miles further inland. Neapolis was on the Via Egnatia, which ran east to Byzantium and west to Philippi, then to Thessalonica, and finally across the Balkan peninsula to Dyrrhachium and its port Egnatia (from which the road may have been named) on the Adriatic coast. Since the narrator was on board, we have a port-by-port description of the voyage, with specific mention of the time it took--as we do also in the other "we" sections (cf. 20:5, 13-15;

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21:1-8; 27:1-28:16). The wind at this crossing must have favored the travelers, for it took only two days to sail the 156 miles to Neapolis, though the trip in the other direction after the third missionary journey took five days (cf. 20:5).

12 Philippi was ten miles northwest of Neapolis, on a plain bounded by Mount Pangaeus to the north and northeast, with the rivers Strymon and Nestos on either side. Shielded from the sea by a very rocky ridge, it lay astride the Via Egnatia and near the Gangites River, a tributary of the Strymon. Its fame in earlier days came from its fertile plain and gold in the mountains to the north. Philip II of Macedon recognized the city's importance, and in 356 B.C. he established a large Greek colony there, changing its name from Krenides ("springs") to Philippi (cf. Diodorus *Historical Library* 7.6.7). With the subjugation of the Macedonians by Rome in 167 B.C., Philippi became part of the Roman Empire. In 146 B.C. it was included within the reorganized province of Macedonia, whose capital was at Thessalonica. Shortly thereafter it was connected to other important Roman cities by the Via Egnatia. During Roman times, the fame of Philippi stemmed from its having been the site of the decisive battle of the second civil war in 42 B.C., when Mark Anthony and Octavian (later Augustus) defeated Brutus and Cassius. After the war many Roman army veterans were settled at Philippi and the city was designated a Roman colony. Its government was responsible directly to the emperor and not made subservient to the provincial administration. Philippi's importance during the NT period, therefore, resulted from its agriculture, its strategic commercial location on both sea and land routes, its still functioning gold mines, and its status as a Roman colony. In addition, it had a famous school of medicine with graduates throughout the then-known world. Luke's reference to Philippi as "the leading [or `first'] city of the district of Macedonia" (*prote tes meridos Makedonias polis*, according to the majority reading of ', A, and C, together with P74--with B basically in agreement, though placing the article *tes* before *Makedonias*) is somewhat confusing. Actually, Amphipolis, the early district capital between 167-146 B.C., and Thessalonica, the provincial capital after that, had a more valid claim to that title. Some Alexandrian MSS read *protes*

("of the first") for *prote* ("the first"), thus suggesting that Philippi was "a city of the first district of Macedonia"--that is, a city of the first of the four administrative districts Macedonia was divided into by the Romans in 167 B.C., before the whole area was reorganized into the province of Macedonia in 146 B.C. Codex Bezae (D) reads *kephale* ("the head" or "capital"), which wrongly asserts its status as the provincial capital. Commentators have differed widely in interpreting the textual evidence here. We should probably, however, accept the majority reading of ', A, C, and P74 and translate the ascription as "the leading city of the district of Macedonia"--understanding it as an expression of Luke's pride in his city, much as Pergamum, Smyrna, and Ephesus each claimed to be "the leading city of Asia" for other than merely governmental reasons. Yet it must be acknowledged that Codex Vaticanus (B) with its reading *prote meridos tes Makedonias polis* could be understood more generally to mean "the leading city of that district of Macedonia" (as JB, NEB, NIV).

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2. *The conversion of Lydia* (16:13-15)

13 In Jewish law, a congregation was made up of ten men. Wherever there were ten male heads of households who could be in regular attendance, a synagogue was to be formed (cf. *M Sanhedrin* 1:6; *M Pirke Aboth* 3:6). Failing this, a place of prayer (*proseuche*) under the open sky and near a river or the sea was to be arranged for (cf. Philo *In Flaccum* 14; Jos. Antiq. XIV, 258 [x.23], though rabbinic sources do not explicitly say it must be by water, cf. SBK, 2:

742). But Philippi apparently did not have the quorum and so was without a synagogue. On the Sabbath, therefore, Paul and his companions walked outside the city in search of a Jewish place of prayer, probably heading toward the Gangites River about a mile and a half west of the city. There they found some women gathered to recite the Shema, to pray the Shemoneh Esreh, to read from the Law and the Prophets, to discuss what they had read, and, if possible, to hear from a traveling Jewish teacher an exposition or exhortation and receive a blessing (cf. comments on 13:15). Paul and his companions sat down with these women and began to speak to them.

14-15 One of the women was from Thyatira, a city of western Asia Minor. Formerly in the ancient kingdom of Lydia before its incorporation into the Roman province of Asia, Thyatira continued to be considered as in Lydia. Hence the woman was called Lydia (or, perhaps, "the Lydian lady"). Thyatira was famous for making purple dyes and for dyeing clothes--industries that were mostly carried on by women at home (cf. Homer *Iliad* 4. 141-42). As an artisan in purple dyes, Lydia had come to Philippi to carry on her trade. She is spoken of as a "God-fearer" (*sebomene ton theon*), having doubtless received instruction at a synagogue in her native Thyatira before carrying her interest in Judaism with her to Philippi. We may surmise that she was either a widow or unmarried and that some of the women gathered for worship were relatives and servants living in her home. As she listened, God opened her heart to the Christian message and "she

and the members of her household were baptized." Then she urged the missionary party to stay at her home, which they did. From such small beginnings the church at Philippi began. To judge from his letter to the Philippians, it was one of Paul's most-loved congregations. Luke, as has been suggested, may have been involved in the establishment and growth of this church; probably Lydia was also prominent in it. Some commentators have suggested that the real name of this "Lydian lady" was either Euodia or Syntyche (Philippians 4:2) and that the other was the wife of the converted jailer. Other commentators think that Paul had Lydia in mind when he referred to a "loyal yokefellow" (Philippians 4:3), and a few even suppose that Paul married Lydia. But all this is mere conjecture. All we really know from the text is that Lydia, together with the members of her household, responded to the gospel and opened her house to Paul and his colleagues. Soon, it seems, her home became the center for Christian outreach and worship in Philippi (cf. 16:40).

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3. *The demon-possessed girl* (16:16-18)

16 While on their way to the Jewish place of prayer (note the present participle *poreuomenon*), the missionaries were met by a slave girl Luke describes as having a "Python spirit" (*pneuma pythona*). The Python was a mythical serpent or dragon that guarded the temple and oracle of Apollo, located on the southern slope of Mount Parnassus to the north of the Gulf of Corinth. It was supposed to have lived at the foot of Mount Parnassus and to have eventually been killed by Apollo (cf. Strabo *Geography* 9.3.12). Later the word python came to mean a demon- possessed person through whom the Python spoke--even a ventriloquist was thought to have such a spirit living in his or her belly (cf. Plutarch *De Defectu Oraculorum* 9.414). Undoubtedly all who knew the girl regarded her as neither fraudulent nor insane but as demon possessed and able to foretell the future. By her fortunetelling, she earned her masters much money.

17-18 As the girl followed Paul and his companions around, she kept on screaming out (note the imperfect *ekrazen*): "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you [*hymen* , pl.] the way to be saved." Her screaming recalls that of the demons during Jesus' ministry (Mark 1:24; 3:11; 5:7; Luke 4:34, 41; 8:28). In both instances there was a compulsive acknowledgment of the true character of those confronted. Here the acknowledgment is stated in terms acceptable to the Jewish world and readily understandable to Gentiles. The title "Most High God" (*ho theos ho hypsistos*), while originally a Phoenician ascription for deity (*El Elyon*), was used by the Hebrews of Yahweh (cf. Num 24:16; Ps 78:35; Isa 14:14; Dan 3:26; 4:32; 5:18, 21; 1Esd 2:3) and by the Greeks of Zeus (cf. C. Roberts, T.C. Skeat, and A.D. Nock, "The Guild of Zeus Hypsistos," HTR, 29 [19.36], 39-88). And the announcement of "salvation" (*soteria*)--while for Paul and the Jews referring to deliverance from sin--would have connoted for Gentiles release from the powers governing the fate of man and of the material world. It

was, therefore, cast in terms Gentiles could understand but Paul could build on. But while the demon-inspired words provided some free publicity for the missionaries and helped gather an audience, when it continued for many days, it became a nuisance. The demon's words were getting more of a hearing than the proclamation of the gospel! So Paul commanded the evil spirit "in the name of Jesus Christ" to come out of the girl, and the demon left her. Presumably, having been delivered by the power of God, she became a Christian and--along with Lydia the businesswoman and members of her household, Luke the physician (notice that the "we" section stops at v. 17), and an unnamed army veteran and jailer (vv. 27-36)--a member of the embryonic church at Philippi.

4. Paul and Silas in prison (16:19-34)

19-21 What Paul did for the slave girl was not appreciated by her masters. In exorcising the

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demon, he had exorcised their source of income. Because of interference with what they claimed as their property rights, and with callous disregard for the girl's welfare, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace (*ten agovan* , "the agora") to face the city's authorities. The charge laid was that Paul and Silas were advocating a *religio illicita* and thus disturbing the Pax Romana. But the charge, being couched in terms that appealed to the latent anti-Semitism of the people ("these men are Jews") and their racial pride ("us Romans"), ignited the flames of bigotry and prevented any dispassionate discussion of the issues. Many have asked why only Paul and Silas were singled out for persecution, with Timothy and Luke left free. Of course, Paul and Silas were the leaders of the missionary party and therefore most open to attack. But we must also remember that Paul and Silas were Jews and probably looked very much like Jews (cf. comments on 14:3 on the tradition of Paul's appearance). Timothy and Luke, however, being respectively half-Jewish and fully Gentile (cf. Col 4:14, where Luke is grouped by Paul with his Gentile friends), probably looked Greek in both their features and their dress and therefore were left alone. Anti-Semitism lay very near the surface throughout the Roman Empire. Here it seems to have taken over not only in laying the charge but also in identifying the defendants.

22-24 As a Roman colony, Philippi had a form of government that was independent of the provincial administration headquartered in Thessalonica. There were two chief magistrates, called *duoviri* in most Roman colonies but in certain colonies referred to by the honorary title *praetores* (cf. Cicero *De Lege Agraria* 2.93), which translates into Greek as *stratggoi* (vv. 20, 22, 35-36, 38). At Philippi the magistrates were given this honorary title. Functioning under the magistrates were two *lictoraes* , which translates into Greek as *rhabdouchoi* (vv. 35, 38), who carried bundles of rods with axes attached (*fascis et secures*) as a sign of their judicial authority and whose job it was to carry out the orders of the magistrates. Jailers commonly were retired army veterans, who could be expected

to follow orders and use their military skills as required. Incited to anti-Semitic fury by the slave girl's owners, the crowd turned on Paul and Silas. The magistrates had them stripped and severely flogged as disturbers of the peace and then ordered them to be jailed. The jailer put them into the innermost cell (the comparative *esotera* is used here as a superlative), fastening their feet in stocks. Though both Paul and Silas were Roman citizens and politically exempt from such treatment (cf. comments on v. 37), the frenzy of the mob and the rough justice of the colonial magistrates overrode their protestations. Later when writing to the Christians at Corinth, Paul looked back on this experience as one of the afflictions he suffered as a servant of Christ and reminded the boasters among them that for the sake of the gospel he had "been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely" than they had and had "been exposed to death again and again"--and had been "three times ... beaten with rods" (2Cor 11:23, 25).

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25-28 One would expect that after such brutal treatment, Paul and Silas would be bemoaning their plight. Certainly they were suffering pain and shock from the flogging they had received. But about midnight, as Paul and Silas were "praying and singing hymns to God," an earthquake suddenly shook the prison, opened its doors, and loosened the chains of all the prisoners. When the awakened jailer saw the doors open, he surmised the worst. In Roman law a guard who allowed his prisoner to escape was liable to the same penalty the prisoner would have suffered

(*Code of Justinian* 9.4.4). Thus the jailer drew his sword to kill himself, believing the prisoners had all escaped. But Paul saw him in the doorway and shouted out from within the prison, "Don't harm yourself We are all here!" Form criticism has pointed out (1) that stories regarding prison doors opening of their own accord and of miraculous escapes from confinement were popular in the ancient world (cf. Euripides *Bacchae* 443ff., 586ff., as early cited by Celsus [see Origen *Contra Celsum* 2.34]; Acts 5:19-24; 12:7-10; Acts of Thomas 154) and (2) that v. 35 can be read immediately following v. 24 without any noticeable break in the story. Various form critics have therefore concluded that vv. 25-34 must be viewed as an "independent legend" inserted into some more original narrative by Luke. But the fact that a story resembles other accounts of a similar type provides very little basis for impugning its historicity. And to conclude that because one portion of a story follows nicely another portion separated from it by a block of material that this intervening material must be a later insertion is indeed a precarious critical procedure. As a matter of fact, there is no escape from prison in vv. 25-28. Therefore the appeal to parallels is vain. Not only Paul and Silas but all the other prisoners remained in their cells. The praying and singing, the earthquake, the opening of the doors, and the loosing of the chains all have special significance as vindicating God's servants Paul and Silas and preparing for the jailer's conversion. So while we may not be able to piece together each detail of the story according to strict logic, we cannot say that vv. 25-34 constitute some independent miracle story Luke inserted into his narrative for effect. The account of the imprisonment of Paul and Silas has meaning only in the context of the whole presentation in vv. 16-40.

29-30 Since it was midnight, the jailer called for torches to dispel the darkness of the prison. Rushing in, he fell trembling before Paul and Silas, doubtless taking them to be some kind of divine messengers. If he had not heard the demon-possessed slave girl shout, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved," he undoubtedly had heard from others what she was saying. And now what had happened confirmed her words about Paul and Silas. So he cried out, "Lords, [*kyrioi* which certainly carries a note of adoration here], what must I do to be saved?" His question showed recognition of his spiritual need and opened the way for Paul and Silas to give him the Good News about Jesus Christ.

31-34 What Paul and Silas gave the Philippian jailer was the same Christ-centered gospel that had been proclaimed since Pentecost: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you

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and your household" (cf. 2:38-39; 3:19-26; 4:12; 8:12, 35; 10:43; 13:38-39). But since it was all new to the jailer, the missionaries took time to explain to him and the others of his household "the word of the Lord" (*ton logon tou kyriou*), setting the Good News of redemption in Jesus before them in terms they could understand. To judge by their actions, the jailer and his family believed in Christ and received the Holy Spirit. The jailer washed the wounds of Paul and Silas, probably at a well in the prison courtyard, and there too he and all his family were baptized. Then he brought the missionaries into his home and fed them. "And the whole family," Luke tells us, "was filled with joy, because they had come to believe in God."

5. Paul and Silas leave the city (16:35-40)

35-36 In the morning the magistrates sent the lictors to the prison with an order to release the two vagabond Jews. They make no mention of an earthquake during the night; apparently they did not relate it to the situation of Paul and Silas. They had probably only wanted to teach them a lesson about the peril of disturbing the peace in a Roman colony and felt that a public flogging and a night in the city's jail would be sufficient to do that. So they ordered the jailer to release Paul and Silas.

37 Paul, however, refused to be dealt with so summarily. Claiming the rights of Roman citizenship for himself and Silas, he demanded that they be shown the courtesy due a citizen and be escorted out of the prison by the magistrates themselves. According to the Valerian and Porcian laws, which were passed at various times between 509 B.C. (the time of the founding of the Roman Republic) and 195 B.C., a Roman citizen could travel anywhere within Roman territory under the protection of Rome. He was not subject to local legislation unless he consented (which was usually the case in business and personal relations), and he could appeal to be tried by Rome, not by local authorities, when

in difficulty. As a citizen he owed allegiance directly to Rome, and Rome would protect him. Even Roman governors in the provinces were forbidden, as A.H.M. Jones points out, "to kill, scourge, torture, condemn or put in bonds a Roman citizen who appealed to the people, or to prevent a defendant from presenting himself in Rome within a certain time" (*Studies in Roman Government and Law* [New York: Praeger, 1960], p. 54)--with the situation being that "under the principate, appeal to the people was converted into appeal to Caesar, perhaps by the law of 30 B.C." (ibid.). Evidence regarding the exercise of this right of appeal is scanty. Nor do we know how a citizen who made the claim "I am a Roman" (*ciuis Romanus sum*) supported his claim then and there. Cicero tells of a Roman citizen who was beaten in the marketplace of Messina in Sicily and speaks of it as a most disgraceful and illegal procedure (*Verrine Orations* 2.5.161-62). But other than that, most of our information on the Roman right of appeal is supplied from Acts itself (here, at 22:25-29; 25:9-12; 26:32; 27:1; and 28:16). Nevertheless, on the basis of the extant evidence, "it would seem that a Roman citizen was protected against arbitrary flogging without

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trial, and if accused could refuse to submit to trial by appealing to Caesar" (ibid., pp. 54-55).

Paul took pride in his Roman citizenship and valued it highly (22:25-28)--a feeling that was doubtless shared by Silas. Just why they didn't assert their rights earlier we can only conjecture. Perhaps the uproar of the mob and the hubbub of the beating kept their protestations from being heard. But now they claimed their rights as Roman citizens--probably not only for their own sakes but also to provide some measure of protection for the few believers meeting at Lydia's home.

38-39 To beat and imprison a Roman citizen without a trial was a serious offense. So when the magistrates heard that Paul and Silas were citizens, they came to apologize for their illegal actions and to escort them out of prison. Then in order to avoid any further embarrassment or opposition from the crowd, they asked Paul and Silas to leave Philippi. Here was a case where Roman officials took action against the gospel and its messengers. As such, it seems to run counter to Luke's apologetic purpose in Acts (cf. Introduction: Luke's Purposes in Writing Acts). But his point is that the magistrates initially acted in ignorance; and when they came to understand matters more fully, they apologized and did what they could to avoid repetition of the blunder.

40 After leaving the prison, Paul and Silas met with the small body of Christians (*hoi adelphoi*, "the brothers," used broadly for "believers"; cf. 18:18, 27) at the house of Lydia and encouraged them in their new faith. Then they left with Timothy to go westward toward Thessalonica. Apparently, however, Luke stayed at Philippi, for only later (20:5) does the second "we" section commence--again at Philippi. By that time the little congregation that had begun so modestly with Lydia and her household, Luke, the slave girl, and the jailer and his family had grown in size and spirituality; for in the letter Paul later wrote them, he speaks of

their "overseers and deacons" (Philippians 1:1), counsels them as believers growing in maturity, and commends them for their continuing concern for him (cf. Philippians 2:25-30; 4:10-19).

C. At Thessalonica (17:1-9)

1 Thirty-three miles southwest of Philippi was Amphipolis, the capital of the northern district of Macedonia between 167-146 B.C. Situated on the east bank of the Strymon River, it straddled the Via Egnatia. But though it was larger and more important than Philippi, Paul and his companions "passed through" it. As they continued west-southwest on the Via Egnatia, they also passed through Apollonia some twenty-seven miles beyond Amphipolis. Their desire was to reach Thessalonica, the capital of the province of Macedonia and the largest and most prosperous city of all in Macedonia, which lay another forty miles southwest of Apollonia. Thessalonica (modern Salonika) was strategically located on the Thermaic Gulf. It too straddled the Via Egnatia. It linked the rich agricultural plains of the Macedonian interior with the

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land and sea routes to the east. Cicero described it as "situated in the bosom of our domain" (*Pro Plancio* 41). It was probably founded by Cassander in 315 B.C. and named for his wife, the daughter of Philip II (cf. Strabo *Geography* 7.21), though other traditions trace its foundation to Philip himself and say it was named either for his daughter or in honor of his victory over the Thessalonians. When Rome conquered Macedonia in 167 B.C., Thessalonica became the capital of the second of the four administrative districts of the province. Then with the reorganization of Macedonia into one province in 142 B.C., Thessalonica became its capital. In the second civil war it sided with Mark Antony and Octavian (later Augustus) against Cassius and Brutus, and because of its loyalty it was declared a free city in 42 B.C. (cf. Plutarch Brutus 46).

As a large city of perhaps two hundred thousand, and one that dominated Macedonian government and commerce, Thessalonica naturally attracted diverse groups of people including a substantial Jewish contingent (1Thess 2:14-16). Paul seems to have looked on it as the strategic center for the spread of the gospel throughout the Balkan peninsula (1Thess 1:7-8). Therefore Paul and Silas-- though doubtless in some pain from their recent beating and time in the stocks-- pushed on resolutely the hundred miles from Philippi to Thessalonica.

2-3 In portraying the extension of the gospel to the main cities bordering the Aegean Sea, Luke lays special emphasis on the fact that Paul's preaching consisted of both proclamation and persuasion--interlocking elements of the one act of preaching. He had struck such a note earlier (cf. 13:43), and it will continue to be heard in 20:9; 24:25; 26:28; and 28:23. Here in Panel 5 it sounds with unmistakable clarity throughout the portrayals of the ministries at Thessalonica (17: 2-4), Athens (17:17), Corinth (18:4), and Ephesus (18:19; 19:8-10). At Thessalonica the missionaries, true to their policy of "To the Jews First, but Also to the Gentiles" (cf. comments on 13:46-52), sought out the local synagogue, sure of finding there a prepared audience of both Jews and "God-fearing" Gentiles.

During the span of three Sabbath days Paul "reasoned [*dielexato*] with them from the Scriptures, explaining [*dianoigon*] and proving [*paratithemenos*] that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead." "This Jesus I am proclaiming [*katangelo*] to you is the Christ," he said. And further, Luke tells us in v. 4 that some "were persuaded [*epeisthesan*] and joined Paul and Silas." The preaching of Paul in the Book of Acts generally and at Thessalonica particularly took the form of a "proclaimed witness"--i.e., a witness to the facts that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, that his suffering and resurrection were in accord with the Scriptures, and that through his earthly ministry and living presence men and women can experience the reign of God in their lives. At times the proclamation was accompanied by miracles. But though miracles brought quick results, "reason," "prove," and "persuade"--words that describe Paul's method of preaching--imply his careful dealing with his hearers' questions and doubts.

4 "Some of the Jews were persuaded," but the greater number of those who responded

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positively to Paul's preaching in the Thessalonian synagogue were "God-fearing" Greeks (*hoi sebomenoi Hellenon*) and "prominent women" (*gynai ton proton* , which probably denotes women of high standing in the city who were the wives of the principal citizens). The Jason mentioned in v. 5 as Paul's host was probably one of the Jewish converts; Aristarchus and Secundus, who are identified as Thessalonians in 20:4, may have also been converted at this time.

5-7 Just as at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, the Jews who did not believe the gospel were incensed at the Gentiles' response to Paul's preaching and with his direct approach to them. So they stirred up a riot. Their plan was to bring Paul and Silas before "the assembly of citizens"

(*ton demon*) and "the politarchs" (*tous politarchas*) on a charge of disturbing the Pax Romana by preaching a *religio illicita* and by advocating another king in opposition to Caesar. But when they could not find the missionaries at Jason's house--evidently because Jason and some others who believed their message had hidden them away--they dragged Jason and some other Christian brothers before the politarchs. Jason (Gr. for Joshua) was probably a Diaspora Jew (see comment on v. 4) who became one of Paul's first converts at Thessalonica. He need not be identified with Jason of Romans 16:21, for the name was fairly common. As a free city, Thessalonica had its governing assembly of citizens, which is probably what Luke had in mind by the use of the term *demos* in v. 5 (though v. 8 speaks of the "crowd," *ochlos* , somewhat synonymously). The magistrates of Thessalonica were called "politarchs"

(*politarches*), a title found in inscriptions ranging from the second century B.C. through the third century A.D. and applied almost exclusively to Macedonian cities. From five inscriptions referring to Thessalonica, it appears that a body of five politarchs ruled the city during the first century A.D.--a number expanded to a board of six in the second century (cf. E.D. Burton, "The Politarchs," AJT, 2 [1898], 598ff.). Certainly the assembly of citizens and the politarchs at

Thessalonica would have known of the troubles within the Jewish community at Rome in connection with Christianity and of Claudius's edict of A.D. 49-50 for all Jews to leave that city (see Suetonius *Vita Claudius* 25.4, who speaks of "constant riots at the instigation of *Chrestus* " and tells of the emperor's order of expulsion; cf. also 18:2). Probably the Jewish opponents of the missionaries played upon the fear that such a situation might be duplicated at Thessalonica, unless Paul and Silas were expelled. In addition, from their charge that the missionaries proclaimed "another king" (v. 7), it may be inferred that they tried to use Paul's mention of "the kingdom of God" (cf. 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31) to arouse suspicion that he was involved in anti-imperial sedition. Indeed, it may be for this reason that Paul avoided the use of "kingdom" and "king" in his letters to his converts, lest Gentile imperial authorities misconstrue them to connote opposition to the empire and emperor.

8-9 The charges against Paul and Silas and their companions naturally alarmed the Thessalonian

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politarchs. They certainly did not want riots like those at Rome in their city. But apparently they found the evidence for the charges scanty; after all, Paul and Silas against whom the charges were directed could not be found. Therefore, the politarchs took what they thought to be a moderate and reasonable course of action. They made Jason and those with him post a bond, assuring them that there would be no repetition of the trouble. This probably meant that Paul and Silas had to leave Thessalonica and that their friends promised they would not come back, at least during the term of office of the present politarchs. When writing his Thessalonian converts a few months later, Paul speaks of many times desiring to visit them again but of being unable to because "Satan stopped us" (1Thess 2:18). Likely Paul had in mind the fact that bond had been posted assuring his nonreturn, and therefore his hands were tied. But though he was unable to return, that did not stop either the spread of the gospel or the opposition of the Jews (cf. 1Thess 1:2-10). Amid all their persecutions and difficulties, the Christians of Thessalonica maintained their faith and witness in a manner that filled Paul with joy when he heard of it (cf. 1Thess 3:6-10).

D. At Berea (17:10-15)

10 The bail bond Jason and his friends posted would have been forfeited were Paul and Silas to be found in their homes. So the brothers sent them, together with Timothy, on to Berea (modern Verria), some fifty miles southwest of Thessalonica by way of Pella. A city in the foothills of the Olympian range south of the Macedonian plain, Berea was of little importance historically or politically, though it had a large population in NT times. It also was south of the Via Egnatia, but with access to the eastern coastal road that ran down to Achaia and Athens. In a fervent speech against Piso, Cicero (106-43 B.C.) had told how the Roman authorities in Thessalonica were so unpopular with the people that when he was on government business he found it wise to sneak into the provincial capital at

night and at times withdraw from the storm of complaints to Berea because it was "off the beaten track" (*In Pisonem* 36). On arriving at Berea, Paul and his companions went as usual to the synagogue to proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus the Christ.

11-12 Luke gave the Jews at Berea undying fame by characterizing them as being "more noble" (*eugenesteroi*) than the Thessalonian Jews because they tested the truth of Paul's message by the touchstone of Scripture rather than judging it by political and cultural considerations. So they examined the Scriptures daily (*kath hemeran*) to see whether what Paul proclaimed was really true, and many believed. Among them was probably Sopater son of Pyrrhus, who is identified in 20:4 as from Berea (cf. Rom 16:21). Included among the Berean believers were not only "a number of prominent Greek women" but also "many Greek men" (*Hellenidon ... andron ouk oligoi*)--that is, not just converts from among Gentile "God-fearers," but also converts who were pagan Gentiles.

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13-15 The Thessalonian Jews, on hearing that "the word of God" was being preached at Berea, sent a delegation there to stir up the same opposition as at Thessalonica. Evidently the Berean Christians recognized that not only was Paul not safe at Thessalonica but he was not safe anywhere else in the region, because the Thessalonian Jews had the ear of the provincial authorities. So the Bereans acted immediately (*eutheos*) as if they were taking Paul to a coastal town like Methone or Dium to sail for some other country. Having thrown their opponents off the track, the Bereans escorted Paul down to the province of Achaia and into Athens, apparently to stay there with some of their relatives. As for Silas and Timothy, they remained in Berea since they were not in such danger as Paul. But when the men who accompanied Paul to Athens returned to Berea, they brought with them a message from Paul for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible--doubtless because he saw that Athens was another strategic center for proclaiming the gospel and wanted Silas and Timothy with him when he began. The movements of Silas and Timothy after Paul left them at Berea are rather difficult to trace, because Luke was not always concerned with details of the minor characters in his narrative and because Paul's references to their activities are somewhat incidental and allusive. But in accord with Paul's instructions, Silas and Timothy rejoined Paul at Athens (1Thess 3:1). Then Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica (1Thess 3:2). Silas, however, seems to have gone back to Macedonia (cf. 18:5)--probably to Philippi, where he received from the young congregation there a gift of money for the support of the missionaries (Philippians 4:15). In the meantime, Paul had moved from Athens to Corinth (18:1) and was joined there by Silas and Timothy on their return from Macedonia (18:5; 1Thess 3:6).

E. At Athens (17:16-34)

Paul's coming to Athens appears to have been intended primarily to escape

persecution in Macedonia. It seems to have been no part of his original plan to preach at Athens. When called to Macedonia, he had apparently planned to follow the Via Egnatia all the way to Dyrrhachium, then cross the Adriatic to Italy, and so to Rome. When writing the Christians at Rome some six or seven years later, Paul speaks of having often planned to visit them but being unable to do so (Rom 1:13; 15:22-23). Provincial action in Macedonia appears to have thwarted his plans for a continued mission in Macedonia, and news of Claudius's expulsion of the Jewish community in Rome (A.D. 49-50) would have caused him to change his plans. Now Paul was in Athens, under circumstances not altogether what he would have planned. He was waiting for Silas and Timothy to come before beginning his mission in Athens. But the rampant idolatry he saw around him compelled him to present the claims of Christ to Jews and "God-fearing" Gentiles in the synagogue on the Sabbath and to whoever would listen in the agora (marketplace) on weekdays. As with Jeremiah (cf. Jer 20:9), "the word of God" burned within Paul like a fire in his bones, and he could not keep silent.

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1. Inauguration of a ministry (17:16-21)

16 Athens is five miles inland from its port of Piraeus, which is on the Saronic Gulf, an arm of the Aegean Sea stretching fifty miles between Attica and the Peloponnesus. It is situated on a narrow plain between Mount Parnes to the north, Mount Pentelicus to the east, and Mount Hymettus to the southeast. Said to have been founded by Theseus, the hero of Attica who slew the Minotaur and conquered the Amazons, Athens was named in honor of the goddess Athena. When the Persians tried to conquer Greece in the fifth century B.C., Athens played a prominent part in resisting them. Though completely destroyed at that time, it quickly recovered and its fleet, which contributed decisively to the defeat of the Persians, became the basis of a maritime empire. Athens reached its zenith under Pericles (495-429 B.C.); and during the last fifteen years of his life, the Partheon, numerous temples, and other splendid buildings were built. Literature, philosophy, science, and rhetoric flourished; and Athens attracted intellectuals from all over the world. Politically it became a democracy. But Athens had attained eminence at the expense of its allies in the Delian Confederacy. Many of them in dissatisfaction turned to its rival Sparta, and the Peloponnesian War (431-404

B.C.) put an end to the greatness of Athens. Culturally and intellectually, however, it remained supreme for centuries, with such figures as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Zeno living there. In 338 B.C. Philip II of Macedonia conquered Athens, but the conquest only served to spread Athenian culture and learning into Asia and Egypt through his son, Alexander the Great. The Romans conquered Athens in 146 B.C. They were lovers of everything Greek, and under their rule Athens continued as the cultural and intellectual center of the world. Rome also left the city free politically to carry on her own institutions as a free city within the empire. When Paul came to Athens, it had long since lost its empire and wealth. Its population probably numbered no more than ten thousand. Yet it had a glorious past on which it continued to live. Its temples and statuary were related to the worship of the Greek pantheon, and its culture was pagan.

Therefore Paul, with his Jewish abhorrence of idolatry, could not but find the culture of Athens spiritually repulsive.

17 *men oun* (NIV, "so") introduces a new scene, perhaps tying together Luke's introduction (v.

