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Reconsidering the Apologetic Purpose of Luke-Acts

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

Reconsidering the Apologetic Purpose of Luke-Acts

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations in this work follow the conventions of *The SBL Handbook of Style for Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*. 2nd ed. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014. Where a standard abbreviation was not available, one conforming to the spirit of the Handbook is listed below.

Significant Terms

ANE	Ancient Near East
BCE	Before the Common Era
CE	Common Era
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature

Ancient Works

<i>Dial.</i>	Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Against Heresies</i>
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	Eusebius, <i>History of the Church</i>
<i>J.W.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Wars</i>
<i>Marc.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Against Marcion</i>

Anthologies/Compilations

<i>ANF</i>	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> . Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885–1887. 10 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<i>NPNF</i> ¹	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1</i> . Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–1889. 14 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
<i>NPNF</i> ²	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2</i> . Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–1900. 14 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.

Reference Works

<i>AYBD</i>	<i>Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noelle Freedman, Gary A. Herion, David F. Graf, and John David Pleins. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
<i>BEB</i>	<i>Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible</i> . Edited by Walter A. Elwell. 2 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988.
BDAG	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Edited by Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000 (Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich).
<i>EDNT</i>	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–1993.
<i>ELDCH</i>	<i>The Essential Lexham Dictionary of Church History</i> . Edited by Michael A. G. Haykin. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022.
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia</i> . Edited by James Orr. 4 vols. Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915.

- LBD* *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016.
- NDT* *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*. Edited by Martin Davie, Timothy Grass, Stephen R. Holmes, John McDowell, T. A. Noble. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016.
- NIDNTTE* *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Edited by Colin Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975–1978.
- PDBS* *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Edited by Arthur G. Patzia, and Anthony J. Petrotta. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- TDNT* *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.

Journals

- BBR* *Bulletin for Biblical Research*
- BibInt* *Biblical Interpretation*
- CBQ* *Catholic Bible Quarterly*
- CBR* *Currents in Biblical Research*
- HTR* *Harvard Theological Review*
- JETS* *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
- JSNT* *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
- JTS* *Journal of Theological Studies*
- NovT* *Novum Testamentum*

Monograph/Commentary Series

- AB* Anchor Bible
- AYB* *Anchor Yale Bible*
- BKC* The Bible Knowledge Commentary
- BTNT* Biblical Theology of the New Testament
- ICC* International Critical Commentary
- IVPNTC* IVP New Testament Commentary Series
- JSNTSup* Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
- NAC* New American Commentary
- NCBC* New Cambridge Bible Commentary
- NIGTC* New International Greek Testament Commentary
- PNTC* Pillar New Testament Commentary
- TNTC* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries

English Bible Translations

- NASB* New American Standard Bible, 1998

Original Language Bibles

- BHS* *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
- NA²⁸* *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland, 28th ed.

NASB95 New American Standard Bible, 1995 ed.
NET The New English Translation (NET) Bible. 1st ed.
SBLGNT The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition

ABSTRACT

The Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles are two critical works in the Bible. Together, these two books make up approximately twenty seven percent of the New Testament.¹ Their literary contribution to what is known about the origins of Christianity and its rapid spread in major cities of the Roman Empire is immeasurable. It is appropriate that so much has been written regarding these two key books' origins, genre, and purpose. Yet, with all that has been written, there is still much debate about this subject. Should these two books be treated separately, as two different genres, or should they be treated as one unified work? Thomas Phillips does well when he states, "The question of the genre(s) of Luke and Acts may seem like a mere scholarly trifle, but one's answer to this question does have interpretive implications."²

This dissertation contends that Luke and Acts (hereafter known as Luke-Acts) is a single, continuous work, divided into two volumes.³ As a continuous work, this study suggests that there is an apologetic purpose behind the making of Luke-Acts, which includes defending the legitimacy of Christianity and the innocence of Paul. This purpose makes what appear to be superfluous details crucial points of evidence.

¹ John A. Martin, "Luke," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old and New Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983–1985), 198–99. The volumes of *BKC* were re-published as a single digital edition by Logos Bible Software, which retains the two-volume page numbering. This will be employed here, rather than the pagination in the original six-volume page numbering.

² Thomas E. Phillips, "Literary Forms in the New Testament," in *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 381.

³ Henry Joel Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (London: SPCK, 1958), 8–9. Cadbury is the originator of the now popular single title for the two-volume work by Luke.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Reason for the Study

It can be easily argued that Lukan literature is crucial to Gospel and New Testament studies. Willem C van Unnick rightfully concludes that Luke-Acts is “one of the great storm centers of New Testament scholarship.”¹ Luke’s contribution to what is known about the origins and spread of Christianity is significant. While much of what is revealed in the Gospel of Luke could be derived from any of the other three canonical Gospels, the record of the birth of the church and the spread of the gospel message to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) would be significantly diminished were it not for what is recorded in Acts of the Apostles. Luke’s two-volume work, accounting for more than a quarter of all the New Testament writings, is an essential and integral part of the Bible.

Because of this great importance, much has been written about Luke-Acts. The number of commentaries, monographs, and journal articles on these two books alone could fill a library. I. Howard Marshall does well to note that “Luke figures in most of the problems of New Testament science.”² Yet, with all that has been written, little consensus has been reached on some of the more crucial historical-critical issues of Lukan literature. Related to this, one could ask why the third Gospel was even necessary. Luke does not criticize earlier attempts, but rather has the intention of an orderly and precise rendition with additional information in his Gospel. It

¹ Willem C. van Unnick, “Luke-Acts, A Storm Center in Contemporary Scholarship,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays in Honor of Paul Schubert*, ed. Leander E. Keck, and J. L. Martyn, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 16.

² I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian & Theologian*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 13.

is doubtful that Luke wrote because he felt that Mark and Matthew were deficient in some way.³ Certainly, the prologue to his gospel makes no allusion to such a deficiency (Luke 1:1–4). There must then be a reason why Luke felt another perspective was required, especially considering what was already told in Mark. Uncovering these reasons is what prompted this study. These represent just a few of the crucial issues in Lukan studies that warrant further exploration.

Background Issues

Historically, Luke and Acts have been treated individually, being considered two separate genres. The logic behind this deserves reconsideration. Both works are addressed to the same individual with a continuous message.⁴ Logically, a unified approach to Luke-Acts seems implicit. One would suspect that scholars would agree upon a single genre or purpose for the writing. This, however, has not been the case historically. To arrive at purpose, it is helpful to first agree on genre. Luke clearly elucidates his purpose in writing his Gospel when he says, “it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught (Luke 1:1–4).”⁵ Even with such a definitive statement, few scholars agree on a single purpose for Luke-Acts.

³ This study is mindful of the consensus opinion of Markan priority. However, traditionally, Matthew was considered the first, followed by Mark, with Luke being the third Gospel produced, which is why the early church arranged them in the order they still enjoy today. More will be discussed on this and other historical-critical issues in the development of the thesis of this dissertation. See Osvaldo Padilla, *The Acts of the Apostles: Interpretation, History and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 23, for an excellent discussion on this.

⁴ Issues surrounding the unity of Luke-Acts will be fully addressed in chapter three of this study.

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural references are from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

No clear purpose statement appears in Acts. However, what is evident is that Acts was intended to be a continuation of the narrative that began in Luke.⁶ Therefore, the purpose statement from the Gospel account applies also to Luke's historical account. All of this leads to the question of what Luke-Acts is and what is its purpose. Answering this question ultimately influences the exegesis of the text and, thus, will be the focus of this research.

Purpose or Purposes?

It is difficult to speak of just one purpose for any New Testament document. While discussing the purpose of Luke's Gospel, Darrell Bock rightfully suggested, "Given the complexity of the volumes, it is unlikely that any one purpose adequately covers the entire Gospel."⁷ Furthermore, with the rise of form and redaction criticism, the focus on purpose has shifted to discussion on themes and theologies of Luke-Acts.⁸ Craig Keener suggested that purpose is inseparable from the question of Luke's implied theology or themes.⁹ Some of those major themes discussed include salvation to the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit, world mission, Christianity and Judaism, Christianity and Rome, the kingdom of God, Luke's Christology, as well as a host of other themes found in the text.¹⁰ While these discussions are important and

⁶ Both Robert Maddox and Henry Cadbury argue this point well. See Robert L. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 3–6; Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 8–9.

⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, IVPNTC 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 20. Craig Keener makes a similar observation in his discussion on the purpose of Acts. See Craig S. Keener, *Introduction and 1:1-2:47*, vol. 1 of *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 435.

⁸ For instance, see Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program Realized for all Nations*, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 99–387; Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, 1–20; or Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 10.

⁹ Keener, *Acts*, 435.

¹⁰ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 55–72; Charles B. Puskas and David Crump, *An Introduction to the Gospels and Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 130–52; Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 45–55; Bock, *Luke*, 20–3.

fruitful, they do not answer the question of what ultimately prompted Luke to produce such a lengthy literary work.

One purpose posited by scholars suggests that Luke wanted to assure his audience of the reliability of the faith.¹¹ They base their position on the prologue of Luke's Gospel account (Luke 1:1–4). Another commonly suggested purpose is the kerygma, that Luke was presenting an orderly account of the birth and spread of Christianity for evangelistic reasons.¹² Another widely held view is that Luke was primarily focused on presenting a history of the Christian faith.¹³ This purpose is closely tied to the discussion on the genre of Luke-Acts.¹⁴ Fourthly, primarily found in circles that consider Luke-Acts written in the late first century CE, some suggest that Luke was writing in response to a crisis of faith among the Christian community who were growing increasingly despondent considering the delay in the *parousia*.¹⁵ Above all, the purpose that is most universally mentioned is apology. Many commentaries and monographs on Luke-Acts discuss the apologetic aspects of the text.¹⁶ In some cases, the apologetic purpose dominates the

¹¹ For instance, Mikeal Parsons argued that Luke “sought to ‘school’ his intended audience in the moral and theological implications of the Christian vision.” Mikeal C. Parsons, *Luke*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 1–19. John Polhill suggested that Luke sought to give Theophilus (a codename for the wider Christian community) a solid ground for the faith. Polhill, *Acts*, 55. See Martin, “Luke,” 2:198–199; Stein, *Luke*, 32–44, just to name a few.

¹² Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, 1–20; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 35; Conzelmann, *Theology of St. Luke*, 10, just to name a few.

¹³ Several scholars mention this including John W. Mauck, *Paul on Trial: The Book of Acts as a Defense of Christianity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 215–18; Maddox, *Purpose*, 19–23; Keener, *Acts*, 436, and others.

¹⁴ More will be said on this topic later in this chapter and in chapter three.

¹⁵ Conzelmann, *Theology of St. Luke*, 93–136, Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 213–18. This view, rejected here, will be discussed at length in chapter three while discussing the date of Luke-Acts.

¹⁶ Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, rev. William F. Albright and C. S. Mann, AB 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986), lv–lxi; Keener, *Acts*, 441–58; Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 221–26; Conzelmann, *Theology of St. Luke*, 137–38, and many more will be discussed throughout this study.

discussion, especially regarding the book of Acts. For instance, Craig Keener devoted more space to the apologetic aspects of Luke-Acts than any of the other themes or purposes listed in his multivolume commentary on Acts.¹⁷ This is significant and is one of the reasons that this study suggests that apology was the primary purpose for the making of Luke-Acts.

This argument does not negate the possibility that Luke had other interests in mind for writing, nor does it reject the presence of the numerous themes or theologies suggested by previous scholars. The argument here is that apology was the main and precipitating reason sparking the writing. To suggest that evangelism was not also one of Luke's aims would be a mistake. One of the things that will be argued in this study is that the occasion that prompted the writing of Luke-Acts was Paul's gathering of the Jewish leaders in Rome and the apology he presented to them at that time (Acts 28:17–20).¹⁸ This is not to say that Luke wrote Luke-Acts prior to their arrival in Rome. It was the gathering itself, and Paul's apologetic argument at that gathering, that prompted Luke to write Luke-Acts over the two-year span of Paul's stay.

What one notices immediately is that, upon arrival, Paul employed the same strategy he followed throughout the book of Acts. That is, whenever he arrived in a new area, he would first visit the Jews, normally in the synagogue, and present the gospel to them first. Those prior occasions were all clearly and primarily evangelistic. However, in the final episode of Acts 28, apology appears to be Paul's primary concern, as is evident by his opening statement (Acts

¹⁷ Keener, *Acts*, 435–58. Of the twenty-three pages devoted to the purpose of Acts, Keener devoted seventeen pages to the apologetic aspects of the book. Keener is one of many scholars who uphold the unity of Luke-Acts and his discussion on purpose is applicable to both of Luke's volumes.

¹⁸ Paul began his address by explaining his innocence to the Roman Jews. Much more will be said on this throughout this dissertation.

28:17–20).¹⁹ This event illustrates how apology was the primary concern, but evangelism was also an important goal. This is the argument being made for the whole of Luke-Acts. Luke’s purpose for composing his two-volume work was born out of the desire to present the Way as the logical fulfillment of Jewish messianic expectations and that Christianity was not some heretical offshoot, nor was Paul guilty of sedition or spreading a *religio illicita*. Essentially, the contention here is apology was the *primary* purpose for the making of Luke-Acts, not the *exclusive* purpose.

While Luke ultimately dedicated both works to Theophilus, he likely had two audiences in mind. The first was those Jewish leaders in Rome. Luke’s Gospel seems more relevant to their interests. Second was the Roman judicial system, to which Acts seem most pertinent. For both audiences, apologetic concerns were primary. The Jewish leaders wanted Paul’s opinion on the sect (αἰρέσεως) that was so negatively perceived (Acts 28:22). The Roman judicial system would have been most concerned about whether Christianity was a legal religion under Rome. Luke-Acts, as will be argued here, is a legal brief that addresses both concerns.²⁰

Research Problem

Compared to the other Gospels, Luke is quite a lengthy gospel narrative. Luke-Acts together make up more than twenty-seven percent of all the New Testament.²¹ Darrell Bock’s analysis reveals how, out of the 7,947 verses in the New Testament, Luke-Acts accounts for 2,157 of them. Luke’s verse count even surpasses Paul’s, who comes in at 2,032 verses. One does not get very far into reading Luke-Acts before realizing Luke’s propensity for details. Many

¹⁹ In that opening statement, Paul insisted that he was innocent of all charges that were levied against him by the Palestinian Jewish leadership. Rome had already acquitted him but, because of Jewish persistence, he found it necessary to appeal to Caesar. Ultimately, Paul argued, his imprisonment was for the sake of the Gospel.

²⁰ The exact role of Theophilus will be discussed in chapter three of this study.

²¹ Martin, “Luke,” 198–99; Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 27.

of those details, if they were omitted, would hardly diminish the narrative or the strength of the message if Luke-Acts were written only for historical, biographical, or evangelistic purposes. This is a curious feature of Lukan literature. This introductory chapter aims to introduce the problem addressed in this study; that is, understanding why Luke-Acts contains so much material that is extraneous to both gospel and historical genres.

The Question of Genre

The Gospel of Luke has been grouped with the Synoptics in the genre of gospel, or Greco-Roman *bios*, whereas Acts has been considered in the category of history.²² *Bios*, as it relates to Luke's Gospel, describes the theological and biographical history of Jesus Christ and His mission on earth.²³ However, considering the connection between the two books, some have attempted to place Luke-Acts within the category of history.²⁴ Richard Burridge attests to challenges faced attempting to fit Luke-Acts into either *bios* or ancient historiography.²⁵ Because Luke-Acts contain a significant amount of information that is superfluous for either a *bios* or ancient history, perhaps, as Burridge suggests, it is time to consider a common genre, possibly in "something altogether different."²⁶

²² Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 27.

²³ For an excellent discussion about Graeco-Roman *bioi*, its origins, and an argument for the Gospels being included in that category, see Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 25th Anniversary Edition. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), 250.

²⁴ Padilla calls Acts a "Hellenistic historical monograph in the Jewish tradition." See Padilla, *Acts*, 61; Burridge, *What are the Gospels*, 343.

²⁵ Burridge, *What are the Gospels*, 342–43. Burridge summarizes the views of David Aune, Martin Hengel, and Martin Dibelius in his comments. More will be discussed on this subject in chapter two of this work.

²⁶ Burridge, *What are the Gospels*, 342. See also Phillips, "Literary Forms in the New Testament," 381.

Details in Luke

To illustrate this point, consider Luke's genealogy of Christ (Luke 3:23–38). Luke traced Jesus' lineage to Adam. Matthew's Gospel only listed from Abraham to Christ (Matt 1:1–17). Mark and John wasted no time on genealogies. Luke must have had some reason for including an extended genealogy. To be sure, as David Litwa noted, Greco-Roman literature has been known to contain genealogies.²⁷ Hesiod's *Theogony*, a poem of creation, is just one example.²⁸ Having a genealogy in itself is not at all striking. The genealogies in Matthew and Luke, however, are of a different sort than those to which Litwa refers.²⁹ Understanding Luke's purpose in providing these details, and their theological and historical significance, is a key concern of this research.

The same questions could be asked regarding the birth narratives of both Jesus and John the Baptist (Luke chapters 1 and 2). Luke is the only one of the Synoptic contributors that provide a detailed birth and pre-ministry history of Jesus and John. Surely Luke had some purpose for this information that extended beyond mere biographical or historical detail. What will be argued here is that these details served an apologetic purpose.³⁰ Luke had an affinity for precise details, placing the narrative in an exact location of time (i.e., Luke 1:5; 2:1–2; 3:1–2).

²⁷ David M. Litwa, *How the Gospels Became History: Jesus and Mediterranean Myths* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 77.

²⁸ Derek S. Dodson and Katherine E. Smith, eds., *Exploring Biblical Backgrounds: A Reader in Historical and Literary Contexts* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), 14–16.

²⁹ The genealogies mentioned by Litwa are categorically different from what is found in the Gospels. Hesiod's genealogies represent a subtype of mythical narrative whereas biblical writers sought to document historical truth from a theological and kerygmatic perspective. See Fritz Graf, "Myth and Mythology: Myth in the Greco-Roman World," *AYBD* 4:963.

³⁰ This argument will be detailed in chapters four and five of this study.

The other Gospel writers were not nearly as meticulous. Luke's Gospel contains material not found in any other canonical Gospel record.³¹

What is equally significant is what Luke does not include. Luke does not include much of the material found in Mark 6:45–8:26, commonly known as Luke's "great omission."³² Even outside of that, there are other examples of material omitted or abbreviated by Luke. For instance, he ignored the parable of the seed (Mark 4:26–29) and abbreviated the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19). With Luke's thorough research and diligence, one might have expected those details in their entirety. It is doubtful that Luke regarded the material as unreliable. What is more plausible is that the details did not fit into Luke's theological purpose.³³ Considering the thorough nature of his research, it is doubtful that Luke would not have had access to these stories. With his affinity for details, it must be significant that he did not include them, especially since Luke includes parables and other materials that are unique to his account.³⁴ There must have been a theological purpose behind what was or was not included.

Details in Acts

Regarding Acts, one finds a great deal of seemingly extraneous material. For instance, in Acts 2:9–11, Luke wrote in regard to those who witnessed the Pentecost outpouring that there

³¹ Much of the infancy narrative (Luke 1–2) is unique to Luke's account. This issue will be addressed in later chapters.

³² Several explanations for Luke's omission of those details have been posited including suggestions that Luke used a defective copy of Mark or that he simply omitted those details to make space for other material. For an excellent discussion on this topic, see Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 264–65.

³³ See Archibald T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009) or Ernest DeWitt Burton, *A Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels for Historical and Critical Study* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1917) for excellent harmonization of the Gospels.

³⁴ The Parables of the Lost Coin (15:8–10), The Prodigal Son (15:11–32), and The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31) are just a few.

were “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.” He had already informed the reader that “there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). Such a simple statement could have sufficed. Luke surely had a purpose in providing this all-inclusive list of countries of origin for those witnessing the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Additionally, there is Luke’s detailed travel narrative of Paul’s voyage to Rome (Acts 27–28). While Paul’s survival from a shipwreck is undoubtedly important, this was only one of the three shipwrecks Paul experienced. Even Paul saw no need to elaborate upon the details of his sea calamities.³⁵ Luke’s provision of a detailed narrative must have been significant to his purpose.³⁶ All these details could have been much more concisely presented. This was not a time when the production of a manuscript was cheap and easy. Availability of adequate materials and cost of production were very real concerns for New Testament writers.³⁷

Proposed Solution

These examples represent just a few of the numerous passages where the author provided information far beyond what was required for a historic or kerygmatic purpose. By providing so much detail, Luke must have had a specific purpose, otherwise, it is inconceivable that he would

³⁵ Paul simply mentions that he had been shipwrecked three times in 2 Corinthians 11:25.

³⁶ Questions about Luke’s sources will be briefly addressed in chapter three of this study while dealing with issues surrounding the formation of Luke-Acts. While this study will by necessity address many historical-critical issues, including issues of authorship, recipient, sources, and text, these issues are not the focus. These issues will be discussed as they relate to the argument presented here.

³⁷ For discussion on the production and distribution of NT writings, refer to E. Randolph Richards, “Reading, Writing, and Manuscripts,” in Green and McDonald, *The World of the New Testament*, 343–64.

waste valuable resources in unnecessary bloviation. The logical conclusion would be that Luke-Acts is something other than just *bios* or history and his concern goes beyond just evangelism. It is the contention of this study that Luke-Acts is primarily an apologetic text composed using features of both biography and history.

Articulation of Thesis

The motivation of this present study is to answer the question of why Luke-Acts is so detailed and what purpose these seemingly extraneous details serve. It is the contention of this dissertation that Luke and Acts is a single, continuous work divided into two volumes. As a continuous work, the assertion here is that the primary purpose of Luke-Acts is apologetic, a defense of Christianity and of Paul. This dissertation will argue that Luke-Acts was written primarily to defend Christianity, considered a rogue and blasphemous offshoot of Judaism by the Jewish religious leaders of the first century, against Jewish charges of being an illegal religion and, in part, as a defense brief for Paul in preparation for his first trial in Rome. Luke-Acts contains a large amount of information that is extraneous from what is traditionally included in a gospel account or Greco-Roman history.

Additionally, this study will suggest that Paul's arrival in Rome and the gathering of the Jewish religious leaders prompted the writing of Luke-Acts (Acts 28:17–26). Paul's desire for that gathering was to present an apology in response to the events that led to his present predicament. The Jewish leaders were unaware of the events, noting that they had not received any communication from Judea concerning Paul.³⁸ However, they were eager to learn more (Acts

³⁸ There are several reasons why these leaders may have been unaware of Paul's case. First, the same difficulties of winter travels that led to Paul's shipwreck may have delayed any letters or representatives from Judea. Secondly, Paul had been whisked away rather quickly. Though the storms delayed him, he still had a significant head start on his accusers. Thirdly, it is possible that the Jewish leaders in Judea decided not to pursue the charges

28:21). The only information they had was that the sect was “spoken against everywhere” (Acts 28:22).³⁹ Paul then spent a full day witnessing about Jesus from the Law and Prophets, with mixed results (Acts 28:23–24). Finally, Paul spent the next two years preaching to all who came to him (Acts 28:30–31). It is feasible that Luke would have set out to codify the message Paul was preaching. This thesis suggests that Luke-Acts is the resulting work.

An additional benefit in the production of Luke-Acts was the evidence that would prove useful to Paul in his trial in Rome. Perhaps Theophilus was a member of this community who decided to represent Paul as his *rhetor*. A *rhetor* was a public speaker or orator, specifically one serving in a court setting as an attorney.⁴⁰ Johannes Munck suggested this theory in his commentary on Acts. He states, “Theophilus may have been a member of the court of Caesar.”⁴¹ John Mauck posits the same, noting the possibility of Theophilus as a Roman lawyer or *rhetor*.⁴² Additionally, John Polhill calls the notion of Theophilus as Paul’s lawyer “the most popular Theophilus theory of all.”⁴³

That Luke-Acts has an apologetic purpose has also been suggested by several scholars throughout the years. Munck reasoned, “It is in *this* particular sense an apology—presenting a defense of Christianity and Paul—and as such it may have played a part in Paul’s trial in

before Caesar. For a more complete discussion, see David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 712.

³⁹ The word “spoken against” is the Greek ἀντιλέγεται, an antonym for *apologeia*. “ἀντιλέγω,” BDAG 89.

⁴⁰ “ῥήτωρ,” BDAG 905.

⁴¹ Munck, *Acts*, lviii.

⁴² Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 27.

⁴³ Polhill, *Acts*, 56. While Polhill acknowledges the popular theory, he ultimately dismisses it in favor of the “God-fearer” hypothesis.