16) with his source material (vv. 17ff.). Though apparently not wanting to begin a mission in Athens till Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul could not keep from proclaiming the Good News about Jesus the Messiah when he attended the synagogue on the Sabbath. There he "reasoned" (*dielegeto*) with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles. He also continued his presentation in the agora every day (*kata pasan hemeran*) to all who would listen. The agora lay west of the Acropolis. It was the forum and marketplace of the city and, therefore, the center of Athenian life. The commercial sections included the large Stoa of Attalus, stretching along the eastern side and flanked by a number of smaller colonnades on the northern

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and southern sides. The western side consisted of important public buildings: the circular Tholos, or office and dining room of the Prytaneum; the Bouleuterion, or senate house; the Metroon, or official archives, before which stood the temple of Ares and statues of the eponymous heroes of the city; the temple of Apollo Patroon; and the Stoa Basileios.

18 Athens was the home of the rival Epicurean and Stoic schools of philosophy. Epicurus (342- 270 B.C.) held that pleasure was the chief goal of life, with the pleasure most worth enjoying being a life of tranquillity free from pain, disturbing passions, superstitious fears, and anxiety about death. He did not deny the existence of gods but argued in deistic fashion that they took no interest in the lives of men. The Cypriote Zeno (340-265 B.C.) was the founder of Stoicism, which took its name from the "painted Stoa" (colonnade or portico) where he habitually taught in the Athenian agora. His teaching centered on living harmoniously with nature and emphasized man's rational abilities and individual self-sufficiency. Theologically, he was essentially pantheistic and thought of God as "the World-soul." Epicureanism and Stoicism represented the popular Gentile alternatives for dealing with the plight of humanity and for coming to terms with life apart from the biblical revelation and God's work in Jesus Christ. (Post-Christian paganism in our day has been unable to come up with anything better.) When the followers of Epicurus and Zeno heard Paul speaking in the agora, they began to dispute (*syneballon* , lit., "to converse," but also "to engage in argument") with him. Some in their pride declared him to be a *spermologos* ("babbler")--a word originally used of birds picking up grain, then of scrap collectors searching for junk, then extended to those who snapped up ideas of others and peddled them as their own without understanding them, and finally to any ne'er-do-well. Others, however, thought Paul was advocating foreign gods, probably mistaking *Anastasis* ("resurrection") for the goddess consort of a god named Jesus.

19-20 The Areopagus (*Areios Pagos* ; lit., "Court" or "Council of Ares," the Gr. god of thunder and war) reaches back to legendary antiquity. Presumably it first met at Athens on the Hill of Ares (Lat. equivalent, "Mars Hill"), northwest of the Acropolis, for murder trials. Early descriptions of processions in ancient Greek city-states, however, depict the Areopagus of the cities as always heading the column of dignitaries, which suggests that the "Court" or "Council of Ares" was the senate or city council of a Greek city-state. At Athens, therefore, while the earlier powers of the Council of Ares were greatly reduced with the demise of the maritime empire, during Roman times it was still the chief judicial body of the city and exercised jurisdiction in such matters as religion and education. Today "Areopagus" survives as the title of the Greek Supreme Court. In Paul's time its membership consisted of all city administrators ("Archons") who alter their term of office were free of official misconduct; it met since the fifth century B.C. in the Stoa Basileios ("The Royal Portico") at the northwest corner of the agora. It was before this council that the followers of Epicurus and Zeno brought Paul--probably half in jest and half in derision, and certainly not seeking an impartial inquiry after truth. The city

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fathers, however, took their task seriously because the fame of Athens rested on its intellectual ferment and on the interplay of competing philosophies. So we should doubtless understand Paul's appearance before the Athenian Council of Ares as being for the purpose of explaining his message before those in control of affairs in the city so that he might either receive the freedom of the city to preach or be censored and silenced.

21 Luke's comment about the Athenians "doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas" is paralleled in the evaluation of his fellow Athenians by Cleon, a fifth-century B.C. politician and general: "You are the best people at being deceived by something new that is said" (Thucydides *History* 2.38.5). The Athenian orator Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.) also reproached his people for continually asking for new ideas in a day when Philip II of Macedon's rise to power presented the city with a threat calling for actions, not words (*Philip* 1.10). Evidently this characterization of the Athenians was widespread, particularly in Macedonia.

2. Paul's address before the Council of Ares (17:22-31)

22-23 Paul does not begin his address by referring to Jewish history or by quoting the Jewish Scriptures, as he did in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (cf. 13:16-41). He knew it would be futile to refer to a history no one knew or argue from fulfillment of prophecy no one was interested in or quote from a book no one read or accepted as authoritative. Nor does he develop his argument from the God who gives rain and crops in their season and provides food for the stomach and joy for the heart, as he did at Lystra (cf. 14:15-17). Instead, he took for his point of contact with the council an altar he had seen in the city with the inscription *Agnosto Theo* ("To an Unknown God"). Later the second-century geographer Pausanias (*Description of Greece* 1.1.4) and the third-century philosopher Philostratus (*Life of Apollonius Tyana*

6.3.5) were to speak of altars to unknown gods at Athens, by which they meant either altars to unknown deities generally or altars to individual unknown gods. But while there is insufficient evidence for us to know the number of such altars at Athens or what their dedicatory inscriptions were, it is not surprising that Paul came across such an altar in walking about the city. Paul used the words of the inscription to introduce his call to repentance. Many critics have asserted that all the speeches in Acts--particularly that to the Areopagus-- are Luke's free compositions, showing what he thought Paul would have said. Certainly, as with every precis, Luke edited the missionary sermons of Paul in Acts; he must also be credited with some genius for highlighting their suitability to their audiences (cf. Introduction: The Speeches in Acts). But for one who elsewhere said he was willing to be "all things to all men" for the sake of the gospel (1Cor 9:20-22), Paul's approach to his Areopagus audience is by no means out of character. On the contrary, in his report of this address, Luke gives us another illustration of how Paul began on common ground with his hearers and sought to lead them from it to accept the work and person of Jesus as the apex of God's redemptive work for humanity.

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24-28 The substance of the Athenian address concerns the nature of God and the responsibility of man to God. Contrary to all pantheistic and polytheistic notions, God is the one, Paul says, who has created the world and everything in it; he is the Lord of heaven and earth (cf. Gen 14: 19, 22). He does not live in temples "made by hands" (*en cheiropoietois*), nor is he dependent for his existence upon anything he has created. Rather, he is the source of life and breath and everything else humanity possesses. Earlier, Euripides (fifth century B.C.) asked, "What house built by craftsmen could enclose the form divine within enfolding walls?" (Fragments 968); and in the first century B.C., Cicero considered the image of Ceres worshiped in Sicily worthy of honor because it was not made with hands but had fallen from the sky (In Verrem 2.5.187). While Paul's argument can be paralleled at some points by the higher paganism of the day, its content is decidedly biblical (cf. 1 Kings 8:27; Isa 66:1-2) and its forms of expression Jewish as well as Greek (cf. LXX Isa 2:18; 19:1; 31:7; Sib Oracles 4.8-12; Acts 7:41, 48; Heb 8:2; 9:24 on the pejorative use of "made with hands" for idols and temples). Contrary to the Athenians' boast that they had originated from the soil of their Attic homeland and therefore were not like other men, Paul affirms the oneness of mankind in their creation by the one God and their descent from a common ancestor. And contrary to the "deism" that permeated the philosophies of the day, he proclaimed that this God has determined specific times (*prostetagenous kairous*) for men and "the exact places where they should live" (*tas orothesias tes katoikias auton* ; lit., "the boundaries of their habitation") so that men would seek him and find him. In support of this teaching about man, Paul quotes two maxims from Greek poets. The first comes from a quatrain attributed to the Cretan poet Epimenides (c.600 B.C.), which appeared first in his poem *Cretica* and is put on the lips of Minos, Zeus's son, in honor of his father:

They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one--

The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!

But thou art not dead; thou livest and abidest for ever,

For in thee we live and move and have our being

(M.D. Gibson, ed., *Horae Semiticae X*

[Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1913], p. 40, in Syriac; italics mine).

The second comes from the Cilician poet Aratus (c. 315-240 B.C.): "It is with Zeus that every one of us in every way has to do, *for we are also his offspring* [italics mine]"

(*Phaenomena* 5); which is also found in Cleanthes's (331-233 B.C.) earlier Hymn to Zeus, line 4.

By such maxims, Paul is not suggesting that God is to be thought of in terms of the Zeus of Greek polytheism or Stoic pantheism. He is rather arguing that the poets his hearers recognized as authorities have to some extent corroborated his message. In his search for a measure of

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common ground with his hearers, he is, so to speak, disinfecting and rebaptizing the poets' words for his own purposes. Quoting Greek poets in support of his teaching sharpened his message. But despite its form, Paul's address was thoroughly biblical and Christian in its content. It is perhaps too strong to say that "the remarkable thing about this famous speech is that for all its wealth of pagan illustration its message is simply the Galilean gospel, 'The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the tidings'" (Williams, p. 206). Nevertheless, there is nothing in it that really militates against Paul's having delivered it or that is in genuine opposition to his letters.

29-31 The climax of the address focuses on the progressive unfolding of divine redemption and the apex of that redemption in Jesus Christ. Being God's offspring--not in a pantheistic sense but in the biblical sense of being created by God in his image--we should not, Paul insists, think of deity in terms of gold, silver, or stone. All that idolatrous ignorance was overlooked by God in the past (cf. 14:16; Rom 3:25) because God has always been more interested in repentance than judgment (cf. Wisdom 11:23: "But you have mercy on all men, because you have power to do all things, and you overlook the sins of men to the end that they may repent"). Nevertheless, in the person and work of Jesus, God has acted in such a manner as to make idolatry particularly heinous. To reject Jesus, therefore, is to reject the personal and vicarious intervention of God on behalf of man and to open oneself up in the future to divine judgment meted out by the very one rejected in the present. And God himself has authenticated all this by raising Jesus from the dead.

3. The response to Paul's address (17:32-34)

32 While the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was the convincing proof to the early Christians and Paul that "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (2Cor 5:19), to the majority of Athenians it was the height of folly. Five

hundred years earlier the tragic poet Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.), when describing the institution of the Athenian Council of Ares, made the god Apollo say, "When the dust has soaked up a man's blood, once he is dead, there is no resurrection" (*Eumenides* 647-48). If Paul had talked about the immortality of the soul, he would have gained the assent of most of his audience except the Epicureans. But the idea of resurrection was absurd. Outright scorn was the response of some of his hearers. Others, probably with more politeness than curiosity or conviction, suggested that they would like to hear Paul on the subject at another time.

33-34 Paul obviously failed to convince the council of the truth of his message, and he evidently failed as well to gain the freedom of the city and the right to propagate his views. The council decided to hold the matter in abeyance for a time. But Paul could tell from this first meeting that sentiment was against him. Some, of course, did believe, for God always has his few in even the most difficult of situations. Among them were Dionysius, who was himself a member of the

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Council of Ares, and a woman named Damaris. But because no action had been taken to approve Paul's right to continue teaching in the city, his hands were legally tied. All he could do was wait in Athens till the council gave him the right to teach there or move on to some other place where his message would be more favorably received. And with a vast territory yet to be entered and a great number of people yet to be reached, Paul chose the latter. We hear of no church at Athens in the apostolic age; and when Paul speaks of "the first converts [*aparche* ; lit., 'first-fruits'] in Achaia," it is to "the household of Stephanas" that he refers (1Cor 16:15). Many have claimed that Paul's failure at Athens stemmed largely from a change in his preaching and that later on at Corinth he repudiated it (cf. 1Cor 1:18-2:5). He spoke, they charge, about providence and being "in God" but forgot the message of grace and being "in Christ"; about creation and appealed to the Greek poets but did not refer to redemption or revelation; about world history but not salvation history; about resurrection but not the cross. We should remember, however, that going to Athens was not part of Paul's original missionary strategy, nor did he expect to begin work there till Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia. Moreover, there were some converts at Athens, and we should not minimize the working of God's Spirit or Paul's message because only a few responded or because we don't know what happened to them afterward. Still, the outreach of the gospel at Athens was cut off before it really began, and in overall terms the Christian mission in the city must be judged a failure. But the reason the gospel did not take root there probably lay more in the attitude of the Athenians themselves than in Paul's approach or in what he said.

F. At Corinth (18:1-17)

Paul's coming to Corinth was "in weakness and fear, and with much trembling" (1Cor 2:3). Though he was directed through a vision to minister in Macedonia (cf. 16:9-10), the mission had not gone at all as he had expected. Nor had his initial

attempt in Achaia provided him with any reason to hope for a change in his fortunes. In fact, matters seemed to have gone from bad to worse at Athens, where he was dismissed with polite contempt rather than being violently driven out. So he must have traveled from Athens to Corinth in a dejected mood, wondering what worse could happen and why God had allowed matters to fall out so badly. Also, he was almost sick with anxiety over the state of the Thessalonian converts whom he had been forced to leave with the threat of persecution hanging over them (cf. 1Thess 2:17-3:5). This anxiety probably played a part in preventing Paul, while at Athens, from fully grasping the opportunities at hand (cf. 2Cor 2:12-13, where he says that intense concern for the Corinthians prevented starting a mission at Troas). Consequently, anxiety continued to weigh upon him and drive him into depression. Paul was only human, and he found that his emotions affected his spiritual well-being and his work. Furthermore, he may have been ill during much of this period from the effects of the beating at Philippi--and this would have contributed further to his emotional depression. Perhaps it was at this time that he prayed repeatedly for deliverance from

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his "thorn in the flesh" (cf. 2Cor 12:7-10) and God said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2Cor 12:9). As we read Luke's account of Paul's ministry at Corinth in the light of the Corinthian letters, we cannot help concluding that Luke has provided his readers with only a brief summary of what occurred. At Corinth more than anywhere else in the accounts of Paul's mission the exact situation is difficult to ascertain, simply because in his letters to the Corinthian church Paul provides so much allusive material about his relations with Christians there and Luke gives so little in Acts. Consequently, theories are rampant regarding historical, personal, and literary relationships between Paul and the church at Corinth. Furthermore, there are wide differences of purpose between Paul and Luke in their Corinthian materials because Paul's concern was pastoral and Luke's apologetic. Here in Acts 18 Luke is chiefly interested in the proceedings before Gallio (vv. 12-17). He presents them (1) to demonstrate that one of the wisest of the Roman proconsuls had declared Christianity to be a *religio licita* and (2) to warn that if Rome began to persecute the church, it would be acting contrary to Gallio, a ruler renowned for his urbanity and wit.

1. Arrival at Corinth (18:1-4)

1 Corinth was on a plateau overlooking the isthmus connecting central Greece to the north with the Peloponnesus to the south. It was built on the north side of the Acrocorinth, an acropolis rising precipitously to 1,886 feet and providing an almost impregnable fortress for the city. To the east was the port of Cenchrea on the Saronic Gulf leading out to the Aegean Sea and to the west, the port of Lechaeum on the Gulf of Corinth opening to the Adriatic. Smaller ships were actually dragged over wooden rollers across the isthmus for the three and one-half miles between Cenchrea and Lechaeum in order to avoid the long and dangerous trip around Cape Malea at the southern tip of the Peloponnesus, while cargoes of

larger ships were carried overland from port to port. Because of its strategic land and sea location, Corinth became a prosperous city-state in the eighth century B.C. During the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., it reached the zenith of its prestige and power, with a population numbering approximately two hundred thousand free men and five hundred thousand slaves. In the fifth century B.C., it declined in importance and size due to the imperialism of Athens--though the Peloponnesian War of 431-404 B.C. won by Sparta and her associates was disastrous for both. In 338 B.C. the city was captured by Philip II of Macedon, who made it the center of his Hellenic League; and from the death of Alexander

the Great to the rise of Roman influence in Greece, it became a leading member of the Achaian League of Greek city-states--for a time even the chief city of that league. In 196 B.C. Corinth was captured by the Romans and declared a free city. In 146 B.C., however, it was leveled to the ground and its population sold into slavery by the general Lucius Mummius as retribution for the leading part it played in the revolt of the Achaian League against Rome. For one hundred

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years the city lay in ruins, until Julius Caesar decreed in 46 B.C. that it should be rebuilt. It was refounded as a Roman colony in 44 B.C., and in 27 B.C. it became the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. The population of Corinth in NT times was probably over two hundred thousand (at least twenty times that of Athens), and was made up of local Greeks, freedmen from Italy, Roman army veterans, businessmen and governmental officials, and Orientals from the Levant--including a large number of Jews. Thanks to its commercial advantages at the convergence of land and sea trade routes, the city greatly prospered. But along with its wealth and luxury, there was immorality of every kind. Beginning with the fifth century B.C., the verb "to Corinthianize"

(*korinthiazesthai*) meant to be sexually immoral, a reputation that continued to be well- deserved in Paul's day. Corinth was the center for the worship of the goddess Aphrodite, whose temple with its thousand sacred prostitutes crowned the Acrocorinth. At the foot of the Acrocorinth stood the temple of Melicertes (the Gr. form of Melkart, the principal god of Tyre), the god of sailors. Temples to Apollo and to Asclepius, the god of healing, have also been found in the ruins of the first-century city, and there were undoubtedly many more such pagan shrines there. The city became a favorite of the Roman emperors. Every two years the pan-Hellenic Isthmian Games were held in the city, presided over by its administrators.

2-3 Entering this large and thriving city, Paul may have asked a passerby where he could find a master tentmaker or leather worker (*skenopoios*) to seek a job from so that he could support himself by his trade. Jewish law directed that young theological students be taught a trade (cf. *M Pirke Aboth* 2:2; see SBK, 2:745-46), and on his missionary journeys Paul earned his living as a tentmaker and leather worker (cf. 20:34; 1Cor 9:1-18; 2Cor 11:7-12; 1Thess 2:9; 2Thess 3: 7-10). So he came in contact with the Jewish Christian couple Aquila and Priscilla, with whom he lived and worked, presumably alongside other journeymen in their shop.

Aquila was a native of Pontus, a region in northern Asia Minor on the south shore of the Black Sea. Priscilla is the diminutive of the more formal name Prisca. Luke's habit is to use the colloquial, diminutive form of names (e.g., Silas, Sopatros, Priscilla, Apollos), whereas Paul usually refers to his friends by their more formal names (e.g., Silvanus, Sosipatros, Prisca, Epaphroditus)--though in certain situations he also speaks of some more popularly (e.g., Apollos, Epaphras). Since Priscilla is often listed before her husband (18:18-19, 26; Rom 16:3; 2Tim 4:19), we may conclude that she came from a higher social class than her husband or was in some way considered more important. Perhaps Aquila was a former Jewish slave who became a freedman in Rome and married a Jewess connected with the Roman family Prisca (*gens Prisca*), which possessed citizenship rights. Together, perhaps through Aquila's craftsmanship and Priscilla's money and contacts, they owned a tentmaking and leather-working firm, with branches of the business at Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus (cf. 18:2, 18-19, 26; Rom 16:3; 1Cor 16:19; 2Tim 4:19).

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Lately Aquila and Priscilla had been forced to leave Rome because of the Edict of Claudius, an expulsion order proclaimed during the ninth year of Emperor Claudius's reign (i.e., 25 January A.D. 49 to 24 January 50) and directed against the Jews in Rome to put down the riots arising within the Jewish community there (cf. Suetonius *Vita Claudius* 25.4: "As the Jews were indulging in constant riots at the instigation of *Chrestus* , he banished them from Rome"). The "Chrestus" Suetonius speaks of may have been an otherwise unknown agitator who was active in Jewish circles within Rome in the forties (the Gr. *Chrestos* means "useful" or "kindly" and was a common name for slaves in the Greco-Roman world). Probably, however, Suetonius, writing seventy years after the event, had no clear understanding of who this Chrestus really was and assumed him to be a local troublemaker, whereas the dispute in the Jewish community was over Jesus Christ and between those who favored his messiahship and those who rejected it. We do not know whether Aquila and Priscilla had any part in the riots--either as agitators or victims. They are not classed as Paul's converts either in Acts or in Paul's letters. Probably they had been converted to Christianity at Rome. If Priscilla was from a family with Roman citizenship, she might not have been included under Claudius's expulsion order; but her husband, if a former Jewish slave and now a freedman, would, and she would have cast her lot in with him. However, Luke's hero is Paul, and he treats minor characters only as they come into contact with Paul. As for Paul, he calls Priscilla and Aquila his "fellow workers in Christ Jesus," speaks of their having "risked their lives for me" (probably at Ephesus, cf. 19:23-41), and says of them, "Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them" (Rom 16:3-4)--all of which suggests that he considered them close and loyal friends and that their services to the Christian cause far exceeded their assistance to him.

4 While working with Aquila and Priscilla, Paul attended the local synagogue every Sabbath. There, Luke tells us, "he reasoned" (*dielegeto*) with those

gathered, "trying to persuade"

(*epeithen*) both Jews and Gentiles. But his ministry during those weeks seems to have been relatively unobtrusive, probably conforming to the kind of witness Aquila and Priscilla were already carrying on among their Jewish compatriots. As was his intention at Athens, though he was unable to hold to it there, Paul may have wanted to refrain from a more aggressive ministry in Corinth till Silas and Timothy could join him.

2. *An eighteen-month ministry* (18:5-11)

5 The coming of Silas and Timothy to Corinth altered the situation for Paul. They brought good news about the Christians at Thessalonica (cf. 1Thess 3:6) and a gift of money from the congregation at Philippi (cf. 2Cor 11:9; Philippians 4:14-15). The news from Thessalonica was better than Paul dared expect, and it greatly comforted and encouraged him (cf. 1Thess 3:7-10)--though it also told of a slanderous campaign started against him outside the congregation (1Thess 2:3-6) and of some perplexity within it concerning the return of Christ (1Thess 4:13-5:

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11). The money from Philippi was especially welcome at this time. Therefore with his spirits lifted by the report of his Thessalonian converts' spiritual well-being and the gift from Philippi providing him freedom from earning a living, "Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching" (*syneicheto to logo ho Paulos* ; lit., "Paul held himself to the word"). The verb *syneicheto* is reflexive (middle voice), durative (imperfect tense), and inchoative (a function of the imperfect), suggesting that with the coming of Silas and Timothy, Paul began to devote himself exclusively to the ministry of the word and continued to do so throughout his stay in Corinth. His initial purpose was to proclaim the Good News to the Jews of the synagogue, and his message to them was that Jesus is "the Christ" (*ton Christon* ; lit., "the Messiah"). It was in response to the report from Thessalonica that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, in which are interwoven (1) commendation for growth, zeal, and fidelity; (2) encouragement in the face of local persecution; (3) defense of his motives against hostile attack; (4) instruction regarding holiness of life; (5) instruction about the coming of the Lord; and (6) exhortation to steadfastness and patience. Some weeks later, on learning of continued confusion at Thessalonica regarding the return of Christ and the believer's relation to it, he wrote 2 Thessalonians. In that second letter, while acknowledging that the church lives in eager expectation of the Lord's return, Paul insists that imminency must not be construed to mean immediacy but is rather the basis for dogged persistence in doing right.

6-7 The ministry at Corinth followed the pattern set at Pisidian Antioch (cf. 13:46-52) of initial proclamation in the synagogue, rejection by the majority of Jews, and then a direct outreach to Gentiles. In solemn biblical style (cf. Neh 5:13), Paul "shook out his clothes"--an act symbolizing repudiation of the Jews' opposition, exemption from further responsibility for them (cf. 13:51), and protest against what he considered the Jews' "blasphemy" (*blasphemounton* ; NIV, "became abusive"; cf. 13:45; 26:11). So leaving the synagogue (*metabas ekeithen* ; lit.,

"leaving from there"), he went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a "God-fearing" Gentile who was receiving instruction at the synagogue (*a sebomenos ton theon* , cf. 13:50; 16:14; 17:4, 17). He invited Paul to make his home the headquarters for his work in Corinth, presumably because he believed Paul's message. The house of Titius Justus therefore became the first meeting place of the Corinthian church. Though MSS vary as to the form of the name of Paul's host, we should probably read it as "Titius Justus." With two names, he was doubtless a Roman citizen and may have been from a family brought in by Julius Caesar to colonize Corinth. Many have plausibly argued that while his Roman nomen was Titius and his cognomen Justus, his praenomen was Gaius and he should be identified with the Gaius of Romans 16:23, of whom Paul says, "whose hospitality I and the whole church here [at Corinth] enjoy" (cf. W.M. Ramsay, *Pictures of the Apostolic Church* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910], p. 205, n. 2; E.J. Goodspeed, "Gaius Titius Justus," JBL, 69 [1950], 382-83). In 1 Corinthians 1:14 Paul speaks of a Gaius he personally baptized at the inauguration of the Christian ministry in Corinth. Presumably he was referring to this man

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who hosted the Christian mission when it needed a center, after being expelled from the synagogue.

8 One of the first to accept Paul's message at Corinth was Crispus, the leader or ruler of the synagogue (*ho archisynagogos*), who, together with his whole household, "believed in the Lord." He was not the first believer at Corinth (Stephanas and his family were; cf. 1Cor 16:15). But he was certainly one of the most prominent believers, and his conversion must have made a great impression and led to other conversions. Paul lists him first in 1 Corinthians 1:14-16 among the few that he had personally baptized.

9-10 Paul had come to Corinth in a dejected mood, burdened by the problems in Macedonia and his dismissal at Athens. Of course, he had been encouraged by the reports and the gift brought by Silas and Timothy, and he was beginning to witness a significant response to his ministry. But a pattern had developed in his Galatian and Macedonian journeys of a promising start followed by opposition strong enough to force him to leave. Undoubtedly he was beginning to wonder whether this pattern would be repeated at Corinth. So one night God graciously gave Paul a vision in which "the Lord" (*ho kyrios* --evidently Jesus, as in 23:11) encouraged him not to be afraid but to keep on, assured him of his presence and of suffering no harm, and told him that many "people" (*laos*) in the city were to be Christ's own. Here was one of those critical periods in Paul's life when he received a vision strengthening him for what lay ahead (cf. 23:11; 27:23-24). In this case, it was confirmed by the Gallio incident that followed it.

11 With such a promising start and encouraged by the vision, Paul continued to minister at Corinth for eighteen months. (The figure should be understood to indicate the entire length of his stay.) This period probably stretched from the fall of 50 to the spring of 52, as can be determined from the pericope about Gallio (vv. 12-17). So Luke summarizes the whole of Paul's mission at Corinth by

telling us that for eighteen months he taught in the city "the word of God" (*ton logon tou theou*)--i.e., the message about Jesus, belief in whom brings forgiveness of sins, salvation, and reconciliation with God.

3. *Before the proconsul Gallio* (18:12-17)

12-13 The promise given Paul in the vision was that he would be protected from harm at Corinth, not that he would be free from difficulties or attack (the wording *oudeis epithesetai soi tou kakosai se* of v. 10 is best understood as "You will not be harmed by anyone's attacks" [NEB mg.] or "No one will be able to harm you" [TEV]). As more and more people responded to Paul's preaching, his Jewish opponents attacked him and laid a charge against him. This occurred, Luke says, "while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia" (see Notes). That Luke distinguishes correctly between senatorial and imperial provinces and has the

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former governed by a proconsul on behalf of the senate and the latter governed by a propraetor representing the emperor says much for his accuracy, for the status of provinces changed with the times. Achaia was a senatorial province from 27 B.C. to A.D. 15 and then again from A.D. 44 onwards (as were Cyprus from 22 B.C. and Asia from 84 B.C.; cf. comments on 13:4 and 19:1). It was therefore governed by a proconsul (as were also Cyprus and Asia during this time; cf. comments on 13:7 and 19:38). Macedonia, however, was an imperial province, and therefore Luke rightly called the magistrates at Philippi praetors (*praetores* or *strategoï*; cf. comments on 16:12, 22-24) while he called those at Thessalonica by the special designation of politarchs (cf. comments on 17:6). Gallio was the son of Marcus Annaeus Seneca, the distinguished Spanish rhetorician (50 B.C.-A.D. 40), and a younger brother of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, the Stoic philosopher, politician, and dramatist (4 B.C.-A.D. 65).¹¹ He was born in Cordova at the beginning of the Christian Era and named Marcus Annaeus Novatus. On coming to Rome with his father during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54), he was adopted by the Roman rhetorician Lucius Junius Gallio, and thereafter bore the name of his adoptive father. He was renowned for his personal charm. His brother Seneca said of him, "No mortal is so pleasant to any person as Gallio is to everyone" (*Naturales Quaestiones* 4a, Preface 11); and Dio Cassius spoke of his wit (*History of Rome* 61. 35). An inscription at Delphi recording a reply from the emperor Claudius to the people of Delphi mentions Gallio as being proconsul of Achaia during the period of Claudius's twenty-sixth acclamation as imperator--a period known from other inscriptions to have covered the first seven months of A.D. 52. Proconsuls entered office in the senatorial provinces on 1 July, and therefore it is reasonable to assume that Gallio became proconsul of Achaia on 1 July

51. Gallio was not proconsul of Achaia very long. Seneca tells us that soon after becoming proconsul, Gallio went on a cruise to rid himself of a recurring fever (*Epistulae Morales* 104.

1); and Pliny the Elder speaks of him as later (55 or 56) taking another cruise from Rome to Egypt to relieve his asthma (*Natural History* 31. 33). In 65, along with his brother Mela (the father of the poet Lucan)--and after the enforced

suicide of his other brother Seneca--he became a victim of Nero's suspicions and was killed (Dio Cassius *History of Rome* 62. 25.3). Paul seems to have been preaching in Corinth for eight or nine months before Gallio came to Achaia as proconsul (i.e., from the fall of 50 to 1 July 51). When Gallio took office, the Jews decided to try out the new proconsul. They brought Paul before Gallio on a charge that he was preaching a *religio illicita* and therefore acting contrary to Roman law. The Greek text says that they brought Paul *epi to bema* , which is variously translated "to the judgment seat" (KJV), "before the tribunal" (RSV, JB), and "into court" (NEB, TEV, NIV)--all of which are attempts to translate the expression into a form suitable to modern ears. The "Bema" at Corinth, however, was a large, raised platform that stood in the agora (marketplace) in front of the residence of the proconsul and served as a forum where he tried cases.

14-16 The word "law" (*nomos*) in v. 13 is somewhat ambiguous. Undoubtedly when it was first

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used by Paul's antagonists in their synagogue, it referred to God's law against which they were convinced Paul was speaking. But at the proconsul's forum, they meant "law" to be understood as Roman law, which they charged Paul was breaking. Gallio, however, after hearing their charges, was not at all convinced that this was true. For him the squabble was an intramural one about "a word [NIV, `words'] and names and their own law" (*peri logou kai onomaton, kai nomou tou kath hymas*)--which doubtless means a squabble concerning "a message" (*logos*), not some disruptive action, "names" having to do with an expected Messiah (*onomata*), and particular interpretations of the Jewish law. Gallio's responsibility, as he saw it, was to judge civil and criminal cases, not to become an arbitrator of intramural religious disputes. What Paul was preaching, in his view, was simply a variety of Judaism that did not happen to suit the leaders of the Jewish community at Corinth but which was not for that reason to be declared *religio illicita* . Thus he did not need to hear Paul's defense but ejected the plaintiffs from the forum as not having a case worth being heard by a proconsul. The importance of Gallio's decision was profound. Luke highlights it in his account of Paul's ministry at Corinth and makes it the apex from an apologetic perspective of all that took place on Paul's second missionary journey. There had been no vindication from Roman authorities of Christianity's claim to share in the *religio licita* status of Judaism in Macedonia, and the issue had been left entirely unresolved at Athens. If Gallio had accepted the Jewish charge and found Paul guilty of the alleged offense, provincial governors everywhere would have had a precedent, and Paul's ministry would have been severely restricted. As it was, Gallio's refusal to act in the matter was tantamount to the recognition of Christianity as a *religio licita* ; and the decision of so eminent a Roman proconsul would carry weight wherever the issue arose again and give pause to those who might want to oppose the Christian movement. Later, in the sixties, Rome's policy toward both Judaism and Christianity would be reversed. But for the coming decade or so, the Christian message could be proclaimed in the provinces of the empire without fear of coming into conflict with Roman law, thanks largely to Gallio's decision.

17 Taking their cue from the snub Gallio gave the leaders of the Jewish community, the crowd at the forum (*to bema*)--in an outbreak of the anti-Semitism always near the surface in the Greco- Roman world--took Sosthenes, the synagogue ruler, and beat him in the marketplace before the forum. Gallio, however, turned a blind eye to what was going on, evidently because he wanted to teach those who would waste his time with such trivialities a lesson. Larger Jewish synagogues sometimes had more than one leader or ruler (cf. comments on 13:15), and Sosthenes may have served jointly with Crispus (before his conversion) in the local synagogue chapter at Corinth. Or perhaps he took Crispus's place after the latter's conversion. Perhaps he became a Christian and is the Sosthenes of 1 Corinthians 1:1, who served as Paul's amanuensis in writing the Corinthian believers from Ephesus, though that is only conjecture.

G. An Interlude (18:18-28)

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The ministry at Corinth proceeded without any legal hindrance and with considerable success for some nine months after Gallio's decision. In the spring of 52, however, Paul left Corinth to return to Jerusalem and then to Syrian Antioch--principally to complete a vow at Jerusalem he had taken earlier, probably while at Corinth. In vv. 18-23 Luke briefly summarizes Paul's route. And in vv. 24-28 he uses this interlude in his portrayal of the advance of the Good News to the Gentile world to introduce Apollos (cf. 1Cor 3:5-9; 4:6-7; 16:12).

1. Paul's return to Palestine-Syria (18:18-23)

18 Luke's brevity in this part of Acts has left open in many minds the reason for Paul's leaving Corinth and sailing for Jerusalem and then going on to Syrian Antioch. The reading of the Western and Byzantine texts at v. 21--"I must by all means keep the coming festival at Jerusalem"--assumes that he wanted to be in Jerusalem for either the Passover or Pentecost. Knox, on the other hand, supposes that Paul returned to Jerusalem at this time to attend the Jerusalem Council (which he dates at A.D. 51 and finds depicted in Gal 2:1-10) and that Luke plays down that purpose here because he had mistakenly presented the Jerusalem Council in 15: 1-29, refusing to acknowledge that the issue of Gentile freedom was settled so late in Paul's ministry John Knox, pp. 68-69; see also J.C. Hurd, Jr., "Pauline Chronology and Pauline Theology," in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, edd.

W.R. Farmer, C.F.D. Moule, and R.R. Niebuhr [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967], pp. 225-48). Luke himself, however, may well suggest the reason in telling his readers that Paul "had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken"--though as a Gentile writing to Gentiles, Luke doubtless felt no need to expand on such a distinctly Jewish practice. Nevertheless, that Paul cut his hair at Cenchrea shows that he had earlier taken a Nazirite vow for a particular period of time that had now ended. Such a vow had to be fulfilled at Jerusalem, where the hair would be presented to God and sacrifices offered (cf.

Num 6:1-21; M Nazir 1:1-9:5; Jos. War II, 313 [xv.1]). Some have proposed that Paul cut off his hair at the beginning of his vow. But there is no evidence for this, and much in the literature about Nazirite vows speaks directly against it. Others have called this a "Nazirite-like" vow, feeling somewhat uneasy that Paul at any time in his Christian ministry took a Jewish vow. But for one who thought of himself as a Jewish Christian (2Cor 11:22; cf. Rom 9-11) and who at the conclusion of three missionary journeys to the Gentile world could still insist that he was "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (Acts 23:6; cf. 26:5), such an action should not be thought strange. Evidently at some time during his residence at Corinth--perhaps at its beginning when he was depressed--Paul had taken a Nazirite vow to God as he asked for his intervention. And now having seen God's hand at work in Corinth and a thriving church established there, Paul was determined to return to Jerusalem to fulfill his vow by presenting his hair as a burnt offering and offering sacrifices in the temple (cf. 21:26). The vow could only be fulfilled after a thirty-day

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period of purification in the Holy City (cf. *M Nazir* 3:6, according to the more lenient ruling of the School of Shammai).

19 Boarding a ship at Cenchrea, Paul crossed to Ephesus, the major commercial center and capital of the Roman province of Asia. With him were Aquila and Priscilla, his hosts at Corinth, who were either transferring their business from Corinth to Ephesus or leaving their Corinthian operation in charge of a manager (as possibly they did earlier at Rome) in order to open a new branch at Ephesus. Perhaps Aquila and Priscilla, who seem to have been fairly well-to-do, paid Paul's passage as they joined him on board the ship for Ephesus--and perhaps also paid his passage on to Jerusalem. Being themselves Jewish Christians, they would have appreciated Paul's desire to fulfill his vow at Jerusalem. What happened to Silas and Timothy during this time, we do not know. They may have remained at Corinth to carry on the ministry there. Or perhaps they went with Paul to Jerusalem, then to Antioch in Syria, and back to Ephesus. Less likely it would seem is the suggestion that they sailed to Ephesus with Paul and then stayed with Aquila and Priscilla awaiting his return. On arriving at Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla set about their business in the city. There they were to remain for four or five years, hosting a congregation of believers in their home and sending their greetings back to their Corinthian friends in one of Paul's letters (cf. 1Cor 16:19). They were probably there during Demetrius's riot (cf. 19:23-41), even risking their lives to protect Paul (cf. Rom 16:4). Sometime after Claudius's death in A.D. 54 (perhaps 56), they probably returned to Rome (cf. Rom 16:3). Paul, however, having wanted earlier to minister at Ephesus (cf. 16:6), went to the synagogue and "reasoned" (*dielexato*) with the Jews gathered there. Though it was not the Sabbath, he knew he could find an audience in the synagogue and probably desired to "test the waters" in anticipation of his later return.

20-21 In the synagogue at Ephesus, Paul found a receptive audience. But though

they encouraged him to stay, he seems to have felt that fulfilling his vow at Jerusalem took priority over everything else. Nevertheless, he promised to return, if it were in the will of God. And with a heart lightened by the prospect of a future ministry at Ephesus, he sailed for Jerusalem.

22 Some have suggested that the ship Paul sailed on was really trying to make harbor at Seleucia, the port of Syrian Antioch, but under a heavy north-northeastern spring gale found it easier to land at Caesarea, some 250 miles further south. But that assumes Paul wanted only to return to Syrian Antioch, and it discredits the capability of ancient navigation for the sake of a theory. Paul, however, probably booked passage for Caesarea, the port city of Jerusalem since the time of Herod the Great (cf. comments on 10:1), and that is where he finally disembarked. From Caesarea, Paul "went up" to Jerusalem, some sixty-five miles southeast. That the name "Jerusalem" does not appear in the text has led some to suppose Luke meant only that Paul went up from the harbor at Caesarea into the city to greet the congregation there. But Jerusalem is

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certainly implied by the expressions "went up" (*anabas*) and "went down" (*katebe*), and also by the absolute use of the term "the church" (*he ekklesia*). At Jerusalem, then, he met with the mother church, from which the gospel had spread to both the Diaspora and the Gentile worlds. In addition, and in accord with fulfilling his aim in coming, he entered into a thirty-day program of purification (cf. *M Nazir* 3:6), after which he presented his shorn hair to God in thanksgiving and offered sacrifices. Then he "went down" to Antioch of Syria, some three hundred miles north, reporting to and ministering within the church that originally commissioned him to reach the Gentiles.

23 Paul remained at Syrian Antioch, Luke tells us, for "some time," probably from the summer of 52 through the spring of 53. Then, on what was to be his third missionary journey, he set out for Ephesus some fifteen hundred miles to the west, revisiting the churches throughout "the region of Galatia and Phrygia" and "strengthening all the disciples." The readings "the region of Phrygia and Galatia" (16:6) and "the region of Galatia and Phrygia" (here) seem to be only stylistic variations for the same locality (cf. BC, 5:239). Here, as in 16:6, the expression probably means the Phrygian region of Galatia or some district in southern Galatia where both Phrygian and Celtic (Galatic or Gaulish) dialects could be heard (cf. comments on 16:6). There is no warrant here for supposing that Paul entered the country around Ancyra, Pessinus, or Tavium. "Strengthening all the disciples" most naturally refers to converts made at and in the areas surrounding Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

2. *Apollos at Ephesus and Corinth* (18:24-28)

24-26 Between the time of Paul's stopover at Ephesus (18:19-21) and his return to the city on his third missionary journey (19:1ff.), Apollos came to Ephesus. A native of Alexandria, he was an educated man (*aner logios* , which came also to connote "an eloquent man") and possessed a thorough knowledge of the Jewish

Scriptures. Somewhere and somehow he had received instruction about Jesus, and up to a point he knew the gospel "accurately" (*akribos*). What he knew he accepted. "He spoke with great fervor" (*zeon to pneumati elalei*, taking to *pneumati*, "in the spirit," to refer to Apollos's own spirit) concerning Jesus. When Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos in the synagogue, they recognized some deficiencies in his understanding of the Christian message. So they invited him to their home and explained "the way of God" (*ten hodon tou theou*) to him "more accurately" (the comparative *akribesteron*). Apollos's knowledge of Jesus seems to have come through disciples of John the Baptist ("he knew only the baptism of John"), either when he was in Alexandria or somewhere else in the empire (perhaps even at Ephesus). Presumably he knew that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and something of Jesus' earthly ministry, but he may have known nothing more. When instructed further by Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos readily accepted all God had done in the death and resurrection of Jesus and in sending the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. There is no suggestion that he

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was baptized then. As with some of Jesus' disciples, probably Apollos's earlier "baptism of repentance" was considered Christian baptism when viewed as pointing to Jesus and was therefore not to be redone every time there was a growth in understanding. Nothing is said about his having received the Holy Spirit, though the nature of his later ministry leads to that assumption.

27-28 A number of people who identified themselves in some way with the gospel were at Ephesus before Paul began to minister there--people like Priscilla and Aquila who understood clearly, like Apollos whose understanding was growing, or like those mentioned in 19:1-7, 13-16, whose faith was to some extent deviant. So when Apollos desired to visit Achaia, apparently on behalf of the gospel, the Christians of Ephesus (*hoi adelphoi*, "the brothers"; cf. 16:40; 18:18) encouraged him and sent a letter of commendation, probably written by Priscilla and Aquila, to the believers at Corinth. There he vigorously debated with the Jews and showed from the OT that Jesus was the Messiah (*ton Christon*). 1 Corinthians 14 indicates how highly Apollos was thought of in the Corinthian church and also how highly he was respected by Paul. Perhaps, as Martin Luther first suggested (cf. *Luther's Works*, 55 vols., edd. J. Pelikan and H.T. Lehman [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1958-67], 29:109-241), the Letter to the Hebrews is an example of his biblical argumentation to a group of Jewish Christians in danger of lapsing back to their former Judaistic commitments.

H. At Ephesus (19:1-19)

The third missionary journey of Paul was chiefly devoted to an extended ministry at Ephesus, the city he apparently hoped to reach at the start of his second journey. On his brief visit there less than a year before, it had shown a real response to the gospel. Luke's account of the ministry at Ephesus is much abbreviated, with a very short summary of only five verses (vv. 8-12) sandwiched between two striking vignettes of a deviant kind of faith (vv. 1-7,

13-19). In all, Paul's Ephesian ministry lasted about three years, from approximately 53 through 56.

1. Twelve men without the Spirit (19:1-7)

1 Ephesus was on the western coast of Asia Minor, at the mouth of the Cayster (or Little Meander) River and between the Koressos mountain range and the Aegean Sea. It was founded in the twelfth or eleventh century B.C. by Ionian colonists from Athens as a gateway to the vast resources of the Asian steppes. In its early days it was a secondary port to Miletus, thirty miles south at the mouth of the Meander River. But when Miletus's harbor became clogged with silt and Miletus itself destroyed by the Persians, commerce and power shifted to Ephesus. In 334 B.C. Alexander the Great captured it at the start of his "drive to the East." From Alexander's death to 133 B.C. it was ruled by the Pergamum kings, the most dynamic and

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powerful of the lesser rulers of Alexander's divided empire. With the inevitability of a Roman takeover, Attalus III, the last of the kings of Pergamum, willed the city to Rome at his death, and Ephesus was made the capital of the newly formed Roman province of Asia. Ephesus relied upon two important assets for its wealth and vitality. The first was its position as a center of trade, linking the Greco-Roman world with the rich hinterland of western Asia Minor. But because of excessive lumbering, charcoal burning, and overgrazing the land, topsoils slipped into streams, streams were turned into marshes, and storm waters raced to the sea laden with silt that choked the river's mouth. The Pergamum kings promoted the maintenance of the harbor facilities at Ephesus, and Rome followed suit. But it was a losing battle against the unchecked erosion of the hinterland. In Paul's day, the zenith of Ephesus's commercial power was long since past. Deepening economic decline had cast a shadow over the city. Efforts were repeatedly made to improve the harbor (in A.D. 65 a large-scale attempt was undertaken), but they either failed or provided only temporary relief. Domitian at the end of the first century A.D. was the last ruler to attempt to repair the harbor's facilities and enlarge its dwindling capacities. Today the mouth of the Cayster River is so choked with silt that the ancient harbor works of Ephesus sit back behind a swamp, some seven miles from the sea. The second factor the life of Ephesus depended on was the worship of Artemis (the Lat. Diana), the multibreasted goddess of fertility whose temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. The relation of Artemis of Ephesus to the Greek goddess Artemis is very vague. Though in their distinctive characteristics they were quite different, in the popular mind they were often equated. King Croesus of nearby Lydia (reigned 564-546 B.C.) built the first temple to Artemis one and a half miles northeast of Ephesus. It was rebuilt on the same site in the fourth century B.C. after having been set on fire in 356 B.C. This temple was almost four times the size of the Parthenon at Athens and stood till the Goths sacked Ephesus in A.D. 263. With the decline of its commerce, the prosperity of Ephesus became more and more dependent on the tourist and pilgrim trade associated with the temple and cult of Artemis. At the time of Paul's arrival, the people of Ephesus, while surrounded by signs of past wealth and still enjoying many of its fruits, were becoming

conscious of the precariousness of their position as a commercial and political center of Asia and were turning more toward the temple of Artemis in support of their economy. After revisiting the churches of Galatia (cf. 18:23), Paul "took the road through the interior" (*dielthonta ta anoterika mere* ; lit., "going through the interior districts") and came to Ephesus. He arrived after Apollos had left for Corinth, entering the city probably in the summer of 53. There he found "about twelve men" (v. 7) who professed to be Christian "disciples" (*mathetai*), but in whom Paul discerned something amiss.

2-3 The question Paul put to the twelve, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed," suggests two things: (1) that he assumed they were truly Christians, since they professed to believe; and (2) that he held that true belief and the reception of the Holy Spirit always went

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together, being unable to be separated either logically or chronologically. These two assumptions caused Paul some difficulty when he met these twelve men, for something in their life indicated that one or the other assumption was wrong. When they answered his question by saying, "We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit," he knew the second assumption was not in error. So he asked further about the first one and found that they claimed to have been baptized only with "John's baptism." The account is extremely difficult to interpret, principally because it is so brief. Probably we should assume that these twelve men, while considering themselves Jewish Christian "disciples" in some sense, thought of John the Baptist as the height of God's revelation--perhaps even as the Messiah himself. John 1:19-34 and 2:22-36 are directed against anyone thinking of the Baptist as superior to Jesus. Together with the emphasis upon "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" in Ephesians 4:5, they suggest that a John-the-Baptist sect existed within Jewish Christian circles in Asia in the first century (assuming, of course, the Ephesian connections of the fourth Gospel and the Letter to the Ephesians). As in any such group--particularly before issues become defined and positions solidified--some would have appreciated John the Baptist and yet looked forward to the greater fulfillment of which he spoke, whereas others would have gone no further in their devotion than the Baptist himself--perhaps honoring him as an equal with Jesus or even elevating him higher than Jesus. Apollos seems to have been in the first category for, though from a John-the-Baptist group, he had been taught "accurately" and needed only that Priscilla and Aquila teach him "more adequately" (18:24-26). "Though," as Luke says, "he knew only the baptism of John," he considered it a prolegomenon to the reception of God's Messiah; and when taught about further events and implications, he readily accepted them. The twelve men Paul met, however, apparently made the Baptist the focus of their devotion. Luke calls them "disciples," just as he speaks of Simon of Samaria as having "believed" (cf. 8:13), of the Judiazers as "believers" (cf. 15:5), of the seven sons of Sceva as exorcising demons "in the name of Jesus," and of Sceva their father as "a Jewish chief priest" (cf. 19:13-14). Luke's practice is to portray the spiritual condition of his characters by their actions without always evaluating it. Here it seems, both

from their own statements and from how Paul deals with them, that we should consider these men as sectarians with no real commitment to Jesus at all.

4-7 Despite their being known as disciples, Paul preached Jesus to the men as he would to any of the Jews. "John's baptism," he said, "was a baptism of repentance" that pointed beyond itself and the Baptist to "the one coming after him"--that is, to Jesus. So on their acceptance of Jesus as the focus of Christian faith, they were baptized "into the name of the Lord Jesus" (*eis to onoma tou kyriou Iesou*). Then Paul laid his hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit, evidencing the same signs of the Spirit's presence as the first Jewish believers did at Pentecost-- viz., tongues and prophecy. Doubtless in Paul's mind they were not rebaptized but baptized into Christ once and for all. When baptism by John the Baptist was seen as pointing beyond itself to

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Jesus (as with Apollos), it was apparently taken as Christian baptism and was not repeated on learning and experiencing more of the faith. But when John's baptism was understood as rivaling commitment to Jesus, then on profession of faith in him, Christian baptism "into the name of the Lord Jesus" was administered.

2. *A summary of the apostle's ministry* (19:8-12)

8-10 The ministry of Paul at Ephesus lasted approximately three years (cf. 20:31). It is remarkable how concisely Luke summarizes this extensive period--though perhaps not so remarkable if we may assume from the absence of the pronoun "we" that Luke was not himself an eyewitness of the events here narrated. The conciseness of the passage is particularly notable when compared with Luke's expansive, anecdotal treatments of the ministry at Philippi (cf. 16: 10ff.) and the return journey to Jerusalem (cf. 20:5ff.), where, to judge by the presence of the "we," he was an eyewitness. Yet though we would like to know much more than Luke gives us here, we cannot for that reason fault what we have. In the synagogue at Ephesus, Paul was "arguing persuasively [*dialegomenos kai peithon* ; lit., `arguing and persuading,' a hendiadys construction] about the kingdom of God." He was speaking to those who had earlier received him favorably (cf: 18:19-21), and the three-month hearing they gave him was one of the longest he had in any synagogue. When opposition to "the Way" (*he hodos*) arose within the synagogue, he withdrew and continued to minister for two more years at the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This was probably the hall of a local philosopher named Tyrannus ("Tyrant") or one rented out to traveling philosophers by a landlord of that name. Since it is difficult (except in certain bleak moments of parenthood) to think of any parent naming his or her child "Tyrant," the name must have been a nickname given by the man's students or tenants. As for the rent for the hall, perhaps Priscilla and Aquila shared it or the growing congregation underwrote it. Following the Western text, we might picture Paul as using the hall between the hours of 11 A.M. and 4 P.M.--the time

of the usual midday rest and after Tyrannus had dismissed his students and Paul had completed his morning's work (cf. 20:34). But that is merely conjecture. All we really know is that for two years Paul "reasoned daily" (*kath hemeran dialegomenos* ; or "had discussions daily," NIV) about the claims of Christ and that during this time the gospel radiated out from Ephesus through Paul's converts so that "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord," with the result that many churches in the outlying cities and villages were founded (cf. Col 1:7; 2:1; 4:16; Rev 2-3; Ignatius *To the Ephesians* ; *To the Magnesians* ; *To the Trallians* ; *To the Philadelphians* ; *To the Smyrneans*). Then after sending Timothy and Erastus as his envoys to Macedonia and Achaia, Paul stayed for a while longer at Ephesus (cf. 19:21-22). While there, Paul wrote the Corinthian church a letter on the subject of separation from the ungodly (cf. 1Cor 5:9-10)--a letter either not now extant or partially preserved (as often

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suggested) in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1. In reply he received a letter from certain members of the Corinthian church (cf. 1Cor 7:1) seeking his advice on matters concerning marital problems at Corinth, food previously dedicated to idols, the decorum of women in worship, the observance of the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, and (possibly) the nature and significance of the resurrection. At about the same time he had some visitors from Corinth, whom he identifies as "Chloe's household" (1Cor 1:11), who told of deep and bitter divisions within the church. And from rumors widely circulating (cf. 1Cor 5:1), he knew that among the Corinthian believers there existed blatant immorality and also litigations in the public lawcourts. To deal with all these matters, the apostle wrote a second pastoral letter--1 Corinthians. The problems at Corinth seem to have taken the course of opposition to Paul's authority and criticism of his doctrine, and he was forced to make a "painful visit" to the city in an attempt to settle matters within the church (cf. 2Cor 2:1; 12:14; 13:1). This visit to Corinth from Ephesus is extremely difficult to place historically because Luke's summary of events during this time is so brief and Paul's references so allusive. It may even have been conducted on his behalf by Timothy and Erastus (cf. 19:22) or by Titus (cf. 2Cor 12:17-18; see also 2:13; 7:6, 13-14; 8:6, 16, 23). Nevertheless, the fact that Paul speaks of it as a "painful visit" and that he found it necessary to continue to rebuke his Corinthian converts suggests that it was not entirely successful. His opponents even taunted him, it seems, with being humble in their presence but bold when away (cf. 2Cor 10:1). (For a fuller discussion of the problems at Corinth, see the Introductions to 1 and 2 Corinthians--esp. the latter--in EBC, 10:175-82; 302-15.)

11-12 From his Corinthian correspondence we learn that Paul, while at Ephesus, had his difficulties, which arose chiefly from conditions at Corinth. But Luke does not speak of them or mention any further difficulties at Ephesus beyond his general reference to Jewish opposition (v.

9) and the Demetrius incident (vv. 23-41). Instead, he rounds off his summary of Paul's Ephesian ministry by speaking of "extraordinary miracles" (*dynameis outas tychousas* ; lit., "miracles not of the ordinary kind"--a somewhat strange way to talk about the miraculous) taking place directly through Paul and through his handkerchiefs and aprons being taken to the sick and demon possessed. The particle *te* and the adverbial use of *kai* in the Greek sentence indicate that Luke had in mind two types of "extraordinary miracles": (1) direct healings through the laying on of Paul's hands (note the phrase *dia ton cheiron Paulou* , "through the hands of Paul," which NIV does not pick up), and (2) indirect healings through the application of Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons. The Greek word *soudarion* (a Lat. loan word from *sudarium*) means a face-cloth used for wiping perspiration, corresponding somewhat to our handkerchief--though, of course, the garments of antiquity had no pockets--and the word *simikinthion* (another Lat. loan word from *semicinctium*) means a workman's apron. So prominent was the divine presence in Paul's ministry at Ephesus, Luke tells his readers, that even such personal garments as Paul's sweat- cloths and work-aprons used in his trade of tentmaking and leather working were taken out to

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the sick and demon possessed, and through their application there were cures.

It is certainly strange to read of healings occurring through sweat-cloths and work-aprons. Most commentators are uneasy with the account here and either explain it away as a pious legend or downplay it as verging on the bizzare. Even when the account is accepted as factual, some would prefer to take it as having been done apart from Paul's knowledge and approval. But Ephesus was the home of all sorts of magic and superstition, and the phrase "Ephesian writings" (*Ephesia grammata*) was common in antiquity for documents containing spells and magical formulae (cf. Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 12.548; Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 5.242). So it need not be thought unnatural that just as Paul met his audiences at a point of common ground ideologically in order to lead them on to the Good News of salvation in Christ, so at Ephesus he acted in the way here depicted. The virtue, of course, lay not in the materials themselves but in the power of God and the faith of the recipients. Luke's interest throughout this chapter is in emphasizing the supernatural power of the gospel. Therefore he has highlighted these "extraordinary miracles." Also, he doubtless included reference to miracles done through sweat-cloths and work-aprons in order to set up a further parallel with the ministries of Jesus and Peter, where healings took place by touching Jesus' cloak (Luke 8:44) and through Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15).

3. *The seven sons of Sceva* (19:13-19)

13-16 Most commentators are convinced at this point that Luke has completely set aside his sources for some popular Oriental legend, which he then attempted to recast into an edifying Christian story. Even so staunch a defender of the historical reliability of Acts as Ramsay, after squirming through an account of rebaptism (as he interpreted it) in vv. 1-7 and of healings by means of sweat-cloths and work-aprons in vv. 11-12, found this section to be the proverbial "last straw" and

declared: "In this Ephesian description one feels the character, not of weighed and reasoned history, but of popular fancy; and I cannot explain it on the level of most of the narrative" (*St. Paul the Traveller* , p. 273). The use of magical names in incantations to exorcise evil spirits was common in the ancient world, and it seems to have been especially prominent at Ephesus. In addition, Jewish practitioners of magic were highly esteemed in antiquity, for they were believed to have command of particularly effective spells. The great reluctance of the Jews to pronounce the divine name was known among the ancients and often misinterpreted according to magical principles. Moreover, those connected with the Jewish priesthood would have enjoyed great prestige in magical circles since they were the most likely ones to know the true pronunciation of the Ineffable Name and therefore most able to release its power (cf. Bruce M. Metzger, "St. Paul and the Magicians," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* , 38 [1944], 27-30). Some Jewish exorcists, on coming into contact with Paul and his preaching about Jesus, attempted to make magical use of this new name they had heard. Luke identifies them as "seven

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sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest" (*Skeua Ioudaiou archiereos hepta huioi*). Perhaps they did belong to one of the high priestly families of Jerusalem (even the best families have their deviants), though undoubtedly the title "Jewish chief priest" was a self-designation manufactured to impress their clients and is reported by Luke without evaluation. Perhaps they even professed to accept Paul's message and to be committed to Jesus personally themselves, much as Simon of Samaria did (cf. 8:9-24). But if they thought of themselves as in some sense Jewish Christians, it was primarily for the benefits they could derive for their magical arts from the power of the name of Jesus, and so they simply continued in their old ways with a new twist. When, however, they tried to use this more powerful name in their exorcisms, Sceva's sons found they were dealing with realities far beyond their ability to cope. The demon they were trying to exorcise turned violently on them, and they fled from the house naked and bleeding. The name of Jesus, like an unfamiliar weapon misused, exploded in their hands; and they were taught a lesson about the danger of using the name of Jesus in their dabbling in the supernatural.

17-19 News of what happened spread quickly throughout Ephesus. All who heard were overcome by reverential fear (*phobos*) and held the name of Jesus in high honor. Negatively, they learned not to misuse the name of Jesus or treat it lightly, for it is a powerful name. Positively, many Christians renounced their secret acts of magic and several magicians were converted. Openly demonstrating the change in their lives, they brought their magical scrolls together and burned them in the presence of the gathered congregation (*enopion panton* , or "publicly"). The value of the papyrus scrolls, Luke adds, was estimated at fifty thousand pieces of silver (*argyriou myriadas pente* ; NIV, "fifty thousand drachmas").

1. A Summary Statement 19:20

20 The advances of the gospel into Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia did not come about without great difficulty and repeated discouragements. At times, in fact, matters looked very bleak. Viewed externally, one might even be tempted to agree with W.L. Knox that Paul's "journey into Macedonia had been the height of un wisdom and its results negligible" (*St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* , p. 85). Perhaps Paul felt that way himself when forced to leave the province. But such a view forgets that at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea a flame had been lit that was to spread throughout the area and that, to judge by Paul's extant letters, the churches founded in these cities (certainly at Philippi and Thessalonica, and probably also at Berea) were among his best and most loyal ones. At Athens Paul faced the snobbery and polite refusal of self-satisfied people; and their lack of response, on top of his difficulties in Macedonia, almost drove him to despair. But at Corinth, in spite of his own feelings of "weakness," "fear," and "much trembling" (1Cor 2:3), God worked remarkably, giving Paul an open door and a successful ministry. With success also came problems, though this time from within the congregation. Nevertheless, Paul had much to thank

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God for, and he evidently went to Jerusalem to fulfill his Nazirite vow with much joy. And at Ephesus, after revisiting his Galatian converts, his ministry continued in ways that showed God's presence and power. Paul's second and third missionary journeys read like a slice of life. Having shown in his earlier panels the gradual widening of the gospel to new groups of people and the establishment of a new missionary policy to the Gentiles, Luke in Panel 5 has presented for his readers a graphic account of the gospel's entrance into new regions. It is the story of the church's dedicated service under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit in proclaiming the Good News to those who desperately needed to hear it. It is a story not without elements of opposition and not without times of depression and heart searching. But it is also one of divine blessing, times of elation, and periods of confidence. Through it all God was at work. In looking back on those days, Luke simply says, "In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power."

Panel 6--To Jerusalem and Thence to Rome (19:21-28:31)

The last panel in Acts presents Paul's somewhat circuitous journey to Jerusalem, his arrest and defenses in Jerusalem, his imprisonment and defenses in Caesarea, his voyage to Rome, and his entrance into and ministry at Rome. The panel is introduced by the programmatic statement of 19:21-22 and concludes with the summary statement of 28:31. Three features immediately strike the reader in this sixth panel: (1) the disproportionate length of the panel, including one-third of the total material of Acts; (2) the prominence given the speeches of Paul in his defense; and (3) the dominance of the "we" sections in the narrative portions (cf. 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). It cannot be said that the length is related to the theological significance of the material presented. It seems rather to be related to the apologetic purpose of Luke, particularly in the five defenses, and to the eyewitness character of the narrative with its inevitable elaboration of details (cf.

the Philippian anecdotes of 16:11-40). The events narrated here span the time from approximately 56 through 62.

A. A Programmatic Statement (19:21-22)

21 "After all this had happened" (*hos de eplerothe tauta* ; lit., "when these things were fulfilled") refers to the events bracketed by the participle *plerosantes* ("having fulfilled," or "when they finished," NIV) of 12:25 and the verb *eplerothe* ("were fulfilled," or "happened," NIV) of 19: 21--viz., the events of the first, second, and third missionary journeys of Paul, as recorded in Panels 4 and 5 (12:25-19:20). Some have conjectured that "after all this had happened" has reference only to the two-year ministry of v. 10. But for Luke the fulfillment of the Gentile mission came (1) in the inauguration of the new missionary policy for reaching Gentiles that was established on the first missionary journey and confirmed at the Jerusalem Council (i.e., Panel 4)

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and (2) in the extensive outreach to the Gentile world that took place during the second and third missionary journeys (i.e., Panel 5). All that took place earlier (i.e., Panels 1-3) was for Luke a preparation for the Gentile mission; and all that happened afterwards (i.e., Panel 6), its aftermath and extension into Rome. With the eastern part of the empire evangelized (cf. Rom 15:23, "now there is no more place for me to work in these regions"), Paul decided to return to Jerusalem and then go on to Rome. On the way he would revisit the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, ministering to them and gathering from them a collection for the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem (cf. 1Cor 16:1-4). After Jerusalem and Rome, he planned to take up a Gentile mission in the western part of the empire, using the Roman congregation as the base for that western outreach just as the church at Syrian Antioch had been his base for evangelizing the eastern part of the empire (cf. Rom 15:24-29). Now, however, he must return to Jerusalem, knowing full well that serious difficulties could befall him there (cf. Rom 15:30-32). Luke says that Paul's decision to go to Jerusalem and thence to Rome was *en to pneumati*, which may mean "by his human spirit" and is thus included in the translation "decided" or "resolved" (so NEB, JB, TEV, NIV), or it may refer to direction "by the Holy Spirit" (so RSV). This same expression is used in 18:25 to refer to Apollos's own spirit ("with great fervor," NIV). But in 20:22 *to pneumati* probably has reference to the Holy Spirit and in 21:4 *dia tou pneumatos* certainly does, and both references relate to Paul's travel plans. So we should probably understand *etheto ho Paulos en to pneumati* here as meaning that "Paul decided by the direction of the Spirit" to go to Jerusalem and then on to Rome. This seems to be supported by the use of the impersonal verb *dei* ("must"), which in Luke's writings usually connotes the divine will. By the combination of *en to pneumati* and *dei*, Luke appears to be making the point in this programmatic statement that the aftermath of the Gentile mission and its extension into Rome were likewise under the Spirit's direction, just as the Gentile mission itself had been.