Rome.”⁴⁴ David Peterson asserted, “In fact, the view that Luke-Acts as a whole is an apologetic history has had a number of supporters in recent decades.”⁴⁵ While falling short of embracing the theory of Luke-Acts as a legal brief in defense of Paul, Frederick F. Bruce ultimately called Luke “the first Christian apologist.”⁴⁶ Several others make note of the apologetic nature of much of the text.⁴⁷ With so much scholarly acknowledgment of an apologetic aspect of Luke-Acts, it is surprising that so little has been made of this. Darrel Bock rightfully states, “The biblical material from Luke-Acts is probably the largest and most neglected portion of the NT.”⁴⁸ This study aims to contribute to this neglected area. Understanding the apologetic purpose of Luke-Acts makes what appear to be superfluous details become crucial points of evidence. Conceding the apologetic purpose of Luke-Acts does not negate the presence or importance of other sub-purposes. Arguing that Luke wrote to defend Christianity and Paul does not mean that he was not also concerned with spreading the Gospel or providing a history of the faith. The argument here is that those purposes are secondary to Luke’s apologetic aim.

Research Goal

The goal of this study, as articulated above, is to ascertain whether apology could be responsible for the inclusion of so much of the narrative and historical material in the Luke-Acts. If so, how does this influence interpretation? The tentative position of this author is that viewing

⁴⁴ Munck, *Acts*, lviii.

⁴⁵ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 36.

⁴⁶ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 36. Peterson summarizes Bruce’s analysis from Bruce’s own commentary. See F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 22.

⁴⁷ Those functional literary clues will be the focus of chapter 4 of this study.

⁴⁸ Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 27.

Luke-Acts through an apologetic lens gives relevance to many of the seemingly irrelevant details. It is hoped that the conclusion of this study will lead to renewed interest in Lukan studies and a desire to evaluate the two books as a single literary entity. Should the thesis prove valid, reading Luke-Acts through an apologetic lens should lead to fresh exegetical insight and additional hermeneutical application for the modern reader.

Methodology

Historical Analysis

The method for the study will encompass a historical, literary, and exegetical evaluation of Luke-Acts. The historical analysis is a necessary foundation for the argument of the proposed thesis.⁴⁹ If Luke-Acts were written as a defense for Paul (or at least Acts), then it is necessary to first establish a date of composition that would have been useful for his trial, which is believed to have happened somewhere between 62–64 CE.⁵⁰ The majority of the arguments against Luke-Acts as an apology stem from the presumption of a late date for the writing, post-70 CE. This belief has been based upon three primary assumptions. The first is dependent on the dating of the

⁴⁹ “Historical evaluation,” as used in this study, refers to the contextual analysis of the issues that lie behind the text. These issues include the identification of the author, recipient, date, and occasion of the writing, which is commonly called the historical context of the text. This is similar in many ways to traditional historical criticism. The front matter of exegetical commentaries exemplifies this sort of analysis as it will be carried out here. While the treatment of these issues will not be as robust as one would find in a commentary, it will be of sufficient quality and quantity to draw conclusions regarding the meaning and purpose of the text. For more discussion on the traditional historical-critical method, see Joel B. Green, “The Challenge of Hearing the New Testament,” in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 10; or Arthur G. Patzia and Anthony J. Petrotta, “Historical Criticism,” *PDBS* 58.

⁵⁰ Paul arrived in Rome between 60–62 CE. Luke states Paul spent the next 2 years preaching in Rome (Luke 28:30), and Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist.* 2.22.1–8; *NPNF*² 1:123–25) asserts the same and adds that Paul was released to embark on further missionary travels. This would mean that Paul’s first trial must have been no later than 64 CE. See Lee Martin McDonald, “New Testament Chronology,” in *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 16.

Muratorian Fragment. The Muratorian Fragment, once considered the oldest fragment attesting to the existence of Luke and Acts, is an ancient document containing a partial list of the New Testament books and represents one of the earliest canon lists.⁵¹ The Muratorian Fragment dates to approximately 170 CE.⁵² Because of this, some are reluctant to assign a date much earlier than the last few decades of the first century lacking any earlier textual witness.⁵³

The second assumption is that Luke is largely dependent upon Mark's gospel and, because the suggested date for Mark is typically somewhere around 65 CE (or later), Luke-Acts could not have been composed in time for any benefit to Paul in Rome. Finally, there is an assumption that Jesus' prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 19:43–44) was a *vaticinium ex eventu*, or a prophecy made after the actual event.⁵⁴ Since the sack of Jerusalem happened in 70 CE, Luke-Acts must have been written afterward. Thus, many critical scholars date Luke-Acts rather late, post-70 CE. All these presuppositions are precarious and refutable. Many have already presented valid arguments for a traditional conservative dating of the text. These positions will be evaluated as part of the argument of the proposed thesis. Evidence will be presented that argues for an early date that accommodates the production of Luke-Acts.

A historical analysis is also necessary to establish a solid timeline of the events that take place in Luke-Acts. One positive and useful application of Luke's affinity for details is that he

⁵¹ Gregory Allen Robbins, "Muratorian Fragment," *AYBD* 4:929.

⁵² Padilla, *Acts*, 24. Padilla's discussion surrounds the authorship of Luke-Acts but provides an excellent summation of the issues, including those of the dating of the writings.

⁵³ There are fragments that predate this. Craig Evans provides an excellent chart outlining them. This will be discussed further throughout this study. See Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 27.

⁵⁴ Patzia and Patrotta, "*vaticinium ex eventu*," *PDBS*, 121–22. See the definitions section at the end of this chapter for a full description of this term.

provided clear markers for establishing a firm timeline of events. Luke’s mentioning of specific Roman officials and historical events provided internal markers that accurately place the narrative *in situ*. These markers are also supported by several external pieces of evidence, which will be presented in chapter three.

Literary and Exegetical Analysis

Literary analysis will also be a crucial method for arguing the thesis. Luke said he composed Luke-Acts so that Theophilus could be assured about the things he had been *taught* (Luke 1:4). The word “taught” (*katecheo*) can also mean “informed” or “reported.”⁵⁵ Inevitably, how one translates this word will influence their interpretation and understanding of the passage. Additionally, an exegetical analysis will help test the theory presented in this study. Several key sections of Luke-Acts will be treated exegetically to show how apology accounts for the inclusion of several of the seemingly superfluous details of the text.

Chapter Synopses

Chapter Two – Literary Review

The thesis will be argued over six chapters. After this introduction, chapter two will provide a literary review of historical scholarship on Luke-Acts and discuss the current state of Lukan studies. This review will interact with literature ranging from ancient sources all the way through modern contributors. The works that are most germane to the subject will be expounded upon. Early church witnesses were unanimous in their view of the authorship of Luke-Acts. This traditional view reigned for nearly two millennia until the skepticism of the nineteenth century.

⁵⁵ “κατηχέω,” BDAG, 534.

The critical methods that became the hallmark of European biblical scholarship, especially from the Tübingen school, called into question everything that tradition took for granted. Consequently, the conversation surrounding Lukan studies has mainly been focused on Luke's place among the Evangelists and the historical quality of Acts. More recently, much of what is written has focused on the theology of Luke-Acts. Concretely identifying the author, date, and purpose of Luke-Acts has become a secondary concern for many. These views will be examined and evaluated. Their contribution to Lukan literature and the goal of this study will be presented.

Chapter Three – The Making of Luke-Acts

Chapter three will address the historical-critical issues previously mentioned. Answering the objections to an early date of writing will be a principal concern of this chapter. Additionally, understanding the making of Luke-Acts will encompass a substantial portion of this section. Henry J. Cadbury's contribution to this subject is crucial, and his views will be discussed at some length here.⁵⁶ Besides arguing strongly for the unity of Luke-Acts, Cadbury offered much support for the traditional historical positions. This chapter will lay a solid foundation for arguing the apologetic purpose of Luke-Acts and the thesis of this study.

Chapter Four – The Purpose of Luke-Acts Part One: Functional Literary Clues

Chapters three and four are crucial for the thesis of this dissertation. They will provide the core elements for Luke-Acts as an apology. Chapter four will present the functional literary clues within the text of Luke-Acts that indicate Luke's apologetic strategy. Three areas will be

⁵⁶ Cadbury's contribution to Lukan studies cannot be overestimated. His theory on this subject has been challenged but never overturned. Henry Cadbury was a prominent NT scholar and professor of the early twentieth century. He was also a professor of NT studies at Harverford College, Bryn Mawr College, and Harvard Divinity School.

explored that illustrate those functional clues. The three areas include Luke's prologue, certain literary features present in Luke-Acts that are common in ancient apologies, and Luke's portrayal of the relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Rome. For instance, the concept of a *religio licita* is important to the text, as is illustrated by the trial narratives of Christ (Luke) and Paul (Acts). Judaism's claim that Christianity was a *religio illicita* was unfounded, as proven by the Leader and Founder of the movement (Jesus) being proclaimed innocent three times before His illegal execution. That theme directly connects to Paul, who was also proclaimed innocent by three Roman officials in Acts. This connection underscores the apologetic nature of the text. The overall antisemitic undertone of Luke-Acts is a passively supportive example of the apologetic purpose of the author.⁵⁷ Altogether, these areas offer discernable clues that Luke was writing something other than a historical or biographical account of Christianity.

John Mauck's *Paul on Trial* makes a significant contribution to the discussion.⁵⁸ Mauck's monograph argues well the concept of Acts as a defense brief for Paul. This study will broaden his argument, contending that Luke-Acts is *primarily* a defense for Christianity with a secondary benefit of providing evidence for Paul. This expanded view supports the assumption that Luke-Acts is a continuous work. Mauck is not the first (or only) scholar to suggest an apologetic purpose to Luke-Acts. Johannes Munck, Henry Cadbury, Daniel Wallace, as well as others, have all written in favor of this suggested purpose.⁵⁹ Other scholarly opinions will be considered as

⁵⁷ Not that Luke was an anti-Semite, has been suggested by some. The overall trajectory of Luke-Acts paints those Jewish leaders who persecuted Jesus and Christianity in a negative light as opposed to the rather positive and sympathetic portrayal of Roman leaders. Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 287.

⁵⁸ John Mauck J.D. is a practicing lawyer and founding partner of Mauck & Baker law firm in Chicago, IL. Though not a biblical scholar, Mauck is a respected student of biblical studies receiving positive feedback from some prominent NT biblical scholars.

⁵⁹ Munck, Acts, lviii; Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 314–15; Daniel B. Wallace, "Acts: Introduction, Outline, and Argument," *New Testament: Introductions and Outlines* (2004), <https://bible.org/seriespage/acts->

well, including scholars who reject Luke-Acts as an apology. Their critical challenges will be answered in this section.⁶⁰

Chapter Five – The Purpose of Luke-Acts-Part Two: Content Clues

Having outlined the functional literary clues in the previous chapter, chapter five will explore the content clues that reveal the apologetic purpose of Luke-Acts. It will be shown how Luke provided extensive details as a rhetorical literary strategy for defending Christianity and Paul. This rhetorical strategy will be demonstrated in Luke's detailed birth narratives, the use of prominent political officials throughout both volumes, the overarching theme of the Gentile mission, and Luke's extensive travelogue. The narrative details provided in these areas are critical for presenting a defense brief for the Way. Understanding Luke's apologetic strategy helps to find meaning in what is often considered extraneous detail.

Previewing this argument, the pre-birth narrative of the first two chapters of Luke connects Old Testament messianic prophecy to their fulfillment through Jesus and John the Baptist. These are connections that scholars like I. Howard Marshall and Darrell Bock address in detail.⁶¹ The contention here is that Luke's theological reason for such a heavy allusion to prophecy was to argue fulfillment through Jesus, revealing Christianity as the logical

introduction-outline-and-argument; Daniel B. Wallace, "Luke: Introduction, Outline, and Argument," *New Testament: Introductions and Outlines* (2004), <https://bible.org/seriespage/luke-introduction-outline-and-argument>.

⁶⁰ Although Mauck's monograph was warmly received, some consider his thesis unproven. See reviews by David S. Eppling, review of *Paul on Trial: The Book of Acts as a Defense of Christianity*, *Criswell Theological Review* 1 (2003): 121–22; H. Wayne House, review of *Paul on Trial: The Book of Acts as a Defense of Christianity* by John W. Mauck, *JETS* 45 (2002): 706.

⁶¹ Marshall, Luke, 45; Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 122.

culmination of Jewish messianic expectation.⁶² The prophetic silence of the prior four hundred years of the intertestamental period was interrupted by a flurry of prophetic activity in the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke.

Another significant example involves the lengthy sea-voyage narrative of Acts 27–28. Paul mentioned being shipwrecked three times in his epistle (2 Cor 11:25). However, Luke gave an entire travel log and extensive details about one specific shipwreck and his survival. These details must have been important to Luke’s purpose. A few scholars have suggested that ancient notions of pollution and divine retribution lie behind this inclusion.⁶³ The belief that deities punished the wicked by death at sea is a pervasive thought in ancient Near Eastern mythology. There is at least one parallel in the Hebrew Bible. The narrative of Jonah reflects this ubiquitous ancient Near Eastern understanding. If Paul were guilty of crimes punishable by death, he would surely have been killed at sea. Moreover, when the Maltese onlookers witnessed his incident with the viper, they thought for sure justice had found Paul at last. Yet Paul remained unfazed. If the gods found Paul innocent, surely the Roman courts must agree.⁶⁴ A few have argued this point over the last several decades.⁶⁵ Luke did not provide a conclusion to Paul’s ordeal. That,

⁶² Darrell Bock argues, “At the beginning of his two volumes, Luke emphasizes that God has made promises. The material on the birth of Jesus in Luke 1–2 makes clear that God is carrying out a plan according to his promise and that he will deliver his people.” Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 122.

⁶³ See, for instance, Gary B. Miles and Garry W. Trompf, “Luke and Antiphon: The Theology of Acts 27–28 in the Light of Pagan Beliefs about Divine Retribution, Pollution, and Shipwreck,” *HTR* 69 (1976): 259–67; David J. Ladouceur, “Hellenistic Preconceptions of Shipwreck and Pollution as a Context for Acts 27–28,” *HTR* 73 (1980): 435–49; John Clabeaux, “The Story of the Maltese Viper and Luke’s Apology for Paul,” *CBQ* 67 (2005): 604–10.

⁶⁴ Not that Luke would have appealed to any other deity in acknowledgment of their existence. The suggested argument asserts that, according to ANE beliefs about divine retribution and punishment, Paul’s survival of this shipwreck is proof of his innocence.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Wallace, “Acts: Introduction, Outline, and Argument.”

combined with the tradition of his acquittal, argue strongly that this was included as a point of evidence.

All this together presents implicit evidence that there was an apologetic purpose behind the inclusion of this material. These are examples of information that Luke provides in abundant detail that, if he were only interested in kerygma, could have been said much more concisely. However, these details would have been pertinent for apologetic reasons. This chapter will tie together the argument of the entire dissertation of how Luke used abundant detail as factual background relevant to Luke's legal brief.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

Chapter seven will summarize the argument of this dissertation. It will also present the weaknesses of the study and areas where further research might be beneficial. Some scholars object to the notion of Luke-Acts as an apology simply because no Roman official would want to wade through so much irrelevant detail.⁶⁶ This is a valid objection. There is a great deal of information in Luke-Acts that would distract a disinterested Roman official. This is where this study will deviate from Mauck's theory. It has been argued here that Luke-Acts was not written simply as a trial brief for Paul's defense. That is only a minor function of the work. It was primarily to defend Christianity from Jewish charges of being a heretical off-shoot of Judaism and thereby a *religio illicita*.

Luke was writing to provide a detailed theological history of Christianity to the community Paul called together in Rome. Every detail of this two-volume work would have been necessary for them. Those details functioned as a "trial brief" defending the legality and

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Barrett, *Luke the Historian*, 63.

legitimacy of the Way. From that, Luke also provided details that would have been useful to Paul in his trial before Nero. Thus, no Roman official would have needed to sift through so much kerygma to get the pertinent details. That would have been Theophilus' responsibility, as will have been argued. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of how this study might impact current and future scholarship on Luke-Acts.

Defining Terms

Apology

Defining terms used in this study is essential in order to avoid unnecessary confusion as to what is being argued. One critical term that must be defined is the use of the word *apology*. Apology, according to the *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, is “a speech of defense in reply to a speech of the prosecution.”⁶⁷ From this term comes the modern field of apologetics which describes “the theory and practice of defending Christianity.”⁶⁸ It is in this sense, to a large degree, which is meant in this study. Luke’s penning of Luke-Acts was, as will be argued, in defense of Christianity from charges levied against her from Jewish religious leaders. Luke-Acts also served as an apology for Paul in his trial in Rome. Paul’s apology is what would currently be known as a defense brief.⁶⁹

The concept of apology here should not be seen as what has become known in the field of apologetics, which seeks to offer a defense of Christianity against all other religions. Today, the field of apologetics is mostly concerned with showing why Christianity is superior to other belief

⁶⁷ Arthur J. Droge, “Apologetics, NT,” in *AYBD*, 1:302.

⁶⁸ Kelly M. Kopic and Wesley Vander Lugt, *Pocket Dictionary of the Reformed Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 14.

⁶⁹ John Mauck’s *Paul on Trial* is built around this idea of Acts as a defense brief for Paul.

systems, especially as it relates to answering some of the questions to basic human problems like the afterlife, sin, redemption, explanations of origins, or suffering (theodicy).⁷⁰ Luke was not seeking to answer these questions in Luke-Acts. Luke's focus was primarily on answering charges accusing Christianity of being an illegal religion. This is the narrow application of what is meant by apology in this study.

Lawyer

This study will discuss the activity of lawyers in the New Testament. To avoid applying the term anachronistically, it is necessary to define the term from a New Testament perspective.

Nomikos

Nomikos is used nine times in the New Testament (Matt 22:35, Luke 7:30; 10:25; 11:45, 46, 52; 14:3; Titus 3:9, 13). Six of these uses are found in Luke's Gospel. When used substantively, it has the meaning of "lawyer." However, in every use found in the Gospels, it has the meaning of an expert in Mosaic law. It is used once outside of the Gospels, and that is in Titus (3:13) referring to Zenas "the lawyer." Whether Zenas was an expert in the Mosaic law or a lawyer is not explicitly given. However, there are implicit clues in the text that support the latter. The conclusion of the *EDNT* which states, "In later Greek ὁ νομικός used substantively gained the meaning 'lawyer/notary' it probably has this sense in the NT only in Titus 3:13," is apropos.⁷¹

⁷⁰ James Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 11–24.

⁷¹ Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, "Nomikos," *EDNT*, 471.

George Knight agrees in his commentary for the *NIGTC* stating, “The term is most likely used here of an expert in Roman law rather than Jewish law.”⁷²

Rhetor

The precedence is set within the Scriptures for the use of lawyers in similar situations. Internal support is found within the book of Acts. Tertullus was a lawyer (ῥήτωρ, *rhetor*) employed by Ananias the high priest (Acts 24:1). A *rhetor* was a public speaker or orator, specifically one serving in a court setting as a prosecuting attorney.⁷³

Logographer

Closely linked to *rhetor* is this title referring to the ancient Greek orators. These individuals were chroniclers who also served as a sort of lawyer. They did not represent clients in the way that one would consider today. These *logographoi* wrote legal briefs to help their clients defend themselves in court. One significant example which has been compared to Luke is that of Antiphon, A Greek orator who wrote a speech in defense of his client Euxitheus who was accused of the murder of Herodes in approximately 419 BCE.⁷⁴

Vaticinium ex eventu

The *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies* defines *vaticinium ex eventu* as “a Latin phrase meaning prophesying from an outcome.”⁷⁵ It is a “prophecy placed in the mouth of a narrative

⁷² George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 357.

⁷³ “ῥήτωρ,” BDAG, 905.

⁷⁴ Miles and Trompf, “Luke and Antiphon,” 259–67.

⁷⁵ Patzia and Petrotta, “*vaticinium ex eventu*,” *PDBS*, 121–22.

figure in light of an event (or events) that actually did transpire.”⁷⁶ Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of the temple (Mt 24:2; Mk 13:2; Lk 19:43–44; 21:6, 22; cf. also Mk 10:38–39; 14:28, Lk 19:42) is claimed by some to be a *vaticinium ex eventu* in their argument for a late date of Mark’s gospel and Luke-Acts.

Presumptions of the Author

No research is conducted in a totally objective manner. Every researcher approaches a subject with some preconceptions. It is important to recognize these presumptions and lay them out at the onset of a project. With that in mind, these are the presumptions that underly this study of Luke-Acts. While being always completely mindful of them, the research and conclusions will be conducted in a manner that is as unbiased as possible.

First, this study begins with acknowledging that Luke, the author of Luke-Acts, was the traveling companion of Paul in agreement with early church tradition.⁷⁷ The research performed in preparation of this study has only reinforced this position. The issues of disparate representation of Pauline theology between Luke’s recording of Paul’s speeches and behavior in Acts and Paul’s own words in the Pauline corpus can be easily explained and accounted for by the differing theological intentions of the authors.⁷⁸ For instance, in Acts, Paul appeals to his Roman citizenship to prevent the scourging at the hands of the Roman centurion (Acts 22:25). Some have suggested that the Paul of the New Testament epistles would never have boasted in

⁷⁶ Patzia and Petrotta, “*vaticinium ex eventu*,” *PDBS*, 121–22.

⁷⁷ See Marshall, *Luke*, 33. This argument will be introduced in the next chapter and fully argued in chapter three.

⁷⁸ Bock presents an excellent discussion on the objection to Lukan authorship. See Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 35–37. See also Marshall’s comments on the challenges to the traditional view of authorship of Luke-Acts in his commentary. Marshall, *Luke*, 34.

his worldly citizenship. Instances like these have led these commentators to suggest that the Luke who penned Luke-Acts could not have been a traveling companion of the Paul we see in the epistles.⁷⁹ Too much is made of this issue. It appears most likely that Paul's purpose in invoking his Roman citizenship was because he was determined to make it to Rome. The theological message of Paul's epistles was for a different audience and different purposes. This was not a conflicting portrayal; it is a differing approach.

Related to this is the assumption that the speeches recorded in Luke-Acts are accurate representations of what was said at the time. This position is consistent with Thucydides' criteria for Greco-Roman history.⁸⁰ While what was recorded may not have been an exact, word-for-word transcript of the original speech, it accurately represents the message that was transmitted by the speaker. Linked to this is the assumption that the details recorded in Luke-Acts are historically accurate while recognizing that the details presented are both selective and have been possibly reorganized for theological purposes. Such theological selectivity does not negate historical accuracy. Luke's purpose was not to present a historical account for history's sake. It was to present a historical account for an apologetic purpose of the gospel.

Limitations of the Study

The goal of this study is to put forward the apologetic nature of Luke-Acts. In doing so, it is hoped that a renewed interest in Lukan literature will ensue. While exegesis of Luke-Acts will be a component of this study, the exegetical scope will be limited. This work will not provide a comprehensive exegesis and exposition of either Luke or Acts. Such a magnanimous task goes

⁷⁹ Marshall, *Luke*, 34.

⁸⁰ For an excellent discussion, see Padilla, *Acts*, 125–37.

far beyond the narrow objective here. It is hoped that this study will prompt scholarship in that direction. The passages chosen will be those that illustrate best the apologetic underpinnings of Luke-Acts. They will not be passages “cherry-picked” to support the thesis. It is suggested that every passage in Luke-Acts fits well into the apologetic context.

This study also acknowledges the ongoing and unsettled issues surrounding the introductory issues of Luke-Acts. This study is not designed to settle the issues of the Synoptic problem, the genre of Luke-Acts, or the identifications of Luke or Theophilus. Other issues, like Luke’s sources, which are important to Lukan studies, will only be skimmed in this study. These issues deserve full treatment far beyond the limitations set out here. Ultimately, a consensus on historical-critical issues surrounding Lukan studies may remain elusive. While the discussion about these issues is important, that is not the focus of this research. This study seeks to understand the primary purpose behind the production of this lengthy historical account of the church. When necessary, these issues will be addressed, and the reader will be directed to any number of the excellent commentaries whose front matter presents cogent summations of the issues. However, for the sake of space, and to remain focused on the thesis at hand, the discussion of those issues will be limited here.

CHAPTER TWO: STATE OF LUKAN STUDIES

Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of Lukan studies throughout the centuries. Scholarship on Luke-Acts can be divided into three primary epochs: the early church, the nineteenth century, and twentieth century to current times. This chapter will elucidate the trends from each of these eras with focus on current scholarship. It is necessary, however, to lay a foundation upon which all Lukan studies have been built. Christianity in the first century was a movement that faced constant threats. The church and its leaders found themselves continually answering attacks from all sides. To this point, James Bielby notes, “almost immediately, the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ gave rise to questions and objections from Jews and Gentiles, from believers, inquirers, and adversaries.”¹

The Early Church

Luke-Acts shares a common recurring theme of defense that runs through most early Christian literature. Notably, much of early Christian literature, including New Testament writings, was “written to promote and defend the Christian movement.”² That is not to say that every New Testament book was written for the purpose of apology.³ That would be a gross overstatement of the role of apology in New Testament literature. The assertion here is that many of the New Testament writers wrote, at least in part, to defend the faith against some form of

¹ Bielby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 37.