22 Before going to Jerusalem, Paul sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia while he remained "in Asia" (*eis ten Asian*; "in the province of Asia," NIV) somewhat longer--which probably means that he stayed on at Ephesus a while, not that he went on a further mission throughout the province of Asia. Luke has not mentioned Timothy since his return from Macedonia to rejoin Paul at Corinth (cf. 18:5). But he was with Paul at Ephesus and served at some time during Paul's Ephesian ministry as his emissary to Corinth (cf. 1Cor 4:17; 16:10-11). This is the first time we hear of Erastus, though in 2 Timothy 4:20 he is spoken of as a well-known companion of Paul's who had a special interest in the church at Corinth. That he was the treasurer of Corinth referred to in Romans 16:23, however, is not at all likely. Nor can he be identified with the Erastus mentioned in a Latin inscription found at Corinth in 1929, which reads, "Erastus, commissioner of public works [*aedile*], laid this pavement at his own expense" (H.J. Cadbury, "Erastus of Corinth," JBL, 50 [1931], 42-58). Erastus was a common Greek name, and it is unlikely that Luke would mention so casually such a significant figure as the treasurer or

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commissioner of public works of Corinth.

As for Silas, though Luke speaks of him repeatedly in describing the second missionary journey (nine times in 15:40-18:5), he makes no reference to him in the rest of Acts. But while Luke's interest in the last chapters of Acts is focused solely on his hero Paul, that is no reason for us to assume that others were no longer with Paul. For example, Titus is not mentioned at all by Luke, but Paul refers to him as having been extensively involved at various times during the Gentile mission (cf. 2Cor 2:13; 7:6, 13-14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18; Gal 2:1, 3; 2Tim 4:10; Titus 1:4).

B. The Journey to Jerusalem (19:23-21:16)

1. The riot at Ephesus (19:23-41)

Before Paul left Ephesus, a riot threatened his life and could have put an end to the outreach of the gospel in Asia. The situation was undoubtedly more dangerous than Luke's account taken alone suggests. For in what may well be allusions to this riot, Paul said later that he had "fought wild beasts in Ephesus" (1Cor 15:32), had "despaired even of life" in the face of "a deadly peril" in Asia (2Cor 1:8-11), and that Priscilla and Aquila had "risked their lives" for him (Rom 16:4). Luke's purpose in presenting this vignette is clearly apologetic, in line with his argument for the *religio licita* status of Christianity (cf. Panel 5 [16:6-19:20]) and in anticipation of the themes stressed in Paul's speeches of defense (Panel 6, esp. chs. 22-26). Politically, Luke's report of the friendliness of the Asiarchs ("officials of the province," NIV) toward Paul and of the city clerk's intervention on his behalf is the best defense imaginable against the charge that Paul and Christianity threatened the official life of the empire. Religiously, Luke's description of the Ephesian riot makes the point that "in the final analysis the only

thing heathenism can do against Paul is to shout itself hoarse" (Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles* , p. 578).

23 The temporal notation "about that time" (*kata ton kairon ekeinon*) is indefinite (cf. 12:1). By itself, it does not necessarily place the riot at the end of Paul's Ephesian ministry. Nevertheless, by the separation of this pericope from the account of Paul's mission in Ephesus (19:1-19) that closes the fifth panel, and by the temporal reference in 20:1 ("when the uproar had ended"), Luke certainly wanted his readers to understand that the riot set off by Demetrius took place at the close of Paul's ministry there. Also, by the absolute use of "the Way" (*he hodos* , cf. v. 9), he wanted them to understand that what happened was not simply against Paul personally but that it was primarily a threat to the continued outreach of the gospel.

24-27 Artemis of Ephesus was not the fair and chaste huntress of Greek mythology but a Near- Eastern mother-goddess of fertility. Her image at Ephesus, believed to have been fashioned in heaven and to have fallen from the sky (cf. v. 35), depicted her as a grotesque, multibreasted

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woman. Probably the Ephesian Artemis was originally a meteorite that resembled a multibreasted woman and became the object of worship, just as other meteorites at Troy, Pessinus, Enna, and Emesa became sacred cult objects. Her worship incorporated the traditional features of nature worship. Her high priest was a eunuch with the Persian title Megabyzos, and under him other eunuch priests and three classes of priestesses served (cf. L.R. Taylor, "Artemis of Ephesus," BC, 5:251-56). With the silting up of the harbor, the Temple of Artemis became the primary basis for Ephesus's wealth and continued prosperity (cf. comments on 19:1). Situated one and one-half miles northeast of the city, it measured about four hundred by two hundred feet in size and stood as one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Thousands of pilgrims and tourists came to it from far and near; around it swarmed all sorts of tradesmen and hucksters who made their living by supplying visitors with food and lodging, dedicatory offerings, and souvenirs. The Temple of Artemis was also a major treasury and bank of the ancient world, where merchants, kings, and even cities made deposits, and where their money could be kept safe under the protection of deity. Paul's preaching had turned many away from the idolatry of the Artemis cult, with the result that the economy of Ephesus was being affected. One profitable business was the making of "silver shrines of Artemis" (*naous argyrous Artemidos*), which probably does not mean "miniature silver replicas of the Artemis temple" but "silver statuettes of Artemis" herself to be used as souvenirs, votive offerings, and amulets. When the gospel began to touch their income, the silversmiths, led by their guild master Demetrius, instigated a disturbance they hoped would turn the people against the missionaries and stir up greater devotion for the goddess Artemis--a greater devotion that would result in greater profits for them.

28-29 The silversmiths began shouting out the ceremonial chant: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (cf. *Bel and the Dragon* 18, "Great is Bel," and 41, "Great art thou, O Lord, thou God of Daniel"), hoping thereby to stir up the city

on a pretext of religious devotion. The Western text inserts "and running into the street" after the reference to their being "furious," and thus adds a note of local color that may well fit the situation. A magnificent boulevard (the so-called Arcadian Way) ran through the heart of Ephesus from its harbor to its great theater at the foot of Mount Pion. Lined with fine buildings and columned porticoes, it was the main artery of Ephesian life. Into this boulevard Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen poured, sweeping along with them in noisy procession all the residents and visitors within earshot. Their destination was the large open-air theater on the eastern side of the city--a theater whose ruins show it could hold some twenty-four thousand people. In it the city assembly probably met. On their way, the crowd laid hold of Gaius and Aristarchus, two traveling companions of Paul from Derbe and Thessalonica respectively (cf. 20:4; 27:2; the genitive Makedonas probably originally referred only to Aristarchus, contra NIV), and dragged them along into the theater. There, much to the delight of Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths, the procession became a fanatical mob.

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30-31 While there is no evidence that Paul was ever tried by a kangaroo court or imprisoned at Ephesus, as some have maintained, the riot faced him with an extremely serious situation. He wanted to appear before "the assembly" (*ho demos* ; "the crowd," NIV), doubtless believing that because of his Roman citizenship and his earlier successful appearances before government officials, he could quiet the mob, free his companions, and turn the whole affair to the advantage of the gospel. But his Ephesian converts would not let him enter the theater, and even some of "the Asiarchs" (*hoi Asiarchoi* "the officials of the province," NIV) who were his friends sent an urgent message for him not to go there. The Asiarchs were members of the noblest and wealthiest families of the province of Asia and were bound together in a league for promoting the cult of the emperor and Rome. Their headquarters were at Pergamum, where their chief temple was erected about 29 B.C.; other temples were erected in honor of the ruling Caesar at Smyrna and Ephesus. Every year an Asiarch was elected for the entire province, and additional Asiarchs were elected for each city that had a temple honoring the emperor. The title was probably borne for life by officers in the league; so in Paul's day there could have been a number of Asiarchs at Ephesus. Like similar leagues in the other provinces (e.g., the Lyciarch of Lycia, the Galatarch of Galatia), the Asiarch was a quasi-religious organization with certain political functions. While it did not have political authority, it served Rome's interests by securing loyalty to Roman rule (cf. L.R. Taylor, "The Asiarchs," BC, 5:256-62). That some of these men were friendly to Paul and gave him advice in such an explosive situation suggests that imperial policy at this time was not hostile to Christianity. Luke had an apologetic purpose in stressing their action, for, as Haenchen says, "A sect whose leader had Asiarchs for friends cannot be dangerous to the state" (*Acts of the Apostles* , p. 578).

32 The crowd had been worked up into a frenzy. "Some," Luke says, "were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why

they were there"--a remark that reveals Luke's Greek sense of ironical humor. What united them was a common resentment against those who paid no honor to the goddess Artemis. Yet, it seems, there was widespread confusion among the people as to the focus of their resentment.

33-34 The Jewish community at Ephesus was large and enjoyed a number of special exemptions granted by past provincial proconsuls (cf. Jos. Antiq. XIV, 227 [x.12], 263-64 [x.25]). Yet it also suffered from the latent anti-Semitism that lay beneath the surface of Greco-Roman society. In an endeavor to disassociate themselves from the Christians in such an explosive situation, the Jews sent one of their number, Alexander, to the podium. This may be the same Alexander of 1 Timothy 1:19-20 or 2 Timothy 4:14, but that is difficult to prove because the name Alexander was common among both Gentiles and Jews (cf. Jos. Antiq. XIV, 226 [x.12]). To the idolatrous mob, however, Jews were as insufferable as Christians on the point at issue in the riot

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because both worshiped an invisible deity and rejected all idols. So Alexander was shouted down with the chant "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians." This shouting kept on for about two hours.

35-40 The "city clerk" (*ho grammateus*) of Ephesus was the scribe of "the assembly" and its chief executive officer. He came to his position from within the assembly and was not appointed by Rome. As the most important native official of the city, he was held responsible for disturbances within it. He argued with the crowd that a riot would hardly enhance the prestige of the city in the eyes of Rome, and therefore any complaint raised by Demetrius and his guild of silversmiths should be brought before the legally constituted authorities. Gaius and Aristarchus who stood before them were neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of other gods, which were common accusations made by Gentiles against Jews generally (including Jewish Christians) in antiquity (cf. Jos. Antiq. IV, 207 [viii.10]; Contra Apion II, 237 [33]). "The courts [*agoraioi*] are open and there are proconsuls [*anthypatoi*]," the city clerk insisted. "Courts" and "proconsuls" are probably generic references and should not be taken to mean that Ephesus had two agora courts (cf. comments on 18:12) or two provincial proconsuls (as some argue occurred in late A.D. 54, when two assassins of the proconsul Junius Silanus usurped power in Asia; cf. Tacitus *Annals* 13.1). The clerk continued by saying that anything further that could not be brought before the courts and the proconsuls could be presented "in the regular assembly" (*en te ennomo ekklesia* ; "in a legal assembly," NIV), which, according to Chrysostom (*Homilies* 42:2), met three times a month. Otherwise, he concluded, the city would risk being called to account by Rome and losing its favorable status because of a riot for which there was no reason.

41 So the city clerk dismissed the crowd. His arguments (stated above) are highlighted because they are important elements in Luke's apologetic motif in

Acts, which he emphasizes further in the accounts of Paul's five speeches in his own defense.

2. A return visit to Macedonia and Achaia (20:1-6)

This report of Paul's return visit to Macedonia and Achaia is the briefest account of an extended ministry in all of Acts--even more so than the summary of the ministry at Ephesus (cf. 19:8--12). Nevertheless, it can be filled out to some extent by certain personal references and historical allusions in 2 Corinthians and Romans, which were written during this time.

1 Leaving Ephesus, Paul moved north to Troas--probably following the Roman coastal road that connected Ephesus with the Hellespont or perhaps going by ship. At Troas he hoped to find Titus, whom he had earlier sent to Corinth to deal with and report on the situation in the church there. Not finding him and being disturbed about conditions at Corinth, he went on to

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Macedonia without any further preaching in either Troas itself or the surrounding region (cf. 2Cor 2:12-13). As at Athens and Corinth when his concern for the Christians at Thessalonica prevented him from giving full attention to an evangelistic outreach (cf. introductory comments on 18:1-17), so at Troas Paul seems to have been consumed with concern about the Christians at Corinth and unable to launch out into any new missionary venture.

2 In Macedonia (probably at Philippi) Paul met Titus, who brought him reassuring news about the church at Corinth (cf. 2Cor 7:5-16). In response to the triumphs and continuing problems that Titus told him about, Paul sent back to the church the letter known as 2 Corinthians. Many have proposed that 2 Corinthians 10-13, the "Severe Letter," preceded the writing of 2 Corinthians 1-9 (with or without 6:14-7:1), the "Conciliatory Letter." That is possible, though there is nothing to require it. Just how long Paul stayed in Macedonia we do not know. Luke's words seem to suggest a fairly prolonged period. It was probably during this time that the gospel entered the province of Illyricum in the northwest corner of the Balkan peninsula (Rom 15:19; cf. also 2Tim 4:10, where Titus is mentioned as returning to Dalmatia, the southern district of the province of Illyricum). Perhaps Paul himself traveled across the Balkan peninsula on the Via Egnatia to the city of Dyrrhachium, from which the southern district of Illyricum (i.e., Dalmatia) would have been readily accessible. Or perhaps one or more of his traveling companions (e.g., Titus) were the missionaries to this area. But however we visualize the movements of Paul and his colleagues during this time, we are doubtless not far wrong in concluding that this ministry in Macedonia lasted for a year or more, probably from the summer of 56 through the latter part of 57. One activity that especially concerned Paul at this time was collecting money for the relief of impoverished believers at Jerusalem. He instructed the churches in Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia about this (cf. Rom 15:25-32; 1Cor 16:1-4; 2Cor 8-9). The collection was an act of love like that undertaken by the church at Syrian Antioch earlier (cf. 11:27-30). More than that, Paul viewed it as a symbol of unity that would help his Gentile converts realize their debt to the mother church in

Jerusalem and give Jewish Christians an appreciation of the vitality of faith in the Gentile churches.

3 After spending some time in Macedonia, Paul went to Corinth, where he stayed for three months, probably during the winter of 57-58. While there, and before his final trip to Jerusalem, Paul wrote his letter to the church at Rome (cf. Rom 15:17-33). The Greek world in the eastern part of the empire had been evangelized (cf. Rom 15:19, 23)--the flame had been kindled, the fire was spreading--and he desired to transfer his ministry to the Latin world, as far west as Spain (cf. Rom 15:24). He evidently expected to use the Roman church as his base of operations, much as he had previously used the church at Antioch in Syria. Earlier he had hoped to go directly to Rome from Macedonia and later to go from Achaia. But now he needed to go to Jerusalem if the collection from the Gentile Christians was to have the meaning he wanted it to

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have (cf. Rom 15:25-32). So, in place of a visit at this time and in preparation for his future coming to them--and also to expound the righteousness of God--Paul sent a formal letter to the Christians at Rome. The Letter to the Romans is the longest and most systematic of Paul's writings and more a comprehensive exposition of the gospel than a letter as such. Some have suggested that the body of the work was composed earlier in Paul's ministry and circulated among his Gentile churches as a kind of missionary tractate giving a resume of his message and, when directed to Rome, was supplemented by an epistolary introduction (Rom 1:1-17) and the personal elements of chapters 15 and 16 (esp. Rom 15:14-16:24, with the doxology of 16:25-27 part of the original tractate). This view would do much to explain the uncertainties within the early church regarding the relation of the final two chapters to the rest of the writing, the absence of "in Rome" at 1:7 and 15 in some minor MSS, and the presence of two doxologies at 15:33 and 16: 25-27.

At the end of three months in Corinth, Paul sought to sail for Palestine-Syria, doubtless intending to reach Jerusalem in time for the great pilgrim festival of Passover (held in conjunction with the Feast of Unleavened Bread) and probably on a Jewish pilgrim ship. But a plot to kill him at sea was uncovered, and he decided to travel overland through Macedonia. Brigandage was endemic on the ancient roads, and inns were not always safe. With Paul carrying a substantial amount of money collected from the Gentile churches, he undoubtedly wanted to get to Jerusalem as quickly and safely as possible. Nevertheless, he felt it best to spend time on the longer land route, preferring its possible dangers to the known perils of the sea voyage; so he began to retrace his steps through Macedonia.

4 Gathered at Corinth for the return journey to Jerusalem with Paul were representatives from the churches: Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy of Lystra, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia. With the change in travel plans, they then accompanied him (together with Silas and perhaps others) into Macedonia. Almost all the main centers of the

Gentile mission were represented, with the notable exception of Corinth. Perhaps Paul himself had been delegated by the Corinthian church to represent it. On the other hand, the lack of mention of Corinth may suggest continued strained relations within the church there. Luke, who appears to have joined the group at Philippi (cf. v. 5), may have done so as representing Philippi.

5-6 Having been unable to get to Jerusalem for Passover, Paul remained at Philippi to celebrate it and the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Jos. Antiq. XIV, 21 [ii.1]; War VI, 421- 27 [ix.3], for the conjunction of the two festivals in the first century). He sent his Gentile companions on to Troas and stayed on at Philippi, apparently with Silas and Timothy. Then after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the missionaries--accompanied by Luke (note the "we" section of vv. 5-15; cf. also 16:10-17; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16)--went down to Neapolis, the port city of

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Philippi, and crossed the Aegean to Troas. It was evidently a difficult crossing because it took five days instead of two days as earlier (16:11).

3. *The raising of Eutychus* (20:7-12)

From 20:5 through the end of Acts (28:31), Luke's narrative gives considerable attention to ports of call, stopovers, and time spent on Paul's travels and includes various anecdotes. It contains the kind of details found in a travel journal, and the use of "we" in 20:5-15; 21:1-18; and 28:16 shows its eyewitness character.

7 Though Paul himself had not undertaken a mission at Troas (cf. 2Cor 2:12-13), the gospel had radiated out from many centers of influence in Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia to penetrate the Gentile world of the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Thus at Troas Paul and his colleagues found a group of believers and met with them "to break bread" and to give instruction regarding the Christian life. The mention of their meeting "on the first day of the week" (*en de te mia ton sabbaton*) is the earliest unambiguous evidence we have for Christians gathering together for worship on that day (cf. John 20:19, 26; 1Cor 16:2; Rev 1:10). The Christians met in the evening, which was probably the most convenient time because of the necessity of working during the day. They met, Luke tells us, "to break bread" (*klasai arton*), which after Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 and 11:17-34 must surely mean "to celebrate the Lord's Supper" (cf. comments on 2:42). At this time Paul "spoke to" (*dielegeto*; lit., "reasoned" or "discussed with") the believers till midnight.

8-9 "As Paul talked on and on" (*dialegomenou tou Paulou*; lit., "during the course of the discussion by Paul"), Eutychus went to sleep and fell to his death. He may simply have been bored by Paul's long discussion. Luke's reference to "many lamps" [*lampades hikani*; lit., "many torches"] in the upstairs room"

suggests that lack of oxygen and the hypnotic effect of flickering flames caused Eutychus's drowsiness--thereby clearing his hero Paul of any blame. But whatever its cause, Eutychus's fall brought the meeting to a sudden and shocking halt. They dashed down and found him dead.

10-11 Of course, Paul also ran down. In an action reminiscent of Elijah and Elisha (cf. 1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:34-35), he "threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him." Eutychus was restored to life. Then they returned to their third-story room, where they had a midnight snack (here the compound "broke bread and ate," *klasas ton arton kai geusamenos* , signifies an ordinary meal, not the Lord's Supper) and Paul talked on till dawn.

12 There is no hint that Paul took the incident as a rebuke for long-windedness. Nor were the people troubled by the meeting's length. They were eager to learn and only had Paul with them a

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short time. It was an evening of great significance for the church at Troas: Paul had taught them, they had had fellowship in the Lord's Supper, and they had witnessed a dramatic sign of God's presence and power. No wonder Luke says that they "were greatly comforted" (*pareklesan ou metrios* ; lit., "they were comforted not a little").

4. From Troas to Miletus (20:13-16)

13 Leaving Troas, Paul's companions took passage on a coastal vessel that was to stop at various ports along the western coast of Asia Minor. Paul, however, waited a while longer at Troas, perhaps to make sure Eutychus was all right; and then, while the boat went around Cape Lectum, he took the direct route to Assos on the Roman coastal road and got there in time to join his colleagues on board. He may have wanted to avoid the northeastern winds that blew around Cape Lectum or may just have wanted to be alone with God on the walk to Assos.

14-15 Assos (modern Bahram Koi) was twenty miles south of Troas, on the Gulf of Adramyttium. It was on the Roman coastal road and faced south toward the island of Lesbos. The boat went on to Mitylene, a splendid port on the southeast coast of Lesbos and the chief city of this largest of the islands of western Asia Minor. From there they went to Kios, the major city of the island of Kios and an early free port (until Vespasian suspended its rights and brought it under Roman authority); then they passed through (*parebalomen* ; "we crossed over," NIV) the channel separating Kios from the mainland of Asia Minor to come to Samos, an island directly west of Ephesus. So the boat arrived at Miletus, the ancient port at the mouth of the Meander River, some thirty miles south of Ephesus (cf. comments on 19:1).

16 Paul had to miss the Passover at Jerusalem (cf. comments on vv. 3, 5-6). But

he wanted, if at all possible, to get to Jerusalem for Pentecost on the fiftieth day after Passover (cf. comments on 2:1). This was the second of the great pilgrim festivals of Judaism. (Sukkoth or Tabernacles, some four months after Pentecost, was the third.) Paul had previously decided not to take a boat that stopped at Ephesus, for he evidently preferred to forego the emotional strain of another parting with the entire Ephesian church and to avoid (possibly) some local danger. The Aegean crossing had taken five days, Paul and his companions had remained at Troas seven days, the trip along the western coast of Asia Minor would have taken at least another ten days, and they had yet to sail across the Mediterranean and then travel by land from Caesarea up to Jerusalem. So Paul was content to sail past Ephesus.

5. Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders (20:17-38)

Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders is the nearest approximation to the Pauline letters in Acts. Its general content recalls how in his letters Paul encouraged, warned, and

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exhorted his converts. Moreover, its theological themes and vocabulary are distinctly Pauline. In his three missionary sermons (13:16-41; 14:15-17; 17:22-31) and five defenses (chs. 22-26), Paul addressed non-Christian audiences. But he was speaking to Christians here. It is significant that, in a situation similar to those he faced in many of his letters, this farewell to the Ephesian elders reads like a miniature letter of his. This becomes all the more significant when we recall that nowhere else in Acts is there any evidence for a close knowledge of Paul's letters. The address is constructed in a way familiar to all readers of Paul's letters. The body of it has three parts, which deal with (1) Paul's past ministry at Ephesus (vv. 18-21), (2) Paul's present plans in going to Jerusalem (vv. 22-24), and (3) the future of Paul himself and of the church at Ephesus (vv. 25-31). It concludes with a blessing (v. 32) and then adds further words of exhortation that point the hearers to Paul's example and the teachings of Jesus (vv. 33-35). Heading each section is an introductory formula: "you know" (*hymeis epistasthe*) at v. 18; "and now behold" (*kai nyn idou*) at v. 22; "and now behold I know" (*kai nyn idou ego oida*) at v. 25; and "and now" (*kai ta nyn*) at v. 32.

17 At Miletus the coastal boat docked for a number of days to load and unload cargo. So Paul took the opportunity of sending for the elders of the Ephesian church to join him at Miletus. The road back to Ephesus around the gulf was considerably longer than the thirty miles directly between Ephesus and Miletus. It would have taken some time to engage a messenger and summon the elders, who could hardly have made the return trip as quickly as a single runner. Doubtless, therefore, we should think of the elders as getting to Miletus, at the earliest, on the third day of Paul's stay there.

18-21 Paul's address to the Ephesian elders begins with an apologia that closely parallels 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12. As at Thessalonica, evidently Paul's Ephesian opponents had been prejudicing his converts against him in his absence; he

therefore found it necessary to defend his conduct and teaching by appealing to his hearers' knowledge of him. The opposition at Ephesus, like that at Thessalonica, seems to have been chiefly Jewish and to have insisted that full acceptance with God could come only through a fully developed Judaism. Therefore Paul had to declare, "I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you." His preaching to both Jews and Gentiles focused on "repentance to God" (*ten eis theon metanoian* ; "that they must turn to God," NIV) and "faith in the Lord Jesus" (*pistin eis ton kyrion Iesoun* ; "faith in our Lord Jesus," NIV)--a content wholly sufficient for salvation (cf. Rom 10:9-10; 2Cor 5:20-6:2; also Acts 26:20-23).

22-24 The second section of Paul's address concerns his plans to go to Jerusalem. Many have claimed a discrepancy between his being "compelled by the Spirit" to go to Jerusalem (20:22-24) and his being warned by the Spirit not to go to Jerusalem in 21:4, 10-14, and have questioned Luke's reporting here in light of their understanding of the situations at Tyre and

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Caesarea. But Luke opened Panel 6 of Acts with the statement that Paul's decision to go to Jerusalem was "by the Spirit" (cf. comments on 19:21), and nothing here is incompatible with that programmatic statement. Both compulsion and warning were evidently involved in the Spirit's direction, with both being impressed upon Paul by the Spirit at various times as he journeyed--probably through Christian prophets he met along the way. So he considered it necessary to complete his ministry of testifying to the grace of God throughout the eastern part of the empire by taking to the Jerusalem believers the money sent by Gentile believers in Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia--a contribution he looked on as a tangible symbol of the faith of these Gentiles and the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

25-27 In the third section of his address, Paul began by speaking of his own future expectations after visiting Jerusalem. He told the Ephesian elders that neither they nor any of those he had ministered to in the eastern part of the empire would ever see him again and that he felt free from any further responsibility in the East because he had done all that he could in proclaiming "the whole will of God." Harnack, who accepted the hypothesis of two Roman imprisonments, concluded from 2 Timothy 4 that Paul did in fact return later to Asia after being released from his imprisonment at Rome and that therefore for Luke to record the premonition in v. 25 (which was falsified by later events) meant that he wrote before Paul's release and further ministry (Date of Acts, p. 103). On the other hand, Dibelius, who denied such an early date for the writing of Acts, used this passage to dismiss a two-imprisonment theory, for, as Haenchen (Dibelius's closest disciple) says, "Anyone who writes thus knows nothing of Paul's deliverance and return to the East, but rather of his death in Rome" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 592). However, in accord with our acceptance of an early date for the writing of Acts (cf. Introduction: Date of Composition) and our belief that two Roman imprisonments can be inferred from the data, we judge Harnack's view to be closer to the truth. Romans 15:23-29 clearly indicates that Paul at this time intended to leave his ministry in the East and, after visiting Jerusalem, move on to

the western part of the empire with Rome as his base. But it is not impossible that later his plans changed (as they did at various times throughout his eastern campaign) and that Luke wrote at a time when the remembrance of Paul's purpose not to return to the East was still fresh and his modification of it still future.

28-31 The third section of Paul's address continues with an exhortation to the Ephesian elders in light of what Paul sees will soon take place in the church. He warns regarding persecution from outside and apostasy within (cf. 1Tim 1:19-20; 4:1-5; 2Tim 1:15; 2:17-18; 3:1-9, which tell of a later widespread revolt against Paul's teaching in Asia, and Rev 2:1-7, which says that the Ephesian church abandoned its first love). So he gives the elders the solemn imperative of v. 28. Theologically, much in Luke's precis of Paul's address reflects Paul's thought and expression at this stage in his life, as these are revealed in the letters he wrote at Ephesus (1 Cor), in Macedonia (2 Cor), and at Corinth (Rom) right before this time. Paul's use of the word "church"

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(*ekklesia*) is an interesting case in point. While in the salutations of his Galatian and Thessalonian letters he used "church" in a local sense (cf. Gal 1:2, "to the churches in Galatia"; 1Thess 1:1 and 2Thess 1:1, "to the church of the Thessalonians"), in addressing his converts at Corinth he used the word more universalistically: "To the church of God in Corinth" (1Cor 1:2; 2Cor 1:1). And thereafter in his writings "church" appears always in a universal sense (cf. esp. Eph, Col). Likewise, his easy association of "God" with the one who obtained the church for himself "with his own blood" (i.e., Jesus) corresponds most closely in expression to the doxology of Romans 9:5 that speaks of "Christ, who is God over all, forever praised." In addition, reference to the blood of Jesus (i.e., *he haima tou idiou* , "his own blood") as being instrumental in man's redemption appears first in Paul's writings at Romans 3:25 and 5:9 (thereafter Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:20).

32 Paul concluded his address with a blessing, committing them "to God and to the word of his grace." Though Paul must leave them, God was with them and so was his word--the word of grace that was able to build them up, give them an inheritance, and sanctify them. Again, the expressions used in Luke's precis of Paul's blessing comprise a catena of Pauline terms: "grace" (which appears in almost all his salutations and benedictions, as well as at the heart of his expositions); "build up" (cf. 1Cor 8:1; 10:23; 14:4, 17; 1Thess 5:11); "inheritance" (cf. Rom 8: 17; Gal 3:18; Eph 1:14; 5:5; Col 3:24); and "sanctified" (cf. Rom 15:16; 1Cor 1:2; 6:11; 7:14; Eph 5:26; 1Thess 5:23).

33-35 Following his blessing, Paul adds a few words of exhortation (as in his letters), urging the elders of the Ephesian church to care for the needs of God's people without thought of material reward. He asks them to follow his example (cf. Philippians 3:17) and calls on them to remember the words of Jesus applicable here: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Paul often related his ethical exhortations to the teachings of Jesus (cf. Rom 12-14; 1Thess 4:1-12) and

the personal example of Jesus (cf. Philippians 2:5-11). So he does that here. The words themselves do not appear in any of the Gospels. But they can be approximately paralleled by Luke 6:38, and the spirit they express certainly permeates the portrayals of Jesus in all four Gospels. While some believe the words to be a post-ascension revelatory oracle by a Christian prophet that was attributed to Jesus, it is probably truer to ascribe them to the original Jesus tradition that circulated among the churches in a collection of Jesus' "Sayings" (the "Logia," or "Q"), whether written or oral.

36-38 When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with the Ephesian elders and prayed with them. On the basis of the parallels between this farewell address and Paul's letters, the substance of what he prayed for can be found in such places as Ephesians 1:15-23; Philippians 1:3-11; Colossians 1:3-14; and 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; 3:11-13; 5:23-24. After a deeply affectionate and sorrowful farewell with tears on both sides, Paul and his traveling companions

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boarded the ship.

6. *On to Jerusalem* (21:1-16)

The narrative of Paul's journey to Jerusalem is of literary and historical significance because it comprises the third of Luke's four "we" sections (21:1-18; cf. 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 27:1-28:16). The material in this section seems to be based on a travel journal of one of Paul's companions (cf. Introduction: The Sources of Acts) and includes various details about the trip, along with some anecdotes. This section is also theologically significant because Luke appears to be describing Paul's trip to Jerusalem in terms of Jesus' going up to Jerusalem to die. Luke knows, of course, that Paul did not die at Jerusalem. Yet he seems to sketch out Paul's journey to Jerusalem in terms that roughly parallel that of Jesus: (1) a similar plot by the Jews; (2) a handing over to the Gentiles (cf. v. 11); (3) a triple prediction on the way of coming suffering (cf. 20:22-24; 21:4, 10-11; see also Luke 9:22, 44; 18:31-34); (4) a steadfast resolution (cf. v. 13); and (5) a holy resignation to God's will (cf. v. 14). As Luke has reserved for Paul the mission to the Gentiles, which Jesus saw as inherent in the Servant theology of Isaiah 61 (cf. Luke 4:16-21; see comments at introduction to Part II: The Christian Mission to the Gentile World), so he describes Paul's journey to Jerusalem in terms reminiscent of the Suffering Servant.

1-2 "After we had torn ourselves away" (the passive participle *apospasthentas* suggesting emotional violence in the parting), Luke says "we" (i.e., Paul and his party) continued by boat to Cos. This small island was one of the Dodecanese group and a free state within the province of Asia in NT times. The next day they sailed to Rhodes, the capital of the large Dodecanese island of Rhodes just twelve miles off the mainland of Asia Minor. In the Greek period, Rhodes had been a rich and powerful city-state. But in Paul's day it was little more than a beautiful port with an aura of past glory that still lingers in the Rhodes of today. The next

stop was Patara, a Lycian city on the southwest coast of Asia Minor. Patara, a large commercial city with a fine harbor, served as a favorite port of call for large ships traveling between the eastern Mediterranean ports of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt and the Aegean ports in Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia. There Paul and his party boarded a large merchant ship bound nonstop for Tyre, for they desired to travel quickly.

3 Sailing the four hundred miles from Patara to Tyre, the famous Phoenician seaport of Syria, they passed by Cyprus to the south. John Chrysostom of Syrian Antioch said that the voyage took five days (*Homilies* 45.2), which is as intelligent an approximation as any.

4 A church had been established at Tyre through the witness of the Christian Hellenists forced to leave Jerusalem at the time of Stephen's martyrdom (cf. 11:19). Paul had fellowship with the believers there while the ship was unloading. Their trying to dissuade him "through the Spirit"

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(*dia tou pneumatos*) from going on to Jerusalem may mean that the Spirit was ordering Paul not to continue with his plans. In that case his determination to proceed was disobedience to the Spirit. Or it may be that Paul doubted the inspiration of these Tyrian believers (so K. Lake, BC, 4:266). Probably, however, we should understand the preposition *dia* ("through") as meaning that the Spirit's message was the occasion for the believers' concern rather than that their trying to dissuade Paul was directly inspired by the Spirit. So in line with 19:21 and 20:22-24, we should treat this not as Paul's rejection of a prophetic oracle but as another case of the Spirit's revelation to Christian prophets of what lay in store for Paul at Jerusalem and of his new friends' natural desire to dissuade him (cf. vv. 10-15).

5-6 After a scene reminiscent of the parting with the Ephesian elders (cf. 20:36-37), Paul and his companions sailed from Tyre.

7 The ship went on to Ptolemais (Acco, or modern Acre on the north cove of Haifa bay), another ancient Phoenician seaport some twenty-five miles south of Tyre. There it made harbor for a day, undoubtedly again to unload cargo. Once more Paul met with the believers of the city. Probably Christianity at Ptolemais also stemmed from the witness of the Hellenistic Christians (cf. 11:19).

8-9 Paul and his party came to Caesarea, the magnificent harbor and city built by Herod the Great as the port of Jerusalem and the Roman provincial capital of Judea (cf. comments on 10:

1). Caesarea is thirty-two miles south of Ptolemais. Luke does not say so, but Paul and his companions probably reached it by the ship they had crossed the Mediterranean on instead of disembarking at Ptolemais and walking to Caesarea. There they stayed with Philip the evangelist (not the apostle Philip)--one of the seven who had been appointed in the early days of the Jerusalem church to take care of the daily distribution of food (cf. 6:1-6). He had evangelized in Samaria and the maritime plain of Palestine (cf. 8:4-40), after which he apparently settled

at Caesarea for some twenty years. Paul stayed at Philip's home for "a number of days" (*hemeras pleious* , v. 10). The timing of Paul's stopovers from Troas to Caesarea had been largely dependent on the shipping schedules. But having disembarked at Caesarea, he could arrange his own schedule. For a man in a hurry to get to Jerusalem, this delay of several days (perhaps up to two weeks) seems strange and leads us to ask why Paul broke his journey here. He might have wanted to rest after his strenuous trip from Corinth to Philippi by land and from Philippi to Caesarea by sea. Certainly he would have been warmly welcomed by the Caesarean believers. More to the point, however, is the fact that he wanted to be in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (cf. 20:16)--not just to get there as early as possible, but to arrive at what he believed was the strategic moment. So Paul's stay in Caesarea was probably a deliberate matter of timing. Luke speaks of Philip's four unmarried daughters as prophetesses (*propheteuousai*), yet says

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nothing about what they prophesied. Had he been in the habit of making up speeches for the characters in Acts, this would have been a prime opportunity for doing so. Perhaps these prophesying maidens and their father gave Luke source material for his two volumes, possibly on women for his Gospel or on the mission in Samaria and the Ethiopian eunuch for Acts. He could have received this matter from them during this visit and during the two-year period of Paul's imprisonment in the city (cf. Harnack, *Luke*, pp. 155-57). Eusebius tells us that Philip and his daughters eventually moved to Hierapolis in the province of Asia (probably fleeing the Roman antagonism toward the Jews in Palestine from the mid-sixties on), and that his daughters provided information on the early days of the Jerusalem church for Papias, the author of five books (not extant) on "Our Lord's Sayings" (cf. *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39).

10-14 While Paul was at Caesarea, the Jerusalemite prophet Agabus (cf. 11:27-28) came there. With the belt that held Paul's outer cloak together, he tied his own feet and hands in an act of prophetic symbolism (cf. 1 Kings 11:29-39; Isa 20:2-6; Ezek 4:1-5:17) and announced, "In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles." In response to this dramatic prophecy, the Caesarean believers--together with Paul's own traveling companions (note the "we" of v. 12)--begged him not to go. But Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem came from an inward spiritual constraint that could not be set aside. It had come to Paul by the Spirit's direction (cf. 19:21; 20:22) in response to a growing conviction that he must present the gift from the churches personally for it to be understood as the symbol of unity he intended it to be (cf. 1Cor 16:4 with Rom 15:31). Paul well knew that his reception at Jerusalem might be less than cordial (cf. Rom 15:30-32). And when they learned of the dangers ahead of him, his friends naturally tried to dissuade him.

15-16 Paul and his colleagues, accompanied by some Caesarean Christians, took the road up to Jerusalem, some sixty-five miles away to the southeast. There they

brought him to the home of Mnason, a Cypriot and "an early disciple" (*archaio mathete* --viz., a disciple of Jesus from the beginning of the Jerusalem church). Not everyone in the Jerusalem church would have been prepared to have Paul and his company of Gentile converts as house guests during Pentecost. But the Caesarean Christians knew their man.

C. Various Events and Paul's Defenses at Jerusalem (21:17-23:22)

1. Arrival at Jerusalem (21:17-26)

17-18 With these two verses, the third "we" section of Acts concludes (cf. 16:10-17; 20:5-15- 21:1-18, 27:1-28:16). But it is likely that the "we" is dropped in 21:19-26:32 for purely literary reasons and that we should assume Luke's presence in Palestine for a longer time than vv. 17- 18 themselves imply. Where Paul is the focus of the narrative--particularly in his discussion with

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the leaders of the Jerusalem church, his arrest in the temple precincts, and his five speeches of defense at Jerusalem and Caesarea--Luke speaks only of him. It was probably at Mnason's house that the believers gathered to receive Paul and his party "warmly." Then on the next day, as Luke says, "Paul and the rest of us" called on James. Perhaps Peter, John, and others of the Jerusalem apostles had been in the city fifty days earlier for Passover. But from Luke's not mentioning them here we may assume that they were away from Jerusalem at the time. James was the resident leader of the Jerusalem church (cf. comments on 12:17 and 15:13). Sharing with him in the administration of the church was a body of elders (*hoi presbyteroi* --perhaps a band of seventy, patterned, as many have surmised, on the Sanhedrin)--who were also there to meet Paul and his colleagues.

19 On this occasion Paul "reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry." Undoubtedly he also presented the collection from the Gentile churches to James and the elders. Nowhere in Acts (except later at 24:17, in reporting Paul's speech before Felix) has Luke mentioned this collection for the Christians of Jerusalem, probably because he did not know how to explain to his Gentile readers (1) its significance as being much more than a way of currying favor and (2) Paul's fears that the Jerusalem Christians might not accept it. But the presentation of this collection was the chief motive of Paul's going to Jerusalem (cf. 1Cor 16:1- 4; Rom 15:25-27). And he felt it absolutely necessary to present it personally to the Jerusalem church so that it be viewed as a true symbol of faith and unity and not as a bribe--though he feared both opposition from the Jews and rejection by the Jewish Christians of the city (cf. Rom 15:30-31).

To understand Paul's fears, we must realize that the Jerusalem church was increasingly being caught between its allegiance to the nation and its fraternal relation to Paul's Gentile mission. To accept the contribution from the Gentile

churches was to be identified further with that mission and to drive another wedge between themselves and their compatriots. True, they had accepted such a contribution earlier (cf. 11:27-30) and had declared their fraternity with Paul in previous meetings (cf. Gal 2:6-10; Acts 15:13-29). But with the rising tide of Jewish nationalism and a growing body of scrupulous believers in the Jerusalem church (perhaps as a result of a large number of Essenes being converted), Jewish Christian solidarity with the Gentile mission was becoming more and more difficult to affirm if the Jerusalem church's relations with the nation were to be maintained and opportunities for an outreach to Israel kept open. Undoubtedly Paul recognized the increased tensions at Jerusalem. No wonder he feared that James and the elders, for the sake of their Jewish relations and mission, might feel themselves constrained to reject the contribution, thus severing, in effect, the connection between the Pauline churches and the Jerusalem church--which would have been a disaster in many ways. Luke, however, seems to have found all this exceedingly difficult to explain to his Gentile readers and so excluded any mention of the collection here and earlier in his account. (Such a rationale as this for Luke's handling of the collection Paul brought to Jerusalem in no way impugns the fact of biblical

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inspiration. Like all the biblical writers, Luke shows his humanness in his writing. His reticences, as in this instance, are not incompatible with inspiration.)

20-24 James and the elders responded to Paul's report and the gift from the churches by praising God. Yet they also urged Paul to join with four Jewish Christians who were fulfilling their Nazirite vows and to pay for their required offerings. In effect, they were saying to Paul, "We can accept this gift from the churches and so identify ourselves openly with your Gentile mission, if you will join with these men and identify yourself openly with the nation." Thus they were protecting themselves against Jewish recriminations while at the same time affirming their connection with Paul and his mission. And, as they saw it, they were providing Paul with a way of protecting himself against a slanderous accusation floating about that he was teaching Jews to apostatize from Judaism. In view of his having come earlier to Jerusalem in more placid circumstances to fulfill a Nazirite vow of his own (cf. 18:18-19:22), Paul would not have viewed such a suggestion as particularly onerous. It doubtless seemed to all concerned a particularly happy solution to the vexing problems both Paul and the Jerusalem church were facing.

25 Many commentators have argued that the fourfold Jerusalem decree (cf. 15:20, 29) has no relevance to this situation but was only brought in to inform Paul for the first time of something drawn up behind his back at Jerusalem after the Jerusalem Council. Yet the reference to the decree here is closely connected with what has gone before and should be viewed as a reminder of the early Christians' agreed-on basis for fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers. Having urged Paul to follow their proposed course of action, the leaders of the Jerusalem church go on to assure him that this in no way rescinds their earlier decision to impose nothing further on Gentile converts than these four injunctions given for the sake of harmony within the church and in order not to impede the progress of the Jewish Christian mission.

26 Coming from abroad, Paul would have had to regain ceremonial purity by a seven-day ritual of purification before he could be present at the absolution ceremony of the four Jewish Christians in the Jerusalem temple. This ritual included reporting to one of the priests and being sprinkled with water of atonement on the third and seventh days. To imagine that Paul was here taking upon himself a seven-day Nazirite vow conflicts with Jewish law because thirty days were considered the shortest period for such a vow (cf. *M Nazir* 3:6). What Paul did was to report to the priest at the start of his seven days of purification, inform him that he was providing the funds for the offerings of the four impoverished men who had taken Nazirite vows, and return to the temple at regular intervals during the week for the appropriate rites. He would have also informed the priest of the date when the Nazirite vows of the four would be completed (or, perhaps, they were already completed, awaiting only the offerings and presentation of the hair) and when he planned to be with them (either with all of them together or with each one individually) for the absolution ceremony. To pay the charges for Nazirite offerings was

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considered an act of piety and a symbol of identification with the Jewish people (cf. Jos. Antiq. XIX, 294 [vi.1], on Herod Agrippa I's underwriting the expenses for a number of poor

Nazirites).

2. *Arrest in the temple* (21:27-36)

27-29 The strategy of Paul's taking a vow and paying for the Nazirite offerings hardly proved successful--probably nothing could have conciliated those whose minds were already prejudiced against Paul. Jews from Asia who had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost determined to take more effective action against him than they had at Ephesus. So toward the end of Paul's seven-day purification (possibly when he came to receive the water of atonement on the seventh day), they instigated a riot under the pretense that he had brought Trophimus, the Gentile representative from Ephesus, beyond the barrier (the *Soreg*) that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the temple courts reserved for Jews alone. Josephus described the wall separating the Court of the Gentiles from the Holy Place, or inner courts reserved for Jews alone, as "a stone balustrade, three cubits high [c.41/2 feet high; though *M Middoth* 2:3 says it was 'ten hand-breadths high,' c.21/2 feet high] and of excellent workmanship" (Jos. War V, 193 [v.2]). "In this at regular intervals," he said, "stood slabs giving warning, some in Greek, others in Latin characters, of the law of purification, to wit that no foreigner was permitted to enter the Holy Place, for so the second enclosure of the temple was called" (ibid., V, 194 [v.2]; cf. VI, 124-26 [ii.4]; Antiq. XV, 417 [xi.5]). One of these Greek notices was found by C.S. Clermont-Gannau in 1871 and two Greek fragments of another were found in 1935. The complete notice reads: "No foreigner is to enter within the balustrade and embankment around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his death which follows" (cf. "New Discoveries," PEQ, 3 [1871], 132). Roman authorities were so conciliatory

of Jewish scruples about this matter that they ratified the death penalty for any Gentile--even a Roman citizen--caught going beyond the balustrade (*Soreg*) (cf. Jos. War VI, 126 [ii.4]). The charge against Paul resulted from the fact that he and Trophimus were seen together in the city, which led to the assumption that they went together into the Holy Place in the temple. But as Bruce observes, "It is absurd to think that Paul, who on this very occasion was going out of his way to appease Jewish susceptibilities, should have thus wantonly flouted Jewish law and run his own head into danger" (*Book of the Acts* , p. 434, n.46).

30 "The whole city [*he polis hole*]," Luke tells us in natural hyperbole, "was aroused." The crime Paul was alleged to have committed (cf. comments on v. 29) was a capital one and could easily ignite the fanatical zeal of the many pilgrims in Jerusalem. So they seized Paul in one of the inner courts of the temple and dragged him out to the Court of the Gentiles. Then the temple police who patrolled the area and stood guard at the gates leading into the inner courts closed

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the gates in order to prevent the inner courts from being defiled by the tumult and possible bloodshed (cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem* , pp. 209-10).

31-32 Word of the riot came to "the commander of the cohort" (*to chiliarcho tes speires* , "the commander of the Roman troops," NIV) garrisoned in the Fortress of Antonia, to the north of the temple precincts, who, with soldiers (*stratiotes*) and some centurions (*hekatontarches*), rushed into the mob and prevented the people from beating Paul further. While the temple police were drawn from the ranks of the Levites (cf. comments on 4:1), the commander of the fortress was a Roman military officer whose responsibility it was to keep peace in the city. The Fortress of Antonia was built by Herod the Great to overlook the temple area to the south and the city to the north and west, with exits to both the Court of the Gentiles and the city proper (cf. BC, 4:

136). The commander was not a chief priest (contra SBK, 2:631; 4:644) and had nothing to do with the priests and officials of the temple (contra HJP, 2.1:267). Rather, he represented Rome's interests and was commissioned to intervene in the affairs of the people on behalf of those interests (cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem* , pp. 211-12).

33-36 The commander formally arrested Paul and ordered him bound with two chains. Undoubtedly he thought him to be a criminal and was prepared to treat him as one. But when he asked the mob about his crime, he got no clear answer. Therefore he ordered him to be taken into the fortress where he could be questioned directly and where a confession could be extracted from him. But the mob still pressed hard after their quarry, so hard that the soldiers had to carry Paul up the steps to the fortress (though probably they dragged him more than carried him). All the while the mob was crying out, "Away with him!" (*Aire auton*)--a cry that on the basis of its other occurrences in Luke's writings certainly means "Kill him!" (cf. Luke 23: 18; Acts 22:22; see also John 19:15; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 3.2; 9.2).

3. *Paul's defense before the people* (21:37-22:22)

The account of Paul's defense before the people consists of three parts: (1) Paul's request to address the people (21:37-40), (2) his speech in defense (22:1-21), and (3) the people's response (22:22). In this first of Paul's five defenses, Luke's apologetic interests come to the fore in highlighting the nonpolitical character of Christianity (contrary to other messianic movements of the day, cf. 21:38) and in presenting Paul's mandate to the Gentiles as being the major reason for Jewish opposition to the gospel (cf. 22:10-22).

37-38 At the head of the stone stairway leading into the Fortress of Antonia, Paul asked for permission to say something to Claudius Lysias the commander (cf. 23:26). The commander was startled to hear his charge speaking in fluent Greek and surmised that perhaps the prisoner was the Egyptian Jew (note the inferential particle *ara* in the commander's question) who three

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years earlier had appeared in Jerusalem claiming to be a prophet and had led a large band of followers into the wilderness and then to the Mount of Olives in preparation for the messianic overthrow of Jerusalem (cf. Jos. War II, 261-63 [xiii.1.; Antiq. XX, 169-72 [viii.1]). Most people considered him a charlatan. Felix and his soldiers drove him off.

39-40 But Paul assured the commander that he was not the Egyptian revolutionary. The epithet "no ordinary city" (*ouk asemou poleos*), by which Paul referred to Tarsus, had been used by various cities to publicize their greatness (cf. Euripides' reference some five hundred years earlier to Athens as "no ordinary city of the Greeks" [*ouk asemi Hellenon polis*] in Ion 8). Paul's use of it here reflects his pride in the city of his birth. Jerome records a tradition that Paul's parents originally came from Gischala in Galilee and migrated to Tarsus after the Roman devastation of northern Palestine in the first century B.C.. (cf. *On Illustrious Men* 5; *Commentary on Philemon* 23). Paul spoke to the crowd in Aramaic (lit. "in the Hebrew dialect," which throughout the NT means "in Aramaic," except at Rev 9:11 and 16:16). Haenchen says that the record here is clearly unhistorical for three reasons: (1) Paul would have been physically unable to make such a speech after having been mauled by the mob, (2) the commander would not have allowed him to speak just because he asked to, and (3) the crowd would not have honored Paul's request for silence (*Acts of the Apostles* , pp. 620-21). But these objections are pedantic. We need not think that the rioters had beaten Paul into insensibility. The Roman commander may well have been impressed by Paul's courteous composure under such trying circumstances. He may also have thought that by letting him speak, he might gain some insight into the cause of the riot. As for the crowd, they may also have been momentarily impressed by Paul's composure and their attentiveness encouraged by gestures of the commander and his soldiers for them to be quiet. Moreover, Paul's use of Aramaic (the lingua franca of Palestine)--though probably frustrating for the commander--would have been appreciated by the crowd and elicited for him a temporary measure of good will.

22:1-2 Paul opens his defense (apologia) with the formal Jewish address "Men, brothers" (*Andres adelphoi*), to which he adds "and fathers" (*kai pateres*) as Stephen did before the Sanhedrin (cf. 7:2). Some have thought that this form of address implies that members of the Sanhedrin were in the crowd. But that need not follow either from the parallel with Stephen's defense or from the way Paul addressed the Sanhedrin later on (cf. 23:1). Many commentators have objected that this defense does not fit the occasion, for it makes no mention of the people's charge that Paul had defiled the temple by taking Trophimus, a Gentile, into its inner courts (cf. 21:28b-29). In reality, however, this speech from the steps of the Fortress of Antonia deals eloquently with the major charge against him--that of being a Jewish apostate (cf. 21:28a). It does this by setting all that had happened in his Christian life in a Jewish context and by insisting that what others might consider apostasy really came to him as a revelation from heaven.

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Indeed, the speech parallels much of what Luke has already given us about Paul's conversion in 9:1-19 and what he will give us again in 26:2-23. He repeats in this way to impress something of exceptional importance indelibly on his readers' minds (cf. comments introducing 9:1-30). Yet it is remarkable how Luke fits the variations in each of these three accounts so closely to their respective contexts and purposes.

3 The triad of "birth" (*genesis*), "upbringing" (*trophe* , lit. "nourishment"), and "training" (*paideia*) was a conventional way in antiquity of describing a man's youth (cf. W.C. van Unnik, *Tarsus or Jerusalem: The City of Paul's Youth* , tr. G. Ogg [London: Epworth, 1962], pp. 9, 28). Alternative ways of punctuating this verse leave open the question as to whether Paul's early childhood was spent in Jerusalem (as van Unnik proposes) or whether his coming to Jerusalem was related to his studying under Gamaliel I some time in his teens (as I have argued in Paul, pp. 25-27). If each participle of this triad is taken as heading its respective clause (so KJV, RSV, TEV; contra JB, NEB, NIV), Paul is here saying, "I am a Jew, `born'

[*gegennemenos*] in Tarsus of Cilicia, `brought up' [*anatethrammenos*] in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and `instructed' [*pepaideumenos*] in the strict manner of the law of our fathers." From this he argues that his Jewishness cannot be disputed and insists that with such a background he was as zealous for all that Judaism stands for as any of those in the crowd before him (cf. Gal 1: 14).

Needless to say, not all have accepted these biographical claims. Many used to take Paul's birth in Tarsus as ground for consigning him to the ranks of Hellenistic Judaism. Also, various of Paul's attitudes, actions, teachings, and turns of phrase have been cited as negating any real knowledge on his part of Judaism as it existed in the orthodox circles of Jerusalem. Theologically, the assertion has often been made that Paul's doctrine of the law is so gross a caricature of

Pharisaic teaching and his understanding of repentance so deficient as to prohibit his having had any real association with the famed rabbi Gamaliel I (cf. BC, 4:279). Methodologically, the claim has sometimes been made that Paul's exegetical procedures do not correspond to rabbinic practices (cf. Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles* , p. 625). But these assertions and claims must be judged from the evidence to be very wide of the mark (cf. my *Paul* , pp. 21-64, on Paul's biographical claims, and my *Biblical Exegesis* , pp. 28-50, 104-32, on rabbinic and Pauline exegetical procedures). Paul himself claims to be "a Hebrew of Hebrews" (2Cor 11:22; Philippians 3:5), and the evidence is almost overwhelming in support of his claims in his letters and in the presentation of his claims as Luke states them here in Acts.

4-5 As evidence of his zeal for God and the Jewish religion, Paul cites his earlier persecution of Christians (cf. comments on 9:1-2). The ascription "the Way" (*he hodos*) picks up what was the earliest self-designation of the first believers in Jesus at Jerusalem--viz., "those of the Way" (cf. comments on 9:2; also 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22).

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6-9 This description of Christ's encounter with Paul on the road to Damascus, except for stylistic differences, closely parallels the one in 9:3-6 (cf. comments on 9:3-6). As in Acts 9, here both Paul and Luke describe the encounter from the viewpoint that Paul's conversion to Jesus as God's Messiah was the result of a heavenly confrontation and that it was not something Paul originated subjectively or others imposed on him. It was, indeed, "Jesus of Nazareth" who confronted him, and this places his messianology in the matrix of the Jewish homeland. But it was the risen and ascended Jesus of Nazareth, the heavenly Christ, who rebuked him and turned him about spiritually; and this alone explains his new understanding of life and his new outlook on all things Jewish.

10-11 In response to the heavenly confrontation, and as a good Jew who thought first in terms of how he should act in obedience to divine revelation, Paul's question was "What shall I do, Lord?" He was told to go into Damascus, where the divine will would be revealed to him. So in his blindness he was led into Damascus by his companions to await instructions as to God's purposes for him.

12-16 At Damascus Paul was visited by Ananias, God's messenger to bring about renewal of Paul's sight and to announce God's purpose for him as a witness "to all men" (*pros pantas anthropous*). The Jewish matrix of Paul's commission is highlighted by the description of Ananias as "a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there" (v.

12); and the Jewish flavor of the episode is strengthened by the expression "the God of our fathers" and the messianic title "the Righteous One" (v. 14; cf. 3:14). The words "Brother Saul, receive your sight" (v. 13) are a summary of the fuller statement reported in 9:17. What was important in the present circumstance was not to reproduce the exact words of Ananias but to emphasize that the commission Paul received from the risen Christ was communicated by a pious Jew who spoke in distinctly Jewish terms. Later on, when Paul defended himself before Agrippa II (ch. 26), there was no need for this particular emphasis; and

therefore the substance of what Ananias said in the name of the Lord Jesus is there included in the words spoken by the heavenly voice on the Damascus Road (cf. 26:16-18). Having thus delivered the Lord's message, Ananias called on Paul to respond: "Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name" (v. 16)--an exhortation reminiscent of Peter's at Pentecost (cf. 2:38).

17-21 Paul's commission at Damascus to be God's witness "to all men" was reaffirmed and amplified in a vision he received as he was praying in the temple. Most likely the visit to the temple and the vision referred to here occurred on Paul's return to Jerusalem three years after his conversion (cf. 9:26-29; Gal 1:18-19). At that time, Luke tells us, Paul faced opposition from the Hellenistic Jews of the city, who viewed him as a renegade and sought to kill him (cf. 9:29). It was evidently at that time--at a period in his life when he most needed divine direction and support--that the same heavenly personage he met on the road to Damascus, the risen and

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exalted Jesus, directed him to "leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me" (v. 18). More importantly, it was at that time that the same exalted Jesus also ordered him: "Go, I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (v. 21). Jerusalem, therefore, Paul says, was his intended place of witness and the temple God's place of revelation. Nevertheless, his testimony was refused in the city, and by revelation his commission "to all men" was to have explicit reference to Gentiles who are "far away" (*makran*, lit., "far off"; cf. comments on 2:39).

22 During most of Paul's defense, the crowd listened with a certain respect, for he had spoken mostly of Israel's messianic hope and had done so in a thoroughly Jewish context. Even his identification of Jesus with his people's messianology and with the Revealer from heaven, while straining the credibility of many in the crowd, could have been tolerated by a people given more to *orthopraxis* (authorized practice) than orthodoxy (correct thought). When, however, Paul spoke of being directed by divine revelation to leave Jerusalem and go far away to Gentiles who had no relation to Judaism, that was "the last straw." In effect, Paul was saying that Gentiles can be approached directly with God's message of salvation without first being related to the nation and its institutions. This was tantamount to placing Jews and Gentiles on an equal footing before God and for Judaism was the height of apostasy indeed! With this Paul was shouted down, the crowd calling for his death: "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!" And in reporting this, Luke stresses as the major reason for the Jewish opposition to Paul his universal outlook that was willing to include Gentiles in God's redemptive plan on the same basis as Jews.

4. Paul claims his Roman citizenship (22:23-29)

23-24 The garrison commander, at a loss to ascertain from the people why they were rioting and probably unable to understand Paul's speaking in Aramaic,

decided to find out the truth of the matter by torturing Paul. His earlier friendliness toward Paul soured, and the brutal part of his nature and job came to the fore. The scourge (Lat. *flagellum*), an instrument of Roman inquisition and punishment, consisted of leather thongs studded with pieces of metal or bone and fastened to a wooden handle. Its use often crippled for life and sometimes killed. Earlier in his ministry, Paul had five times received thirty-nine lashes at the hands of Jewish authorities and had three times been beaten with rods by the order of Roman magistrates (cf. 2Cor 11:24-25 and comments on 9:30; 11:25; 16:22-24). But being flogged with the flagellum was a far more brutal penalty than these. Here Paul was at the brink of the kind of unjust punishment Christ endured when Pilate, in a travesty of justice, had him flogged after declaring him innocent (John 18:38-19:1).

25 Roman citizens were exempt from examination under torture. The Valerian and Porcian laws, confirmed and amplified by the Edicts of Augustus, prescribed that in trials of Roman citizens

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there must first be a formulation of charges and penalties, then a formal accusation laid, and then a hearing before a Roman magistrate and his advisory cabinet. Therefore as the soldiers "stretched him [Paul] out to flog him"--on the stone floor or at a pillar or post, or perhaps by suspension from the ceiling or a hook--he said to the centurion in charge, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"

26-28 At this time, Roman citizenship was a highly prized right conferred only on those of high social or governmental standing, those who had done some exceptional service for Rome, or those able to bribe some imperial or provincial administrator to have their names included on a list of candidates for enfranchisement. In the second and third centuries A.D., the use of bribery became increasingly common, but earlier it accounted for only a small minority of citizens. New citizens received a *diploma civitatis Romanae* or *instrumentum*, and their names were recorded on one of the thirty-five tribal lists at Rome and also on their local municipal register. Succeeding generations of a citizen's family possessed a *professio* or registration of birth recording their Roman status and were registered as citizens on the taxation tables of their respective cities. No article of apparel distinguished a Roman citizen from the rest of the people except the toga, which only Roman citizens could wear. But even at Rome the toga was unpopular because of its cumbersomeness and was worn only on state occasions. Papers validating citizenship were kept in family archives and not usually carried on one's person. The verbal claim to Roman citizenship was accepted at face value; penalties for falsifying documents and making false claims of citizenship were exceedingly stiff--Epictetus speaks of death for such acts (*Dissertations* 3.24, 41; cf. Suetonius *Vita Claudius* 25).

We do not know how and when Paul's family acquired Roman citizenship. Ramsay argued that it stemmed from 171 B.C., when Tarsus received its constitution as a Greek city and many of the socially elite in Tarsus and Cilicia were made citizens (*Cities of St. Paul*, p. 185). Cadbury proposed that Pompey,

in settling the eastern provinces during the 60's B.C., transferred a number of Jewish prisoners to Tarsus, set them free, and bestowed Roman citizenship upon them (*Book of Acts* , pp. 73-74). But Roman citizenship was not a corollary of citizenship in a Greek city-state, nor were former prisoners or slaves considered fit subjects for enfranchisement. Most likely one of Paul's ancestors received Roman citizenship for valuable services rendered to a Roman administrator or general (perhaps Pompey) in either the Gischala region of northern Palestine or at Tarsus. Therefore, when Paul claimed his Roman citizenship, the centurion immediately stopped the proceedings and reported to the commander: "This man is a Roman citizen" (v. 26). This brought the commander posthaste to question Paul, who convinced him that he was indeed a Roman citizen (v. 27). His own citizenship, the commander said, was purchased by a large sum of money-- probably, since his name was Claudius Lysias (23:26), during the reign of Claudius through paying one of the members of Claudius's court. Paul's response, "But I was born a

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citizen" (v. 28), implies his high estimate of his citizenship.

29 That Paul was a citizen put the situation in a different light (cf. 16:37-39). Examination under torture, while suitable for ordinary men in the empire, had to be abandoned, and some other way of determining the nature of the charge had to be found. Undoubtedly the commander shuddered as he realized how close he had come to perpetrating a serious offense against a Roman citizen.

5. Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin (22:30-23:11)

The irregular structure of Luke's account of Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin evidently reflects the tumultuous character of the session itself. Three matters pertaining to Luke's apologetic purpose come to the fore: (1) Christianity is rooted in the Jewish doctrine of the resurrection of the dead (cf. 23:6); (2) the debate Paul was engaged in regarding Christianity's claims must be viewed as first of all a Jewish intramural affair (cf. 23:7-10); and (3) the ongoing proclamation of the gospel in the Gentile world stems from a divine mandate (cf. 23:11).

30 Still unsuccessful in ascertaining why the people were so angry at Paul, the commander ordered the Jewish Sanhedrin (cf. comments on 4:5) to come together to interrogate his captive. As a Roman citizen, Paul had a right to know the nature of the charges against him and the penalties involved before formal accusations were laid. The commander also needed to know these things in order to decide what else should be done. Perhaps he had talked with Paul after releasing him from his chains (cf. 21:33). Since this was a religious matter, he decided to have it clarified before the highest judicial body of Judaism. As a Roman military commander, he had no right to participate in the Sanhedrin's deliberations. But as the Roman official charged with keeping peace in Jerusalem, he could order the

Sanhedrin to meet to determine the cause of the riot.

23:1 Paul began his defense by addressing the members of the Sanhedrin as "Men, brothers" (*Andres adelphoi*, NIV, "My brothers"), the common formal address used among assembled Jews. Then he asserted, "I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day"--a bold claim but not without parallel on Paul's part in other situations (cf. 20:18-21, 26-27; 24:16; Rom 15:19b, 23; Philippians 3:6b; 2Tim 4:7).