² Droge, “Apologetics, NT,” *AYBD* 1:302.

³ Bielby notes, “While none of the books of the New Testament is an apologetic text in a systematic sense, most contain an awareness of apologetic issues and exhibit apologetic concerns.” Bielby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 37.

doctrinal error or theological attack arising from the Jews, Greco-Roman cultural influence, or errors of orthodoxy or orthopraxy.⁴ First Peter exhorts the reader to always be ready to make a defense (*apologia*) for anyone who asks for reason for the faith (1 Pet 3:15).⁵ Such a simple statement reveals a common undertone of apology in the New Testament. It is from this current that Luke-Acts was produced.

The focus of this study is to ascertain the purpose of Luke-Acts. To arrive at purpose, a crucial first step is to identify the author and the context of his writing. A review of Christian literature from the first century will aid in identifying these elements.

Internal Evidence: The New Testament

Since most of the New Testament was written anonymously, what is known about the authorship and audience of various New Testament books is derived from internal clues within the text, or external testimony from extra-biblical sources from the latter part of the second century and beyond.⁶ Regarding Luke-Acts, the New Testament alone offers very few clues. First, the recipient of the letter is clear. The author leaves no doubt as to whom he was writing. Both Luke and Acts identify Theophilus as the intended recipient (Luke 1:3, Acts 1:1).⁷ The

⁴ Bielby argues that “it is very plausible to see one of the purposes of the Gospels as apologetic, to sustain the faith of early Christians in the face of attacks from Jews and Gentiles.” Bielby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 38. Paul faced constant attacks from the Judaizers. Much of what is written in Romans and Galatians is a defense for his teaching on Christianity and the Law of Moses. Thus, the apologetic undertones of much of the NT literature is quite clear.

⁵ Droge, “Apologetics, NT,” *AYBD* 1:302.

⁶ That much of the NT literature is unsigned is a ubiquitous notion. However, on the issue of anonymity and pseudepigraphy in relationship to the NT, see Lee Martin McDonald, “Pseudonymous Writings and the New Testament” in Green and MacDonald, *The World of the New Testament*, 361–66; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, 17–18.

⁷ This study recognizes the debate over the identity of this Theophilus, including whether he was a real person or a metaphorical representation of a community to whom the author wrote. This debate will be addressed fully in chapter three.

author of the two-volume work is not so evident. It is clear that whoever authored Luke-Acts was a traveling companion of Paul. This is evident from the “we” passages of Acts.⁸ This, however, leaves a wide-open field.

Acts list several candidates that would fit this mold. Silas, Timothy, Titus, Barnabas, Luke, and a few others could all be viable candidates.⁹ Some can be easily eliminated.¹⁰ One person rises to the top of the list, and that is Luke.¹¹ To narrow this field, attention will need to turn to external clues from extra-biblical authors. Those external clues reside in the writings of the apostolic and post-apostolic fathers.

External Evidence: The Patristics

The patristics offer much insight into the authorship of Luke-Acts and some other literary clues. Second century writers were not particularly focused on ascertaining the purpose of New Testament books, at least not in the way which is in the discussion here. However, they offer some clues that help formulate a reasonable idea. One of the primary thrusts of Lukan scholarship during the patristic period was that of apology. F. F. Bruce rightfully argues that “The great age of Christian apologetics was the second century.”¹² In making this assertion, Bruce illustrates the concerns of the writers of that era. In making their apologetic arguments,

⁸ The generally accepted “we” passages are Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 34; Adolf Harnack, *Luke the Physician, the Author of the Third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. John R. Wilkinson (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1907), 26–120.

⁹ Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 32.

¹⁰ For instance, Barnabas would not be a viable candidate since, according to Acts, he and Paul parted ways after his disagreement over John Mark (Acts: 15:36–41). There is no known tradition of the two embarking on any further travels together.

¹¹ Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 35. Darrell Bock makes this assertion after evaluating the arguments of the church Fathers and the internal evidence of the Scriptures.

¹² Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 26.

one of the things the patristics offer is a rather clear picture of whom they believed authored Luke-Acts. Early church tradition on Lukan authorship of Luke-Acts is quite unanimous.¹³ Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Eusebius all make clear statements identifying the author of Luke-Acts. Justin Martyr, offers attestation to an early date for Luke-Acts. Their comments will be the focus of this next section.

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (110–165 CE) is known as the first Christian apologist. Being disillusioned by classical philosophy’s lack of answer to some of his metaphysical questions, Justin turned to faith and became a great defender of Christianity, so much so, it cost him his life.¹⁴ In defending the faith, Justin provided rather early attestation to an extant version of at least the Gospel of Luke. Justin writes, “For in the memoirs which I say were drawn up by His apostles and those who followed them, [it is recorded] that His sweat fell down like drops of blood while He was praying, and saying, ‘If it be possible, let this cup pass’.”¹⁵ This statement is a clear allusion to Luke’s gospel (Luke 22:42, 44). This could only have been drawn from Luke’s Gospel as Luke is the only Evangelist to record this scene from Jesus’ agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

That Justin references the memoirs of Luke suggests that there had to have been an established and ubiquitous tradition to which he referred. Considering how closely Justin’s words match those easily referenced today supports the notion that the tradition was likely codified at this point. Inferred in this is that the codification must have happened at a time well

¹³ Bock, *Luke*, 17–18; Darrell L. Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 32.

¹⁴ “Introductory Note to the First Apology of Justin Martyr,” in *ANF* 1:159.

¹⁵ Justin, *Dial.* 103.19 (*ANF* 1:251).

before Justin's early second century existence. Thus, Luke-Acts would arguably have been written no later than the latter part of the first century.¹⁶

Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus (120–202 CE) is best known as a bishop of Lyons. According to tradition, he heard the gospel from the preaching of Polycarp, who in turn heard it from John, the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve.¹⁷ Irenaeus reveals much about the early church's belief on the authorship of Luke-Acts.

Irenaeus attests to Lukan authorship noting, "Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him."¹⁸ Irenaeus goes on to note, "But that this Luke was inseparable from Paul, and his fellow-labourer in the Gospel, he himself clearly evinces, not as a matter of boasting, but as bound to do so by the truth itself."¹⁹ With this statement, he clearly identifies Luke as the companion of Paul and the person authoring the "we" sections of Acts. This builds the case that this same Luke was the physician Paul mentioned in Colossians (4:14).

Irenaeus made statements that speak to the Synoptic problem. According to Irenaeus (who likely borrowed from Papias), the order of production of the Gospels seems to be Matthew,

¹⁶ Note, the earliest extant manuscript of Luke's gospel (Papyrus 75) dates between 175 and 225 CE, containing the inscription *Euangelion kata Loukan*. See Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1, for a complete discussion on this.

¹⁷ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.20.4–8 (NPNF² 1.237). In this section, Eusebius quotes at length Irenaeus' comments in a letter to Florinus where Irenaeus recounts how, as a boy, he sat and listened to Polycarp's preaching and how Polycarp recounted having lived with John and received his understanding of "the word of life" directly from the Apostles.

¹⁸ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1 (ANF 1:414).

¹⁹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.14.1 (ANF 1:437).

Mark, Luke, and then John.²⁰ This seems to be the accepted order up until the nineteenth century, at which time scholars began to challenge the suppositions of the apostolic fathers.²¹

Tertullian

Tertullian (ca. 145–220 CE) was a late second century to early third century north African apologist. He was best known for his body of apologetic works refuting heretics, pagans, and carnal Christians in defense of the faith.²² Although criticized for his affinities toward Montanism, Tertullian’s work provides valuable insight into the struggles of early Christianity.

Tertullian said much in regard to Luke and the origins of his work. One of the issues against which Tertullian wrote was the Marcionite heresy (*Marc.* 4.2.2). Tertullian refuted Marcion’s redaction of Luke’s gospel. Marcion apparently removed portions of the gospel in order to support his view that the Creator, from whom Christ came, was altogether different than the Creator of the Old Testament, and that Christianity was not connected to Judaism in any way.²³

Tertullian’s attestation to Luke being the author of the Gospel bearing his name is clear. He always refers to it as the Gospel of Luke. Tertullian notes, “Of the apostles, therefore, John and Matthew first instil [*sic*] faith into us; whilst of apostolic men, Luke and Mark renew it afterwards.”²⁴ This comment, at least in its translation, seems to suggest that John and Matthew

²⁰ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1 (*ANF* 1:414).

²¹ Nineteenth-century critical challenges to the traditions of the early church will be discussed in the next section.

²² Jordon H. Edwards, “Tertullian,” *ELDCH*, n.p.

²³ Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.2, 4.7 (*ANF* 3:347, 351). According to Irenaeus, Marcion removed all the genealogical records of the birth of Christ from his copy of Luke’s Gospel, which was the only Gospel account Marcion recognized. See Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.27.2 (*ANF* 1:352).

²⁴ Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.2 (*ANF* 3:347).

were the first to produce their Gospel accounts, while Mark and Luke came later. This, view, at least on the surface, conflicts with other patristics on the order of the production of the Evangelists.²⁵ Tertullian also suggests that Luke got at least some of his Gospel material from Paul. In his apologetic addressing the heretical teachings of Marcion (and others), Tertullian supports the traditional views on Lukan literature.

Eusebius of Caesarea

Eusebius (or Eusebius Pamphili, 260–339 CE) was a bishop of Caesarea and Christian historian.²⁶ Eusebius' historical records provide a wealth of information about the early church. On the subject of Luke-Acts, there are at least two issues related to this study to which Eusebius spoke. Eusebius noted,

For Matthew, who had first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go among others, by committing the Gospel according to himself to writings in his native language, compensated by his writing for the lack of his presence those from whom he was being sent. And Mark and Luke had already given out the Gospels according to themselves.²⁷

Eusebius made this remark while listing what he called the irrefutable writings of the apostles. Eusebius asserted that Matthew wrote his Gospel account because he was pressured into doing so. He did this because he was embarking upon preaching outside of his Hebrew circle. These comments are important, like those of Irenaeus and Tertullian, in that they factor into the issue of the Synoptic problem. Based upon this English translation, Eusebius appears to

²⁵ For example, Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.24) argues the order Mark, Luke, Matthew, and then John. No hard stance on order of writing should be derived from this statement. First, being that this is an English translation of Tertullian's comments limit any definitive positions being drawn. Additionally, the purpose of the statement was not made to argue any particular order of the Evangelists, only to attest to how they came to be.

²⁶ Roy Joseph Deferrari, ed. and trans., *Ecclesiastical History, Books 1–5*, vol. 19 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 3; Benjamin Laird, "Eusebius of Caesarea," *LBD*.

²⁷ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24 (*NPNF*² 3:152).

support Markan priority, which has been referenced as support for the theory that Luke used Mark as a source.²⁸ The main point here is that Eusebius provided clear attestation to the authors of the four Gospels.

Furthermore, Eusebius provided context regarding the identification of Luke, the author of the Gospel account ascribed to him. He suggested that “Luke, who was by race an Antiochian and by profession a physician, had long been a companion of Paul, and had more than a casual acquaintance with the rest of the Apostles.”²⁹ Eusebius confirmed the New Testaments association (Col 4:14) and that this Luke was the person of the “we” passages of Acts. Eusebius attested to the fact that Luke authored both Luke and Acts saying,

He has left us in two inspired books examples of the art of healing for souls which be Obtained from them: namely, the Gospel, which he testifies that he planned according to what those who were eye-witnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word had handed down to him, all of whom he says he had followed from the first, and the Acts of the Apostles, which he composed on the evidence not of hearsay but of his own eyes.³⁰

Eusebius also claimed that Paul was accustomed to quoting from Luke, which he considered to be his own Gospel account.³¹

Summary of Lukan Scholarship from the Early Church

Several points may be derived from this discussion of contributions from the early church on Lukan literature. First, it is important to recognize the overall trajectory of literature in the first and second centuries. There was a definite undertone of apology in literature of that period.

²⁸ The same concerns apply here as mentioned regarding Tertullian’s comments on the order of writing of the Gospels.

²⁹ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.4 (NPNF² 3:136).

³⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.4 (NPNF² 3:136).

³¹ Eusebius referenced Romans 2:16; 16:25; and 2 Timothy 2:8 as evidence of Paul having “his own” gospel.

Much of what was written was in response to attacks against Christianity or to correct errors in orthodoxy or praxis. Thus, much literature, especially within the patristic corpus, was written to defend Christianity. This was true with many of the writings of the New Testament. Again, it is not to say that every New Testament book was written for the purpose of apology. It is only suggested that apology was at least an undercurrent in many of the New Testament books. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Luke would have produced an apologetic work in that environment.

Secondly, the patristics offered much insight into the origins of the New Testament literature. This is particularly true in the discussion about Luke-Acts. There is strong, unified testimony from Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Eusebius that Luke was the author of the Gospel that bears his name and the book of Acts. Furthermore, they attest to the fact that this same Luke was the traveling companion of Paul and was a physician by trade. Eusebius reflected the view of his time that Luke was Antiochene. While the patristics were observing what presumably was obvious in the text, their proximity to the events strengthens their credibility. The patristics offer valuable insight into Lukan studies.

Thirdly, the early church testimony is ambiguous on what order the Gospels were produced. This is likely why the issue remains under scrutiny to this day. Therefore, reliance upon these traditions in solving the Synoptic problem is tenuous. What they do clearly offer is a defense of the authenticity of the Gospels, what they say and from whom they came. Except for some who were deemed heretics (i.e., Marcion), there was an overwhelming consensus on the veracity of the Gospels and what they reveal. Their views stood strong until the rise of the critical methods of the nineteenth century, to which discussion will now turn.

Tübingen School and Nineteenth Century Scholarship

Howard Marshall argued, “From the latter half of the second century onwards the clear and consistent verdict of early church writers is that he was Luke, the ‘beloved physician’ and the companion of Paul.”³² Historical assumptions on Lukan studies stood unchallenged until the critical era of modernism. The influence of critical scholarship coming out of Germany, especially the “Tübingen School,” in the nineteenth century cannot be overstated. One of the leading influential figures of the time was Ferdinand Christian Baur and the Tübingen School.

Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860)

Ferdinand Baur was the founder of what is known as the “Tübingen School.”³³ Although related to the University of Tübingen, the Tübingen School was not an actual academic institution, rather, it represented a group of scholars who embraced and perpetuated Baur’s critical ideas. Baur, a professor of church history and dogmatics, developed a radical historical-critical approach to biblical and New Testament studies.³⁴ His thoughts were highly influenced by Georg Hegel’s “dialectical” approach.³⁵ Hegelian philosophy analyzed literature from a point-counter point perspective (thesis + antithesis = synthesis). Baur’s approach to interpretation of Luke-Acts was built largely on this philosophy.

³² I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 33.

³³ Patzia and Petrotta, “Tübingen School,” in *PDBS*, 118. Patzia and Petrotta note, “‘the ghost of Baur’ continues to survive in some circles.” Further references to the Tübingen School will not appear in quotations going forward.

³⁴ Patzia and Petrotta, “Baur, Ferdinand Christian,” in *PDBS*, 18.

³⁵ Stanley E. Porter and Ron C. Fay, “Introduction to Luke-Acts in Modern Interpretation,” in *Luke-Acts in Modern Interpretation*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Ron C. Fay, Milestones in New Testament Scholarship (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021), 19.

Baur's Views

Baur embraced the skeptical views that were prevalent in the nineteenth century, including rejection of many of the doctrinal positions of Lutheranism and supernatural claims of the Bible.³⁶ Baur, in applying Hegelian principles to his study of Luke-Acts, saw the major issue of the early Church as a division between two factions, the Petrine group and the Paulinist camp.³⁷ Thus, the purpose of the production of Luke-Acts was to ease the tensions between these two factions. For Baur, Luke's Gospel was the best representation of the Pauline perspective and Acts was the early church's attempt at reaching a middle ground between the two factions.³⁸

In keeping with the general skepticism of the time, Baur doubted the authenticity of Luke-Acts and rejected the historicity of Acts altogether. Baur dated Luke's Gospel to 130–140 CE with Acts coming much later, closer to 200 CE.³⁹ He also rejected the traditional identification of Luke. Instead of a historical Luke, the author of Luke-Acts was a member of the Christian community of the second century. Baur's views became known as *tendency criticism* due to Baur's classification and dating of New Testament documents based upon their

³⁶ Ferdinand Christian Baur, Peter Crafts Hodgson, and Robert F. Brown, *Lectures on New Testament Theology*, trans. Robert Brown, ed. Peter Crafts Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 78. Baur argued here that the Gospels are not true or reliable vehicles of history. See also "Baur, Ferdinand Christian," in *PDBS*, 18.

³⁷ Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Christianity and the Christian Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2019), 41–77. Baur presented his view in a thorough evaluation of the history of the Christian church in the first three centuries here. See also Grant R. Osborne, "Biblical Criticism, New Testament," *BEB*, 323; Porter and Fay, "Introduction to Luke-Acts," 19–22.

³⁸ Baur, Hodgson, and Brown, *Lectures on New Testament Theology*, 78; Baur, *Christianity and the Christian Church*, 62–5. See also Porter and Fey, "Introduction to Luke-Acts," 21.

³⁹ Osborne, "Biblical Criticism, New Testament," 323.

“tendencies.”⁴⁰ Baur built upon the skeptical foundation of the Enlightenment, laying the groundwork for liberal theology.⁴¹

Baur’s Followers: The Rise of the Tübingen School

Baur’s views found many adherents, mainly in Germany. Those individuals became what was known as the Tübingen school. Their writings reflected dependence upon Baur’s Petrine/Pauline proposition. One of the most radical to perpetuate Baur’s positions was Bruno Bauer (1809–1888).⁴² Bruno Bauer took his mentor’s views to the extreme. He suggested that neither Paul nor the book of Acts represented historical Christianity and he rejected all of the Pauline letters.⁴³ Other notable followers included David Strauss (1808–1874), Gustav Volkmar (1809–1893), and Eduard Zeller (1814–1908).⁴⁴ Adolf Hilgenfeld (1823–1907) was Baur’s most prolific follower. Though he perpetuated Baur’s dialectic views of the early Church, Hilgenfeld conflicted with some of Tübingen’s core principles, including accepting the authenticity of some of the Pauline corpus.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Baur’s tendency to criticism is exemplified in his broad sweep of early Christian history. See Baur, *Christianity and the Christian Church*. See also Osborne, “Biblical Criticism,” 323.

⁴¹ Porter and Fey, “Introduction to Luke-Acts,” 55. Liberal theology here is defined as an overall skepticism and challenge to the traditional doctrines of the Christian faith and the historicity and inspiration of the Bible. This skeptical criticism grew out of the period of Enlightenment and heavily influenced biblical studies during the nineteenth century. It is in no way meant as a pejorative term. For a fuller explanation, see H. Harris, “Liberalism, German,” *NDT*, 516.

⁴² Porter and Fey, “Introduction to Luke-Acts,” 22.

⁴³ W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 74–77; Porter and Fey, “Introduction to Luke-Acts,” 22.

⁴⁴ Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School: A Historical and Theological Investigation of the School of F. C. Baur* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 127–33; William Baird, *History of New Testament Research*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 271; Porter and Fey, “Introduction to Luke-Acts,” 22. The contributions of each of these individuals are significant and worthy of much more space than can be devoted here.

⁴⁵ For instance, Baur rejected Pauline authorship of 1 Thessalonians, but Hilgenfeld thought the letter was authentically Paul. Harris, *Tübingen School*, 119–20; Porter and Fey, “Introduction to Luke-Acts,” 23.

Opposition within Tübingen: Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889)

Baur's views were not always warmly received. Opposition arose even from within the Tübingen camp. One of those dissenting voices was that of Albrecht Ritschl.⁴⁶ Ritschl moved to the University of Tübingen from northern Germany specifically to study with Baur. Ritschl, however, began to reject some of the core assumptions of the Tübingen school. For instance, Ritschl opposed Baur's assumptions on Pauline authenticity of 1-2 Thessalonians and the disputed Pastoral Epistles. He also rejected Baur's reconstruction of early church history. Though Ritschl conflicted with Baur on several fronts, he still adhered to Tübingen's liberal theology. Joseph Barber Lightfoot (1828–1889) and Philip Schaff (1819–1893) represented two of the more conservative members of Tübingen following Ritschl's drift towards a less radical position.⁴⁷ However, it was his disciple Adolf Harnack who would become one of the most prolific classical liberal scholars in Germany of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to part ways with Baur.⁴⁸

Post-Baur Classical Liberalism: Adolf Harnack (1851–1930)

Adolf Harnack was a prolific New Testament scholar and university professor. After receiving his doctorate at the University of Leipzig, Harnack went on to become a professor there, but soon found himself disillusioned with the university. Harnack was influenced much by

⁴⁶ Porter and Fey, "Introduction to Luke-Acts," 23; Peter N. Hillyer, "Ritschl, Albrecht (1822–89)," *NDT*, 1625–26.

⁴⁷ Albert Ritschl was a transitional figure marking the decline of Tübingen's influence and the rise of classical liberalism. His disciples, especially Adolf Harnack (mentioned next) would continue his moderation of some of Tübingen's positions. Porter and Fey, "Introduction to Luke-Acts," 23; Hillyer, "Ritschl, Albrecht," 1625.

⁴⁸ See Hillyer, "Ritschl, Albrecht," 1625; F. F. Bruce, "Harnack, Adolf (1851–1930)," *NDT*, 841–43; and Zachary K. Dawson, "Adolf Harnack and Lukan Scholarship at the Height of Classical Liberalism," in Porter and Fey, *Luke-Acts in Modern Interpretation*, 57–91.

German scholarship and originally embraced classical liberalism, especially the views of Albrecht Ritschl, garnering a reputation as a formidable liberal theologian. However, in contrast to those positions, Harnack became an ardent proponent of issues that would later become the cornerstone of conservative New Testament scholarship and evangelical Christianity.⁴⁹

First, Harnack fully embraced the traditional view of the identity of Luke. He believed the author of the third Gospel and Acts were the same person identified in Colossians 4:14; the physician and native of Antioch and traveling companion of Paul.⁵⁰ He had come to this position based upon his evaluation of church history, especially Eusebius. On this subject, Harnack wrote, “One statement, however, deserves to be regarded as especially reliable. Both Eusebius and the ancient ‘*Argumentum evangelii secundum Lucan*’ agree in describing him as a native of Antioch.”⁵¹ The main point of evidence upon which Harnack based his case for identifying Luke as the author of the two-volume work was his evaluation of the “we” passages of Acts. A large portion of *Luke the Physician* was devoted to building this argument.⁵² Also, Harnack suggested that the author of Acts took special interest in Antioch, showing specialized knowledge of the city, focusing on key episodes in the narrative (i.e., Acts 11:20–26; 13:1), thereby supporting the proposition that Luke was a native of Antioch.⁵³

Another feature lending credibility to Lukan authorship of Luke-Acts was what he considered to be the distinctive linguistic features that revealed the specialized medical

⁴⁹ Porter and Fey, “Introduction to Luke-Acts,” 27; Dawson, “Adolf Harnack,” 57–91; Bruce, “Harnack, Adolf,” 841.

⁵⁰ Dawson, “Adolf Harnack,” 77.

⁵¹ Harnack, *Luke the Physician*, 4; Dawson, “Adolf Harnack,” 77.

⁵² Harnack, *Luke the Physician*, 26–120; Dawson, “Adolf Harnack,” 80.

⁵³ Harnack, *Luke the Physician*, 22–24.

knowledge of Luke the physician.⁵⁴ Harnack was largely echoing the views of William Kirk Hobart, which garnered a decent level of support among Harnack's contemporaries.⁵⁵ However, this view would later be challenged, most notably by Henry Cadbury, and has since largely fallen into abeyance.⁵⁶

Thirdly, and rather significant to this study, is Harnack's views on the dating of Acts. Originally, Harnack believed Acts was written significantly earlier than what was generally proposed by the Tübingen school. Harnack originally believed that Acts had to have been written prior to Domitian persecution, stating, "It is limited to the years 78-93 CE."⁵⁷ However, within four years, his views had changed significantly. By the time he published *The Date of Acts and the Synoptic Gospels*, Harnack believed that Acts had to have been written "at the beginning of the seventh decade," after the Gospel of Luke, which he dated at 60 CE.⁵⁸ This evolution of his thinking was based on several factors. First, the lack of a conclusion in the book of Acts pointed to Acts being written prior to Paul's execution. Secondly, no mention in Acts of the destruction of Jerusalem and the persecution of the Jews that followed supported a date earlier than 70 CE. In fact, Harnack reasoned, it was the Jews who did the majority of the persecuting that took place

⁵⁴ Dawson, "Adolf Harnack," 77–78.