2 This so enraged the high priest that, in violation of the law, he ordered those near Paul to strike him on the mouth. Ananias the son of Nedebaeus reigned as high priest from A.D. 48 to 58 or 59 and was known for his avarice and liberal use of violence. Josephus says he confiscated for himself the tithes given the ordinary priests and gave lavish bribes to Romans and also Jews (cf. Antiq. XX, 205-7 [ix.2], 213 [ix.4]). In a parody on Psalm 24:7, the Talmud lampoons

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Ananias's plundering and greed: "The temple court cried out, 'Lift up your heads, O you gates, and let Yohanan [mixing the letters in the Heb. name Hananiah, which is Ananias in Gr.], the son of Narbai [a textual corruption that confuses the similarly formed Heb. letters `r' and `d' and reads Narbai for Nadbai, a title meaning `generous one' and used ironically] and disciple of Pinqai [a satirical word-play on the Heb. verb *panaq*, `to pamper'], enter and fill his stomach with the divine sacrifices" (b *Pesahim* 57a). He was a brutal and scheming man, hated by Jewish nationalists for his pro-Roman policies. When the war with Rome began in A.D. 66, the nationalists burned his house (cf. Jos. War II, 426 [xvii.6]) and he was forced to flee to the palace of Herod the Great in the northern part of Jerusalem (ibid., 429 [xvii.6]). Ananias was finally trapped while hiding in an aqueduct on the palace grounds and was killed along with his brother Hezekiah (ibid., 441-42 [xvii.9]).

3 Indignant at the affront, Paul lashed out at Ananias and accused him of breaking the Jewish law, which safeguarded the rights of defendants and presumed them innocent until proved guilty. Paul had not even been charged with a crime, let alone tried and found guilty. Anyone who behaved as Ananias did, Paul knew, was bound to come under God's judgment. Paul's words, however, were more prophetic than he realized. Ananias's final days--despite all his scheming and bribes--were lived as a hunted animal and ended at the hands of his own people. Ananias's order to strike the defendant was in character. But Paul's retort seems quite out of character for a follower of the one who "when they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats" (1 Peter 2:23). Paul, it seems, momentarily lost his composure--as evidently Ananias hoped he would--and put himself at a disadvantage before the council. We cannot excuse this sudden burst of anger, though we must not view it self-righteously. We are made of the same stuff as Paul, and his provocation was greater than most of us will ever face. Yet his quickness in acknowledging his wrong (v. 5) was more than many of us are willing to do.

4-5 In his apology, Paul cited Exodus 22:28. Zahn supposed that, in disclaiming knowledge of Ananias's being the high priest, Paul was speaking ironically (Theodore Zahn, *Die Urausgabe der Apostelgeschichte des Lucas* [Leipzig: Deichert, 1916], p. 763). But the tone of the statement (cf. "brothers") and the reference to Exodus 22:28 suggest that the words were meant quite seriously. Ramsay proposed that a meeting convened by a Roman officer would have been run like a Roman assembly, with Paul on one side, the Sanhedrin (including the high priest) on the other, and the commander himself presiding (*Trustworthiness of the NT* , pp. 90ff.). But while Rome's chief administrative officer in the city could order the Sanhedrin to meet, he was not a part of the council, nor would he have so offended Jewish sensibilities as to have taken any part in the meeting. It is frequently claimed that Paul's failure to recognize the high priest shows that he had an eye condition that obscured his vision. But this is an illegitimate inference drawn from the

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juxtaposition of Paul's mention of an illness in Galatians 4:13-14 and his colloquial idiom of concern ("you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me") in Galatians 4:15. Luke was not averse to excusing his hero from blame wherever possible (cf. comments on 20:8); so we may well assume that he would have mentioned Paul's failing eyesight if it were relevant here. At regular meetings of the Sanhedrin, the high priest presided and would have been identifiable for that reason. But this was not a regular meeting, and the high priest may not have occupied his usual place or worn his robes of office. Also, since Paul had visited Jerusalem only sporadically during the past twenty years, and since the high priest's office had passed from one to another within certain priestly families (cf. comments on 4:6), Paul might very well not have known who the high priest in A.D. 58 was--Ananias who reigned since A.D. 48 or Ishmael ben Phabi who took the office in A.D. 58-59 (cf. comments on 25:2). Nor, in fact, would he have known any of the current high priestly claimants by sight. All he could do when told he was speaking to the high priest was apologize--though more to the office than to the man--and acknowledge by citing Scripture that, while he did not accept the view that laws provided the supreme direction for life (cf. 1Cor 2:15; 9:20-21), he had no intention in being guided by Christ and his Spirit to act contrary to the law or do less than the law commanded.

6 Ananias's interruption changed the entire course of the meeting, but not as he had expected. Instead of being cowed into submission, Paul began again (note the resumptive use of the formal address "Men, brothers" [*Andres adelphoi* NIV, "My brothers"]). This time he took the offensive. "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee," he declared; "I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead" (cf. 24:21; 26:6-8; 28:20b). Many have agreed with Weiss that "we must be on our guard against spoiling the portrait of Paul by the impressions we receive from the speeches of the Apostle which have been interpolated, especially the speeches in the defence during his trial" (J. Weiss, *The History of Primitive*

Christianity , 2 vols., tr., ed. F.C. Grant [London: Macmillan, 1937], 1:148). Therefore adjectives such as "improbable," "incomprehensible," and "unhistorical" have been frequently used of the narrative here. Even when Luke's account is accepted, Paul is often interpreted as having played the *enfant terrible* before rather unworthy opponents and engaged in an adroit maneuver that was not really sincere. But Pharisaism in Paul's day was not as stereotyped as it later became under rabbinic development. He could still have been considered a Pharisee because of his personal observance of the law and his belief in the Resurrection, even though he did not separate himself from Gentiles. And as for saying he was tried "because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead," we must realize, as Harnack pointed out, that "whenever the Resurrection was spoken of, our Lord, as a matter of course, formed for St Paul, for St Luke, and for the listeners the efficient cause" (*Date of Acts* , p. 87). The phrase "the resurrection of the dead" seems to have been used by Paul and by Luke to refer to the whole doctrine of resurrection as that doctrine was validated and amplified by the resurrection of Jesus (cf. 17:32 in the context of 17:31)--even before members

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of the Jewish Sanhedrin. We need not, therefore, attribute deceit to Paul in this matter. Luke may have been condensing Paul's speech by leaving out the obvious, as seems to have been done in 17:32. But as Harnack argued,

We may even believe that St Paul, at the beginning of his discourse, said roundly,

"Touching the Resurrection of the dead I stand here called in question"; for Luther also

declared a hundred times that he was called in question touching the merits and honour of

Jesus Christ, while his opponents asserted that these things did not come at all into the

question (ibid., p. 87).

7-10 Paul's declaration served to divide the council, with Sadducees on the one side (cf. comments on 4:1) and Pharisees on the other (cf. comments on 5:34). Some of the Pharisees saw in the inquisition of Paul an attempt by the Sadducees to discredit Pharisaism theologically (viz., to make Paul and his message the *reductio ad absurdum* of a Pharisaic position) and rose to his defense. The Sadducees, however, kept pressing their objections, and the debate soon got out of hand. So violent, in fact, did it become that the commander had to bring in soldiers and rescue Paul. Once more the commander was frustrated in his effort to learn exactly why the Jews were so adamantly opposed to his prisoner.

11 Paul had feared such a reception at Jerusalem (cf. 20:22-23; 21:13; Rom 15:31), and now his worst fears were being realized. He had planned to go to Rome and minister throughout the western part of the empire after his visit to

Jerusalem (cf. Rom 15:24-29). But developments at Jerusalem were building up to a point where it appeared his life could come to an end in the city through any number of circumstances beyond his control. Undoubtedly he was despondent as he awaited the next turn of events in his cell in the fortress. But "the following night" (*te epiousse nykti* ; lit., "the night of the next day") the risen and exalted Jesus appeared to Paul--as he has done at other critical moments in his ministry (cf. 18:9-10; 22:17-21)--and encouraged him by his presence. So now the Lord said, "Take courage!" And he assured Paul that he would yet testify in Rome as he had done in Jerusalem. Certainly, as Bruce observes, "this assurance meant much to Paul during the delays and anxieties of the next two years, and goes far to account for the calm and dignified bearing which seemed to mark him out as a master of events rather than their victim" (*Book of the Acts* , p. 455).

6. A plot to kill Paul (23:12-22)

12-15 Failing in their earlier plot to kill Paul in the temple precincts, more than forty fanatical Jews (probably many of them Asian Jews who had instigated the earlier plot, cf. 21:27-29) resolved to do away with him by ambushing him in the narrow streets of Jerusalem. For this they needed a pretext to lure him out of the fortress. So they arranged with "the chief priest and

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elders" (evidently Ananias, together with some of his Sadducean cohorts) to ask for Paul's return before the Sanhedrin for further questioning. They pledged that they would kill him as he was brought from the Fortress of Antonia north of the temple to the hall of the Sanhedrin southwest of the temple area (cf. comments on 4:5). To show their determination, they vowed not to eat or drink till they had accomplished their purpose. That did not mean, however, that they would necessarily have to starve if they failed. The rabbis allowed four types of vows to be broken: "vows of incitement, vows of exaggeration, vows made in error, and vows that cannot be fulfilled by reason of constraint" (M *Nedarim* 3:1-3)--exclusions allowing for almost any contingency. The conspirators' plan, though violating both the letter and the spirit of Jewish law pertaining to the Sanhedrin (cf. b *Sanhedrin* 82a), was in keeping with the character of the high priest Ananias (cf. comments on 23:2).

16-17 We have no knowledge about Paul's sister and his nephew, or of how the young man learned of the plot. In his letters Paul says nothing of his immediate family, and this is Luke's only reference to any of Paul's relatives. Perhaps Paul had stayed with his sister and her family when he studied under Gamaliel I at Jerusalem (cf. 22:3) and when he returned from Damascus as a Christian (cf. 9:26-28)--though he probably did not stay with her on later visits to the city, and certainly not on his last visit (cf. 21:16). From Philippians 3:8, where Paul speaks of having "lost all things" for the sake of Christ, many have supposed that he was disinherited by his family for accepting and proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. Such a supposition seems likely. Yet family ties are not easily broken; so when his uncle was in mortal danger, Paul's nephew could not stand by without warning him. After all, in Judaism the saving and preservation of life takes precedence over everything else. As a Roman citizen under protective custody, Paul could receive visitors--among them his nephew. So when Paul heard his warning, he asked one of the centurions to take his nephew to the commander.

18-22 This pericope is set off as almost a separate unit by Luke's favorite connecting phrase *men oun* ("so," "then") both at its beginning and at its end. Luke may have inferred from the commander's action what was said between him and Paul's nephew, though the use of *men oun* suggests a separate source for his information--that is, the nephew himself. The seriousness with which the commander took the warning about the plot shows that he knew Ananias was the kind of man to fall in with it and realized that Jewish feeling against Paul was strong enough to nurture such a plot.

D. Imprisonment and Defenses at Caesarea (23:23-26:32)

1. Imprisonment at Caesarea (23:23-35)

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23-24 Since the commander could not risk having a Roman citizen assassinated while in his custody, he took steps to transfer Paul to the jurisdiction of Felix, the governor (*ho hegemon* , "the procurator") of the province of Judea. He wanted to get Paul to Caesarea, the provincial capital (cf. comments on 10:1), as quickly as possible and before the conspirators got wind of it. So the commander ordered two centurions to ready two hundred infantry and seventy cavalry, together with two hundred "spearmen" (*dexiolaboi*) for escort duty, leaving for Caesarea at nine that evening (lit., "the third hour of the night"). In addition, he ordered that "mounts" (*ktene*) be provided for Paul, which probably means, since *ktene* means both "riding animals" and "pack animals," not only a horse for Paul but also another one for either riding or carrying his baggage, or both. The word *dexiolaboi* appears only here in the NT and nowhere else in extant Greek literature until the sixth century A.D. All that can be said for certain is that it is a Greek term translating some Latin title used in the Roman army. Most translators have guessed that it means "spearmen" since *dexios* means "right handed" and spears were usually thrown with the right hand (cf. KJV, ASV, RSV, TEV, NIV). Others prefer not to infer its meaning from its etymology and translate it as either "light-armed troops" (NEB) or "auxiliaries" (JB). Perhaps, however, the *dexiolaboi* were not another kind of soldiers but "led horses" included within the cavalry contingent as additional mounts and pack animals (cf. BC, 4:293). The purpose of the detachment was security and speed. So we should probably visualize the first being provided by the two hundred infantry and the second by the seventy cavalry with their two hundred extra mounts and pack animals, many of which may also have been used to carry infantry during the night. Luke has repeatedly called the commander a *chiliarchos* (cf. 21:31- 33, 37; 22:24, 26-29; 23:10, 15, 17-19, 22)--literally, "commander of a thousand," but usually involving command of about six hundred soldiers. If, therefore, we surmise that the garrison at Jerusalem consisted of about six hundred men in all and that *dexiolaboi* refers not to infantry but to additional mounts and pack animals, then the commander had considered the plot against Paul serious enough to commit almost half the garrison at the Fortress of Antonia to escort Paul, with most of them due to return in a day or two (cf. v. 32). In saying that the commander wrote

a letter "of this type" (*echousan ton typon touton* , lit., "having this pattern"; NIV, "as follows"), Luke acknowledged that what follows is only the general purport of the letter. He would hardly have been in a position to read the correspondence between a Roman commander and a Roman provincial governor. What he knew of the letter probably came from Paul, who himself would only have known about its contents as the governor used it in the initial questioning of his prisoner.

26 To have begun the letter with a salutation that (1) named the sender, (2) named the recipient, and (3) sent greetings would not have taxed Luke's ingenuity. That is standard form for a letter of antiquity and is common to every letter of the NT, except Hebrews and 1 John. For the first time in Acts, the commander's name is given. He was evidently a freeborn Greek

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who had worked his way up through the ranks of the Roman army and at some time paid an official of Claudius's government to receive Roman citizenship (cf. comments on 22:28). At that time his Greek name Lysias became his Roman cognomen, and he then took the nomen Claudius in honor of the emperor. Felix was the governor of the Roman province of Judea from A.D. 52-59 (on Felix, cf. comments on 24:1). The title "Excellency" (*kratistos*) originally denoted a member of the Roman equestrian order (Lat. *egregius*), like that of knights in Britain. Later it became an honorific title for highly placed officials in the Roman government (as here, 24:3; 26:25), but it was also used as a form of polite address (cf. 1:1).

27-30 The body of the letter summarizes the events from the riot in the temple precincts to the commander's discovery of a plot against Paul's life. Paul may very well have smiled to himself when he heard how Lysias stretched the truth to his own benefit in claiming to have rescued Paul from the mob because "I had learned that he is a Roman citizen" and had omitted any reference to the proposed flogging. But the most important part of the letter, that concerning Lysias's evaluation of the Jewish opposition to Paul, was clear: "I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment" (v. 29). And that was of great significance not only for Paul's fortunes but also for Luke's apologetic purpose.

31-32 "So" (*men oun*), Luke says, completing his account of the transfer of Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea with a note of evident relief, the soldiers carried out their orders and brought Paul during the night to Antipatris, a town built by Herod the Great in honor of his father Antipater. (The exact location of Antipatris is unknown. Most have identified it with modern Kulat Ras el Ain some thirty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem, at the foot of the Judean hills.) Having left Jerusalem at nine in the evening (cf. v. 23), the detachment would have lost no time in covering the distance by morning. If the cavalry contingent included two

hundred extra mounts and pack horses (cf. comments on v. 23), perhaps the infantry were allowed to ride and jog alternately. At any rate, the purpose of the mission was both safety and speed. And when the conspirators were left far behind and ambush was less likely, the infantry turned back to Jerusalem and the cavalry took Paul to Caesarea, some forty miles distant.

33-35 At Caesarea, the prisoner and Lysias's letter were turned over to Felix, the governor. On reading the letter, he questioned Paul on the basis of its contents. Had Paul been from one of the client kingdoms in Syria or Asia Minor, Felix would probably have wanted to consult the ruler of the kingdom. But on learning that Paul was from the Roman province of Cilicia, he felt competent as a provincial governor to hear the case himself, when Paul's accusers arrived from Jerusalem. In the meantime, Paul was kept under guard in the palace Herod the Great built for himself at Caesarea. It now served as the governor's headquarters and also had cells for prisoners.

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2. Paul's defense before Felix (24:1-27)

In his account of Paul's defense before Felix, Luke gives almost equal space to (1) the Jewish charges against Paul (vv. 1-9), (2) Paul's reply to these charges (vv. 10-21), and (3) Felix's response (vv. 22-27). He does this, it seems, because he wants to show that despite the devious skill of the Jewish charges and the notorious cruelty and corruptibility of Felix, no other conclusions can be drawn from Paul's appearance before him than that (1) Christianity had nothing to do with political sedition and (2) Jewish opposition to Christianity sprang from the Christian claim to legitimate fulfillment of the hopes of Judaism.

1 There are a number of time notations in the narrative covering the period from Paul's arrival at Jerusalem to his being brought to Caesarea (cf. 21:17-18, 26-27; 22:30; 23:11-12, 23, 32). Yet helpful as they are, it is difficult to correlate Luke's temporal connective here ("five days later," *meta pente hemeras*) with any of them. One would naturally suppose "five days later" to mean five days after Paul's arrival at Caesarea. But in view of his quoting Paul's remark that "no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship" (v. 11), Luke evidently meant the five days to be reckoned from Paul's arrest in the temple--whether that occurred on the last day of the seven-day purification period (cf. comments on 21:26) or a day or two before its end (cf. "when the seven days were nearly over," 21:27). With the notations of time ("five days later") and of place ("Caesarea"), the names of Paul's adversaries ("the high priest Ananias ... with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus"), and the identification of the judge ("the governor" Felix), the stage is set for Paul's defense. It was characteristic of Ananias to prosecute Paul as quickly as possible (cf. comments on 23:2); so to present his trumped-up charges as effectively as possible he employed a lawyer named Tertullus. Tertullus was a common Greek name in the Roman world, and all we know of the man comes from this passage. Probably he was a Hellenistic Jew chosen by Ananias because of his expertise in affairs of the empire and his

allegiance to Judaism. Perhaps Ananias also felt confident that in Felix he had a governor he could manipulate for his own purposes. Antonius Felix was born a slave and freed by Antonia, the mother of the emperor Claudius. He was a brother of Pallas, who was also a freedman of Antonia and became a good friend of the young prince Claudius in the imperial household. Through the influence of Pallas, in A.D. 48 Felix was appointed to a subordinate government post in Samaria under the provincial governor Ventidius Cumanus. In A.D. 52 Claudius appointed him governor of Judea when Cumanus was deposed--an office usually reserved for freemen of the Roman equestrian order but which he obtained through intrigue and the support of the governor of Syria, Quadratus (cf. Tacitus *Annales* 12.54; Jos. War II, 247 [xii.1]; Antiq. XX, 137 [vii.1]). During his governorship, insurrections and anarchy increased throughout Palestine. Try as he would to put down the uprisings and regain control, his brutal methods only alienated the Jewish population more and

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led to further disturbances (cf. Jos. War II, 253-70 [xiii.2-7]; Antiq. XX, 160-81 [viii.5-8]). Tacitus described him as "a master of cruelty and lust who exercised the powers of a king with the spirit of a slave" (*Historiae* 5.9). Despite his low birth, Felix had a succession of three wives, each in her own right a princess (cf. Suetonius *Vita Claudius* 28). The first was the granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra, making Felix the grandson-in-law (Claudius being a grandson) of Antony. The third was Drusilla, the youngest daughter of Agrippa I, who was unhappy as the wife of Azizus, king of Emesa, and whom Felix desired because of her beauty and who was persuaded through the intervention of a Cyprian magician named Atomus (cf. comments on 13:6-8) to leave her husband for him (cf. Jos. Antiq. XX, 141-44 [vii.2]). Nero recalled Felix to Rome sometime during A.D. 59. Nothing is known of his subsequent fate.

2-4 Tertullus began the case for the prosecution with the customary flattery for the judge in words chosen for his purpose. Many Jews would have been shocked to hear the high priest's mouthpiece attributing "a long period of peace" and "reforms" to Felix's administration; and few would have joined in any expression of "profound gratitude" for the governor's frequent displays of ferocity, cruelty, and greed. But Tertullus knew how to appeal to Felix's vanity. It was also customary to promise brevity (cf. Lucian *Bis Accusatus* 26: "But in order not to make a long speech, since much time has elapsed already, I will begin with the accusation"), though such is human nature that the promise was rarely kept.

5-9 The three charges laid against Paul (v. 5) are probably only a precis of the entire case, which Tertullus had gone on to elaborate. But this precis makes it clear that Tertullus intended to create the impression of political sedition against Rome in his first two charges (disturbing the peace among the Jews; being a ringleader of the Nazarenes) and to argue the right for Judaism to impose the death penalty in his third charge (attempting to desecrate the temple; cf.

comments on 21:28-29). During his reign over Judea, Felix had repeatedly crucified the leaders of various uprisings and had killed many of their followers for disturbing the Pax Romana (cf. Jos. War II, 253-63 [xiii.2-5]). Tertullus's endeavor, as supported by the high priest and the Jewish elders with him, was to put Paul on the same level as these brigands, with the hope that in his insensitivity to the issues, Felix would act in his usual manner simply on the basis of their testimony. As in Jesus' trial before Pilate, their accusations were framed principally in terms of political sedition (cf. Luke 23:2, 5), though all along their main grievance was religious.

10 Invited to respond, Paul also began with a complimentary statement--but a briefer and truer one. Felix had been in contact with the Jewish nation in Palestine for over a decade, first in Samaria and then as governor over the entire province of Judea. Therefore Paul was pleased to make his defense before one who was in a position to know the situation as it was and to understand his words in their context.

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11-13 In refuting the charges against him, Paul dealt with each in turn. First, it was "no more than twelve days ago" that he came to Jerusalem, not for political agitation but for worship. In such a short time, he implied, there would hardly have been sufficient opportunity to foment a revolt. Second, his accusers could hardly charge him with being a ringleader of any sedition, for he was alone when they arrested him in the temple and they could not cite any time when he was stirring up a crowd anywhere in the city (v. 12). Third, their claim that he desecrated the temple was unproved because it was entirely without foundation (v. 13).

14-16 The real reason Ananias and the Jewish elders opposed him, Paul insisted, was religious: "I worship the God of our fathers, as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect--though I believe [understanding *pisteuon* as a concessive adverbial participle] everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (vv. 14-15). And while he differed from Ananias and the elders in his acceptance of "the Way," his conscience in the matter was "clear before God and man" (cf. 23:1) since his position was in agreement with the Law and the Prophets. Paul's statements about having "the same hope in God as these men" and accepting "a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" have led to much comment since Ananias himself would not have accepted the doctrine of a resurrection (cf. comments on 4:1 regarding Sadducean beliefs) and Paul in his letters speaks only of a resurrection of the righteous (cf. 1Cor 15:12-58; 1Thess 4:13-5:11; 2Thess 2:1-12). But evidently there were some Pharisees among the elders who came down to Caesarea with Ananias (cf. v. 1). And though Sadducees did not share with Pharisees the hope of a resurrection, Paul as a Pharisee was probably sufficiently self-confident to believe that it was the Pharisaic hope that characterized--or, at least, should characterize--all true representations of the Jewish faith. Furthermore, while Paul in his letters speaks only of a resurrection of the righteous (as also our Lord in Luke 14:14; 20:35-36), this is probably because the

treatment is pastoral in nature and deals only with the righteous. But we should not assume from this that neither Pharisaic Judaism nor Paul ever spoke of a twofold resurrection (as in Dan 12:2; John 5:28-29; Rev 20:12-15).

17 Reconstructing for Felix what happened in Jerusalem, Paul spoke of coming to Jerusalem "to bring my people [*eis to ethnos mou* ; lit. `for my nation'] gifts for the poor and to present offerings" (cf. "to worship," v. 11). This is the only time Luke mentions the collection for the poor at Jerusalem, which was so dear to Paul's own heart (cf. Rom 15:25-27, 31; 1Cor 16:1-4). Some have complained that for Paul to say that the gift was "for my nation" adds a note of insincerity that should be discounted, for certainly Paul's efforts were directed toward relieving the plight of poor believers in the Jerusalem church and not of Jews in general. Yet it need not be thought strange for the man who said in Romans 15:31 that the collection he was taking for

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Jewish Christians was "my service that is *for Jerusalem*" (*eis Ierousalem* , NIV, "in Jerusalem") to also say that "I came to Jerusalem to bring *for my nation* (*eis to ethnos mou*) gifts for the poor." What he did, he did not only for the relief of Christians and as a symbol of unity between believers but also, as Harnack insisted, "for all Israel; he had ever before his eyes the nation *in its entirety*The conversion of the whole nation was the ultimate aim of all his exertions [italics his]" (*Date of Acts* , p. 74). By aiding that branch of the church whose mission it was to call the nation to its Messiah, he was indirectly engaged in a mission to his own nation (cf. Rom 11:13b-14).

18-21 Continuing the summary of what took place at Jerusalem, Paul spoke of his arrest in the temple (v. 18) and his arraignment before the Sanhedrin (v. 20). But, he insisted, there was no crowd to incite nor any attempt on his part to create a disturbance; rather, he was taken by the crowd while worshiping in a ceremonially clean condition. If the Asian Jews who instigated the riot had any serious charge against him, they should have been present to accuse him before the governor. Roman law imposed heavy penalties upon accusers who abandoned their charges (*destitutio*), and the disappearance of accusers often meant the withdrawal of a charge. Their absence, therefore, suggested that they had nothing against him that would stand up in a Roman court of law. Nor did the Sanhedrin, Paul went on, find any crime in him--except that he believed in the resurrection of the dead. Therefore, Paul declared, he was on trial because of his belief in "the resurrection of the dead" (v. 21).

22-23 Felix seems to have summed up the situation accurately. After a decade in Palestine (cf. comments on v. 1), he was, in his own way, "well acquainted with the Way" (v. 22). While certainly not a Christian, he could see that the Jewish charges against Paul were entirely religious in nature even though presented in the guise of political sedition. He therefore sought to preserve the Pax Romana

within his jurisdiction simply by removing the possibility of confrontation between the disputants and by delays in judicial procedure. So Paul was placed under protective custody in the palace of Herod the Great, and Ananias was given the deceptive promise of a decision being reached when the commander Lysias came down to Caesarea and presented his testimony (which he had already given in his letter, cf. 23:25-30). As a Roman citizen, Paul was allowed some freedom and permitted visits from friends to care for his needs. But both he and Ananias seem to have realized that Felix had no intention of bringing the case to a decision in the near future; and they evidently, each for his own reasons, decided to await the appointment of a new provincial governor before pressing for a resolution--an appointment, given the recent course of Felix's reign, they expected soon.

24-26 Added to the description of Felix's response is this vignette about the interaction between the Roman governor, his Jewish wife, and the Christian apostle, which elaborates further the nature of Felix's response and highlights one aspect of Paul's continued, though restricted,

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ministry while under protective custody at Caesarea. The vignette is joined to the rest of the narrative by a favorite Lukan connective--viz., the preposition *meta* with a time designation (*meta hemeras tinas* , "after certain days"; or "several days later," NIV). While it may be tempting to see in the expression a chronological note of significance, Luke's earlier use of *meta hemeras tinas* (cf. comments on 9:19b) prohibits this. Drusilla, Felix's third wife and the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, had broken off her marriage to Azizus, the king of Emesa, because of Felix (cf. comments on v. 1). Emesa was a small kingdom in Syria (modern Homs), and Azizus had agreed to become a convert to Judaism in order to marry her. But the teenage Drusilla was unhappy with Azizus; and, as captivated by Felix's ruthlessness and power as he was with her beauty, she accepted his offer of marriage. Neither his birth as a slave, his Roman paganism, nor her Jewish scruples deterred her from what she considered a higher station in life. The relationship between Felix and his young wife seems to have been based upon greed, lust, and expectations of grandeur. Yet they apparently still had some qualms of conscience and therefore took the opportunity to send for Paul and hear his message. Paul spoke to Felix and his wife about the necessity of "faith in Christ Jesus" (v. 24). He also made it plain that this involved an ethical life, for he spoke of "righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come" (v. 25)--three subjects Felix and Drusilla particularly needed to learn about! His preaching touched the quick of their kind of living and Felix ordered him to stop. Apparently Drusilla was offended by what she considered Paul's moralistic ranting, for Luke makes no mention of her having listened to him again. Felix also seems to have been unhappy at the shift in the discussion from divergent religious views to personal morality and responsibility. He was, Luke tells us, "afraid" (*emphobos* ; lit., with the preposition strengthening the noun, "terrified") in the presence of such preaching. Yet his cupidity and corruption led him to call Paul often before him in hope of getting a bribe for his release. Felix must have believed that Paul had access to some money--either from an inheritance from his parents, as Ramsay postulated, or through Christian friends who visited him (cf. 24:23; 27:3)--and he hoped to get his hands on some of it.

27 After two years Festus replaced Felix as governor of Judea. Felix's downfall came through an outbreak of hostilities between Jews and Greeks at Caesarea, with both claiming dominant civil rights in the city--the Jews because of their greater numbers and wealth and because Herod the Great, a Jew, had rebuilt the city; the Greeks because they had the support of the military and because they claimed the city was always meant to be a Gentile city (cf. Jos. War II, 266- 70 [xiii.7]; Antiq. XX, 173-78 [viii.7]). Using the Syrian troops under his command, Felix's intervention took the form of military retaliation upon the Jews. Many were killed, taken prisoner, or plundered of their wealth; and a delegation of Jews went to Rome to complain. Felix was recalled to Rome and would have suffered severe punishment had not his brother Pallas interceded for him before Nero (cf. Jos. Antiq. XX, 182 [viii.9]). Felix was replaced by Festus in A.D. 60.

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During this time, Paul remained in Herod's palace at Caesarea--with Felix undoubtedly rationalizing his imprisonment as a protection for Paul and a favor to the Jews, though in reality it was an expression of Felix's cupidity. It must have been an extremely tedious time for Paul. Luke, however, seems to have made full use of the two years to investigate "everything from the beginning" about Christianity (cf. Luke 1:3). And while we cannot say whether he at this time produced either a preliminary draft of his Gospel ("Proto-Luke") or any portion of Acts, it is probable that during this time he became quite familiar with (1) the traditions comprising Mark's Gospel (whenever that Gospel was written), (2) other materials having to do with the story of Jesus that he would also incorporate into his Gospel (so-called Q and L material), (3) accounts circulating in Palestine of events in the early church that he would include in the first half of Acts, and (4) recollections and interpretations of Paul as to his activities before Luke joined him. Undoubtedly as well, he had begun to sketch out during this time the structure and scope of his two-volume work we know as Luke-Acts.

3. Paul's defense before Festus (25:1-12)

The account of Paul's defense before Festus is the briefest of his five defenses. Most of it parallels in summary fashion the account of Paul's appearance before Felix. The new element is Paul's appeal to Caesar, which sets the stage for his journey to Rome. In this pericope, Luke's apologetic purpose is to show that only when Roman administrators were largely ignorant of the facts of the case were concessions made to Jewish opposition that could prove disastrous for the Christian movement.

1 For the Jewish population of Palestine, Porcius Festus was a welcome successor to Felix (cf. Jos. War II, 271 [xiv.1]; Antiq. XX, 185-88 [viii.10])--immeasurably better than the villanous Luceius Albinus (A.D. 62-64) and the totally corrupt Gessius Florus (A.D. 64-66) who succeeded him in office (cf. Jos. War II, 272-83

[xiv.1-3]). Nothing is known of Festus before he assumed the governorship of Judea. Nor can the time of his nomination for the post or his arrival in Palestine be precisely fixed. Probably Festus began to rule in Judea in 60. He inherited all the troubles and tensions that were mounting during Felix's maladministration, which culminated in the disaster of 66-70 (cf. Jos. War II, 271 [xiv.1]; Antiq. XX, 185-96 [viii.10-11]). His term of office was cut short by his death in 62.

The situation in Palestine demanded immediate action to bring together opposing factions within the Jewish nation. Therefore on arriving in Palestine, Festus took only three days to settle in at Caesarea before going up to Jerusalem to meet with the leaders of the nation.

2 The high priest at Jerusalem when Festus took office was Ishmael, the son of Phabi, whom Herod Agrippa II appointed to succeed Ananias during the final days of Felix's governorship (cf. Jos. Antiq. XX, 179 [viii.8], 194 [viii.11], 196 [viii.11]). The Talmud says that he served as high

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priest for ten years (b *Yoma* 9a), though Josephus reports that he was replaced by Agrippa II with Joseph, the son of Simeon, during Festus's rule because of a dispute over a wall erected to block the king's view of the temple and while Ishmael was detained at Rome (cf. Jos. Antiq. XX, 189-96 [viii.11]). Ananias, however, continued to exercise a dominant role in Jerusalem

affairs right up to his death in 66 at the hands of Jewish nationalists (cf. Jos. Antiq. XX, 205 [ix.

2], 209 [ix.3]). It is probably for this reason that Luke speaks of "the chief priests" (*hoi archiereis*) and not just the high priest Ishmael as appearing before him with the elders when Festus came to Jerusalem (cf. 4:23; 9:14; 22:30; 23:14; 25:15).

3 Counting on the new governor's inexperience, the Jewish authorities urged Festus to transfer Paul's case to Jerusalem for trial. Luke says they did this in order to ambush and murder him on the way (cf. 23:12-15). Perhaps also they hoped that with such a change of venue, should their plans for an ambush again be frustrated, they could arrange to have Paul tried before the Sanhedrin on the single charge of profaning the temple--for which they had the right to impose the death penalty (cf. comments on 21:27-29)--without having to sustain the charade of claiming political sedition as was required for the death penalty in a Roman court.

4-5 Unwittingly, Festus overturned their plans by inviting the Jewish leaders to return with him to Caesarea and press charges against Paul there. Evidently he desired to carry out only such business as was absolutely necessary on his first visit to Jerusalem and preferred to preside over any extended trial back at Caesarea--particularly since the prisoner was already there.

6-8 Festus convened court and ordered Paul brought before him, thus reopening

the whole case against Paul, and the Jewish accusers restated their charges against him (cf. 24:5-6). But again they produced no witnesses, nor could they prove their charges. As for Paul, he stoutly continued to insist on his innocence (v. 8). So the impasse remained.

9 Festus was at a loss to know what to make of the Jewish charges and Paul's denials (cf. vv. 18-20a). Yet the Sanhedrin plainly wanted the case transferred to Jerusalem for trial; and as the new governor of Judea, Festus saw no reason why he could not concede the Jews this. Festus seems not to have fully appreciated what lay behind their request and apparently thought it would be politic to gain their good will by a change of venue.

10-11 Paul understood that to return to Jerusalem was to place himself in serious jeopardy. It would be tantamount to being turned over to the Sanhedrin; for once he was in Jerusalem, the Jewish authorities would exert every pressure on Festus to have Paul turned over to them for trial on the charge of profaning the temple. "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried," he asserted. But being unsure as to just what action Festus might take in the matter if left at that, Paul went on to claim one final right he had as a Roman citizen: "I appeal to

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Caesar!"

Roman law in the Julio-Claudian period (the *lex Iulia*) protected Roman citizens who invoked the right of *provocatio ad Caesarem* (appeal to the emperor) from violent coercion and capital trials by provincial administrators. By the beginning of the second century A.D., Roman citizens were automatically sent off to Rome by provincial governors for trial for a variety of offenses (cf. Pliny the Younger *Epistolae* 6.31.3; 10.96.4; Tacitus *Annales* 16.10.2); in the third century, when everyone except a slave was considered a citizen, the right of *appellatio ad Caesarem* (appeal to the emperor) in two or three days after a civil or criminal conviction was universally allowed. But in the Julio-Claudian period when Roman citizenship was not widely diffused, a citizen of Rome living outside Italy could appeal to Caesar for trial by an imperial court at Rome only in cases that went beyond the normal civil and criminal jurisdiction (i.e., beyond the *ordo* to the *extra ordinem*) of a governor--particularly where the threat of violent coercion or capital punishment was present. As many have noted, the texts that tell of Paul's appeal to Caesar (25:11-12, 21, 25-26; 26: 32; 28:19) do not connect it explicitly to the fact of his Roman citizenship. "But there was no necessity," as Sherwin-White points out, "to reassert what had been established very circumstantially at the beginning of the inquiry" (p. 66). Likewise, it may seem somewhat strange that Paul should have preferred to appeal to the emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68), the persecutor of Christians at Rome, rather than continue to entrust his case to Festus, whether at Caesarea or Jerusalem. But the early years of Nero's rule (54-62), under the influence of the Stoic philosopher Seneca and the prefect of the praetorian guard Afranius Burrus, were looked upon as something of a Golden Age. There was little in the year 60 that would have warned regarding Nero's later character and relations with Christianity during the last five years of his life.

12 Festus's discussion with his advisors was probably not whether a *provocatio ad Caesarem* should be allowed. The *lex Iulia* required that such an appeal by a Roman citizen be honored if the charges against him were judged to be *extra ordinem* . What Festus had to determine was

(1) whether the charges against his prisoner fell into the category of normal provincial jurisdiction (the *ordo*) or went beyond that jurisdiction (the *extra ordinem*), and (2) whether it was either just or feasible to acquit the prisoner so as to make such an appeal unnecessary. Since the charges against Paul concerned political sedition, which in Roman law could be punished by death, and profanation of the Jerusalem temple, which in Jewish law called for death, Festus had no choice but to acknowledge the *extra ordinem* character of the charge and accept Paul's appeal. But Festus still could pronounce an acquittal after the act of appeal. Legally he had the right. Yet politically no newly arrived governor would have dreamt of antagonizing the leaders of the people he sought to govern by acquitting one against whom they were so vehemently opposed. It was more a political than legal decision Festus had to make, and he was probably only too glad to have this way out of a very sticky situation. So he agreed to the appeal, happy to rid himself of the prisoner and the problem.

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4. *Festus consults with Herod Agrippa II* (25:13-22)

Though ridding himself of one problem, Festus now took on another--though a more minor one than the first: What would he write in his report to the imperial court at Rome about the charges against Paul and the issues in the case?

Undoubtedly, Luke had no direct knowledge of what was said in private between a Roman governor and the king of a neighboring principality. But the gist of what was discussed would certainly have been evident from their resultant actions, and Luke here fleshes out the details of that conversation in order to prepare the way for Paul's last great defense before Herod Agrippa II.

13 Marcus Julius Agrippa II (A.D. 27-100) was the son of Agrippa I, the grandson of Aristobulus, and the great-grandson of Herod the Great. He was brought up at Rome in the court of Claudius and, like his father, was a favorite of the emperor. At his father's death in 44, he was only seventeen years old--too young to rule over his father's domains (cf. comments on 12:1). Therefore Palestine became a Roman province to be administered by a provincial governor. In 50, however, following the death of his uncle in 48, Claudius appointed Agrippa II king of Chalcis, a petty kingdom to the northeast of Judea. In 53 Claudius gave him the tetrarchy of Philip, Abilene (or Abila), Trachonitis, and Acra (the tetrarchy of Varus) in exchange for the kingdom of Chalcis. And in 56 Nero added to his kingdom the Galilean cities of Tarichea and Tiberias with their surrounding lands and the Perea city of Julias (or Betharamphtha) with fourteen villages belonging to it (cf. Jos. War II, 220-23 [xi.6-xii.1], 247 [xii.8], 252 [xiii.2]; Antiq. XX, 104 [v.2], 138 [vii.1], 159 [viii.4]). As ruler of the adjoining kingdom to the north, Herod Agrippa II came to pay his respects to Festus, the new governor of Judea. Later Agrippa tried to prevent the Jews from revolting against Rome (cf. Jos. War II, 343- 404 [xvi.3-5]), but his efforts were in vain (ibid., 405-7 [xvii.1]). During the war of 66-70 he was firmly on the side of Rome, and after the war Vespasian confirmed him as king in the territory he

previously governed and added new areas to his domain. The Talmud implies that he had two wives (cf. b *Sukkah* 27a). But Josephus gives no indication of his being married or having children, and his death marked the end of the Herodian dynasty. With Agrippa II was Bernice (properly Berenice or Pherenika--Veronica in Lat.), his sister one year younger than himself. She had been engaged to Marcus, a nephew of the philosopher Philo. Then she was married to her uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, but at his death in A.D. 48, she came to live with her brother Agrippa. Rumors of their incestuous relationship flourished in both Rome and Palestine (cf. Juvenal *Satirae* 6. 156-60; Jos. Antiq. XX, 145-47 [vii.3]), and in an effort to silence them she married King Polemo of Cilicia in 63. In 66, however, she returned to live with her brother. She became Titus's mistress at the close of the Roman war in Palestine, and in 75 went to Rome to live with him. Her relationship with Titus became a public scandal, and he was forced to send her away (cf. Tacitus *Historiae* 2.2). When Titus became

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emperor in 79, Bernice returned once more to Rome; but he was obliged to have nothing to do with her, and she returned to Palestine (cf. Dio Cassius *History of Rome* 56.18).

14 Though Agrippa II did not rule over Judea, he had been appointed by Claudius--like his uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, before him (Jos. Antiq. XX, 103 [v.2])--to be "the curator of the temple" (*he epimeleia tou hierou*), with power to depose and appoint the high priest and the responsibility of preserving the temple's treasury and priestly vestments (Jos. Antiq. XX, 213 [ix. 4], 222 [ix.7]). The Talmud reports that his mother Cypros took a profound interest in the Jewish religion (cf. comments on 12:1, citing b *Pesahim* 88b), and some of this interest may have rubbed off on him. Agrippa II, in fact, was looked upon by Rome as an authority on the Jewish religion. And it was for this reason that Festus broached the subject of Paul's case when Agrippa visited him.

15-21 Festus told Agrippa how the Jewish leaders confronted him with Paul's case when he first went to Jerusalem and that they had asked for Paul's death (v. 15), but he acted in accordance with Roman law in demanding that charges be properly laid and the defendant allowed his day in court (v. 16). Furthermore, he insisted, he acted with due dispatch, for on the day after he and the Jewish leaders returned to Caesarea, he convened court in order to try the case (v. 17). To his surprise he found that the charges did not concern real offenses punishable under Roman law but theological differences of a Jewish intramural nature (vv. 18-19a) and a debate "about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive" (v. 19b). Such matters were plainly incomprehensible and pointless to a Roman administrator. With a shrug of his shoulders, Festus confessed his total inadequacy to deal with them (v. 20a). In an endeavor to resolve the impasse, Festus told Agrippa he was prepared to accede to the Sanhedrin's request for a change of venue to Jerusalem (v. 20b). But Paul objected to this and appealed to Caesar, an appeal Festus had granted (v. 21). Now then, what in the world was he to write in sending Paul on to

the imperial court regarding the charges against the prisoner and the issues of the case?

22 This stirred Agrippa's interest so that instead of merely giving his advice, he asked to hear Paul himself. The Greek expression *kai autos* ("also myself"; "myself," NIV) makes the "I" emphatic, laying stress on Agrippa's real desire to meet Paul. Festus was only too happy to arrange a meeting for the very next day. Paul's meeting with Herod Agrippa II has often been paralleled with that of Jesus before Herod Antipas in Luke 23:6-12. Not only was each arraigned before a Roman governor, but each was brought before a Jewish king who wanted very much to meet him (Luke 23:8). Paul's time with Agrippa II, however, turned out far more harmoniously than that of Jesus before Antipas. While Luke may have had the parallels in mind (only Luke includes the pericope of Jesus' appearance before Antipas), the differences of purpose and detail are too great to class the accounts of the two meetings as doublets.

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5. Paul's defense before Herod Agrippa II (25:23-26:32)

Paul's defense before Herod Agrippa II was evidently for Luke the most important of the five defenses. It is the longest and most carefully constructed of the five--factors that of themselves give notice as to something of its importance in Luke's eyes. Perhaps Luke was in the audience chamber through the courtesy of an officer of the guard, or perhaps he heard Paul's account of the event and what was said at some time later. But however he got the information, he chose to conclude his reports of Paul's five defenses with this speech, which has quite properly been called the apostle's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (cf. Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, p. 488). All the attention in the account is focused on Paul himself and the gospel, not on the charges brought forward by the Jews, and certainly not on any rumored incest between Agrippa and Bernice. Inherent in Luke's account are at least three apologetic themes: (1) Paul's relations with the Roman provincial government in Judea did not end in dissonance but with an acknowledgment of his innocence (cf. 25:25; 26:31); (2) even though the Jewish high priests and Sanhedrin opposed Paul, the Jewish king who in Rome's eyes outranked them agreed with a verdict of innocence (cf. 26:32); and (3) Paul's innocence was demonstrated not only before Roman and Jewish rulers but also publicly before "the high ranking officers and the leading men of the city" (25:23). Yet Paul's speech before Agrippa II is not just an apologia in the narrow sense of the word. It is also a positive presentation of the gospel with an evangelistic appeal: Christ would suffer, rise from the dead, and proclaim light to both Jews and Gentiles (26:23); what God did in and through Jesus the Christ was done openly, "not done in a corner" (v. 26); all the prophets pointed forward to redemption in Christ, and believing them leads one on to accepting Christ (v. 27); and Paul's prayer for all who hear is that they "may become what I am, except for these chains" (v. 29). It is with such a kerygmatic purpose that Luke penned his two volumes (cf. Introduction: Luke's Purposes in Writing Acts), and this account of Paul's final defense is a fitting climax to that purpose. All that remains is to sketch out the apostle's journey to Rome and his ministry there, thus

completing the geographical framework of Luke's presentation and concluding it on a note of triumph (cf. 28:31).

23 Luke describes Agrippa and Bernice as entering the audience chamber of Herod the Great's Caesarean palace "with great pomp" (*meta polles phantasias*), accompanied by a procession of "high ranking officers" (*chiliarchoi* ; lit., "commanders of a thousand men") and "the leading men of the city." The Romans always knew how to process well. The sight of Agrippa's royal robes, Bernice's finery, and the military and civil dignitaries decked out in their official attire doubtless overwhelmed those unaccustomed to such displays--which was the effect the whole affair was calculated to produce. After the procession, Paul the prisoner was brought in. But though the situation was contrived to assert the importance of Roman officialdom and the

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inferiority of the man who stood before it, Luke's divinely inspired insight penetrated the trappings and saw that the situation was really reversed. And his evaluation has prevailed in history.

24-27 Festus opened the proceedings by turning the dignitaries' attention to Paul with the words "You see this man!" (*theoreite touton*). After saying that he could not substantiate the charges against Paul, he told them how Paul had appealed to Caesar. Then, asking for help with what he would have to write in sending Paul to the imperial court at Rome, Festus turned the conduct of the inquiry over to King Agrippa. A number of subtle touches in these verses are particularly appropriate for the situation. The title *Sebastos* ("Emperor," v. 25), found only here and in v. 21 in the NT, is the Greek equivalent of Augustus. It was first conferred on Octavian, the adopted heir of Julius Caesar, by the Senate in 27 B.C. to denote "one who is augmented" or lifted above other mortals and was restricted to the reigning emperor (and, at times, his wife). The addition of *Kyrios* ("Lord" or "His Majesty") to the imperial title began in the time of Nero (A.D. 54-68), and its usage steadily increased till it became common during the reign of Trajan (98-117). Despite its associations with deity in the eastern realms of the empire, the growth of the imperial cult, and the pretensions to divinity of such emperors as Nero and Domitian, the title *Kyrios* did not by itself signal to Romans the idea of deity but rather connoted that of majesty (cf. TDNT, 3:1054-58). Likewise, Festus's statement (v. 27) that he thought it "unreasonable" (*alogos*) to send on a prisoner with unspecified charges against him is typical of the face-saving language used among officials when what is really meant is that the failure to specify charges would be a dereliction of duty.

26:1 At Agrippa's invitation to speak for himself, Paul, though manacled by chains (v. 29), motioned with his hand for attention (cf. 21:40) and began speaking. While we have only a precis of what was said, it is the longest precis of Paul's five defenses and undoubtedly reflects the relative length of the address

itself. Agrippa was considered something of an authority on the Jewish religion (at least by the Romans); therefore he might have been expected to listen closely to Paul's lengthy explanation of the relation of his message and ministry to the hope of Israel.

2-3 This was just the kind of situation Paul had longed for during two bleak years in prison--viz., a knowledgeable judge and a not inherently antagonistic audience before whom he could not only make his defense but also proclaim his message. Therefore he began with unusual fervor, expressing appreciation for the opportunity of speaking, complimenting the judge, and asking for patience in hearing him out. Since Festus had already said that Paul had not committed a capital crime (cf. 25:25), Paul chose to defend himself only against the charge that he had transgressed against Judaism.

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4-8 It was not in spite of his Jewish heritage but because of it, Paul insisted, that he believed and proclaimed what he did. So he began the body of his address (note the connective *men oun* at the start of v. 4) by drawing together his Pharisaic background and his Christian commitment, arguing that the Jewish hope and the Christian message are inseparably related. His life had been spent among his people in his own country and in Jerusalem (v. 4; cf. 22:3). He had lived as a Pharisee, "the strictest sect" (*ten akribestaten hairesin*) of the Jewish religion (v. 5; cf. Philippians 3:5-6). It was because of the Jewish hope in the resurrection of the dead that he was being tried (v. 6). And the ironic thing was that the charges against him were brought, of all people, by the Jews themselves (note that *hypo Ioudaion* , "by the Jews," is in the place of emphasis at the end of v. 7). Yet why should any of his audience (note the pl. *hymen* , "you") think it "incredible that God raises the dead" (v. 8), particularly when God had validated the truth of the resurrection by raising Jesus from the dead (cf. comments on 23:6)?

9-11 Speaking retrospectively, Paul went on (note the resumptive use of *men oun*) to acknowledge that he too once thought that Christian preaching about the resurrection of Jesus was incredible. Pharisee though he was, he too had denounced belief in the resurrection of Jesus and had persecuted those who claimed to have seen Jesus alive after his crucifixion. He put Christians in prison, agreed with the death penalty for their "heresy" (cf. 8:1, taking "I cast my vote against them" as a metaphor for *syneudokeo* , "I give approval"), and went through the synagogues seeking to punish them for apostasy (cf. M *Makkoth* 3:10-15a on synagogue whippings) and to get them to recant. This he did not only in Jerusalem but also in cities outside Judea (*kai eis tas exo poleis* , lit., "also to the outside cities"; "even to foreign cities," NIV).

12-14 While Paul was trying to stamp out nascent Christianity, the encounter that changed his life took place. That Paul's account of his Damascus Road conversion appears three times in Acts (chs. 9, 22, 26) undoubtedly shows how important this

event was not only for Paul but also for Luke (cf. introductory comments on 9:1-30). And it is in this third account that Luke's kerygmatic purpose (i.e., to proclaim the gospel of Christ) in Luke-Acts reaches its climax. Yet the threefold repetition of what happened is more than a simple retelling of the same details. Each account fits its own special context in Paul's life and in Luke's purpose. Here there is an intensification and explication of the details that is not found in the earlier accounts: (1) the heavenly light was "brighter than the sun" (cf. 9:3; 22:6); (2) it blazed around both "me and my companions" (cf. 9:3; 22:6); (3) "we all fell to the ground" (cf. 9:4; 22:7); and (4) the voice from heaven spoke "in Aramaic" (lit., "in the Hebrew dialect"). None of these is necessarily in contradiction to the other two accounts, but each was intended to clarify for Paul's hearers and Luke's readers the significance of the events. Likewise in v. 14b we have the only place (i.e., if we reject the Western addition at 22:7, incorporated into the TR by Erasmus) in the three accounts where "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (*skleron soi pros kentra laktizein*) is included. In the Greek world this was

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a well-known expression for opposition to deity (cf. Euripides *Bacchanals* 794-95; Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 324-25; *Agamemnon* 1624; Pindar *Pythia* 2.94-95; Terence *Phormio*

1.2.27). Paul may have picked it up in Tarsus or during his missionary journeys. He used it here to show his Greek-oriented audience the implications of the question "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Lest he be misunderstood as proclaiming only a Galilean prophet he had formerly opposed, he pointed out to his hearers what was obvious to any Jew: correction by a voice from heaven meant opposition to God himself. So he used a current expression familiar to Agrippa and the others (cf. my *Paul* , pp. 98-101).

15-18 On the other hand, this third account leaves out certain features we might have come to expect from the other two: (1) the heavenly speaker identifies himself only as Jesus (cf. 22:8); (2) there is no mention of Ananias (cf. 9:10-19; 22:12-16); (3) there is no mention of Paul's blindness and subsequent healing (cf. 9:8-9; 18-19; 22:11, 13). There was, however, no need to refer to Nazareth (particularly having mentioned it in v. 9) or to refer to the devout Jew Ananias, as when addressing the crowd in the temple (cf. comments on 22:8, 12). Nor was it necessary for Paul to refer to his blindness and healing, which might have been confusing to a pagan audience. Rather, in his address before Agrippa and the others, Paul merged the words of Christ as spoken on the road to Damascus (cf. 9:5-6; 22:8, 10), as given through Ananias of Damascus (cf. 22:14-15), and as received in a vision at Jerusalem (cf. 22:18-21). The result was that Paul did not emphasize details of time or human aid in this third account of his conversion. What Paul did emphasize was the lordship of Christ and the divine commission Christ gave him. The words of the risen Jesus calling Paul to his mission (vv. 16-17) recall the commissioning of the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah: "Stand up on your feet and I will speak to you....I am sending you...to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me" (Ezek 2:1, 3); "You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do

not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you" (Jer 1:7-8). The commission itself (v. 18) echoes that of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42:6b-7: "I ... will make you ... a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness." Indeed, Paul's mission was a prophetic one that perpetuated the commission originally given to God's Righteous Servant, Jesus Christ. And Christians today, as God's servants and prophets, are called to the same kind of ministry.

19-21 Having been confronted by the risen and glorified Jesus, Paul henceforth knew but one Master and found it impossible to resist his commands. So he told Agrippa how he began preaching about Jesus in Damascus and continued to do so in Jerusalem (cf. 9:20-30). The words "and in all Judea" (*pasan te ten choran tes Ioudaias* ; lit., "all the region of Judea") are grammatically strange (i.e., an accusative construction in the midst of datives, without the necessary preposition *eis*) and conflict with the evidence of Acts 9:20-30 and Galatians 1:18-24

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that Paul did not preach the gospel throughout "all the region of Judea." Perhaps the preposition *eis* was accidentally omitted by an early scribe after Ierosolymois (as such diverse scholars as Blass, Ramsay, and Dibelius have postulated). More likely "and in all Judea" was an early gloss that entered the text through a false reading of Romans 15:19. Not only in Damascus and Jerusalem, however, but also to the Gentiles did Paul preach a message of repentance and conversion. And it was because of his preaching to Gentiles, he insisted, that the Jews were so aggressively opposed to him.

22-23 Nevertheless, in fulfillment of Christ's promise (v. 17), God had stood by Paul, protecting him and enabling him to proclaim "to small and great alike" a message thoroughly in accord with Israel's faith and in harmony with all that the prophets and Moses said would happen: "that [*ei* here equaling *hoti* , "that"; cf. v. 8] the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles." Despite occasional claims to the contrary, there is no evidence that pre-Christian Judaism ever thought of the Messiah in terms of suffering. Certainly many of the building blocks for a later doctrine of a suffering Messiah were present in the Jewish consciousness during the period of Late Judaism, and there is some indication that these elements were later brought together at times into either an inchoate (cf. 4 Ezra 7:29-30) or distorted (cf. the medieval Sabbati Svi sect) suffering Messiah doctrine. But the proclamation of both a suffering Messiah and the resurrection of Jesus were distinctive to early Christianity. To these foundation tenets of the early faith, Paul, by revelation (cf. Gal 1:11- 12; Eph 3:1-6), added the legitimacy of a direct outreach to Gentiles. Indeed, such features of the Christian message went beyond the explicit beliefs and expectations of Judaism. But Paul's claim was that they were developments brought about by God himself to show the true intent of Israelite religion and in continuity with all that the prophets and Moses said would happen.

24 At this point Festus broke into Paul's address, unable to endure it any longer. Festus may not have been speaking for the Jews, to whom a suffering Messiah and a direct ministry to Gentiles were outrageous. But no sensible Roman could believe in the resurrection of a man from the dead--and even if he did privately accept such a strange view, he would not allow it to interfere with his practical living or bring him into danger of death. Paul, Festus concluded, was so learned in his Jewish traditions that he had become utterly impractical. Such talk was the height of insanity. Down through the ages Festus's response has been echoed by men and women too trapped by the natural to be open to the supernatural, too confined by the "practical" to care about life everlasting.

25-27 But what Festus declared to be madness Paul insisted was "true and reasonable" (*aletheias kai sophrosynes rhemata* ; lit., "of true and reasonable words"). Then he turned to Agrippa for support. The ministry of Jesus was widely known in Palestine, and Agrippa would have heard of it. Jesus' death and resurrection were amply attested, and the Christian gospel had

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now been proclaimed for three decades. Certainly the king knew of these things, "because it was not done in a corner" (*ou gar estin en gonia pepragmenon touto*)--another (cf. v. 14b) Greek idiom of the day (cf. Plato *Gorgias* 485D; Epictetus *Dissertations* 2.12.17; Terence *Adelphi* 5.2.10). And certainly the king believed the prophets--a belief, as Paul saw it, that inevitably brought one to Christ. So the prisoner became the questioner, as Paul boldly said, "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets?"

28 Paul's direct question embarrassed Agrippa. He had his reputation to maintain before Festus and the other dignitaries. Whatever he may have thought about Paul's message personally, he was too worldly-wise to commit himself in public to what others thought was madness. So he parried Paul's question with his own clever, though rather inane, one: "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" The adjective *oligos* often has reference to quantity and here could mean "with such few words" or "with such a brief argument." But it is also used with the preposition *en* ("in") to denote duration (cf. BAG, p. 566b). And this is how NIV rightly translates it here--"in such a short time" (so also RSV and TEV). KJV's translation of Agrippa's reply to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," has become one of the famous quotations in history. Countless sermons have been preached on it and a gospel hymn inspired by it. Nevertheless, it is not what Agrippa said, nor is KJV's translation of v. 29 what Paul said.

29 Addressing the king with extreme politeness (note the use of the optative *euxaimenan*, "I could wish," "I pray," which in Paul's day had become rare) and taking up Agrippa's own word *oligos* ("short time"), Paul replied, "Short time or long--I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am." Undoubtedly he spoke with evangelistic fervor, directing his appeal not only to the king but also to the other dignitaries. Then in a lighter vein, recognizing the apparent incongruity of appealing for their acceptance of spiritual

freedom while he himself stood chained before them, he raised his hands and added, "except for these chains."

30-32 Paul had had the last word, and his light touch at the end of his response evidently broke up the meeting. With it Agrippa dismissed the proceedings and with Festus and Bernice strode out of the audience chamber. We need not visualize them gathering in an adjoining room to render an official judgment. In appealing to Caesar, Paul had removed the case from their jurisdiction. Yet Agrippa had presumably heard enough to instruct Festus what he should write in his report to Rome. Their conclusion was that Paul had done nothing that in Rome's eyes merited death or imprisonment, and Agrippa was heard to comment, "This man could have been set free, if he had not appealed to Caesar." Agrippa's comment should not be taken to mean that a provincial governor could not free a prisoner after an appeal to Caesar. In this situation, however, Paul's status was not a question of

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law only but also of politics (cf. comments on 25:12). Luke has picked up these words of Agrippa and uses them to conclude his accounts of Paul's defenses before Roman as well as Jewish judges. In fact, they conclude Luke's apologetic motif in Acts and vindicate both Paul and Christianity from any suspicion of sedition.

E. The Journey to Rome (27:1-28:15)

There are many things one would like to know about Paul's two-year imprisonment at Caesarea. For instance, how was the apostle supported during this time? Felix thought he was a man who had access to some money (cf. 24:26), but on what basis did he suppose this? How cordial were Paul's relations with the Jerusalem Christians and their leaders during his imprisonment? How cordial were his contacts with the Caesarean believers or with other groups of Christians in the vicinity? What happened to Silas, who was originally a member of the Jerusalem congregation (cf. 15:22)? What were Timothy and Luke doing during these two years? What happened to the rest of those who represented the Gentile churches at the time of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem (cf. 20:4)? Aristarchus is mentioned in 27:2 as embarking with Paul for Rome, and this implies that he remained in the area during Paul's imprisonment. But what did he and the others do during that time? Other questions arise as well. Such matters, however, were evidently not of interest to Luke or to Paul in his letters. In an endeavor to fill these gaps in Luke's account of Paul's stay in Caesarea, some have proposed that several of Paul's letters (notably Eph, Col, Philem) were written while he was in prison in Caesarea. But internal evidence points to their composition during his subsequent Roman imprisonment. Luke's account of Paul's voyage to Rome stands out as one of the most vivid pieces of descriptive writing in the whole Bible. Its details regarding first-century seamanship are so precise and its portrayal of conditions on the eastern Mediterranean so accurate (cf. James Smith, *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*, 4th ed. [London: Longman,

Brown, Green & Longmans, 1880]) that even the most skeptical have conceded that it probably rests on a journal of some such voyage as Luke describes. Critical discussion, therefore, has focused not so much on the trip itself as on Luke's portrayal of Paul on the trip--viz., on Paul (1) as a prisoner receiving special favors (cf. 27:3, 43; 28:7); (2) as a speaker giving advice (cf. 27:10, 21-26, 33-34); and (3) as a miracle worker honored by all (cf. 28:3-6, 8-10). Haenchen speaks for many when he says of the author:

He certainly possessed a journal of this voyage. Yet Paul was no noble traveller with

special authority, but a prisoner accused of inciting to riot. He therefore had no say in any

of the decisions. Just those edifying supplements which extol Paul are additions by the

author to a journal of reminiscences which could not report anything special about Paul, but

only described the voyage, the danger and the rescue (*Acts of the Apostles* , p. 709).

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But such a judgment is far too extreme. Clearly Luke viewed Paul as his hero and thus may be suspected of having minimized Paul's own fears during the voyage and of having cast him into a more heroic mold than was justified. Nevertheless, Paul was a Roman citizen who still retained rights until proven guilty. In addition, he was a man of powerful personality, who commanded respect in various situations. Most of all, he was an apostle of Jesus Christ, who had been promised divine protection and assured that he would reach Rome (cf. 23:11) and through whom God by his Spirit worked in an extraordinary fashion (cf. 19:11-12; 20:10-12). Historians may criticize Luke for his preoccupation with Paul and for his enthusiastic portrayal of his hero's nobility under great difficulties. But such criticisms as those of Haenchen reflect theological skepticism rather than perceptive scholarship and philosophical naturalism rather than Christian testimony to God's supernatural activity.

1. From Palestine to Crete (27:1-12)

1 The account of Paul's journey to Rome is the longest of Luke's four "we" sections (27:1-28: 16; cf. 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18). And the vividness and precision of the narrative confirm what the use of "we" implies--that it is an eyewitness report. Luke says that the centurion Julius, who was to take Paul to Rome, was a member of "the Imperial Regiment" (*speires Sebastes* ; lit., "the Augustan Cohort"). Many commentators (following Mommsen and Ramsay) see this as a reference to a group of imperial officials called the *frumentarii* , who not only organized the transportation of grain to Rome but also had police duties and performed escort services on their travels throughout the empire. But Aurelius Victor (cf. *Liber de Caesaribus* 13.5-6) seems to attribute the organization of the *frumentarii* to the emperor Trajan (A.D. 98-117), and there is nothing to indicate that even if there were *frumentarii* earlier that they had police or escort responsibilities. The soldiers who performed these services in Paul's day were the *speculatores* , a special body of imperial guards who were particularly prominent

in times of military intrigue (cf. Tacitus *Historiae* 1.24-25; 2.73). These *speculatores* belonged to no particular division of a Roman army legion (though there was a Cohors Augusta I in Syria during the reign of Augustus, and there is evidence of a Cohors Augusta III at Rome). Instead, they formed a special unit of their own, assigned to various police and judicial functions.