⁵⁵ For a summary of Hobart's argument, see William K. Hobart, *The Medical Language of St. Luke* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), xxx–xxxvi.

⁵⁶ Dawson, "Adolf Harnack," 77–78. More will be said about this when discussing Henry Cadbury's contribution to Lukan scholarship.

⁵⁷ Harnack, *Luke the Physician*, 22.

⁵⁸ Adolf Harnack, *The Date of the Acts and the Synoptic Gospels*, trans. John R. Wilkinson (London: Williams and Norgate, 1911), 90–91.

in Acts instead of them being the ones persecuted. Thirdly, a date much earlier explained Luke's lack of familiarity with Paul's letters.⁵⁹

Of course, the implications of such an early date affected the then current views about the dating of the Synoptics. Harnack addressed those issues as well. For one, Harnack assigned a much earlier date of Mark's Gospel stating, "St Mark must have written his Gospel during the sixth decade of the first century at the latest, this date may be regarded as certain."⁶⁰ Harnack's proposition stood in stark contrast to those of his peers. In making his argument, Harnack suggested that Luke was dependent upon Mark for production of his own Gospel account.

Another significant proposition by Adolf Harnack is worth mentioning here as it relates to the thesis of this study. In his commentary on Acts, Harnack lauds Luke's focus, writing "It is wonderful how firmly, exclusively, and consistently St. Luke throughout the whole book has kept the idea of the Mission and expansion of Christianity in his eye, and has scarcely anywhere allowed himself a digression."⁶¹ Then, in his footnote on that statement, Harnack stated, "Only one single subsidiary aim is to be discerned—the defense of St. Paul against Judaistic calumnies."⁶² Harnack's note suggests that Acts was written with defense of Paul in mind. This notion has quite a long history. Harnack's views were definitely out of step with his Tübingen peers and predecessors. Harnack had embraced views that became the hallmark of conservative scholarship of the twentieth century.

⁵⁹ Harnack, *Date of Acts and the Synoptic Gospels*, 90–133; For a great synopsis of Harnack's argument, see Dawson, "Adolf Harnack," 88–89.

⁶⁰ Harnack, *Date of Acts and the Synoptic Gospels*, 133.

⁶¹ Adolf von Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles*, trans. John R. Wilkinson (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), xxii.

⁶² Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles*, xxii.

Baur's Legacy

The challenges against many of Baur's assumptions coming from within the Tübingen camp led many to abandon Baur's historical skepticism and radical liberal views.⁶³ Ritschl, Harnack, and those that followed dealt crucial blows to Tübingen popularity.⁶⁴ Baur's transformation of Lukan studies, however, was significant. Even as the popularity of his views diminished, his influence continues to be felt in the present.⁶⁵ Baur, nevertheless, sparked a new wave of interest in Lukan studies in the twentieth century. It is there that this chapter now turns.

Twentieth Century to the Present: Form and Redaction Criticism

The historical-critical methods of German scholarship produced a flurry of literature on Lukan studies. The challenges to the historical traditions and doctrines arising from Tübingen, and the corresponding responses, led to a wave of new literature coming from Europe and North America. This literature falls primarily into two categories: form and redaction criticism. Form criticism focuses on literary forms used to transmit the oral traditions of the early church. Redaction criticism focuses more on the theological interpretations of the traditions by the Evangelists.⁶⁶ Some of the leading scholars shaping Lukan studies at that time include Martin Dibelius, Henry Cadbury, and Hans Conzelmann.⁶⁷

⁶³ Porter and Fey, "Introduction to Luke-Acts," 28.

⁶⁴ There is insufficient space to discuss every scholar who successfully challenged Baur's propositions. Though omitted here, the contributions of Williams Ramsay deserve exploration. For an excellent synopsis of Ramsey's contributions and his archaeological studies of Asia Minor, see William Mitchell Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1895); Porter and Fey, "Introduction to Luke-Acts," 27.

⁶⁵ Porter and Fey, "Introduction to Luke-Acts," 54.

⁶⁶ Porter and Fey, "Introduction to Luke-Acts," 32.

⁶⁷ This list of scholars is by no means exhaustive or exclusive. These individuals were chosen here because of the breadth of their contributions to both Luke and Acts and their influence on the trajectory on Lukan

Martin Dibelius and Form Criticism (1883–1947)

Martin Dibelius was a German scholar (the son of Franz Wilhelm Dibelius, a conservative scholar and Lutheran pastor) who earned his PhD at University of Tübingen. He was highly influenced by Hermann Gunkel's *religionsgeschichtliche* (history of religion) method. Dibelius is credited with being the founder of the interpretive method he called *formgeschichte*, which, in English, is form criticism. Though Dibelius never wrote any full-length monographs on Luke or Acts, he did contribute much in regard to Lukan studies in the context of development of the text via form criticism.⁶⁸ Dibelius' evaluations were over the Synoptics as a whole, and Acts, but offer much insight into Lukan literature that would influence scholarship to this day. To this point, Dvorak states, "it is rare that a scholarly study or commentary comes along that does not engage Dibelius' work."⁶⁹

Dibelius' method of form criticism looked for seams in the text that indicate the beginning and end of a story or saying from the original tradition.⁷⁰ From this, he found four main forms: paradigms, paraenesis, tales, and legends.⁷¹ A paradigm is defined as anecdotes (brief stories about Jesus) that circulated with relative ease and were disconnected from their historical context. A parenesis (found primarily in Matthew and Luke and rarely in Mark),

scholarship. Certainly, Ernst Haenchen, Frederick F. Bruce, Charles K. Barrett, and others deserve full treatment in this category. However, for space's sake, the discussion will be limited to only the three mentioned. For an excellent introduction to the contributions of all of these individuals, see their individual entries in Porter and Fay, *Luke-Acts in Modern Interpretation*.

⁶⁸ James D. Dvorak, "Martin Dibelius on the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles: The Most Literary Writings in the New Testament," in Porter and Fay, *Luke-Acts in Modern Interpretation*, 94–96.

⁶⁹ Dvorak, "Martin Dibelius," 127.

⁷⁰ Dvorak, "Martin Dibelius," 112.

⁷¹ Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel: Die Formgeschichte Des Evangeliums*, trans. Bertram Lee-Woolf (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1971), 37–177.

though similar to a paradigm but having its own defining characteristics, are teachings that exhort the community. Tales are miracle stories upon which the Evangelists add “richer content and narrative elements” so that the stories take on a “secular motive,” while a legend describes “deeds of holy men or women with particular attention given to the human elements associated with their piety.”⁷² Form criticism took a slightly different shape when applied to Acts. Alterations had to be made to Dibelius’ method to fit the different genre of Acts.⁷³ These alterations he called *Stilkritik*, or “style criticism.”⁷⁴

Martin Dibelius made no attempt at identifying the author of Luke-Acts. In his *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, Dibelius simply refers to him as “the author, whom I call Luke (without prejudice to the question of authorship).”⁷⁵ Regarding dating of the two-volume work, Dibelius followed the prevailing thoughts of critical scholarship of the time. Dibelius did not feel that Luke and Acts belonged in the same literary categories, despite their sharing the same author and recipient. He argued, “both these works by the same author do not belong in one class.”⁷⁶ Martin Dibelius perpetuated the same skepticism of the historical issues of Luke and Acts that undergirded the classic liberalism of the nineteenth century.

⁷² An example of a paradigm, according to Dibelius, includes the story of the inhospitable Samaritans (Luke 9:51–56), or the healing of the man with dropsy (Luke 14:1–6). The Sermon on the Mount is an example of a parenesis. Luke 7:11–17 (raising of the Widow’s son) provides an example of a tale while the birth announcement of Luke 1:26–35 serves as an example of a legend. For detailed descriptions and examples of each form in relation to the Synoptics, see Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 37–177; and Dvorak, “Martin Dibelius,” 111–19.

⁷³ Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 121–26.

⁷⁴ Dvorak, “Martin Dibelius,” 123. *Stilkritik* (style criticism) was not a new method. It was an adaptation of form criticism primarily applied to the speeches of Acts.

⁷⁵ Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Mary Ling, ed. Heinrich Greeven (London: SCM Press, 1956), 2.

⁷⁶ Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, 2.

The implications of form criticism on Lukan studies was significant. Martin Dibelius moved the needle of Lukan studies back toward the critical camp of Tubigen. With regard to genre theory, the application of Dibelius' method pushed the Gospels more into the category of biography and Acts more into the category of historiography.⁷⁷

Henry Joel Cadbury (1883–1954)

Similar to Dibelius' form criticism, Henry Cadbury made a deep impact on Lukan studies with his scientific-critical approach to biblical studies.⁷⁸ Cadbury was born in Philadelphia in a Quaker home. He obtained his PhD from Harvard in 1914 and began a significant teaching career at Andover Theological Seminary, Bryn Mawr College, and Harvard University.⁷⁹ Cadbury was devoted to a scientifically objective approach to biblical studies, which he believed was the best approach in keeping with his Quaker roots.⁸⁰

Cadbury on the Unity of Luke-Acts

Likely Cadbury's largest impact on Lukan studies was his thoughts on the unity of Luke and Acts. He argued well the connection between the two books which historically never seemed to have circulated together. Cadbury suggested several reasons for this, the most prominent being the early Church's desire to arrange the canon according to genre, placing Luke with the Synoptics and Acts at the head of the epistles, being a work of a different sort. The uncoupling of

⁷⁷ Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 127.

⁷⁸ Osvaldo Padilla, "Henry Joel Cadbury and the Study of Luke-Acts," in *Luke-Acts in Modern Interpretation*, 144.

⁷⁹ Cadbury received much of his education in Quaker institutions. However, Andover Theological Seminary (congregationalist) and Harvard were not Quaker affiliated. See Padilla, "Henry Joel Cadbury," 132.

⁸⁰ Padilla, "Henry Joel Cadbury," 129–32.

the two books was unfortunate according to Cadbury. He argued that it is unfathomable that anyone would separate 1-2 Kings or 1-2 Chronicles in the way Luke-Acts has been disjoined.⁸¹ Yet, the early Church did so, nonetheless.

Cadbury argued the connection between the two books quite scientifically. He compared the connection of Luke's volumes to other classical and biblical multivolume works.⁸² Cadbury believed that Luke and Acts likely originally had a common name and was distinguishable as "Book I and Book II."⁸³ From this, he argued that the two-volume work deserved the reapplication of a unified title. At the same time, he fully expected that the entrenched nature of the traditional titles would not allow it to "supplant the older names."⁸⁴ He pondered *Ad Theophilum I and II*, but finally settled on "Luke-Acts," patterned after the modern designation of Ezra-Nehemiah.⁸⁵ This title continues to be the primary referent to Luke's work.⁸⁶

Cadbury on Luke the Physician

William Hobart and Adolf Harnack had popularized the theory that the medical language used in Luke-Acts supported the belief that the author was Luke the Physician and traveling

⁸¹ Henry Joel Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 8–11.

⁸² For instance, Cadbury pointed to examples of Josephus' *Against Apion*, works by Philo, and biblical works like 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles.

⁸³ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 10.

⁸⁴ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 10.

⁸⁵ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 11.

⁸⁶ Mickael Parsons and Richard Parvo recently began to push back against the widespread acceptance of the joining of these two books. However, his objections do not seem to have garnered any real traction. See Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard L. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 1–19; Ron C. Fay, "Richard I. Pervo: Luke as Novelist and Acts as Entertainment," in *Luke-Acts in Modern Interpretation*, 336–39.

companion of Paul as mentioned in Colossians 4:14.⁸⁷ Cadbury dealt a deadly blow to the theory, illustrating another significant contribution he made to Lukan studies.⁸⁸ Cadbury compared Luke-Acts to other classical writings, especially the writings of Josephus, Plutarch, and Lucian, individuals who were not medically trained. In his examination of their works, Cadbury found similar grammar to that found in Luke-Acts. Cadbury reasoned that, since these men were not physicians but employed some of the same language as Luke, one could not deduce from linguistics alone that Luke was a physician. Likewise, if one were to make an inference based on the use of supposed medical language that Luke was a physician, then one would likewise need to infer the same for Josephus, Plutarch, and Lucian. According to Cadbury, such an inference was unlikely.

Cadbury's rejection and refutation of Hobart's theory, however, should not be taken too far. Osvaldo Padilla does well to note, "Cadbury did not prove that Luke was not a doctor; he only proved that his *vocabulary* was not privy to doctors alone."⁸⁹ Cadbury's reaction was simply to correct the over-assertion of his predecessors. Cadbury embraced the traditional identification of Luke, just not the argument of the medical language. On dating of Luke-Acts, Cadbury acknowledged the thoughts of Harnack and others of a rather early (pre 70 AD) date for the making of Luke-Acts.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Refer to the section above under Adolf Harnack's contributions to Lukan studies.

⁸⁸ See Henry J. Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co, 1969), 34–72 for his complete argument, which is summarized in this section.

⁸⁹ Padilla, "Henry Joel Cadbury," 135.

⁹⁰ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 31. Refer to the section under Adolf Harnack for his assertion that Luke-Acts was written approximately 62 CE.

Cadbury on the Purpose of Luke-Acts

Henry Cadbury had much to say on the purpose of Luke-Acts. Several of his statements are quite relevant to the thesis of this study. Because of this, a few of his statements will now be included at length. First, in speculating on the object (purpose) of Luke-Acts, Cadbury said, “It may well be supposed that Luke intended especially to show the legitimacy of Christianity from both the Jewish and the Gentile standpoint.”⁹¹ He then later stated, “Still more patent is Luke’s defense of Christianity from charges brought against it as breaking Roman law. It may even be conjectured that his Jewish apologetic had as its aim the satisfaction of Rome’s demand that foreign religions must be licensed to be permitted.”⁹² Finally, in support of suggestions by others that Acts was written as a trial brief for Paul, especially based upon the abrupt ending of Acts, Cadbury connected Luke with Acts in this apologetic purpose reasoning,

We shall have to admit, on the other hand, that several of the words in the address to Theophilus do permit, and when compared with the latter part of Acts positively possess, the connotation of *apologia*, and the close of Acts itself is filled with this mood. It is quite probable that Luke’s avowed purpose so far as his preface expresses it...is to correct misinformation about Christianity rather than, as is so often supposed, to confirm the historical basis of Theophilus’s religious faith.”⁹³

A few notes on these quotes are in order. First, Cadbury clearly supports the idea that Luke-Acts was written as an apologetic text. There can be little doubt about this. Cadbury suggested, based on several indicators of the text, that Luke’s object in production of Luke-Acts was, at least in part, defense. This leads to the second important note. Cadbury did not argue that apology was the only purpose of the production of Luke-Acts. He suggested that it was *a*

⁹¹ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 306.

⁹² Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 308.

⁹³ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 315. The preface and address to Theophilus that Cadbury mentions refers to Luke 1:4.

purpose, albeit a major one judging by his comments. The fact is, Cadbury suggested a “diversity of aims” that set Luke to writing Luke-Acts.⁹⁴ He listed three possibilities, quoted above, for what he called “the object of Luke-Acts.”⁹⁵ Of those three “objects,” Cadbury expended the bulk of his efforts on the apologetic aspects. The role of apology in the production of Luke-Acts is clear according to Cadbury.

Henry Cadbury’s contribution to Lukan studies was immense, and in far more ways than just a unified title to the two-volume work. His work helped moved the conversation of Lukan studies toward a more conservative orientation. It is unusual to read any literature written on Luke-Acts that does not reference Cadbury, and rare is the scholar that does not employ the moniker commissioned by him.

Hans Conzelmann (1915–1989) and the Redaction-Critical Method

Hans Conzelmann was influential in Lukan scholarship of the twentieth century. Where much of the attention was focused on form criticism, Conzelmann presented a different approach that would change the trajectory of New Testament studies, especially studies of Luke-Acts, up through the present day.

Hans Conzelmann was a German-born scholar who studied at the University of Tübingen where he received his PhD. Later, Conzelmann moved to Marburg to study under Rudolph Bultmann.⁹⁶ Conzelmann taught extensively at the University of Göttingen as a professor of New

⁹⁴ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 302.

⁹⁵ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 299–316. Cadbury also lists divine guidance, defense of Christianity from charges of being an illegal religion, and a defense brief for Paul. Two of these three reasons are apologetically motivated.

⁹⁶ Alan J. Thompson, “Hans Conzelmann: Luke as Theologian of Salvation History,” in *Luke-Acts in Modern Interpretation*, 247–48. Conzelmann was born in Tailfingen Germany in 1915.

Testament studies. Conzelmann's pedagogy intimates the general orientation and trajectory of his ideas.

Hans Conzelmann applied a redactional-critical approach to Luke-Acts, examining the work for its theological significance, fully embracing Cadbury's assertion of the unity of the text.⁹⁷ Conzelmann's purpose in this was to elucidate the theology of Luke in both volumes. Conzelmann was not concerned, as primary importance, with issues of form and source criticisms, issues that concerned Dibelius and others. His primary goal was a literary examination of the final form, recognizing the canonical status of the works. In this, Conzelmann found a key theological meaning in the *parousia*.⁹⁸ For Conzelmann, the situation that gave rise to the production of Luke-Acts was the current situation in which the church found itself, that is, in a world increasingly antagonistic to the faith. Thus, the purpose for the writing of Luke-Acts was to calm the angst of the Christian community in light of the delay of the *parousia*. Conzelmann, in agreement with his Tübingen roots, believed Luke's Gospel was dependent upon both Mark and "Q," but with a greater historical focus. At the same time, he thought little of the historical accuracy of the text or Luke's handling of his sources.

This focus was designed to contrast the historical situation of Jesus' earthly ministry, which was different from the current situation in which the church existed at the time of composition. Conzelmann embraced a periodization of salvation history that was divided into three epochs:

1. The time of Israel through John the Baptist.
2. The time of Jesus, which represents the "time in the middle of times."

⁹⁷ Thompson, "Hans Conzelmann," 247–48; Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 9–17.

⁹⁸ Conzelmann, *Theology of St. Luke*, 93–136. The *parousia* refers to the second coming of Christ. Conzelmann argued that the delay in the *parousia* caused alarm in the early church.

3. The church era which concludes with the *parousia*, which happens in the distant future.⁹⁹ Conzelmann's point seems to be that Luke was writing to retrain the Christians of his era to focus on the work of salvation in their current era, trusting in God's plan even through trials and tribulations, and to take their minds of an eminent eschatology, which would happen far in the future. In the process, Conzelmann felt Luke was quite liberal in his adaptation and application of his sources. In short, Conzelmann's redactional-critical method disconnected Luke and his sources from their proper place *in situ*, applying them to the then-current situation of the community to whom Luke wrote. Luke was nothing more than a theological interpreter of history who freely used and altered sources for his own theological aim. Those materials, including the recorded speeches, were adapted to present a theology that explained the delay in the *parousia* to which the community of faith had expected to have already come.

Conzelmann believed Luke was written approximately 70 CE, with Acts following much later, approximately 80–100 CE.¹⁰⁰ Thus, according to Conzelmann, Luke presented a theology of the kerygma appropriate for the Christian community of his day, which reflected an understanding of the *parousia* that would bring hope and comfort.¹⁰¹ On the purpose of Luke-Acts, Conzelmann appeared to support the idea of apology as a motivating factor behind the text. In the Gospel account, Conzelmann posited the notion of a “political apologetic” in certain aspects of the text.¹⁰² In Acts, Conzelmann noted that the appearance of the word *apologia* argues

⁹⁹ Conzelmann, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 9–17, 95–131; Thompson, “Hans Conzelmann,” 254–58.

¹⁰⁰ Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles a Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, eds. Eldon Jay Epp and Christopher R. Matthews, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel and Donald H. Juel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2016), xxxiii.

¹⁰¹ Thompson, “Hans Conzelmann,” 247–68; Conzelmann, *Theology of St. Luke*, 9–17.

¹⁰² Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 138–39.

for the apologetic purpose there.¹⁰³ Thus, in agreement with Cadbury, Conzelmann argued well the apologetic purpose of much of Luke and Acts, although his main purpose was to present the theology of the two-volume work.

Conzelmann laid the groundwork upon which others would build. Not everyone agrees with Conzelmann's methods or theological assessment of Luke. Alvin Thompson, for one, calls his methodological and theological framework "flawed" and claims it was "unanimously rejected," while recognizing the influence his redactional-critical approach had on subsequent scholarship.¹⁰⁴

Many would follow Conzelmann in evaluating Luke-Acts from a redactional-critical perspective. They, of course, would come to their own conclusions on Luke's theological aims, focusing not on the apparent distinctions between historical tradition and redaction but on the narrative as a whole.¹⁰⁵ As noted in the previous chapter, I. Howard Marshall contributed much to the theological discussion on Luke-Acts in his many commentaries and monographs. Other notable contributors include Charles Talbert, Joseph Fitzmyer, Charles K. Barrett, and Darrell Bock.¹⁰⁶

Hans Conzelmann's redactional-critical approach has become the predominate approach to Lukan studies to this day. Thanks to Conzelmann, Luke the theologian has become an equally

¹⁰³ Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 141.

¹⁰⁴ Thompson, "Hans Conzelmann," 268.

¹⁰⁵ Thompson, "Hans Conzelmann," 263.

¹⁰⁶ Charles H. Talbert, ed., *Luke-Acts, New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); Charles K. Barrett, *Luke the Historian in Recent Study* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009).; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AYB 28 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 31 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

important area of focus as Luke the historian.¹⁰⁷ Conzelmann altered the trajectory and approach to Lukan studies in a way that continue to influence scholarship in the twenty-first century.

Recent Contributions

The twenty-first century is still young, only in its second decade, yet there are some scholars who are already making significant contributions to the field. Craig Keener is a professor of New Testament studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. He has been quite a prolific writer in the twenty-first century. He has contributed a number of books, articles, and commentaries relevant to Luke-Acts.¹⁰⁸ Keener reflects a more conservative evangelical position on the critical issues of Luke-Acts. He agrees with the traditional identification of Luke as the author of the two-volume work and a date of the early seventies CE for its production.¹⁰⁹ Keener also argues for an apologetic purpose of Luke-Acts.¹¹⁰

Another individual making a significant contribution to the field of Luke-Acts is Mikeal C. Parsons. Parsons is a professor and Macon chair of religion at Duke University. He has written or co-authored several works relevant to Luke-Acts.¹¹¹ Parsons represents a more liberal

¹⁰⁷ This point is obviated by the number of monographs that evaluate Luke as theologian and historian. See for example Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, BTNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012); and I. Howard Marshall's *Luke: Historian & Theologian*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁸ Some of Keener's key contributions to this field include Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993); idem., "Paul and Sedition: Pauline Apologetic in Acts," *BBR* 22 (2012): 201-224; idem., "The Spirit and the Mission of the Church in Acts 1–2," *JETS* 62 (2019): 25–45; idem., *Acts*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), and much more.

¹⁰⁹ Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, "Luke" and "Acts."

¹¹⁰ Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, "Acts, Purpose."

¹¹¹ For instance, see the previously cited Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts*, as well as Martin M. Culy, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Joshua J. Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010); Mikeal C. Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011); Martin M. Culy, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Josiah D. Hall, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2022).

view of the critical issues of Luke-Acts. Together with Richard Pervo, they presented a significant challenge to the prevailing view of the unity of Luke-Acts.¹¹² It is not that these authors reject the idea of Luke-Acts as a two-volume work. At the conclusion of their study, they affirmed the authorial and theological unity of the text but assert a canonical disunity that deserves scholarly pursuit. Parsons also doubts the traditional identification of Luke and dates the writings rather late (ca. 80-90 CE for Luke and 110 CE for Acts).¹¹³

Keener and Parsons are just two scholars currently adding to the field of New Testament and Lukan studies. Many more names could be listed if space allowed. With all that has been written over the centuries there is still room for further research. It will be the responsibility of scholars of the future to decide who made the greatest impact of the twenty-first century.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter provided a selective view of Lukan scholarship. It began with a summation of the views stemming from the early church. What was presented reveals that the patristics were unified in their belief that the author of Luke and Acts was Luke the physician and traveling companion of Paul. This analysis has also shown that nearly all literature from the early centuries of Christianity reflected an apologetic thrust, including literature of the New Testament. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the making of Luke-Acts was motivated by a need to answer accusations against Christianity and Paul. The early church provided a basis upon which Christianity both survived and thrived. The views of the apostolic fathers would stand, nearly unchallenged, for nearly two millennia.

¹¹² See Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke-Acts*, 115–25.

¹¹³ Parsons, *Luke*, 119.

Next, attention turned to the critical era of the nineteenth century. This was an era marked with skepticism and challenges to generally held assumptions of prior epochs. The positions of the early church on Luke and Acts were not immune to these challenges and, like the Reformation, many of the key figures originated from Germany. The center of critical scholarship rose out of the University of Tübingen by a group of scholars inspired by the work of Ferdinand Christian Baur. Baur's *tendency criticism* inspired a handful of followers, known as the Tübingen school, who would go on to transform New Testament studies and lay the groundwork for classical liberalism. The Tübingen schools' popularity rose quickly, but also fell quickly, as critical challenges against Baur's positions arose. Some challenges came from within the movement from people like Albert Ritschl. Others, like Adolf Harnack, who found his beginning in Tübingen but later rejected much of their assumptions, helped move the trajectory of Lukan studies back towards a more traditional position. Though the popularity of the Tübingen school diminished, the impact of their literary contributions continues to be felt in scholarship today. Their skepticism led to a flurry of activity to open the final era.

The twentieth century saw the rise of form and redaction criticism. Prominent contributors included Martin Dibelius, who was credited with pioneering the process of form criticism in New Testament studies. It also produced Henry Cadbury with his scientific form critical approach to Lukan studies, who successfully argued the unification of Luke-Acts. Along with them, Hans Conzelmann pioneered the redactional-critical method, an approach that continues to dominate Lukan studies to this date. New contributors, like Mikeal Parsons and Craig Keener, continue to add to the field of Lukan studies. With all that has been written, there is still room for research and debate.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MAKING OF LUKE-ACTS

Introduction

This dissertation argues that Luke-Acts was written primarily for the purpose of defending Christianity from accusations of being an illegal, heretical religion (Luke), and as a defense brief for Paul (Acts) in preparation for his trial in Rome. That Luke-Acts is an apologetic text is not a novel idea. In the opening decade of the twentieth century, Adolf Harnack suggested that the reason Luke had so intently focused on the mission of the spread of the gospel in Acts was for one single, discernable purpose, and that was “the defence of St. Paul against Judaistic calumnies.”¹ Not long after, Henry Cadbury reasoned that one of the evident purposes for the making of Luke-Acts was “to show the legitimacy of Christianity from both the Jewish and Gentile standpoint” and the defense of Christianity from charges of breaking Roman law (*religio illicita*).² Later, Johannes Munck argued that the purpose of Acts was to present a defense of Christianity and of Paul while playing a role in Paul’s trial in Rome.³ Most recent commentaries acknowledge at least a minor role of apology in the purpose of Luke-Acts.⁴ James Edwards goes as far as to say that the Gospel of Luke “defends Christ and the apostles (= church) against

¹ Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles*, xxii.

² Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 306–10.

³ Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles*, lviii.

⁴ See, for instance, Marshall, *Acts*, 17–22; Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 37; Richard N. Longenecker, “Acts,” in *Luke–Acts*, ed. Tremper Longman III, and Daniel Garland (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2007), 751–59; Polhill, *Acts*, 56–7; Bock, *Luke*, 20; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 13–14.

Jewish polemic as the legitimate heir of the promise to Israel” and Acts “seeks to allay Roman fears that ‘the Way’ is politically subversive.”⁵

While the idea of apology being a component of Luke-Acts may be unobjectionable, suggesting that apology is a primary purpose has met with much resistance, especially the defense brief argument.⁶ For instance, I. Howard Marshall, while arguing for a more evangelistic purpose, opines, “We are not denying that Luke had an apologetic motive in the composition of Luke-Acts, especially in the case of Acts. But it is a subordinate aim as compared with the main theme of the presentation of the historical basis for Christian faith.”⁷ The reason for disagreeing with the idea of apology as a primary purpose is usually based on two key points, the dating of Luke-Acts and the amount of irrelevant kerygmatic material involved in the narrative.⁸ This chapter will primarily address the historical-critical issues involved in the dating of Luke-Acts, issues that are often invoked to deny the apologetic purpose of the text. These issues include the date of writing, the identification of the author (Luke) and the recipient (Theophilus), and the unity of the two parts. The next chapter (chapter four) will lay out the positive apologetic argument which will, in part, address the objectionable content issues.

⁵ Edwards, *Luke*, 14.

⁶ Bock, *Luke*, 20; Marshall, *Acts*, 22; Peterson, *Acts*, 37; Longenecker, “Acts,” 751–9; Polhill, *Acts*, 56–7.

⁷ Marshall, *Acts*, 22.

⁸ Bock, *Luke*, 20; Marshall, *Acts*, 22; Peterson, *Acts*, 37; Longenecker, “Acts,” 751–59; Polhill, *Acts*, 56–57; Edwards, *Luke*, 13–14. In respect to the amount of kerygma found in Luke-Acts in comparison to what he considers usable legal material, Charles Barrett argued, “No Roman court could be expected to wade through so much Jewish religious nonsense in order to find half-a-dozen fragments of legally significant material.” see Charles K. Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles: A Shorter Commentary*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 2002), xxxvii.

Issues Dating Luke-Acts

Proposed Theories

There are two general categories where scholarship falls in dating Luke-Acts: those who hold to a pre-70 CE date (Harnack, Longenecker, and likely Marshall), and those who suggest a post-70 CE date (Edwards, Parsons, and Thompson), with a majority of them arguing production during the last quarter of the first century (70–95 CE).⁹ This breakdown reflects a synthesis of the views generally proposed for the writing of Luke and Acts individually, with the understanding that modern commentators almost unanimously agree that Luke was written before Acts. The Gospel of Luke accounts for the earliest dates with Acts providing the *terminus ad quem* for the two-volume work. The deciding factors for which side scholars fall typically depends on their opinion of the dating of the Gospel of Mark and Luke's treatment of the Olivet Discourse (Luke 19:43–44; 21:5–36; 23:27–31; cf. 13:34–35).¹⁰

⁹ Adolf Harnack dated Luke to the approx. 60 CE with Acts coming a few years later, ca. 62 CE. Richard Longenecker agreed with Harnack, dating Acts to 64 CE, shortly after the composition of Luke. I Howard simply suggested an extended period of composition with a date of issue somewhere around 70 CE. James Edwards argued a late seventies date while Mikeal Parsons dated Luke to no earlier than 80 CE with Acts following, ca. 110 CE. John Townsend concluded that Luke-Acts was written in the middle of the second century CE. See Adolf Harnack, *The Date of the Acts and the Synoptic Gospels*, trans. John R. Wilkinson (London: Williams and Norgate, 1911), 90–91; Longenecker, "Acts," 784–88; Marshall, *Luke*, 34; Marshall, *Acts*, 48–51; Edwards, *Luke*, 12; Parsons, *Luke*, 19; Parsons, *Acts*, 16; John Townsend, "The Date of Luke-Acts," in *Luke-Acts, New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar*, ed. Charles Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 47–58.

¹⁰ Edwards, *Luke*, 11. There are several pieces of the Olivet Discourse scattered throughout Luke (13:34–35; 17:22–37) but are concentrated in the parallel passages in Matthew and Mark. See Jeffrey Glen Jackson, *Synopsis of Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), Mk 13:18–23; Burton, *A Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels*, "Discourse on the Last Things;" Bock, *Luke*, 332.

The Relationship between Mark and Luke's Gospel Accounts

The consensus among modern scholars is that Luke was dependent upon Mark (and possibly Matthew and “Q”) to produce his Gospel.¹¹ This conclusion is in line with Luke's own testimony in his preface to the third Gospel where he acknowledges prior traditions handed down from other eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1–4). It is reasonable to conclude that Luke would have consulted those traditions in his careful investigation, with at least one of those traditions being Mark's Gospel. Also, the testimony of the early church on the order of the Gospels is in line with this conclusion.¹² Considering these observations, this study accepts that Luke depended on Mark as a source for his Gospel production. The implication of this is that Mark would need to have been completed before Luke-Acts. Thus, dating Luke is dependent on dating Mark. For the theory of this dissertation to hold, the date of Mark's completion must have been early enough for Luke to reference it in the production of his apology.¹³

¹¹ To this point Marshall argues, “The view that Luke used Mk. substantially as we have it seems to me to be beyond reasonable doubt.” Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 30. See also Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 38; John A. Martin, “Luke” in *BKC*, 2:201, Edwards, *Luke*, 11–14. Parsons, *Luke*, 10–19; Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, “Acts;” Henry Wansbrough, *Introducing the New Testament* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 92.

¹² Early tradition placed the Gospels in the order they appear in modern Bibles: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. (i.e., Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.1.1). Tatian's *Diatessaron* is one of the oldest manuscripts (ca. 160–175 CE) that lists the fourfold Gospels in this order. So also, P⁴⁵ (ca. 200 CE). See “Introductory Note to Tatian the Assyrian,” in *ANF*², 62–63; Parsons, *Luke*, 10. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, there is some variation among the patristics regarding this order (cf. Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.2, Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24). Also, the concern of the church Fathers was primarily authorship and order, not literary dependence (synoptic problem).

¹³ Just how much time was needed is debatable. See Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 39.

Proposals for Dating of Mark

Dating Mark carries its own challenges. Proposals for dating Mark's Gospel range from the early sixties to the mid-seventies CE.¹⁴ There is external and internal evidence that help place Mark in time.

External Evidence

The early church offers external clues for dating Mark. Tradition ties the production of Mark to Peter.¹⁵ All of these writers attest to Mark, Peter's companion, composing a Gospel account at the behest of the Christian community, so that Peter's stories would never be lost. They also testify that Peter approved of what Mark produced. If the testimony originating from the patristics is true, then Mark's Gospel would have been completed no later than ca. 64 or 65 CE, when tradition says Peter was executed.¹⁶ Thus, a *terminus ad quem* for completion of Mark would be 65 CE. Other than a general skepticism against early church tradition, there seems to be little reason to doubt this evidence.

¹⁴ Suggestions outside this range exist. For instance, James Crossley argued for a date ca. 30–40 CE. See James G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity*, JSNTSup 266 (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 207–9; Also, Bock *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 39; Bock, *Luke*, 18–19; Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, “Mark, Date, Setting and Purpose”; Edwards, *Luke*, 11; Andrew J. Mattill, “The Date and Purpose of Luke-Acts: Rackham Reconsidered,” *CQB* 40 (1978): 340; James A. Brooks, *Mark*, NAC 23 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1991), 28; Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); 35–40; Wansbrough, *Introducing the New Testament*, 92.

¹⁵ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1 (ANF 1:414); Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.15; 6.14.6 (ANF 1:261, 273) Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 8 (NPNF² 3:364). See also France, *Mark*, 38; Brooks, *Mark*, 18.

¹⁶ Brooks, *Mark*, 28; France, *Mark*, 37.

Internal Evidence

More recent scholars argue that Mark 13 (Mark's version of the Olivet Discourse) reflects the events of Neronian persecution (64–65 CE) and the Jewish war (66–70 CE).¹⁷ If the events Mark describes refer to the earlier Neronian persecution, then Mark would have been written after 65 CE. If, however, the events depicted the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, then Mark would have been written after 70 CE. The presupposition involved in this position is that Mark's description of Jesus' predictions in the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13) was a *vaticinium ex eventu*.

Based upon this line of argument, the *terminus ad quem* for Mark could be as late as the mid-70s CE. If that is the case, then Luke could not have been written until much later and, therefore, would have been useless for any trial or defense for Paul (though useful still for Christianity in general). However, while the prospect of a *vaticinium ex eventu* is possible, it is not the only plausible explanation. This line of argument may reflect some of the continual influence of the rationalism of the nineteenth century on New Testament and Lukan studies.¹⁸ However, if the predictions of Mark 13 (and the parallels in Matthew and Luke) represent a true prophetic proclamation (which this study affirms), then a date much earlier than 65 CE is

¹⁷ Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel*, 2; Brooks, *Mark*, 28; France, *Mark*, 38; Marshall, *Luke*, 34; Marshall, *Acts*, 48.

¹⁸ This is not to say that all scholars who embrace a late date for the Gospels are liberal or are adherents to Tübingen theology. Some conservative scholars date Matthew and Luke post-70 CE based on historical clues instead of a rejection of predictive prophecy. Frederick Bruce is an example. Bruce originally embraced an early date for Luke, ca. 61 CE, but later settled on a date between 70–80 CE based on historical clues, including the fall of Jerusalem. See Stanley E. Porter, "F. F. Bruce, Luke-Acts, and Early Christian History," in Porter and Fay, *Luke-Acts in Modern Interpretation*, 219.

possible.¹⁹ The next section will present an argument for a much earlier date for the writing of Mark based upon the possibility of predictive prophecy.

Alternative View: A Pre-Seventh Decade Dating of Mark's Gospel

Viewing the Olivet Discourse as a prophecy after the fact presents only one possible perspective. Although, on the surface, it may appear that ascribing to this view means that the prophecy ascribed to Jesus is fictitious, it is important to note that, as Marshall argues, "it is equally possible that genuine prophecies were remembered, cited, and perhaps edited simply because of the author's desire to show that what Jesus prophesied had in fact come true."²⁰ Marshall goes on to argue that there is good reason to believe that the prophecy was written before the event and reflects a general understanding of the trajectory of political events in the region at that time.²¹ The proposition here is that it is equally plausible that the predictions ascribed to Christ in the Olivet Discourse were predictive prophecies and, considering the political and social climate of the first century, are in line with messianic expectations.

Adolf Harnack's Proposal

Adolf Harnack was one of the first to offer a radically early date for the book of Mark.²² Harnack's argument for an earlier date for Mark's Gospel is based upon the theory that Mark had written a proto-copy of his account which he brought to Rome, where he visited Paul in prison

¹⁹ Bock, *Luke*, 18–19.

²⁰ Marshall, *Luke*, 49.

²¹ Marshall argues, "anybody with any political sense could see in what direction events were moving in Palestine in the sixties of the first century." See Marshall, *Acts*, 49. See also Bock, *Luke*, 18–19.

²² Harnack, *The Date of the Acts*, 126–33.

and met Luke.²³ Harnack stated, “it is possible that St Mark brought his Gospel to Rome when he came thither to St Paul, in prison; he may, while in Rome, have subjected it to further revision, and some considerable time later may have published it at the prayer of the Roman Christians.”²⁴

Harnack’s theory is based in part upon his evaluation of the traditions of the patristics, especially those of Irenaeus.²⁵ Harnack argued that interpreters had taken Irenaeus’ comments too literally. Specifically, he suggested that “Irenaeus does not mean to say that the Gospel of St Matthew was composed at the time when St Peter and St Paul were preaching in Rome, nor that the second Gospel was not written until after the death of the two chief apostles.”²⁶ If Harnack is correct, then, as he concluded, Mark could have been written in “the sixth decade of the first century.”²⁷ Harnack’s suggestion is significant. Harnack offered a reasonable explanation of the evolution of Mark’s Gospel. Considering the general understanding of the development of New Testament literature, that drafts copies (or “proto-copies” as Harnack suggested) existed prior to the canonized final form, it is quite reasonable to assume that draft copies (or a proto-copy) of

²³ Bock, *Luke*, 18–19.

²⁴ Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 132.

²⁵ Irenaeus as recorded in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.8.2 (NPNF² 3:222).

²⁶ Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 129–31. Harnack provided the Greek text of Eusebius, “Ὁ μὲν δὴ Ματθαῖος ἐν τοῖς Ἑβραίοις τῆ ἰδίᾳ αὐτῶν διαλέκτῳ καὶ γραφῆν ἐξήνεγκεν εὐαγγελίου, τοῦ Πέτρου καὶ τοῦ Παύλου ἐν Ῥώμῃ εὐαγγελιζομένων καὶ θεμελιούντων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, μετὰ δὲ τὴν τούτων ἔξοδον Μάρκος, ὁ μαθητὴς καὶ ἐρμηνευτὴς Πέτρου; καὶ αὐτὸς τὰ ὑπὸ Πέτρου κηρυσσόμενα ἐγγράφως ἡμῖν παραδέδωκεν. καὶ Λουκᾶς δέ, ὁ ἀκόλουθος Παύλου, τὸ ὑπ’ ἐκείνου κηρυσσόμενον εὐαγγέλιον ἐν βίβλῳ κατέθετο. ἔπειτα Ἰωάννης ὁ μαθητὴς τοῦ κυρίου, ὁ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ ἀναπεσών, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξέδωκε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, ἐν Ἐδέσῳ τῆς Ἀσίας διατρίβων.” He then provided his own paraphrase of the text, “Among the Hebrews, Matthew also published in their own tongue a written gospel [besides his oral teaching], while’ in Rome Peter and Paul proclaimed [orally, not in writing] the Gospel, and founded the Church. But [although they died without leaving behind them a written gospel, their teaching has not perished, for] after their death Mark also [like Matthew], the disciple and interpreter of Peter, handed down to us in writing the teaching of Peter; and Luke, the follower of Paul, gathered together in a book the Gospel preached by the latter apostle. ‘Thereupon John, the disciple of the Lord, who also lay in his bosom, he also published the Gospel while he was dwelling at Ephesus.’” Harnack argued that the “while” provided in the translation is a genitive absolute and not temporal.

²⁷ Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 133.

Mark could have circulated among Christian communities.²⁸ That proto-copy may have been the source Luke consulted. That same copy of Mark might have undergone revisions after meeting with Peter and Paul in Rome and later became the final version requested by the Roman community. Harnack's explanation leaves ample room for Luke to have used Mark as a source and produce Luke-Acts early in the sixties CE, in time for Paul's trial.

James Crossley's Proposal

More recently, James Crossley argued for an even earlier date for Mark based on a source critical approach involving an evaluation of Jewish laws in Mark as compared to Matthew and Luke.²⁹ What Crossley argued is that the Synoptics portray Jesus as a Torah-observant Jew whose conflict with Jewish leaders of His day was over their expansions to, and application of Torah. Whereas Acts and the Pauline epistles reflect a controversy that had developed between Christians and Jews over Christian's lack of observation of certain parts of the Mosaic law. These controversies, which arose in the mid to late forties, are not present in Mark but show signs in certain places in Matthew and Luke.

To illustrate his point, Crossley examined parallel accounts of interactions between Jesus and the Jews over matters of the Law (Mark 2:23–28 and parallels, and Mark 10:1–12 and parallels).³⁰ Crossley illustrated how Mark presented the situation in simplicity while the other Synoptics added clarifying additions that they felt were necessary considering the growing controversy. Those additions, argued Crossley, reflect the fact that Matthew and Luke were

²⁸ Richards, "Reading, Writing, and Manuscripts," 362.

²⁹ Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel*, 206–9.

³⁰ Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel*, 159–82. Parallel Synoptic passages for the Mark 2 pericope (plucking and eating grain on the sabbath) include Matthew 12:1–8 and Luke 6:1–5. The parallel Synoptic passage for Mark 10:1–12 (divorce) is Matthew 19:1–9.

written after the rise of the Jewish-Christian legal controversy (mid-to-late 40s) while Mark's simplistic presentation reflect an earlier period, possibly mid-30s to mid-40s.³¹ This is important because it argues that Mark was written before the mid-forties when these issues arose.³²

Crossley's proposition is compelling, even if it is unprovable. His inductive reasoning is at least equally sound as those who suggest that the Synoptics were composed after the fall of Jerusalem based on their supposition that biblical prophecy must be postdictive prophecy.

Before laying out his argument, Crossley also presented a compelling argument of why the internal and external evidence to which scholars point to date Mark to 65–75 CE is problematic and “is of little use” in accurately dating Mark.³³ On the issue of the internal evidence of Mark 13, Crossley argued convincingly that the crisis of the Olivet Discourse could easily have referred to the Caligula crisis (ca. 40 CE) as opposed to the Jewish war of the late 60s.³⁴ Based upon this argument alone, Mark could be dated as early as 45 CE. Crossley's final proposition is a date in the range of 35–45 CE, much earlier than most scholars.³⁵

While radical, and possibly fragile, Crossley's argument does open the possibility of a much earlier date for Mark, which makes room for a much earlier production of Luke-Acts. What both Harnack and Crossley illustrate is that there are reasonable explanations that allow for an earlier date of composition of Mark's Gospel which, in turn, allows for an early date for the

³¹ Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel*, 125–82. Crossley did similar for Mark 7:1–23 and its parallels which he suggests argues for the earlier thirties date.

³² Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel*, 206–9.

³³ Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel*, 1–5; 205.

³⁴ The Caligula Crisis refers to the event surrounding Emperor Gaius Caligula who reigned 37–41 CE. Caligula had attempted to erect a statue of himself in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, nearly sparking a war. The war would not materialize until 66 CE. See Edwards, *Mark*, 391; Scott T. Carroll, “Caligula (Emperor),” *AYBD*, 1:819–21.

³⁵ Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel*, 3, 208.

composition of Luke-Acts. The next section will now present reasons for an early date of Luke-Acts.

Luke's Treatment of the Olivet Discourse and the Effect on Dating Luke-Acts

As stated earlier, one of the main reasons scholars assume a late (post-70 CE) date for the composition of Luke-Acts is because of Luke's treatment of the Olivet Discourse. This argument has already been reasonably challenged regarding Mark. Some of the same arguments used to defend an early date for Mark can be employed in making an argument for an early date of Luke-Acts.

Comparison of the Olivet Discourse in the Synoptics

This study has called attention to the difference between how Luke presented Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem and that of the other Synoptics, but it has not yet demonstrated this contrast. It will do so now.³⁶

Mark 13:2	Luke 21:5b–6	Matthew 24:2	Luke 19:41–44
<p>And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down” (NASB).</p>	<p>He said, “<i>As for</i> these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down” (NASB).</p>	<p>And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down” (NASB).</p>	<p>When He approached <i>Jerusalem</i>, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 “For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and</p>

³⁶ Comparison here follows Jeffrey Jackson's harmony of the Synoptics. See Jackson, *Synopsis of Matthew, Mark and Luke*.

surround you and hem
 you in on every side,
 44 and they will level
 you to the ground and
 your children within
 you, and they will not
 leave in you one stone
 upon another, because
 you did not recognize
 the time of your
 visitation” (NASB).

In the above chart, what is illustrated is how Luke 19:41–44 (far right column) appears to add clarification to Jesus’ prophecy of how the Temple would be destroyed. Luke’s additions, according to those who argue the postdiction position, reflect that Luke had a perspective that Matthew and Mark lacked.³⁷ Luke’s mentioning the erection of barricade and the surrounding of Jerusalem by an attacking army (Luke 19:43) presented a level of detail that only could be known to someone looking back on the situation already past. To this point, James Edwards argues, “The references to the fall of Jerusalem in Luke 19 and 21 seem to many, myself included, to betray particulars of the Jewish War of 66–70.”³⁸

Luke 21:20–21 presents an additional illustration used by those who argue a post-70 CE date.

³⁷ See Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 118–19; Edwards, *Luke*, 10; Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 39.

³⁸ Edwards, *Luke*, 11; Parsons, *Luke*, 285. Edward’s comment here reflects his rational assumption that it was not Jesus who made the prophecy, rather it was Luke attributed the speech to Christ. The assumption of this study is that Luke accurately recorded the prophetic speech of Christ in the Olivet Discourse.

Mark 13:14

“But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains” (NASB).

Luke 21:20–21

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.
21 “Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city” (NASB).

Matthew 24:15–16

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),
16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains” (NASB).

What is illustrated in the comparison above is how Luke, according to some scholars, has changed the apocalyptic language from the prediction and replaced it with terminology more relevant to what happened in the Jewish war (66–70 CE). “Abomination of Desolation” has been replaced with Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, a similar description given in Luke 19:43. While this argument is possible, it is not the only plausible explanation for the edit. Adolf Harnack suggested that Luke may have substituted the Old Testament apocalyptic language to make the words more relevant to Theophilus, who would have been less familiar with the Daniel reference.³⁹ Harnack argued, “Everything is much better explained on the hypothesis that St Luke had omitted the “Abomination of Desolation” because he naturally thought that it would not be intelligible to his readers, and that he had replaced it by a prophecy of the destruction of the city.”⁴⁰

What Harnack concluded is logically possible. Jesus’ words were originally spoken to His disciples. They were an audience that had deep knowledge of Daniel’s “Abomination of

³⁹ Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 119–20.

⁴⁰ Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 123.

Desolation” prophecy (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Jesus invoking that phrase was meant to be striking, unsettling, especially considering Jewish-Roman relations of the time.⁴¹ That phrase would likely not have had the same effect on someone like Theophilus, who did not have that same level of exposure to Old Testament apocalyptic texts as someone from a Palestinian Jewish background.⁴² A phrase like that might have been “unintelligible” to someone like Theophilus, according to Harnack.⁴³ Instead, Luke used common Roman conquest language, describing “a Roman defense perimeter (*circumvallation*),” which would have been familiar to someone like Theophilus.⁴⁴ If anything, an argument could be made here that Luke was presenting information in a more socially relevant format while he was producing an apology defending the legitimacy of Christianity.