2 While it is not stated explicitly, the port of embarkation was undoubtedly Caesarea. If it had been any other, Luke, in accord with his usual practice, would have mentioned it. The boat they boarded was a coastal vessel from the city of Adramyttium, a seaport of Mysia on the northwest coast of Asia Minor, opposite the island of Lesbos. Embarking with Paul were Luke (cf. "we") and Aristarchus, who were possibly entered on the passenger list as Paul's personal doctor and servant, respectively. As a Roman citizen who had appealed to the emperor, Paul would naturally have had a more favored position than the other prisoners; and the centurion would

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have recognized his superiority as a gentleman with attendants. That Aristarchus is included in Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 24 as sending greetings from Rome (assuming a Roman origin for these letters) suggests that he traveled with Paul all the way to Rome and remained with him during his imprisonment there, rather than returning to his home at Thessalonica.

3 At Sidon, the ancient Phoenician port some seventy miles north of Caesarea and twenty-five miles north of Tyre, the boat took on cargo. Here Paul was permitted to visit the Christians of the city, who, like those at Tyre (cf. comments on 21:4), had probably become believers through the witness of Christian Hellenists forced to leave Jerusalem at the time of Stephen's martyrdom (cf. 11:19). The centurion Julius had probably been advised by Festus to be lenient with Paul, and doubtless Paul had already made a good impression on Julius. Yet a soldier would have been always with him during his visit with the believers of Sidon.

4-5 From Sidon, the boat sailed northwest toward Cyprus, staying close to the long east coast of the island ("the lee of Cyprus") because of the westerly winds that blow from spring through fall on the eastern Mediterranean. Two and one half years earlier Paul and his companions had sailed with that westerly wind from Patara to Tyre and had passed Cyprus on the south, perhaps making the entire voyage in only five days (cf. comments on 21:3). Now, however, their voyage from Sidon to Myra was considerably slower as their boat had to run against the winds and tried to stay in the lee of sheltering land masses. Crossing the open sea between Cyprus and Cilicia to the north, the vessel worked its way westward to Myra in Lycia, on the southwest coast of Asia Minor, helped along by local land breezes and a westward current that runs along that coast.

6 Myra was two and one-half miles inland to the north of its port Andriaca. In Paul's day it was the most illustrious city in Lycia, with distinguished public buildings, a very large theater, and many evidences of wealth (Strabo *Geography*

14.3.7). Its port became the natural port of call for grain ships bound for Rome from Egypt, and in commercial importance it overshadowed its rival Patara to the west (cf. comments on 21:1). At Myra Julius arranged with the owner of a larger Alexandrian grain ship to take the soldiers and prisoners on board for the longer voyage to Italy.

7-8 Leaving Myra, the grain ship moved slowly along the peninsula that thrusts seaward between the islands of Cos and Rhodes to the port of Cnidus, at the southwestern tip of Asia Minor. Cnidus was a free city in the province of Asia and the last port of call before sailing west across the Aegean for the Greek mainland. But the northern winds that blow down the length of the Aegean at this time of year pushed the ship off course and forced the pilot to seek protection along the southern coast ("the lee") of Crete, the 160-mile-long island southeast of Greece. Passing Cape Salmone on the eastern tip of Crete, the ship entered the small bay of Fair Havens (modern Limeonas Kalous) near the town of Lasea and about 5 miles east of Cape Matala.

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9-10 Navigation in this part of the Mediterranean was always dangerous after 14 September and was considered impossible after 11 November (cf. Vegetius *De Re Militari* 4.39). The ship had lost valuable time since leaving Myra, and it was obvious that there was no hope of reaching Italy before winter. Yom Kippur ("Day of Atonement"), the chief festival of Judaism celebrated on the 10th of the lunar month Tishri (between the latter part of September and the first part of October in a solar calendar), was already past. So Paul warned that disaster would befall them if they tried to go further.

11-12 But the pilot and the ship's owner preferred not to winter in the small, open bay of Fair Havens, being reluctant to seek quarters for themselves and their passengers in the small town of Lasea. They hoped to winter at the larger and safer port of Phoenix (modern Phineka) some forty miles west of Fair Havens. Between Fair Havens and Phoenix, however, west of Cape Matala, the south coast of Crete turns suddenly to the north and exposes a ship to the northern gales before it regains the protection of the coast just before Phoenix. Nevertheless, the centurion agreed with the pilot and the ship's owner that it would, if at all possible, be best to winter at Phoenix, with its harbor looking toward the southwest and northwest (*bleponta kata liba kai kata choron* ; "facing both southwest and northwest," NIV).

2. *Storm and shipwreck* (27:13-44)

13-15 Shortly after the decision to winter at Phoenix was made, a gentle southern breeze began to blow; and it appeared that they would have no trouble in crossing the Gulf of Messara that began west of Cape Matala on the southern coast of Crete. But no sooner had they rounded the cape and entered the gulf than they were caught in a hurricane coming from Mount Ida to the north. Sailors called this wind the Euroquilo (Gr. *Eurakylon*)--a hybrid word from the Greek *euros* meaning "east wind" and the Latin *aquilo* meaning "north wind"--so

"Northeaster" (NIV). Before it they were helpless.

16-17 Driven southwest some twenty-three miles to the small island of Cauda (modern Gavdos or Gozzo), the ship managed to gain the lee of the island. The sailors pulled in the dinghy, which was full of water, reinforced the ship with ropes to keep it from breaking up, and put out the sea anchor to keep the ship from running onto the sandbars of Syrtis, off the African coast west of Cyrene. The statement *echronto hypozonnyntes to ploion* ("they passed ropes under the ship," NIV) is difficult to translate precisely because *hypozonnyntes* is an ancient nautical term that could have signified any one of a number of procedures: (1) passing ropes under a ship and securing them above deck in order to reinforce the hull in a heavy sea (so KJV, RSV, NEB, NIV); (2) tying ropes around a ship's hull above water for the same purpose (so JB, TEV); or (3) frapping or

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hogging a vessel by tying the stem and stern tightly together with ropes above the deck in order to keep it from breaking its back in a heavy sea (cf. Cadbury's argument in BC, 5:345-54, and Book of Acts, p. 10, based on an Egyptian drawing of boats in Queen Hatseput's expedition some eighteen and a half centuries before Luke).

18-20 For fourteen days and nights (cf. v. 27), the ship was in the grip of the Northeaster. The crew tried to lighten the ship by throwing overboard all the deck cargo (v. 18), then by disposing of the ship's tackle (v. 19). In the darkness of the storm they could not take their bearings from the sun or stars. All hope of being saved had vanished.

21-26 Undoubtedly Paul shared the general pessimism on board ship (cf. the inclusive use of "we" in v. 20). But one night toward the close of the fourteen-day storm, "an angel of God" stood by Paul and reassured him (v. 24) with a message of comfort for this time of crisis (cf. 23:

11). The next morning when Paul shared it with his companions on shipboard, he was human enough to (in effect) say "I told you so" to those who had not taken his advice at Fair Havens. Moreover, ever one to give advice, he added that in his opinion they would not be saved without running aground on some island.

27-29 During the fourteenth night after leaving Crete, it was clear--probably from the running swell and the roar of surf--that they were off shore. Soundings indicated shallower water. To keep the ship from being wrecked against the rocks of an unknown coast in the darkness, they dropped four anchors and waited for dawn. Luke tells us that they were in the Adrian Sea (*en to Adria*), which many (including NIV and JB, though not KJV, RSV, NEB, and TEV) have confused with the Adriatic Sea (though cf. footnote in JB). Strabo, however, in A.D. 19, said that "the Ionian Sea is part of what is now called the Sea of Hadria" (*Geography* 2.5.20). And Josephus reports that in A.D. 63 he suffered shipwreck

together with six hundred others bound for Rome in the central Mediterranean "in the midst of the sea of Adria" (*kata meson ton Adrian*), with only eighty being plucked from the waters to continue their journey (cf. Life 15 [3]). This suggests that the name Adrian or Hadrian was used for all that part of the Mediterranean between Greece, Italy, and Africa.

30-32 Contrary to the best tradition of the sea, the sailors schemed to save themselves by lowering the dinghy (cf. vv. 16-17) under cover of lowering some more anchors from the bow. But Paul saw through the ruse, doubtless realizing that no sailor would drop anchors from the bow under such conditions. He knew to try to make shore in the morning without a full crew would be disastrous. So Paul warned Julius that all would be lost if the sailors deserted the ship. Though he had not listened to Paul earlier (cf. vv. 11-12), Julius took his advice here and ordered his men to cut the lines holding the dinghy and let it fall away.

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33-38 The storm had been so fierce that preparing food had been impossible. In this time of crisis, Paul's great qualities of leadership came to the fore. Urging all on board to eat, he took some bread, gave thanks to God, and ate it. The others on board also ate. Then, strengthened by the food, they threw the cargo of grain overboard to give the ship a shallower draft as they beached her. Only at v. 37 does Luke tell us how many were on board. Probably it became necessary when distributing the food to know the exact number, and Luke himself may have had a part in supervising the distribution. Though there is some MS evidence for reading 76, there is nothing improbable in the larger and better-attested number 276. Josephus tells of making a Mediterranean crossing to Rome in A.D. 63 in a ship that had 600 on board and which was also wrecked (cf. Life 15 [3]).

39-41 Here Luke tells with a profusion of nautical detail that makes this chapter unique how the ship was beached amid the pounding surf on a sandbar (*eis topon dithalasson* ; lit., "on a place of two seas" with deep water on either side) some distance from land, and began to break apart. From then on it was every man for himself.

42-44 Roman military law decreed that a guard who allowed his prisoner to escape was subject to the same penalty the escaped prisoner would have suffered (cf. comments on 12:18-19a; 16: 25-28). Thus the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, lest they escape while getting to land. Julius, however, determined to protect Paul, prevented this. He ordered all to get to land either by swimming or by holding on to pieces of the wreckage. So God in his providence brought them all safely to shore, as he had promised Paul he would (cf. v. 24). Many, like Luke, undoubtedly saw the relation between the promise and their safety and in their own ways praised the God Paul served.

3. *Ashore at Malta* (28:1-10)

1 Malta (*Melite*), on which the ship was wrecked, is an island about 18 miles long and 8 miles wide. It lies 58 miles south of Sicily and 180 miles north and east of the African coast. It had been colonized about 1000 B.C by Phoenicians, and the vernacular language in Paul's day was a Punic (Carthaginian) dialect. But in 218 B.C it was captured by Rome at the start of the Second Punic War waged against Carthage and granted the status of a *municipium* , which allowed a large measure of local autonomy. Augustus established a Roman governor on the island, who bore the title *municipi Melitesium primus omnium* ("the chief man over all in the municipality of Malta," *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 10.7495; cf. *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* 5754--or, as at v. 7, *ho protos tes nesou* , "the first man of the island"). He also settled a number of army veterans and their families there. In Paul's day the island was known for its prosperity and residential architecture, and its native population must have spoken not

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only Phoenician but also some Latin and Greek.

Melite has at times been identified with Meleda or Mljet off the Dalmatian coast (modern Yugoslavia) in the northeastern part of the Adriatic Sea, far to the northeast of Malta. But that is linked to the confusion of "Adrian" with "Adriatic" (cf. comments on 27:27). In all likelihood the ship was blown west from Crete to the east coast of Malta, rather than northwest into the Adriatic. So the traditional location of Saint Paul's Bay on Malta should continue to be considered the most probable site for Paul's landing. The island was first named by Phoenicians, in whose language *melita* meant "a place of refuge"--a function that naturally fits it.

2 Luke calls the natives who welcomed them *hoi barbaroi* ("barbarians," cf. also v. 4), which NIV well translates unpejoratively as "islanders." *Barbaroi* is an onomatopoeic word; to the Greeks and Romans strange languages sounded like "bar-bar-bar," hence the word "barbarian" (Lat., *barbarus*). Today "barbarian" connotes a savage or primitive person, or a crude, uneducated one. But that was not always what the Greeks and Romans meant by it. As for the Maltese, though their language sounded strange, they were hardly savages. They built a fire, Luke says, to welcome "us all" (*pantas hemas* -- viz., all 276 survivors), which was just what was needed in the cold and rain.

3-4 When Paul was bitten by the viper, the islanders concluded he was a murderer whom Justice (*he dike*) had at last caught up with since he hadn't died at sea. The Greek goddess Dike, or her Phoenician counterpart, was apparently venerated by the Maltese. Had he died, they might have written an epitaph like the one Statyllius Flaccus wrote for a shipwrecked sailor who was killed by snakebite:

O, he escaped the storm and the raging of the murderous sea. But as he lay stranded in the

libyan sand, not far from the beach and heavy with sleep, at last, naked and destitute,

weary as he was from the terrible shipwreck, the viper struck him dead. Why did he

struggle against the waves? He did not escape the lot which was destined for him on land

(*Palatine Anthology* 7.290).

Today Malta has no venomous snakes. But, as Ramsay noted, "Such changes [in animal life] are natural and probable in a small island, populous and long civilised" (*St. Paul the Traveller* , p. 343).

5-6 Seeing that Paul was unaffected by the snakebite, the islanders decided that he must be a god--or, perhaps, a favorite of the gods (cf. BC, 4:342, which quotes Plutarch's statement that Cleomenes, who was miraculously protected by a snake, was a *theophiles* , "a favorite of the gods"). Nothing is said about Paul's rebuking the islanders as he had rebuked the people at Lystra (cf. 14:15-18), for evidently there was no attempt at Malta to offer Paul any worship.

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Luke gives us such a vividly detailed account of the incident because he wants his readers to appreciate that Paul was not only a heaven-directed man with a God-given message but also a heaven-protected man. The powerful account of the storm and shipwreck has shown this, and now this vignette stresses it once more.

7 Though Paul spent three months (cf. v. 11) on Malta, Luke gives us only one more incident from his stay there--the healing of Publius's father. It is an account much like that of Peter and the crippled beggar (cf. 3:1ff.) in purpose, though not in length. Luke seems to have included it to illustrate the continuing power of Paul's ministry despite his being in Malta as a prisoner destined for a hearing before Caesar. No matter what the circumstances are, the true servant of Christ is, like Paul, never off duty for his Lord. As the Roman governor of Malta, Publius had the title "the first man of the island" (cf. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 10.7495; *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* 5754). As an act of official courtesy, he brought the survivors of the wreck to his estate and entertained them for three days while their respective situations were sorted out and arrangements made for their lodgings over the winter elsewhere on the island. Luke's reference to the governor only by his praenomen, though remarkable, was not exceptional in the ancient world. Perhaps the islanders regularly spoke of the governor simply by his first name, and Luke, who had no great sympathy for Roman nomenclature, simply reported the name he heard in common use. Or perhaps this use of the first name reflects the friendly relationship that had developed between Publius, Paul, and Luke during those three months.

8-9 The malady the father of Publius was suffering from may have been Malta fever, which was long common in Malta, Gibraltar, and other Mediterranean locales. In 1887 its cause, the microorganism *Micrococcus melitensis*, was discovered and traced to the milk of Maltese goats. A vaccine for its treatment has been developed. Cases of Malta fever are long-lasting--an average of four

months, but in some cases lasting two or three years. Luke uses the plural *pyretois* ("fevers") in his description, probably with reference to the way it affects its victims with intermittent attacks. After Paul had healed Publius's father-in-law through prayer and laying on of hands, "the rest of the sick on the island" came to him and were healed. Luke's use of "the rest" (*hoi loipoi*), implying that all the island's sick flocked to Paul and that he healed them all, is doubtless somewhat hyperbolic. What Luke is telling us is that Paul's ministry to those he met consisted in both proclaiming the Good News of Christ Jesus and healing them physically. Luke's inclusion of this vignette prepares for the climax of his book-- Paul's entrance into Rome and the triumphant note "without hindrance" (*akolytos*) on which his two volumes end (cf. v. 31).

10 As a result of Paul's ministry during his months on Malta, the islanders honored him and his party in many ways (*pollais timais etimesan hemas* ; lit., "they honored us with many honors").

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Paul was no god, as they had soon learned. But he was a messenger of the one true God, with good news of life and wholeness in Jesus Christ. In carrying out his God-given commission, Paul gave of himself unstintingly on behalf of people. That they appreciated his ministry is evidenced by their giving him and his colleagues supplies for the rest of their journey. From what Luke tells us it seems that Paul may have looked on his stay in Malta as a high point in his ministry--a time of blessing when God worked in marvelous ways, despite the shipwreck and his being still a prisoner. God seems, through the experiences at Malta, to have been refreshing Paul's spirit after the two relatively bleak years at Caesarea and the disastrous time at sea and preparing him for his witness in Rome.

4. *Arrival at Rome* (28:11-16)

11 "After three months" (*meta treis menas*), the centurion Julius arranged for another ship to take his contingent of prisoners and soldiers on to Italy. According to Pliny the Elder, navigation on the Mediterranean began each spring on 8 February, when the westerly winds started to blow (*Natural History* 2.122)--though Vegetius says that the seas were closed until 10 March (cf. *De Re Militari* 4.39), by which, however, he probably had reference to travel on the high seas and not coastal shipping. Therefore sometime in early or mid-February 61, Paul and his colleagues boarded ship again for the last leg of their voyage to Italy after their shipwreck on Malta, perhaps in late October (cf. comments on 27:9). The ship was another Alexandrian vessel, probably another grain ship (cf. comments on v. 13) from Egypt that had been able to make harbor at Malta before winter set in and the disastrous Northeaster struck. Ships, like inns, took their names from their figureheads; and this one, Luke tells us, "was distinguished by the Dioscuroi" (*parasemo Dioskourois*)--i.e., the painted carving at its prow of Castor and Pollux, the sons of Leda, queen of Sparta, who in Greek mythology were transformed by Zeus into twin gods represented by the constellation Gemini.

The cult of the Dioscuroi (lit., "sons of Zeus") was especially widespread in Egypt and the Gemini were considered by sailors a sign of good fortune in a storm. For an Alexandrian ship, the figurehead was an appropriate one.

12 Sailing north-northeast, the ship reached the harbor of Syracuse, on the east coast of Sicily. There at the most important city of Sicily, it remained for three days, probably awaiting better wind conditions and loading and unloading cargo.

13 From Syracuse the ship "set sail" (*perielontes*, lit., "weighed anchor") for Rhegium (modern Reggio di Calabria), an important harbor at the toe of Italy and on the Italian side of the Strait of Messina. There it docked to await a more favorable breeze. On the next day, however, a southerly wind began to blow, and they were able to make the 180 miles up the coast of Italy to Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli) in only two days. Puteoli was a resort city on the Bay of Naples, the port city of Neapolis (modern Naples), and the principal port of southern Italy. It vied with

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Ostia, the port of Rome at the mouth of the Tiber, as a terminus for the grain ships from Egypt. There Paul and his party, as members of Julius's contingent, disembarked.

14 There are two rather surprising statements in this verse. At Puteoli Paul and his companions "found some brothers who invited us to spend a week with them." It was not, of course, unusual for Christians to be found in such an important city as Puteoli. There was a Jewish colony there (cf. Jos. War II, 104 [vii.1]; Antiq. XVII, 328 [xii.]), from which some may have become Christians on their travels or through the witness of believers who visited Puteoli. What is surprising, however, is that Paul a prisoner was at liberty to seek out the Christians of the city and accept their invitation to spend seven days in fellowship with them. Nevertheless, it is possible that for some reason Julius found it necessary to stop at Puteoli for a week after disembarking and that during that time he allowed Paul the freedom (though undoubtedly accompanied by a guard) to seek out his fellow believers and enjoy their hospitality, as he did at Sidon when the journey to Rome began (cf. 27:3). As Luke presses toward the end of his story, his account becomes more and more concise--so much so that the reader feels some measure of surprise. A second surprising feature of v. 14 is its forthright conclusion: "And so we came to Rome" (*kai houtos eis ten Romen elthamen* ; which NIV, following the KJV and BDF [par. 327], tones down to "went to Rome" by treating the verb as an imperfect rather than as an aorist). It is not surprising that they came to Rome; that had for some time been the goal of Paul's journey and Luke's narrative. But that the mention of their arrival appears here before v. 15 and not as the opening statement of v. 16--where it would seem to have been more appropriate--is indeed surprising. Ramsay argued that this double mention of Rome was probably due to "the double sense that every name of a city-state bears in Greek"--that is, the whole administrative district of Rome (the *ager Romanus*) and the actual city itself (*St. Paul the Traveller* , pp. 346-47). But the adverb *kakeithen* ("and from there"; "there," NIV) that begins v. 15 shows that the actual city of Rome is in view, not just an administrative district (cf. BC, 4:345). The

problem, therefore, is not so easy to explain away, either by treating the verb as an imperfect (so KJV, BDF, NIV) or by understanding the direct object as an administrative district (so Ramsay). All things considered, the best explanation for the appearance of "and so we came to Rome" in v. 14 is that it reflects Luke's eagerness to get to the climax of his story and that this eagerness led him to anticipate their arrival at Rome--even though he had to go back in v. 15 and include another detail of the last stage of the journey before finally bringing Paul and his colleagues to Rome (vv. 16ff.). So the solution lies along psychological rather than linguistic or administrative lines.

15 Taking the Via Domitiana from Puteoli to Neapolis, Paul would have passed the tomb of the poet Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro, 70-19 B.C.). In the Mass of Saint Paul that was celebrated at Mantua, Virgil's birthplace, till the fifteenth century, this Latin poem about Paul at Virgil's tomb

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was included:

Virgil's tomb the saint stood viewing

And his aged cheek bedewing,

Fell the sympathetic tear;

"Ah, had I but found thee living,

What new music wert thou giving,

Best of poets and most dear"

(T.R. Glover's free translation).

Imaginary though this is, it points to the link between Virgil's vibrant humanity and intense longing for a savior and Paul's dynamic gospel with its answer to this longing. At Neapolis, Julius and his contingent turned northwest to travel to Rome on the Via Appia-- that oldest, straightest, and most perfectly made of all the Roman roads, named after the censor Appius Claudius who started its construction in 312 B.C. During the seven-day stopover at Puteoli, news of Paul's arrival in Italy reached Rome. So a number of Christians there set out to meet him and escort him back to Rome. Some of them got as far as the Forum of Appius (*Forum Appii*), one of the "halting stations" built every ten to fifteen miles along the entire length of the Roman road system. It was forty-three miles from Rome in the Pontine marshland, and a market-town had grown up around it. Others only got as far as the Three Taverns (*Tres Tabernae*) Inn, another halting station about thirty-three miles from Rome. Paul's gratitude to God for the delegation that met him must have been unusually fervent, because Luke pauses to make special mention of it. In his letters, Paul often urges his readers to be thankful,

and here he illustrated his advice.

16 At Rome, Paul was allowed to live in private quarters, though a soldier guarded him at all times. The chain he wore (v. 20) was probably attached to his wrists. Yet in Luke's eyes Paul entered Rome in triumph. Through his coming the gospel penetrated official circles in the capital of the empire, and God used his detention there for two years to spread the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the city (cf. vv. 30-31). With this verse, the last "we" section in Acts closes. To judge by the greetings in Colossians 4: 10-14 and Philemon 23-24 (assuming a Roman origin for these letters), Luke and Aristarchus must have remained with Paul through most--if not all of his detention at Rome, being joined from time to time by such friends as Epaphras, John Mark, Demas, and Jesus, who was surnamed Justus.

F. Rome at Last (28:17-30)

At last, Paul's great desire to visit the capital of the empire (cf. Rom 15:22-24, 28-29) was

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fulfilled. Despite his manacles, guard, and house arrest, he was free to receive visitors. Among them, Luke tells us, were (1) the leading Jews of the city, whom he asked to visit him when he first arrived (vv. 17-28) and (2) others, evidently both Jews and Gentiles, who came to his quarters at various times during his two-year detention (v. 30).

1. Meetings with the Jewish leaders (28:17-28)

17-20 Three days after (*meta hemeras treis*) arriving at Rome, Paul invited the leaders of the Jewish community to meet with him in his own quarters. He wanted to learn what they had heard from Jerusalem about him and to find out their attitude toward him. Through their contacts in the imperial court and with their money, they could, if they desired, support the charges against him. Since they undoubtedly knew something about his case, he wanted to defend himself before them. Also, he hoped the occasion would be an opportunity for proclaiming the message about Jesus the Messiah and that some would respond to it. Paul began with the formal salutation used at Jewish gatherings: "Men, brothers" (*Andres adelphoi* ; "My brothers," NIV). The first word of his address "I" (*ego*)--which in his precis Luke places before the salutation--clearly shows that Paul was about to deliver a personal apologia. He had done nothing, he insisted, against the Jewish people or against the customs of the fathers (v. 17). The Roman authorities had judged that he had not committed any capital crime and were willing to release him (vv. 17b-18). But objections from Jerusalem forced him to appeal to Caesar--not to accuse his own people but to save his life (v. 19). The point of contention between him and his accusers at Jerusalem had to do with the messianic hope of Israel, which Paul believed was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth and they did not. Therefore he concluded: "It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain" (v. 20; cf. 23:6; 24:21; 26:6-8).

21-22 The immediate response of the Roman Jewish leaders to Paul's address is surprising. Apparently they did not want to get involved. They disclaimed having gotten any letters about him from the authorities at Jerusalem and said they had heard nothing, officially or unofficially, against him from any Jew who had come to them from Judea (v. 21). Yet Christianity had been known within the Jewish community at Rome for some time (cf. comments on 2:10). In fact, in the late forties Jews at Rome had been so sharply divided about Christianity that the emperor Claudius banished them all from the city to stop the riots there (cf. comments on 18:2). Certainly the Jewish leaders at Rome knew a great deal about Christianity generally and at least something about Paul, and their claim to know only "that people everywhere are talking against this sect" (v. 22) seems much too "diplomatic" in light of their knowledge.

It is, however, in the light of their recent experience that we should judge the Jewish leaders' response to Paul's words. Having been expelled from Rome in 49 or 50 because of riots about Christianity in their community, and having only recently returned to their city after Claudius's

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death in 54, they were simply not prepared in 61 to become involved in Paul's case one way or another. They doubtless had their own opinions about it. But (1) the Jerusalem authorities had not requested them to get involved; (2) Paul was a Roman citizen who had had essentially favorable hearings before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa II; and (3) his case was now to be tried before Caesar himself. So they wanted to have as little as possible to do with Paul and Christianity. But they did say that they were willing at some future time to hear his views on "this sect" (*haireisis* , from which the word "heresy" is derived).

23-24 So they arranged this second meeting, and an even larger delegation came to Paul's quarters. Luke tells us only that it lasted "from morning till evening" and that Paul proclaimed "the kingdom of God" (cf. comments on 1:3) focusing on Jesus, to whom the Law and the Prophets bore witness (v. 23; cf. v. 31). For the content of what he said, we should probably think of his sermon in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (13:17-41) and the letter sent to the Romans. As for his method, he "tried to convince them" (*peithon autous*), which implies that Paul combined proclamation with persuasion (cf. comments on 17:2-4) and that there was a good deal of impassioned debate. The day-long session proved profitable, for "some were convinced by what he said"--though, sadly, "others would not believe" (v. 24).

25-28 The points at which many of the Jewish leaders disagreed with Paul and left the session, Luke says, were two: (1) Paul's attempt to prove the obduracy of Israel from Scripture on the ground that Isaiah had foretold the Jews' rejection of Jesus as Messiah, and (2) his insistence that because of Israel's hardened attitude the message of "God's salvation" has been sent directly to Gentiles where it would find a positive response. He documented the first point by quoting Isaiah 6:9-10. The LXX had already turned the imperatives of vv. 9b-10a into finite verbs, with the result that the entire blame for Israel's estrangement from God is placed on the stubbornness of the people themselves. That is how Jesus also is

reported as having used the passage in the "Logia" collection (cf. Matt 13:13-15; Luke 8:10; see also the use of the passage in Mark 4:12 and John 12:40, though not with quite the same thrust) and how Paul explained Israel's predicament in Romans 9-11. But Paul quotes prophecy here not just to explain Israel's stubbornness but to set the stage for his second point: In the providence of God, redemption was now being offered directly to Gentiles and they were responding. A revolutionary new policy for proclaiming the gospel and making converts had been providentially worked out during Paul's first missionary journey and at the Jerusalem Council (cf. 12:25-16:5 and comments in loc.). That policy was then carried out through two more missionary journeys extending into Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia (cf. 16:6-19:20). It was a policy that advocated the proclamation of the gospel "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Rom 1:16; cf. Acts 13:46-52). Luke has taken pains to show how everything that happened in the ministry of the early Jerusalem church essentially looked forward to the inauguration of this policy and how this policy lay at the heart of Paul's missionary purpose. Now having traced the

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story of the advance of the gospel to Rome, Luke reports how that same pattern was followed at Rome. And his account of the gospel's advance from Jerusalem to Rome in terms of the distinctive policy of first the Jew, then the Gentile comes to a fitting conclusion with the quotation of Isaiah 6:9-10--one of the oldest Christian testimonia portions from the OT.

2. *Continued ministry for two years (28:30)*

30 Luke has accomplished his purpose in showing how the gospel Paul proclaimed entered Rome and in depicting the initial response in the city. Now he gives us this terse reference to Paul's two years of house arrest. Luke does not give us details about Paul's two years in Rome because he is not writing Paul's biography. Some argue that Paul was executed at the end of his two-year detention and that Luke did not speak of his execution because to do so would have ruined his portrayal of the triumphant advance of the gospel. Others argue that (1) Paul's case never came to trial because the prosecutors failed to appear within the statutory eighteen-month period, and that (2) Luke expected his readers to understand that since a two-year period of detainment went beyond the statutory period for prosecution, Paul was released. But during the storm at sea, the angel of the Lord had assured Paul that he would stand trial before Caesar (cf. 27:24). Therefore, it seems proper to assume that Luke intended his readers to infer that Paul's case, whatever its outcome, did come before the imperial court. Cadbury speaks of "the extraordinary darkness which comes over us as students of history when rather abruptly this guide leaves us with Paul a prisoner in Rome" (*Book of Acts*, p. 3). Indeed, we are forced to look elsewhere for information about Paul's Roman imprisonment and its aftermath. Accepting the Prison Epistles as having been written during his Roman imprisonment, we may surmise that Paul fully expected to stand before Caesar's court and that, while he could not be certain about the outcome, he also expected to be released (cf. Philippians 1:19-26; Philem 22). There is little reason to doubt his intuition. Therefore we may date such a release somewhere around 63. Accepting the Pastoral Epistles as genuine,

we may believe that after Paul's release from this Roman imprisonment he continued his evangelistic work in the eastern portion of the empire (at least in lands surrounding the Aegean Sea)--perhaps even fulfilling his longcherished desire to visit Spain (Rom 15:23-24, cf. 1 Clement 5). And since 2 Timothy 4:6-18 speaks of an approaching second trial in a tone of resignation, we may conclude that Paul was rearrested about 67 and, according to tradition, beheaded at Rome by order of the emperor Nero.

G. A Summary Statement (28:31)

31 This summary statement has often been viewed as only an amplification of v. 30, indicating the nature of Paul's ministry during his two years of detention at Rome. But to judge by Luke's

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practice in the other five summary statements in Acts (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20), we are evidently meant to take it as the summary statement for the whole of Panel 6 (19:21-28:31). In all of his prison experiences at Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome, Luke is saying, Paul "boldly"

(*meta pases parresias* ; lit., "with all boldness," which connotes publicly, candidly, and forcefully) "preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." And he did this, Luke goes on to insist, "without hindrance" (*akolytos*). This shows the tolerance of Rome at that time toward Christianity and the gospel proclamation--a tolerance Luke passionately desired would continue and hoped to promote through these last chapters. Furthermore, since the last word of Acts is the crisp adverb *akolytos* , we may say with reasonable confidence that it was Luke's desire to close his two-volume work on this victorious note: the apostolic proclamation of the kingdom of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, despite all difficulties and misunderstandings, had moved forward throughout the Jewish homeland and into the Roman Empire "without hindrance." The Western text adds the following words to the end of this verse: "Because this is the Messiah, Jesus the Son of God, by whom the whole world is to be judged." But while the addition was intended to round off Luke's apparent abruptness, it only weakens his point and spoils his unique ending. Luke's instinct in closing his great work as he did was completely right. In seeming to leave his book unfinished, he was implying that the apostolic proclamation of the gospel in the first century began a story that will continue until the consummation of the kingdom in Christ (Acts 1:11).

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