Alternative Theories Accounting for the Differences

While the two previous examples appear to illustrate that Luke gives clarifying information, it is not necessary to conclude that it resulted from additional insight from looking back at a past event. It is within reason, for those who do accept the possibility of predictive prophecy, to accept that Jesus did accurately predict the coming events forty years before they happened, and that Luke faithfully recorded the message of the prophecy.⁴⁵ What is more, it is

⁴¹ The Caligula crisis is in mind here. The disciples would likely have connected the “Abomination of Desolation” to Daniel and understood the seriousness of the allusion.

⁴² Possibilities for identifying Theophilus will be addressed later in this chapter.

⁴³ Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 119–20.

⁴⁴ Edwards, *Luke*, 12; Harnack, *The Date of Acts and the Synoptic Gospels*, 123. Marshall acknowledged this argument but ultimately rejected it, arguing instead, “These changes can be explained in terms of the rewriting of Mk. by Luke. He will have clarified the allusion to the events of AD 66–70 in the light of history.” Marshall, *Luke*, 770.

⁴⁵ Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 126–33; Logenecker, “Acts,” 788.

also possible to connect this additional information to Luke’s familiarity with Old Testament prophecy.⁴⁶ Parallels for Luke’s mentioning “throwing up barricades” and “siege works” are readily found throughout Old Testament prophetic literature, especially in relationship to military tactics prevalent in the ancient near east, especially in the conquests of the Roman Empire of other rebellious cities.⁴⁷

To illustrate this point, comparison will now be made between Luke 19:43 and Ezekiel 4:2; Isaiah 29:3; and 37:33. These passages are chosen because they reflect the common military tactics in the ancient near east when taking a city. What this will show is that what is predicted in the Olivet Discourse was a process that was neither foreign or incomprehensible to Jesus’ disciples or Luke’s first-century audience. They might easily have expected that this process would be employed if Jerusalem were ever to be judged and destroyed by God.⁴⁸

The comparison will be made from the Greek text of the New Testament and the LXX.⁴⁹

Luke 19:43 (SBLGNT) reads, “παρεμβалоῦσιν οἱ ἐχθροί σου χάρακά σοι καὶ περικυκλώσουσιν σε καὶ συνέξουσιν σε πάντοθεν.”

Luke 19:43 (NASB), “when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side.”

Ezekiel 4:2 (LXX) reads, “περιβαλεῖς ἐπ’ αὐτήν χάρακα, καὶ δώσεις ἐπ’ αὐτήν παρεμβολὰς,”

Ezekiel 4:2 (NASB), “Then lay siege against it, build a siege wall, raise up a ramp, pitch camps and place battering rams against it all around.”

Isaiah 29:3 (LXX) reads, “Καὶ κυκλώσω ὡς Δαυὶδ ἐπὶ σέ, καὶ βαλῶ περὶ σέ χάρακα.”

⁴⁶ Logenecker, “Acts,” 788.

⁴⁷ Mattill, “The Date and Purpose of Luke-Acts,” 341–48.

⁴⁸ To this point, Darrell Bock argued, “the prediction of Jerusalem’s fall is one that Jesus was capable of making solely on the basis of his knowledge of how God acts to judge covenant unfaithfulness.” See Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 40.

⁴⁹ The LXX text is derived from Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta: With Morphology* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979) and Lancelot C. L. Brenton, ed., *The Septuagint Version: Greek* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1851). The Greek NT text is derived from Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2011–2013).

Isaiah 29:3 (NASB), “I will camp against you encircling you, And I will set siegeworks against you, And I will raise up battle towers against you.”

Isaiah 37:33 (LXX) reads, “μὴ κυκλώσῃ ἐπ’ αὐτὴν χάρακα.”

Isaiah 37:33 (NASB), “[not] throw up a siege ramp against it” (bracketed text for clarification, italicized text for comparison).

What becomes evident, in even this small sampling of texts, is that Luke uses terms frequently employed throughout the Old Testament. Terms like “parembalousin,” “charaka,” and “perikyklōsousin kyklōsō” are all terms that would be expected in describing military conquest of a city and pronouncement of judgment upon Israel. What this illustrates is what Adolf Harnack argues, that “nothing appears which could not have been written in any Jewish eschatological work.”⁵⁰ Luke’s description of Jesus’ prophecy of the judgment coming to Jerusalem is consistent with the original message, but presented in a way that was intelligible to Theophilus. Additionally, some have argued that what is described in the Olivet Discourse is not a clear description of what happened because of the Jewish war. Mattill stated, “but there are many details especially characteristic of the final fall of Jerusalem as described by Josephus in his *Wars of the Jews* (published about 75) which Luke does not report.”⁵¹

What has been argued here is that *vaticicium ex eventu* explanation is not the only plausible reason for the accuracy of the Olivet Discourse. That Luke may have altered Mark 13 for his audience is plausible. That he did it because he wrote from a post-70 CE vantage point is debatable. If the Olivet Discourse illustrates that Luke-Acts was written after the destruction of

⁵⁰ Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 123; Mattill, “The Date and Purpose of Luke-Acts,” 341–45.

⁵¹ Mattill, “The Date and Purpose of Luke-Acts,” 345. Darrell Bock laid out a similar argument. See Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 40; James Edwards acknowledged this argument but ultimately declared it unpersuasive. See Edwards, *Luke*, 11.

Jerusalem, then it illustrates that all the Synoptics were written late as well.⁵² Marshall does well to argue, “The case for dating any of the Synoptic Gospels after ad 70 is thus not a conclusive one.”⁵³ Equally plausible is the possibility that Jesus accurately predicted divine judgment that would occur at the end of the Jewish War. Luke’s description was one that was common in ancient near eastern conquest and, more relevantly, in Roman military tactics (*circumvallation*). Furthermore, there is an argument to be made for an early seventh decade date based on internal features in Acts. Attention will now turn there.

The Contents of Acts as Evidence of an Early Dating of Luke-Acts

An argument can be made for an early seventh decade date for the production of Luke-Acts based on internal features of the text. Many of these features are found in Acts. If Acts were written after Luke, as is nearly universally accepted, then showing the plausibility of Acts being completed early should suffice. Some of the internal features that support this argument include the lack of conclusion to the events of Paul’s ordeal and the overall character of Acts in relationship to history. These features will be elaborated upon and argued that they suggest an early sixties CE date for Luke-Acts.

Luke’s Abrupt Ending to Acts

That Acts ends abruptly is evident. Luke begins a narrative in Acts 22 that culminates in Paul being sent to Rome to stand trial (Acts 28). At the end of the lengthy, detail-rich story, Luke concluded with a simple and quite unsatisfying statement that Paul “stayed two full years in his

⁵² The argument can be made that Mark was written early while Matthew and Luke, who were dependent on Mark, were written after 70 CE. This is an issue that will be addressed in more detail in later chapters.

⁵³ Marshall argued, “The case for dating any of the Synoptic Gospels after AD 70 is thus not a conclusive one, and there is not the slightest reference in Acts to the fall of Jerusalem. Marshall, *Acts*, 49.

own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered (Acts 28:30–31, NASB).” This abrupt ending argues that Luke-Acts was written in the early years of the seventh decade CE, prior to Paul’s acquittal, reimprisonment, and execution.⁵⁴

Luke had given extensive details about each trial leading up to that concluding line. He provided full-length speeches, narrated the thoughts and actions of key participants along the way, even gave an extensive travel log of the voyage to Rome. Luke narrated every pre-trial hearing Paul faced. First, beginning in Jerusalem with the hearing on the steps that led to the Roman barracks outside the Temple (Acts 22:1), Luke provided extensive details about what was said and done during this event. He even gave a conclusion to the proceedings complete with two separate proclamations of innocence (Acts 23:9, 29 NASB).⁵⁵ From there, Luke detailed the other preliminary hearings before Felix (Acts 24:1–35), Festus (Acts 25:1–22), and Agrippa (Acts 25:23–26:32). In each case, Luke revealed the outcome of each hearing; Paul was innocent. It seems rather strange then that Luke would withhold the final verdict of Paul’s trial in Rome if he were aware of its conclusion. Mattill understandably proclaims, “It would be inexplicable for Luke not to tell of Paul’s martyrdom if he knew it. If the latter date is correct, Luke is guilty of nothing less than a literary crime: he excites all his readers’ interest in the fate

⁵⁴ See Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 93–9; Longenecker, “Acts,” 781–83; Bock, *Luke*, 16; Peterson, *Acts*, 5; Marshall, *Acts*, 49; Marshall, *Luke*, 35; Peterson, *Acts*, 4; Polhill, *Acts*, 27.

⁵⁵ One coming from the Pharisees who were accusing him saying, “We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” (23:9). The other from Claudius Lysias where he also states that Paul was had done nothing “deserving death or imprisonment” (23:29).

of Paul, and then leaves him without a word as to the conclusion.”⁵⁶ Others have drawn this same conclusion.⁵⁷

The most logical reason that Luke did not provide the outcome of Paul’s ordeal was because the outcome was not yet known. Luke had brought the story up to its current point as things had transpired. Considering the character of Luke-Acts overall, it is simply “unintelligible” that a historian and chronicler of Luke’s character would leave out such details if they were known to him.⁵⁸ Luke had given the reader prophecies of Paul’s preaching in Rome, prophecies about chains and death awaiting Paul if he went to Jerusalem, and prophecies about everything he would suffer at the hands of the Jews.⁵⁹ Lee McDonald argues, “it is difficult to understand why the death of its primary hero is missing from the story. Luke had no trouble mentioning the deaths of Stephen and James, so why not Paul’s if it had already happened?”⁶⁰ If Luke knew the outcome but chose to withhold it, especially that Paul had been acquitted at his first trial, but failed to divulge that information, that would be cruel and equivalent to literary malpractice.⁶¹ Harnack expressed the sentiment of so many when he asked the rhetorical

⁵⁶ Mattill, “Date and Purpose of Luke-Acts,” 337. Mattill summarized the key argument of Richard Rackham, “The Acts of the Apostles: II. A Plea for an Early Date,” *JTS* 1 (1899): 76–87.

⁵⁷ See Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 93–9; Longenecker, “Acts,” 781–83; Bock, *Luke*, 16; Peterson, *Acts*, 5; Marshall, *Acts*, 49; Marshall, *Luke*, 35; Peterson, *Acts*, 4; Polhill, *Acts*, 27.

⁵⁸ Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 98.

⁵⁹ The words of Agabus (Acts 21:10) and the Lord (Acts 23:11) are in mind here.

⁶⁰ McDonald, “New Testament Chronology,” in *The World of the New Testament*, 16.

⁶¹ Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 93–9; Mattill, “Date and Purpose of Luke-Acts,” 337; Rackham, “Acts: A Plea for and Early Date,” 78–80.

question, “Is such behaviour on the part of our author intelligible? Is it, indeed, intelligible on the part of any historian?”⁶²

Not everyone agrees with this conclusion. Marshall acknowledged the logic but ultimately concluded that Luke may have simply stopped the story where he did because he had taken it as far as he meant.⁶³ However, in his commentary on Luke, Marshall suggested that Luke’s omission of the fall of Jerusalem and the death of Paul are “strong indications of a date before 70 CE.”⁶⁴ Mikeal Parsons acknowledged the “enigmatic” ending to Acts but rationalized that it was rhetorical, providing “a sense of closure by recalling themes introduced in Acts 1 and a sense of being unfinished by leaving other major themes incomplete or unstated.”⁶⁵ Parsons rationalizes this tactic by arguing that ancient rhetoricians in antiquity have, in other instances, employed the tactic of “suspended endings.”⁶⁶

Neither Marshall’s nor Parsons’ explanations are satisfying. The main reason scholars forcefully uphold a late date for the production of Luke-Acts goes back to those assumptions about the Olivet Discourse. Therefore, Luke-Acts had to have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem and, therefore, a different explanation is necessary for why Luke omitted these key details. Conzelmann and the redactional-critical method provided the template for building more

⁶² Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 98.

⁶³ Marshall, *Acts*, 49. Marshall argued, “The latter possibility is the more likely, since Luke’s purpose was to show how the gospel reached Rome rather than to write the life story of Paul, and it leaves open the question whether Paul was martyred at the end of the two-year period in Acts 28:30 or at a later point.”

⁶⁴ Marshall, *Luke*, 35.

⁶⁵ Parsons, *Acts*, 365. Parsons argued, “the ending is best understood, on literary grounds, as another example of a ‘suspended’ ending.”

⁶⁶ See Parsons, *Acts*, 366 for a complete explanation of his argument.

complex arguments to explain the unexplainable.⁶⁷ Instead of accepting the simplest and obvious argument (Luke ended Acts where the action ended), arguments are formed around themes like the *parousia*, or salvation history.⁶⁸ In the end, the argument that Luke ended the narrative without providing a conclusion of which he was fully aware is less plausible, less appealing, and less satisfying than the obvious solution.

Omission of Key Events and Other Significant Features in Acts

Similar to the lack of a conclusion to Paul's ordeal, Luke is also silent on the destruction of Jerusalem and the events of the Jewish war. If these events had taken place, considering the significant nature of that event, surely, he would have mentioned it. Yet, Luke is silent on this. Furthermore, he does not even allude to any hint of a coming crisis in his narrative.⁶⁹ Luke does not describe a situation where tensions between Rome and Judaism were high. It would make little sense for Paul to appeal to Rome if Nero was already predisposed to punish Jerusalem for rebellion.⁷⁰

Also absent is any mention of the death of James the Just (ca. 62 CE), who rose to a place of prominence in leadership in the Jerusalem Church. James played a key role in significant portions of the book of Acts, especially the Jerusalem council (Acts 15). Again, Luke informed the reader of Stephen's death (Acts 7) and James, son of Zebedee (Acts 12). It is strange that he

⁶⁷ It is not that the redaction-critical method is flawed. The method itself is valuable, allowing interpreters to trace important themes throughout the Bible.

⁶⁸ As previously mentioned, Conzelmann thought that Luke-Acts was written to address the problem of the delay in the return of Christ (*parousia*) and wrote an apologetic to encourage the Christian community of Luke's time. Marshall and Bock employed similar redactional-critical approaches in Luke-Acts.

⁶⁹ That is, other than Jesus' prediction of judgment in the Olivet Discourse. See arguments by Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 40–41; Peterson, *Acts*, 17; Marshall, *Acts*, 50; Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 99.

⁷⁰ This is a point that Adolf Harnack argued in detail. See Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 90–114.

suddenly decided that the death of James, Paul, and Peter should go without mention, opting for a “suspended ending.”⁷¹ Again, Luke’s silence on these events argues for an early date of writing for Acts.

Adding to this, Darrell Bock mentioned how Acts “presupposes a racially mixed community, which in turn suggests an earlier date, not a later one.”⁷² What he insinuates is that Luke, in Acts, characterizes the relationship between Jews and Gentiles as still delicate, “when Gentile inclusion was still a live issue.”⁷³ Bock argued, “That the Gentile mission still needs such vigorous and detailed defense further suggests this earlier period, since by the 80s the Gentile character of the Christian movement was a given. That believers need reassurance in the midst of intense Jewish pressure fits an early date as well.”⁷⁴ These are all issues that were previously argued by Harnack much earlier.⁷⁵ Marshall appears to agree. Marshall argued that the indication of early Catholicism is absent in Acts. He stated, “There is little interest in the crystallization of sound doctrine, in the doctrine of the church, in the sacraments, and in the development of a hierarchical ministry standing in a line of succession from the apostles.”⁷⁶

When evaluating the character and detail of Acts, it becomes difficult to maintain a post-70 CE date for Acts. The events portrayed in Acts suggest that it was written at a time early in the sixties. Considering all these issues together, this study suggests that Acts may have been

⁷¹ McDonald, “New Testament Chronology,” 15–17; Bock, *Luke*, 18–19; Marshall, *Acts*, 49.

⁷² Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 40–41.

⁷³ Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 40–41; Bock, *Luke*, 18–19.

⁷⁴ Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 40–41.

⁷⁵ See Harnack, *The Date of Acts*, 90–114.

⁷⁶ Marshall, *Acts*, 50.

composed between 60–64 CE.⁷⁷ This date corresponds to the time of Paul’s arrival at Rome (ca. 58–60 CE) and his two-year imprisonment (60–62 CE).⁷⁸ After his arrival in Rome, Paul called together the Jewish leaders and explained his situation to them (Acts 28:17–23). Their response to Paul was one of ignorance, only having knowledge about the Christian “sect” and that it was spoken against everywhere. This led Paul to set up a meeting and lay out for them the events that had transpired. It is the contention of this dissertation that the resulting meeting is when Luke decided to record Paul’s testimony and Luke-Acts is the resulting work. Likely, the work was produced over the two-year period of Paul’s imprisonment and completed (at least as a first draft) sometime before Paul’s release. Also, much of the information gathered by Luke in the production of Luke-Acts proved to be useful to Theophilus, who may well have served as Paul’s legal representative.⁷⁹ This study does not deny the possibility that later additions and revisions could have been made to the text after 70 CE.

Identifying the Author and Audience of Luke-Acts

Luke of Antioch: Apologist, Historian, and Theologian

That Luke was the author of the third Gospel and Acts was uncontroversial until about the nineteenth century. Though both volumes nowhere contain the name of Luke, the testimony of the early church was unanimous in their identification. As was discussed in chapter two, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Eusebius agree that Luke the physician, native of Syrian

⁷⁷ Richard Rackham concluded, “the Acts we have the work of one who was writing at Rome about A.D. 60 by the side of St. Paul in his imprison.” See Rackham, “Acts: Plea,” 86: See also Homer Austin Kent Jr., *Jerusalem to Rome: Studies in the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 16.

⁷⁸ Kent, *Jerusalem to Rome*, 16. Also, see chart on 106; John A. Martin, “Luke,” in BKC, 2:198–99.

⁷⁹ The identifications of Luke and Theophilus will be discussed in the following section.

Antioch, and Paul’s traveling companion, authored both volumes. There are two primary clues, internal and external, that aid in this identification.

Internally, the patristics (and modern scholars) point to the “we” section of Acts (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16) to show that whoever wrote the narrative was an active participant in some of Paul’s journeys.⁸⁰ The one candidate listed in Acts or the epistles that match all the required characteristics is Luke.⁸¹ This identification is supported by the external evidence as well, which comes from two sources. First, three epistles attributed to Paul list Luke as a traveling companion: 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24; and Colossians 4:14. It is the Colossians pericope that reveals Luke’s occupation as a physician.⁸² Besides the Pauline epistles, the Anti-Marcionite prologue to Luke (ca. 150–180 CE) and the Muratorian Canon (ca. 200 CE) contain either the title *Euangelion kata Loukan*, or list the author as Luke the physician.⁸³ This indicates that attestation to Lukan authorship was fixed fairly early. Taking all this into consideration, Peterson argues, “there are good reasons for concluding that the traditional solution is reliable and true.”⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, 7.

⁸¹ Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*, 32; Kent, *Jerusalem to Rome*, 14; Marshall, *Luke*, 33; Martin, “Luke,” 2:198; Polhill, *Acts*, 23; Parsons, *Luke*, 5; Peterson, *Acts*, 1; Harnack, *Luke the Physician*, 26–120.

⁸² While recognizing the controversy of the authenticity of some of the epistles attributed to Paul, this study will not engage in that debate. The reader is encouraged to consult any of the referenced commentaries or monographs mentioned throughout for more on the issue.

⁸³ Kent, *Jerusalem to Rome*, 14; Peterson, *Acts*, 1.

⁸⁴ Peterson, *Acts*, 4.

Besides being the author, Luke is also a significant historian, theologian, and apologist.⁸⁵ Luke himself attests to the fact that he was a historian.⁸⁶ In the prologue to the Gospel (Luke 1:1–4), Luke said that he thoroughly researched the information he was about to present. His own self-testimony portrays him as a historian. That he is a theologian is evident in that he was selective in what information he incorporated. Like any theologian, information is employed to present a theme or theology. Luke is no different. Luke-Acts, as Conzelmann, Bock, and Marshall so well demonstrate, is also a theological treatise.

The identification of Luke, the physician and traveling companion of Paul as the author of Luke-Acts dominated for nearly two millennia until the skepticism and rationalism of the nineteenth century. One of the reasons some scholars argue against Luke's authorship is because the portrayal of Paul in Acts is, in their estimation, so different than that of the undisputed Pauline epistles. There are at least three issues to which they point. First, they suggest Acts portrays Paul as a skilled orator and miracle worker whereas Paul himself denies these accomplishments.⁸⁷ Additionally, Acts theology seems to lack some of the central tenets of Paul, like justification or atonement.⁸⁸ Third, Paul, in Acts, refuses the title of apostle whereas, in his

⁸⁵ See Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*; Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*; Marshall, *Luke: Historian & Theologian*; and Bock, *Theology of Luke-Acts*; Peterson, *Acts*, 7.

⁸⁶ Martin, "Luke," 2:198.

⁸⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, 26. For instance, Paul says in 1 Cor 2:1 that he did not come in eloquence of tongue. Yet Paul, on Mars Hill, presents quite an eloquent address to the members of the Aeropogus (Acts 17:22–31).

⁸⁸ Polhill, *Acts*, 26.

letters (e.g., Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1, etc.) he argues the case.⁸⁹ Some have argued that whomever wrote Luke-Acts could not have known Paul.⁹⁰

The differences here are explainable. First Luke and Paul wrote for very different reasons. Because of this, their emphases will naturally differ. Luke is not Paul. Luke presented the aspects of Paul he felt were important for his purposes. When Paul was about to be flogged for causing an uproar in the Temple, he invoked his Roman citizenship. Of course, in his letters, Paul never boasted of such a claim. This, however, is not evidence that Luke did not know Paul. Luke was focusing on the precipitating event that led to Paul going to Rome, which was foretold to him by Jesus (Acts 23:11). The objection here is unfounded. Marshall concluded well arguing, “The view that Paul’s theology is inaccurately presented in Acts is a palpable exaggeration.”⁹¹ As for the apostleship issue, Bock argued, “Acts 14:4 and 14 do name Paul as an apostle along with Barnabas, and the actions he performs that parallel what Peter was able to do put Paul in a similar light without using the title regularly.”⁹²

When all the evidence is considered, the testimony of the patristics of the authorship of Luke-Acts is strong. Luke the physician, whom Paul identified in Colossians, is the author of Luke-Acts. Objection to this identification is another reflection of the continued influence of the skepticism and rationalism of modernism.

⁸⁹ Marshall, *Luke*, 33; Polhill, *Acts*, 26; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. B. Noble and G. Shinn (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 114–16; Philipp Vielhauer, “On the ‘Paulinism’ of Acts,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 33–50.

⁹⁰ Parsons, *Luke*, 9.

⁹¹ Marshall, *Historian & Theologian*, 74–76; Polhill, *Acts*, 26.

⁹² Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 37.

Theophilus as Recipient and Intended Audience

Identifying Theophilus is a significantly more difficult task than identifying Luke. The only two mentions of this individual are from Luke-Acts. Nothing else is known that concretely points to one individual. Nevertheless, there are two major theories that have been offered as possible identities of the mysterious Theophilus. These theories may be divided into two categories: those that suggest Theophilus was an actual person and those that argue, based on the semantics of the name, that he was a theoretical representative of a wider Christian audience, possibly the community to whom Luke wrote.

Theophilus as Metaphor

One major suggestion for identifying Theophilus argues that he was a metaphorical representative of a wider Christian community.⁹³ This theory rises from the meaning of the name Theophilus, which translates to “lover of God,” or “loved of God.”⁹⁴ John Polhill titled this position the “God-fearer” position.⁹⁵ Proponents who adhere to this “God-fearer” theory reason that the hypothetical “Theophilus” is a code name for the intended Christian audience to whom Luke wrote. John Polhill, in his commentary on Acts concluded, “Of all these theories, the God-fearer suggestion has the most to commend it.”⁹⁶ James Edwards found support for this theory among the church fathers. He notes, “The name itself...was often taken by the Fathers as a

⁹³ Several commentaries, bible dictionaries, and encyclopedias make this assertion. See for example “Theophilus,” *BEB*, 2052; Stein, *Luke*, 66; Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 27.

⁹⁴ “Theophilus,” *BEB*, 2052; “Θεόφιλος,” *BDAG*, 452.

⁹⁵ This should not be confused with the term “God-fearers,” who were Gentile converts to Judaism and attended Synagogue. Polhill, *Acts*, 57.

⁹⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, 57.

metaphor of the reader. ‘If you love God, it was written to you,’ said Ambrose.”⁹⁷ Robert O’Toole, though he argued that Theophilus was an actual person, suggested that the name is a pseudonym. He suggested, “However, this specific person is not easy to identify, and the pseudonym ‘Theophilus’ was probably used to protect this individual from the political authorities.”⁹⁸

Though tantalizing, this theory does not seem to fit with the overall Lukan narrative and would require one to “ignore the description of a specific person in a specific context.”⁹⁹ If Theophilus here is not an actual person or intended recipient of Luke’s writings then, one could not really trust that any named recipient of a New Testament text was an actual person. Theophilus is referred to as “most excellent” in the address (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). If one accepts that Theophilus is a pseudonym representing a community of individuals, then the same should be applied to Felix or Festus, whom Paul, Claudius Lysias, and Tertullus also address as “most excellent” (Acts 23:26; 24:2; 26:25).¹⁰⁰ Such an application would not fit the overall narrative scheme of Luke-Acts. Just as Felix and Festus are actual individuals being addressed, so is Theophilus.

Theophilus the Individual

Attempts have been made to relate Theophilus to a few individuals in antiquity. First, some have suggested that Theophilus may have been Theophilus ben Ananias (ca. 37–41 CE),

⁹⁷ Edwards, *Luke*, 27.

⁹⁸ Robert F. O’Toole, “Theophilus (Person),” *AYBD* 6:511.6.

⁹⁹ Jennifer Creamer, Aída Besançon Spencer and Francois P. Viljoen, “Who is Theophilus? Discovering the Original Reader of Luke-Acts,” *In Die Skriflig* 48 (2014): 6.

¹⁰⁰ “Theophilus,” *BEB* 2052.

high priest of the Temple and brother-in-law to Caiaphas.¹⁰¹ While the placement of this individual in history could fit, addressing Luke-Acts to this individual does not make sense. A Jewish high priest at that time would not likely have been a Christian convert and would have had little interest in what Luke records in his two volumes. Unless Luke was writing to attempt to convert this individual, dedicating this work to him just does not fit and it would be unlikely a non-believer would want to read such a lengthy gospel “tract.”

Another more credible suggestion is that of a certain Theophilus of Alexandria. There is an ancient tradition that links Theophilus with the Coptic Church in Alexandria.¹⁰² Support for this position can be found in the Ante-Nicene Fathers, a document dating to the latter half of the second century CE.¹⁰³ There is mention of a Theophilus, “who was more exalted than all the men of power in that city,” who has been proposed as a possible candidate for the recipient of Luke-Acts.¹⁰⁴ This Theophilus seems to have originated in Antioch and became prominent in Alexandria. John Wesley reasoned that the ancients revealed that Theophilus “was a person of eminent quality at Alexandria.”¹⁰⁵

Related to this point is the suggestion that Theophilus was a prominent Roman official. Based upon the way Luke addresses Theophilus (“most excellent” Luke 1:3, Acts 1:1), some suggest that he may have been a Roman official.¹⁰⁶ Creamer et. al, conclude as much stating,

¹⁰¹ Elwell & Beitzel, “Theophilus,” *BEB* 2052; O’Toole, “Theophilus (Person),” *AYBD* 6:511.

¹⁰² Marshall, *Luke*, 43; O’Toole, “Theophilus (Person),” *AYBD* 511.

¹⁰³ “Introductory Notice to Pseudo-Clementine Literature,” (*ANF* 8:70).

¹⁰⁴ Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions*, 10.68 (*ANF* 8:210).

¹⁰⁵ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 4th ed. (New York: J. Soule and T. Mason, 1818), 141.

¹⁰⁶ Marshall, *Luke*, 43; Creamer et. al, “Who is Theophilus,” 6; Burnett H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924), 535.

“Theophilus was, likely a person of social and governmental rank, and a Gentile with a background in Roman and Greek culture.”¹⁰⁷ This identification holds much weight when considering the internal evidence. The use of the honorific title “most excellent” recurs in the book of Acts. Claudius Lysias used it in addressing Felix in a letter (Acts 23:26). Tertullus, the lawyer employed by Ananias the high priest, addressed Governor Felix in the same manner (24:3). Finally, Paul addressed Porcius Festus as “most excellent” when Festus accused him of being out of his mind (26:25). The evidence in this theory is compelling. This identification is both enticing and appealing. Whether this Theophilus was Jewish, a Christian convert, or both is uncertain. Either possibility fits though, if he were truly linked to the Coptic Church in Alexandria, that would argue that he was at least a convert or seeker. It is unknown how he would have become affiliated with Luke or Paul, or how he would have come to Rome.

Given this identification has led several to conclude that Theophilus was, or became, Paul’s legal representative in Rome.¹⁰⁸ This theory has a long history of support. Johannes Munck suggested this in his original translation and commentary on the book of Acts.¹⁰⁹ More recently, John Mauck wrote a full-length monograph based upon this theory.¹¹⁰ Those who argue that Theophilus was a lawyer representing either Christianity in general or Paul specifically, suggest that he was not a Christian or Jewish convert.¹¹¹ For instance, William Larkin stated,

¹⁰⁷ Creamer et. al, “Who is Theophilus,” 6.

¹⁰⁸ See Polhill, *Acts*, 56–7.

¹⁰⁹ Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles*, lv–lviii.

¹¹⁰ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 221–26.

¹¹¹ Munck, *Acts*, lv–lviii; Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 26–7.

“Luke wrote Acts to Theophilus, a Gentile, who is representative of the intelligent Roman middle-class reading public among whom Paul’s case had sparked interest.”¹¹²

Mauck agrees and points to a few compelling reasons to support this conclusion. For one, Mauck argued that Christians would reject such lofty titles as “most excellent,” a salutation that is reserved for prominent Roman officials. Theophilus’ greeting is impersonal, “lacking any references to his spiritual state either positional to God or person.”¹¹³ Salutations and greetings typical in New Testament writings meant for Christian audiences were more personal and spiritual, as exemplified in the epistolary greetings.¹¹⁴ Theophilus’ greeting in both Luke and Acts lack this sort of relational marking. This would make perfect sense if Theophilus’ relationship were more formal and legal. For this and other reasons, Mauck identifies Theophilus as a Roman special investigator (*cognitionibus*) tasked with investigating and reporting the facts of the case to be heard before Nero.¹¹⁵ Luke’s role was to present all the details of the case. Theophilus would have chosen that which was most relevant for Paul and Rome. As for appeal to the Jewish potential converts, the parts that would have been irrelevant to Theophilus would still be relevant to those who were looking for connection between Jesus and their messianic expectations. Mauck lays out a solid and convincing argument in this regard.

As expected, not all agree. Robert Stein insisted that Theophilus was a Christian because he believes the intended reader of Luke was the Christian community.¹¹⁶ Darrel Bock argued a

¹¹² William J. Larkin Jr., *Acts*, IVPNTC 5 (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1995), “Audience and Occasion.”

¹¹³ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 26–27.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, how Paul addresses the Romans (1:7) as ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ (beloved of God).

¹¹⁵ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 26–27. Mauck goes into great detail identifying different Roman legal positions and responsibilities that are too lengthy to include here.

¹¹⁶ Stein, *Luke*, 26.

middle approach, suggesting Theophilus could be both a Roman official and Christian, or at least a seeker.¹¹⁷ Overall, Mauck's argument is more convincing. Whether Theophilus is a believer or not is less important than why Luke addressed the two volumes to him. More will be discussed on this topic in the next chapter when the argument turns to the features of Luke-Acts that support the thesis of this work.

The Unity of Luke-Acts

Since the publication of Henry Cadbury's *The Making of Luke-Acts* in 1927, the understanding that Luke and Acts were two volumes of a single, unified work went virtually unchallenged until the last thirty years or so.¹¹⁸ Cadbury asserted among all the issues of New Testament authorships, "no answer is so universally agreed upon as is the common authorship of these two volumes."¹¹⁹ He so vigorously argued this point that, even currently, many scholarly and popular publications continue to employ the hyphenated title.¹²⁰ Cadbury argued their unity based upon literary and stylistic grounds.¹²¹ There were three compelling features that clearly indicate the connection and unity between the two works:

1. Both works were addressed to the same person (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1).
2. Acts specifically refers to "the former work" (Acts 1:1), indicating that what was being presented was a continuation of the previous work.
3. The close similarity in style and narrative presentation.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Bock, *Luke*, 18.

¹¹⁸ Patrick E. Spencer, "The Unity of Luke-Acts: A Four-Bolted Hermeneutical Hinge," *CBR* 5 (2007): 342. Serious attempts to disconnect the link created by Cadbury began to rise in the 1990's with the challenges of Mikeal Parsons and Richard Pervo. Those challenges, and responses, will be addressed later in this section.

¹¹⁹ Cadbury, *Making*, 8.

¹²⁰ Maddox, *Purpose*, 3.

¹²¹ Spencer, "Unity," 342.

¹²² Cadbury, *Making*, 8.

The first and second points are self-explanatory. The third requires a bit of discussion.

Robert Maddox provided a helpful rubric that illustrates Cadbury's last point. Maddox presented "bridges" that connect Luke-Acts. First, Luke discusses the story of the early Jesus and the activity of the risen Lord in His disciples in a similar fashion. Foundational to understanding the character of Christian life and the church is the incarnation, mission, and passion of Christ. Likewise, the work of Christ is only fully appreciated when the resultant birth and flourishing of the church are fully presented. The link between the story of Christ and the story of His church are evident between the two parts. Secondly, Luke presented these crucial connecting points in both volumes in similar fashion, with the ascension forming a major bridge between the two. Acts begins where Luke ends, both focused on the resurrection and ascension. Thirdly, argued Maddox, Jerusalem functions as a "geographical sign-post" in both volumes. Jesus's journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51–19:40), the launching of the gospel from Jerusalem (Acts 1:8), and Paul's journey to Jerusalem, imprisonment, and the voyage from Jerusalem to Rome all illustrate the centrality of Jerusalem in both narratives.¹²³ Darrell Bock pointed out, "There is a geographical movement across the two volumes as we move from Jerusalem to Rome, from the center of Israel to the center of the world. This pictures the movement of God's promise into all the world."¹²⁴ These bridges partially illustrate the narrative unity of Luke-Acts.¹²⁵

¹²³ Maddox, *Purpose*, 9–11.

¹²⁴ Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 58. Bock presents an excellent outline and narrative summary of Luke-Acts that clearly illustrates the unity between the two works in chapter 4 of his work.

¹²⁵ Cadbury and others present far more discussion on the narrative unity of Luke-Acts than space allows in this work. For a fuller explanation, see Cadbury, *Making*, Parts I, II, and III; and Maddox, *Purpose*, chapter 1.

Unbolting Luke-Acts

The most significant challenge to the unity of Luke-Acts came from Mikael Parsons and Richard Pervo. Their aim was to define what is meant by “unity” in Luke-Acts. Parsons and Pervo reduced the issue to five criteria that scholars have used to describe the unity of Luke-Acts, authorial, canonical, theological, generic, and narrative unity.¹²⁶ Regarding authorial unity, Parsons and Pervo concede the issue, accepting the ubiquitous assertion that both volumes were written by the same person.¹²⁷ The identity of the author, whom they simply call “Lukas,” is still a matter of debate. They make no effort to make a claim in that regard. The focus of the remainder of their monograph was to address the other four categories. With at least two of the remaining categories (theological and narrative unity), the authors did not effectively detach the two volumes but, at best, weakened the bond between them ever so slightly.¹²⁸ Parsons and Pervo concluded, “Luke and Acts *may* belong to one genre, but the explorations of separate genres have thus far yielded interesting data and should be excluded. As narratives they are independent yet interrelated works. Theological unity ought not be a brush with which to efface particularity.”¹²⁹

Regarding canonical unity, Parsons and Pervo offered the most significant challenge. They argue that there is no evidence in church history that Luke and Acts ever circulated

¹²⁶ Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 7–19.

¹²⁷ Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 7–8, 116.

¹²⁸ Generic unity can be placed among these two as well. However, this study will address their criticism since the genre of Luke has traditionally been considered distinct from the genre of Acts. See chapter two of Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*; Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 56–61; Spencer, “Unity,” 343–44.

¹²⁹ Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 126. The author’s evaluation of each category was lengthy but, in the end, only encouraged the pursuit of individual interpretive studies alongside the study as a unified work.

together, as one unit.¹³⁰ They note (as do other scholars) that the early church literature shows no indication of Luke-Acts being read together as one unit.¹³¹ The Muratorian Fragment separates the two, placing Luke with the Gospels and Acts with the epistles (either before or after the epistolary corpus).¹³² From this, they deduce that the reception history of the two books was distinct from each other. The early church never considered them as a single work in two volumes. In his commentary on Acts, Parsons concluded, “The little evidence that we do have, then, does not suggest that these two documents, Luke and Acts, were ‘published’ together by Luke as one volume or even published at the same time, only later to be separated from one another with the emergence of the fourfold Gospel.”¹³³ In this, Parsons and Pervo raise very valid concerns.

Related to canonical unity is the issue of genre. Since Richard Bauckham’s publishing of *What are the Gospels*, Luke has been considered, along with the other three canonical Gospels, to be works of the *Bios* genre.¹³⁴ Acts, however, is believed to belong to a species of historiography, a historical monograph.¹³⁵ Parsons and Pervo exploit the differences between the

¹³⁰ Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 20–23.

¹³¹ Christopher Rowe makes a similar argument. See Christopher K. Rowe, “History, Hermeneutics and the Unity of Luke-Acts,” *JSNT* 28 (2005): 131–57.

¹³² Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, chapter 2; Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 55. Parsons also lists several other early documents to argue his case. These include P⁴⁵, Codex Bezae, The Cheltenham Canon, and the Stichometry of Codex Claramontanus. See Parsons, *Acts*, 12–15.

¹³³ Parsons, *Acts*, 13.

¹³⁴ Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 246. Burridge concluded his work stating, “Our main study demonstrated that the genre of the four canonical gospels is to be found in βίος literature.”

¹³⁵ Padilla, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 72. While most scholars lean towards Acts as a historical monograph, other genres have been proposed, including biography, novel, and epic. See Thomas E. Phillips, “The Genre of Acts: Moving Toward a Consensus?” *CBR* 4 (2006): 365–96 and Phillips, “Literary Forms in the New Testament,” in *The World of the New Testament*, 381.

two, using it as a point that weakens the argument for the unity of Luke-Acts. They note the difficulty scholars have encountered attempting to assign a single genre to both halves while reconciling the different features of each work that lay outside the proposed genre.¹³⁶ Again, the concerns raised here are valid. Both Luke and Acts contain elements of history and biography yet, their features appear to be sufficiently different that, combining them into one of those genres leaves more questions than answers. Resolving these issues has been challenging.

Proposed Solutions

The problem of canonical unity is not as daunting as it may seem. While there is no literary evidence proving Luke-Acts ever circulated as one work in two volumes, that does not prove that they were never considered to be as much. Even Parsons and Parvo acknowledge early church awareness of the fact that both books were “separate works by a single author.”¹³⁷ However, they ardently reject the notion that the patristics ever thought of them as unified in the sense that Cadbury suggested.

Understandably, not all agree. Darrell Bock, pointing to the same evidence used by Parsons and Parvo, argue that there is just not enough evidence from the early church to conclude whether they understood Luke-Acts as a unified work.¹³⁸ Andrew Gregory suggested that Irenaeus and whoever put together the Muratorian Fragment read Luke-Acts as two elements

¹³⁶ Parsons and Parvo, *Rethinking*, 119–20.

¹³⁷ Parsons and Parvo, *Rethinking*, 21.

¹³⁸ Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 58.

of one literary unity.¹³⁹ He also argued that there is reason to believe that Luke intended both volumes to circulate together, offering hermeneutical reflections to support his theory.¹⁴⁰

Regardless of how the “first readers” (the patristics) received Luke-Acts, the first reader (Theophilus) likely received both volumes close together for whatever purpose Luke had in mind for the work. The later reception by the patristics is really a separate issue that does not address the original purpose of Luke to Theophilus. The arrangement of the canon likely had separate considerations from Luke’s purpose in producing the two-volume work. Furthermore, the weight of the literary and narrative unity far exceeds that of any desire to disconnect them, alleviating any hesitation to examine the two halves as one literary unit.¹⁴¹ Scholars who typically support canonical disunity agree with the essence of Bock’s comments.¹⁴²

As for the issue of generic unity, Parsons and Parvo contradict themselves. They first argue that genre differences weaken the bonds between Luke and Acts, only to concede that Luke-Acts *may* belong to the same genre.¹⁴³ Additionally, the boundaries that separate genres are quite fluid. Describing genre, as Burridge notes, is descriptive and not prescriptive.¹⁴⁴ Trying to force Luke-Acts into only one of these categories will always be fraught with difficulties.

¹³⁹ Andrew F. Gregory, “The Reception of Luke and Acts and the Unity of Luke-Acts,” *JSNT* 29 (2007): 459.

¹⁴⁰ Gregory, “Reception,” 459, 466–70.

¹⁴¹ Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 58; Spencer, “Four-Bolted,” 347–49.

¹⁴² See, for instance, Christopher Rowe’s conclusions in his article. Rowe, “History, Hermeneutics and the Unity,” 152–54.

¹⁴³ Parsons & Parvo, *Rethinking*, 126.

¹⁴⁴ Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 32. Parsons and Parvo, *Rethinking*, 13–16, acknowledge as much in their article.

Another possibility is to see Luke-Acts as a generic blend, built upon Luke's knowledge of Hellenistic historiography and biography, using these vehicles to present his apology of Christianity and Paul.¹⁴⁵ This is not the first suggestion that Luke-Acts was composed as an apology. F. F. Bruce affirmed as much calling Luke the first Christian apologist.¹⁴⁶ Luke Johnson compares Luke to contemporary Jewish apologists, suggesting that at least one of the purposes was to present Christianity as "a philosophically enlightened, politically harmless, socially benevolent and philanthropic fellowship."¹⁴⁷ As Patrick Spencer noted, most scholars today place Luke-Acts within the genre of "apologetic historical literature."¹⁴⁸ Limiting the genre discussion to only biography or history confines the work, obscuring what may well be the obvious purpose, to present a defense of Christianity and Paul.

What Parsons and Pervo set out to do was to test the strength of Cadbury's "hyphen" connecting Luke-Acts, changing it to a "far from superfluous 'and.'"¹⁴⁹ In doing so, they raised some significant issues that deserve scholarly discussion and debate. Their attempt to remove the "bolts" that tie Luke-Acts were, according to Patrick Spencer, unsuccessful. Spencer offered a significant refutation of Parsons and Pervo's criteria for testing the unity of Luke-Acts, calling those criteria "bolts" which secure the "hinge" that hold the two halves together.¹⁵⁰ For Spencer, the hinge remains solidly in place, though it may be a bit squeaky. Debate about the unity of

¹⁴⁵ Spencer, "Four-Bolted," 356–57; Phillips, "Unity," 380–92.

¹⁴⁶ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 27; Maddox, *Unity*, 21; Peterson, *Acts*, 38.

¹⁴⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 19–20.

¹⁴⁸ Spencer, "Four-Bolted," 357; Phillips, "Unity," 380–82.

¹⁴⁹ Parsons and Parvo, *Rethinking*, 126–7.

¹⁵⁰ Spencer, "Four-Bolted," 342–60.

Luke-Acts will likely continue for some time as the issue remains far from settled.¹⁵¹ Still, for now, Cadbury's "hyphen" remains intact.

Chapter Three Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to address the historical-critical objections to the proposition that Luke-Acts was composed as an apologetic work to defend Christianity and Paul. Those objections likely reflect some of the lingering rationalism of the nineteenth century. The overall distrust of the testimony of the early church and rejection of the supernatural meant that scholars sought other solutions to explain prophecy, miracles, and other supernatural occurrences in Scripture. The Tübingen school and their higher critical approaches provided just the right tools. The two key issues negatively influencing the debate relate to the dating of Luke-Acts and the amount of irrelevant kerygmatic material involved in the narrative. This chapter addressed only the first concern. Complaints about the content of Luke-Acts will be answered in subsequent chapters.

The focus of the first half of this chapter was on the concerns surrounding the dating of Luke-Acts. Many scholars argue a composition date that would have been far too late to be of any use to Paul in Rome during his first imprisonment. Their typical argument is that Luke used Mark as his primary source and, since Mark was written rather late, Luke-Acts would have been composed even later, likely post-70 CE. Central to their dating both Mark and Luke-Acts is their assumption that the Olivet Discourse was a *vaticinium ex eventu*, an assumption that reflects the rationalism of the nineteenth century and the lingering influence of Ferdinand Baur and his Tübingen school on Lukan studies. When that assumption is removed, and the possibility of

¹⁵¹ Spencer, "Four-Bolted," 360.

predictive prophecy considered, then a strong case for dating Mark's Gospel (and Luke-Acts) much earlier is rather simple. If Mark's Gospel (or at least a draft) were written in the sixth decade, as Adolf Harnack suggested, then Luke-Acts could have easily been composed between 60–64 CE, as suggested by this study. That would have been well in time for use as a defense brief for Paul.

Next, this chapter sought to identify the author and recipient of Luke-Acts. The tradition of the early church was unanimous, that the author of both volumes was the same Luke who was a physician and traveling companion of Paul's. This study concurs with that conclusion. Despite strong internal and external evidence supporting it, some reject this conclusion for the same reasons they object to an early production date, that is the continued skepticism arising from Tübingen. Regarding the recipient of Luke-Acts, the "God-fearer" suggestion was dismissed since it had no real merit. This chapter has argued that Theophilus was an actual person and a ranking Roman official who possibly served as Paul's legal defense. Clues to this identification were found internally within Acts and externally within some of the writings of the patristics.

Finally, this chapter has defended Henry Cadbury's proposition that Luke-Acts was composed as two volumes of a single, unified work. This proposition enjoyed universal acceptance until critical challenges arose within the last thirty years. Those challenges were evaluated and, in the end, found to be inadequate. Because Luke-Acts is two-volumes of a unified work, this chapter has suggested that a single apologetic purpose could be discerned for Luke's production, despite perceived generic differences between the two. This suggestion will be more fully argued over the remainder of this dissertation.

The main goal of this chapter was to present a case that Luke-Acts could have been written early enough to serve as a defense brief. This author does not have any illusion that any

of the historical-critical issues addressed have been completely resolved. The purpose here was to re-open the door that was closed by the skepticism of the nineteenth century. If it was possible that Jesus could predict the destruction of Jerusalem forty years before it happened, and the Gospel writers faithfully recorded what was said as opposed to what had occurred, then serious consideration should be given to explanations based upon that possibility. In illuminating this possibility, serious consideration can and should be given to the proposition that Luke wrote for the primary purpose of defense. The suggestion being made at the conclusion of this chapter is that Luke constructed this apology to record Paul's testimony during his two-year imprisonment. This proposal can only be seriously considered when the critical assumptions of the nineteenth century have been sufficiently challenged and an alternative view considered. This chapter has opened the door to this alternative view, which will be more fully developed in the chapters to come.

CHAPTER 4: THE PURPOSE OF LUKE-ACTS: LITERARY CLUES

Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the historical-critical objections to the proposal that Luke-Acts was composed primarily for apologetic reasons. Addressing those objections was necessary and foundational to constructing an argument in favor of this thesis. With those obstacles removed, this chapter will begin to build a case for classifying Luke-Acts as an apology for Christianity and Paul. This argument will be conducted in two parts. The first part will elucidate the functional literary clues found in the text of Luke-Acts while part two will explore matters of content and how Luke used narrative detail to make his apology.

The first part will be the focus of this present chapter. One functional indicator that Luke wrote Luke-Acts to defend Christianity and Paul is seen in his prologue (Luke 1:1–4). This purpose statement, when understood contextually, suggests the apologetic aim of the text. Secondly, when comparing Luke-Acts to other ancient apologies, one finds similar literary features. Those features are additional functional indicators. Additionally, Luke's portrayal of the relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Rome, and the concept of *religio licita*, provide yet another identifying quality of an apologetic work. What will be argued is that these features are the discernable clues that Luke was writing something other than a historical or biographical account of Christianity. The second part, those issues of content, will be explored in the next chapter (chapter five).

Purpose of Luke-Acts: Luke's Prologue

The starting point for understanding Luke's purpose in composing Luke-Acts is in his own statement in his Gospel prologue (Luke 1:1–4). Considering that Luke and Acts make up

two parts of one whole, the prologue should be understood to introduce both works.¹ Before beginning exegesis on the text of the prologue, one must also consider the historical context to understand what Luke means in his purpose statement. Understanding the circumstances that led to the production of Luke-Acts will ultimately help one understand what Luke means in his prologue.

Historical Context

This dissertation has suggested that the occasion prompting the production of Luke-Acts was Paul's gathering of the Jewish leaders upon his arrival in Rome (Acts 28:17–20).² This suggestion is based upon the presupposition that Luke-Acts was written ca. 60–64 CE, as argued in the previous chapter. If this assumption is correct, then understanding the historical context of Paul's arrival in Rome is important.

Paul's Defense in Rome

Upon arrival, Paul seemed eager to put forth his innocence of all accusations levied against him by Jewish authorities in Palestine (Acts 28:19). He feared word may have reached those Roman Jewish leaders and, thus, desired to present his defense directly to them first. Paul presented his case to the Jewish leaders in Rome on an appointed day, from morning until evening, “solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning

¹ Bruce rightfully argued, “The purpose of Acts cannot be considered in isolation from the purpose of Luke's Gospel. The two parts, for all their stylistic differences, make up an integral whole, with one coherent purpose.” See Bruce, *Acts*, 23.

² This is a connection Bruce made in his own commentary on Acts. Bruce noted, “At the time when he wrote, Christianity was, to use one of his own phrases, ‘everywhere spoken against’ (28:22).” Bruce, *Acts*, 24. Loveday Alexander also suggested this connection stating, “Theophilus is being used by Luke not so much as a back-door introduction to the Roman corridors of power but for what he is in his own right—that is (let us hypothesize), as a prominent and amenable representative of the same Jewish community in Rome to which Luke has Paul make his last impassioned plea for hearing in Acts 28.” See Loveday Alexander, “What if Luke had Never Met Theophilus?” *BibInt* 8 (2000): 165.

Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets” (Acts 28:23). Luke is the only person that left a historical account of what took place at that gathering. Without Acts, many of the historical events between the resurrection and the situations described in the churches of the Pauline corpus would be a mystery. Stanley Toussaint was correct to conclude, “Without [Acts], we should be incalculably poorer.”³ Furthermore, Luke is the only biblical writer that provided a comprehensive record from the birth of Christ to the growth and spread of Christianity. It seems evident that Luke thought it was important for these events to be recorded.

Luke the Logographer

This dissertation has proposed that Luke-Acts captured much of Paul’s defense. The Gospel of Luke represents a defense of the legitimacy of Christianity while Acts defends both Christianity and Paul from charges of being an illegal religion that was engaged in sedition, treason, and other accusations levied by the Jewish religious leaders.⁴ Paul’s argument before the Jewish leaders seems to make two primary points: he was innocent of all charges levied against him by the Palestinian Jewish religious leaders (as affirmed by prior Roman officials) and he was in chains ultimately because of the messianic hope fulfilled by Jesus (Acts 28:17–20). When examining Luke-Acts considering these issues, it seems reasonable that Luke was providing detailed answers for the issues Paul raised. In other words, Luke was providing narrative details that illustrated that Christianity is the logical fulfillment of Jewish messianic expectations and that its presence is neither a threat to Judaism nor to Rome. As argued here, Luke-Acts is the compilation, categorization, and presentation of the defense of Christianity and of Paul. It was

³ Toussaint, “Acts,” in *BKC*, 2:349.

⁴ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 6–8. Mauck listed fourteen specific charges against Paul and at least four charges against various other individuals throughout the book of Acts.

meant primarily for the Jewish leadership in Rome and for Theophilus, likely Paul’s legal representative or the Roman official set to hear his case.⁵

Luke’s role, therefore, reflects that of a logographer, compiling and categorizing the facts of the case for Theophilus, who was likely either Paul’s lawyer or a representative for the Roman legal system assigned to his case.⁶ If that is the case, then the message of Luke’s prologue in his Gospel should be understood to mean that Luke was providing a detailed, well-researched, factual account of the things previously reported to Theophilus (Luke 1:3–4). Attention will now turn to the meaning of the prologue and how it relates to this thesis.

Luke’s Prologue (Luke 1:4): The Meaning of *κατηγέω* in Luke’s Purpose

Luke is the only Evangelist to introduce his gospel account with a clear purpose statement.⁷ Luke stated in the opening of his Gospel that, “it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:3–4). The Greek text of Luke 1:4 reads, ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν (SBLGNT). At least one critical exegetical concern relevant to this thesis is found in the translation of this phrase. The verb *κατηχήθης* (aorist passive indicative, second person singular of *κατηγέω*), which is rendered “taught” in the NASB, ESV,

⁵ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 21–28.

⁶ As a reminder, Logographers were chroniclers who also served as a sort of lawyer. They did not represent clients in the way that one would consider today. These *logographoi* wrote legal briefs to help their clients defend themselves in court. See chapter one of this dissertation for more on this. The possibility of Theophilus being a member of the Jewish community in Rome cannot be excluded. The two positions do not have to be mutually exclusive. See Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 25–32.

⁷ John also offered a clear purpose statement in his gospel, but it does not come until the end. See John 20:30–31.

NIV, NET, and NLT, or “instruct” in the NKJV and NRSV, can also be translated “informed” or “report.”⁸ How one translates this word will influence the meaning of the text.

The Use of *κατηγέω* in Religious Instruction

To “teach” or “instruct” carries the connotation of information being didactically transmitted, like the teaching that takes place in a classroom. In fact, the English word “catechism” is derived from this word, which, of course, is the instruction in religious dogma.⁹ This understanding seems to be the orientation of most English translations. Their approach is built upon the belief that Theophilus was a Christian and was beginning to doubt some aspects of the faith.¹⁰ Hans Conzelmann’s theology of Luke-Acts and thesis for his monograph rests upon this premise.¹¹ Conzelmann’s position is largely built upon the assumption of a late date to produce Luke-Acts. A post-70 CE date necessitates the need to find a purpose more relevant to the circumstances Christianity was facing later in the century. Persecution was more abundant and the imminent hope of the return of Christ seemed less sure. The idea of Luke-Acts as a legal brief would not fit in that paradigm. However, this approach is not the only valid perspective.

⁸ Both “taught” and “report” are valid from a lexical perspective and there is evidence both synchronically and diachronically for both applications. See “κατηγέω,” BDAG, 534; *EDNT*, 273.

⁹ Larkin, *Acts*, “Introduction;” Marshall, *Luke*, 43.

¹⁰ This is the orientation of Conzelmann, Marshall, and Parsons, to name a few. See Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 43; Parsons, *Luke*, 17–18.

¹¹ Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 95–136. Conzelmann suggested that Luke’s primary concern was the delay in the Parousia and that the Christian community to whom Luke was addressing was beginning to doubt the veracity of the Gospel they had received. Conzelmann argues that Luke sought to assure that community that Jesus fulfilled all Messianic expectations and that, despite the persecution they presently faced, the promised eschatological fulfillment would happen. Conzelmann assumptions are that Theophilus was a member of that believing community and that his faith required bolstering. See also Marshall, *Luke*, 43.

The Use of *κατηχέω* for Informational Purposes

Others, like John Mauck, argue Theophilus was a non-believer.¹² If that is so, then “report” or “inform” may be the better choice. That Luke primarily wrote for a Gentile audience becomes clear when one examines the narrative of Luke-Acts, which also evidences Luke’s apologetic purpose. John Martin argues this point well.¹³ First, in several places, Luke took the time to explain Jewish localities. This would not be necessary if he were writing to a primarily Jewish audience as they would already have been familiar with those locations.¹⁴ Another sign is Luke’s genealogy of Christ. Where Matthew traced Jesus’ lineage to Abraham, Luke traced it all the way back to Adam. This foreshadows a significant theme, the inclusivity of the gospel, that would work its way through Acts as well. Another literary clue to Luke’s apologetic purpose is how he used Roman officials to demark significant times in his narrative history. The birth of Jesus is announced in the time of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1) while John the Baptist’s ministry began during the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1).¹⁵

These clues are important. If Theophilus was an official of the Roman courts, the Gentile orientation of Luke-Acts would make sense, especially the invocation of Roman officials in the narrative. If Theophilus was just a Christian member of a Lukan community, or a pseudonym for a generic Christian body, then it would serve little purpose to include these features. That Luke wrote in this way supports the argument that he was writing to Theophilus, a non-believer, and

¹² Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 25–32.

¹³ Martin, “Luke,” *BKC*, 2:198–200.

¹⁴ For instance, in Luke 4:31, Luke clarified that Capernaum was a city in Galilee. He did the same in 8:26; 21:37; 23:5; and 24:13).

¹⁵ Martin, “Luke,” *BKC*, 2:198; Polhill, 67–69.

possible legal representative.¹⁶ In light of this, *κατηχέω* is best understood to mean “inform” or “report.” In this view, Luke is not strengthening Theophilus’ faith, he is reporting the truth about the details of which he was previously informed. If Luke-Acts were written in the early 60s CE, as this dissertation has asserted, then the *sitz im leben* better supports the trial brief proposal.

Κατηχέω versus Διδάσκω

There are additional contextual clues to further support this conclusion. First, Luke predominately used *διδάσκω* when referring to matters of instruction, especially religious instruction (cf. Luke 4:15, 31; 5:3, 17; 6:6; 21:37).¹⁷ Choosing *κατηχέω* in the prologue, if he were discussing religious instruction, is unexpected. However, occurrences where Luke uses *κατηχέω* overwhelmingly favor the meaning of informed or report. Luke used *κατηχέω* when referring to the passing of information or reporting of details.¹⁸

Luke only used *κατηχέω* four times, including the one used in his prologue. Of the other three, two clearly carry the connotation of reported or informed. Those instances relate to Paul’s arrival in Jerusalem (Acts 21:15–26). In this passage, Paul met with James and the elders of the Jerusalem church. After rejoicing over Paul’s success among the Gentiles, the elders informed Paul that there were also many devout Jews who had believed, Jews who were also “zealous for the Law” (Acts 21:20). Those same Jews had already heard about Paul and were told (*κατηχήθησαν*) that he was teaching (*διδάσκεις*) Jews to forsake Moses (Acts 21:21). They suggested Paul make a religious statement to demonstrate his continued respect for the law. By

¹⁶ One cannot exclude the possibility that Theophilus might have been an interested seeker in addition to his role as a legal representative or Roman official.

¹⁷ *Διδάσκω* appears 17 times in Luke and 16 times in Acts, each having the connotation of teaching or instruction.

¹⁸ For example, Acts 18:25; 21:21, 24.

doing so, Paul would show that there was no validity behind what they had been told (κατήχηνται, Acts 21:24). As seen here, both κατηγέω and διδάσκω are used in those verses, which perfectly illustrate Luke's tendency in using those words. To interpret either use of κατηγέω in this pericope as "taught" or "instruct" would be out of context. The most appropriate meaning in this context is "report" or "inform."

Luke's third use in Acts is less clear. In the Acts 18 pericope, the discussion surrounds Apollos, who was a devout Alexandrian Jew that had been "instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25). The word used in this verse is κατηχημένος, and on the surface, rendering it "instructed" seems appropriate. However, when evaluated in the larger context, incorporating the events immediately following (Acts 18:26), it becomes evident that Apollos had not been instructed, in the sense that he was adequately taught the Way, but merely informed about a new event which was a partial fulfillment of Old Testament messianic expectation.¹⁹

Apollos appeared to be a follower of John the Baptist, as were some other Ephesian Jews among whom he preached (Acts 19:1–7). None of them had been fully instructed in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus' atoning sacrifice. Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and gave him further clarification (Acts 18:26). Paul did the same for those who remained in Ephesus (Acts 19:1–7). Only after further explanation were they truly informed (or taught) the Way. William Larkin presented an alternative perspective arguing, "We encounter less difficulty, though, if we take Apollos to be a knowledgeable, fervent but unregenerate disciple of John the Baptist who believes Jesus is the Messiah but does not understand the present saving significance

¹⁹ William Larkin defined this as an "underrealized eschatology." Larkin, *Acts*, "Acts 18:23–19:7."

of his death and resurrection.²⁰ Therefore, in this pericope, *κατηχημένος* could be rendered “informed,” reflecting the level of knowledge he actually possessed of salvation through Christ. Apollos had not received any Christian catechism. Such formal religious instruction was not normalized until later.²¹ It is more likely that Apollos was excitedly preaching about what he had been informed regarding John’s ministry and the arrival of the Messiah, that the forerunner had arrived, but had not yet been fully indoctrinated. That is not to say that Apollos was not a Christian. It simply reveals that his understanding of the fullness of the gospel message was deficit in some manner.

Proposed Solution

What becomes evident in all this is that when Luke used *κατηχέω*, he normally referred to reporting or informing details, not to religious instruction. Luke preferred *διδάσκω* in those situations. That is not to assert that Luke did not intend a kerygmatic purpose in addition to his apologetic aim in producing Luke-Acts. Apology was the primary concern. An extensive quote from Hermann Wolfgang Beyer’s entry in the TNDT is apropos here,

The use of *κατηχεῖν* in the dedication of Lk., and the declaration of its purpose: ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν (1:4), raises a special problem. If it bears a more general sense, then we must translate: “In order that you may know the reliability of the stories which have been reported to you.” But if it bears a more specific sense, we must render: “In order that you may have certainty concerning the doctrines in which you have been instructed.” This question is decisive, because on it depends the problem whether we are to see in Theophilus a non-Christian who has heard of Jesus but who only in this Gospel receives a connected account which interprets the appearance of Christ, or whether he was a Christian already instructed in the doctrine of the Lord. Linguistically both are possible, and the author of Lk. and Ac. shows acquaintance with both. Hence we can only decide from the substance of what is said. It seems more likely in this respect that *λόγοι* means “reports” or “accounts” rather than “doctrines.”

²⁰ Larkin, *Acts*, “Acts 18:23–19:7.”

²¹ “*κατηχέω*,” *EDNT*, 2:273.

Theophilus has heard these, and the point is to show him that these stories about Jesus are true. Hence *κατηχεῖν* is to be taken in the more general sense.²²

What Beyer concludes is logical. Luke was not attempting to persuade Theophilus that the doctrines of the faith in which he had believed were certain (*ἀσφάλειαν*). The evidence suggests that Theophilus was likely a non-believer or, at best, an interested seeker.²³ It is more plausible that Luke was assuring Theophilus that the reports of what took place were certain (*ὄν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν*). Like Apollos, Theophilus had been introduced to some of the facts about the Way but needed further explanation. In Theophilus' case, the additional information was likely for evidentiary reasons.

Daniel Wallace adds another point of support that Luke's prologue reflects his apologetic purpose. Wallace argued that Luke's address to Theophilus is in the vocative case. The vocative case is typically employed in three ways: direct address, exclamation, or appositionally.²⁴ In Luke's prologue, *κράτιστε* is in apposition to *Θεόφιλε*, the subject of the clause of purpose. *Κράτιστε*, in this case, likely carries the force of a simple address. However, Wallace notes in his introduction to Acts that, in his examination of the use of the vocative, it is "almost universally in the papyri only in petitions."²⁵ Wallace's point seems to be that Luke was making an official petition of a Roman official, illustrated by his use of *Κράτιστε* in a formal address. This manner of formal address is an indication that Luke was writing an apologetic text. If Wallace's

²² Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, "κατηχέω," *TDNT* 3:638–39.

²³ While this will be the assumption of this study, it is recognized that the matter remains debatable. See Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 25–26; Martin, "Luke," *BKC*, 2:198; Creamer, Spencer and Viljoen, "Who is Theophilus?" 6.

²⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 65–70; Herbert Weir Smyth, *A Greek Grammar for Colleges* (New York: American Book Company, 1920), 312.

²⁵ Wallace, "Acts, Introduction, Outline, and Argument."

conclusion is correct, then it is unlikely that Luke was writing to bolster Theophilus' faith, or that of any supposed Lukan community.²⁶ Nor was his purpose to “‘school’ his intended audience in the moral and theological implications of the Christian,” as suggested by Mikeal Parsons.²⁷ Luke was writing to provide factual information for Theophilus, information that would support the innocence of Christianity and of Paul. Luke's prologue was a petition to consider the evidence that would be provided over the two volumes of Luke-Acts.

Considering all the above, a more fitting translation of this clause might read, “so that you may know the certainty of the matters that have been reported to you.”²⁸ In other words, the testimony presented to Theophilus was well-researched, vetted, true, and valid. Luke's prologue reveals that the purpose was to present a legal brief to a Roman official of significance.²⁹ Marshall argued, “At the outset, Luke makes it clear that he is attempting to give an account of what actually happened based on reliable testimony and that he is doing so in order that his reader(s) may be sure that what they have been taught rests on a sound foundation.”³⁰ The prologue to Luke's Gospel argues the apologetic purpose of the two-volume work.

²⁶ For a more complete discussion of whether the Gospels were composed with a single community in mind or whether the intended audience was the wider Christian community, see Richard Bauckham, “Introduction,” in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 1–6. In the case of Luke's Gospel, the dedication to Theophilus seems to support the idea that an individual (or possibly a specific community) was in view. That does not preclude the possibility that Luke-Acts would be relevant to a wider audience. Luke-Acts, however, was primarily meant for a Gentile audience, and one Gentile in particular, Theophilus.

²⁷ Parsons, *Luke*, 19.

²⁸ Author's own translation.

²⁹ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 19–32.

³⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 130. Although Marshall chose to render *κατηχήθης* as “taught,” reported or told is the better translation.

Purpose of Luke-Acts: Luke and Other Ancient Apologies

Luke-Acts bears a resemblance to other ancient apologetic works of Luke's time.³¹ One of the strongest features indicating that Luke-Acts is not a typical history or *bios* is the dedication of the work to a Roman official. This is a key feature of an apology. Apologies are often addressed to Roman officials.

Justin Martyr and Josephus

For instance, Justin's first apology is addressed "to the Emperor Titus Aelius Adrianus Antonianus Pius Augustus Caesar" while his second apology is addressed to the Roman senate.³² If Theophilus was a Roman official as has been argued here, then the dedication of Luke's two-volume work to him supports the apologetic theory. Added to this point is the use of honorific titles in the address. Like Luke, Josephus addressed Epaphroditus with "most excellent" in his apology.³³

Tertullus in Acts

This apologetic feature can be seen internally within Luke-Acts. In Acts 24:1–8, Tertullus, a lawyer employed on behalf of the Jewish high priest Ananias to argue charges against Paul, began his argument addressing the Roman official, "most excellent Felix." Luke's account of the beginning of Tertullus' speech reflects a similar pattern to the beginning of the

³¹ Marshall argued, "Unlike the other Evangelists, Luke begins his Gospel with a brief preface such as one would find in the work of a contemporary secular writer." See, Marshall, *Luke*, 39.

³² Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 1 (*ANF* 1:163); idem., *1 Apol.* 1 (*ANF* 1:188).

³³ Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.1 and 2.1. Josephus's introduction (Ἰκανῶς μὲν ὑπολαμβάνω καὶ διὰ τῆς περὶ τὴν ἀρχαιολογίαν συγγραφῆς, κράτιστε ἀνδρῶν Ἐπαφρόδιτε) is like Luke's prologue. See Benedikt Niese, *Flavii Iosephi Opera: Edidit et Apparatu Critico Instruxit*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892), 3, line 5. See also Puskas and Crump, *Introduction to the Gospels and Acts*, 143.

Gospel of Luke. This is another defining feature of an apology. It is important to note that this study is not arguing that Luke-Acts does not contain features of ancient historiography or *bios*. It most certainly does. However, these features are the vehicles that Luke used to drive his apologetic narrative. Luke's prologue, with the use of the honorific title *κράτιστε*, and address to a Roman official, strongly suggests that Luke-Acts is an apologetic work and was written to defend Christianity.

Plato's Apology of Socrates

Another feature arguing that Luke-Acts was written for apologetic purposes can be seen when a comparison is made to Plato's *Apology of Socrates*. Some scholars have suggested that Luke-Acts contain features found in other ancient Hellenistic philosophers, orators, and apologists in their treatment of Socrates.³⁴ Steve Reece argued convincingly that Luke would have been familiar with Plato's *Apology of Socrates* due to the ubiquitous nature of the work in literature contemporary to Luke.³⁵

Luke's Educational Exposure

Luke was obviously an educated man. Reece suggested that he would have been at the top of the fifteen percent of the literate Eastern Mediterranean world.³⁶ This was evident in the literary character and quality of Luke-Acts. Reece argued that only someone who had completed

³⁴ See Steve Reece, "Echoes of Plato's Apology of Socrates in Luke-Acts," *NT* 63 (2021): 177–97; Greg Sterling, "Mors Philosophi: The Death of Jesus in Luke," *HTR* 94 (2001): 383–402; John S. Kloppenborg, "Exitus Clari Viri: The Death of Jesus in Luke," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 8 (1992): 106–20.

³⁵ Reece, "Echoes of Plato," 178–80.

³⁶ Marshall attested to as much commenting on the preface alone. He argued, "The preface is written in excellent Greek with a most carefully wrought sentence structure and stands in contrast to the style adopted in the following narrative. It claims a place for the Gospel as a work of literature, worthy of an educated audience." See Marshall, *Luke*, 39; Reece, "Echoes of Plato," 178.

at least the first two levels of “circular education” (ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία) could put together such a lengthy treatise that included “historical prefaces, rhetorical speeches, dramatic stories, detailed travelogues, and formal letters.”³⁷ Students who had gone through the first two levels were exposed (directly or indirectly) to Plato, with his most prominent work being his *Apology of Socrates*. If Luke made it to the third level, he would have been intimately familiar with Plato’s writings. Reece supported his assertion by showing how ancient writers (orators, philosophers, etc.) had quoted or clearly alluded to Plato’s *Apology*.³⁸

Luke and Plato: Employment of the “Moral Exemplar”

Luke’s portrayal of Jesus, Peter, Stephen, and Paul reflects echoes of the Platonic depiction of Socrates, which became a moral exemplar of apologists and philosophers of Luke’s time.³⁹ Socrates became known as a pious and completely just man, unjustly accused, sentenced, and murdered, while remaining calm and fearless, accepting his divinely determined fate while dying courageously.⁴⁰ Luke portrayed Jesus in a similar fashion in his own Gospel account. Luke’s depiction of the passion of Christ differs from the other Evangelists in significant ways. Luke appears to have redacted Mark’s depiction of Jesus and made him more “Socratic” by ignoring Jesus’ weaker moments (feeling sorrowful or troubled), moments which both Matthew

³⁷ Reece, “Echoes of Plato,” 178. See Reece’s article for a detailed description of ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία (circular education).

³⁸ Reece suggests this as a possibility. That Luke was an educated man has been argued by others. See Reece, “Echoes of Plato,” 178–81; Marshall, *Luke*, 39.

³⁹ Reece, “Echoes of Plato,” 183–84; Sterling, “Mors Philosophi,” 382–402.

⁴⁰ Reece, “Echoes of Plato,” 183.

and Mark elevated.⁴¹ Relatedly, Luke stressed that it was the Jewish Religious leaders, not Rome, that was responsible for the death of Jesus and the persecution of other Christian figures. This was likely done for apologetic reasons. Kloppenborg suggested that Luke was keen to avoid offending Greco-Roman sensibilities or anything that would be subversive.⁴² Luke portrayed the Romans in a more positive, sympathetic light than he did the Jews, a point which will next be explored.

Luke's Portrayal of Judaism in Luke-Acts

It was already stated that Paul sought to answer two primary charges when he addressed the Jewish leadership. Those charges included heretical teaching and *religio illicita*. Luke-Acts present narrative details and speeches as points of refutation of those charges. Luke's anti-Jewish undertone, focus on trial scenes, and the Roman judicial processes all uphold this theory.

Anti-Christian Judaism

One important strand Luke presented to Theophilus was that Christianity was no threat to Judaism or Rome. One telling feature supporting this conclusion is the decidedly anti-Jewish sentiment of Luke-Acts. This is not to say that Luke-Acts is antisemitic. Antisemitism would infer an ethnic bias against Judaism. Luke is not biased against Judaism nationalistically or ethnically. Neither should anti-Jewish be perceived as a pejorative term. When Luke used the term "the Jews (Ἰουδαῖοι)," he most often referred to the Jewish leadership related to their

⁴¹ For instance, Mark 14:33–34, and Matt 26:37–38 depict Jesus his prayer to have the cup pass from him a total of three times. Luke (Luke 22:41–42) only describes one instance. Reece suggests that Luke passes these "weaknesses" off to Jesus' followers. See Reece, "Echoes of Plato," 185.

⁴² See Kloppenborg, "Exitus Clari Viri," 106–20; Reece, "Echoes of Plato," 184–85.

rejection of the Way.⁴³ Luke-Acts demonstrates Judaism's hostility towards Christianity but never Christianity's rejection of Judaism.⁴⁴

Luke illustrated this in much of the narrative details of Luke and in the speeches of Acts. For instance, in Luke 11:37–54, the Pharisees criticized Jesus for not washing prior to the meal. This exchange led to Jesus issuing a series of woes against the Pharisees and teachers of the law decrying their hypocritical application of the Torah. Again, in Luke 13:10–17, synagogue officials criticized Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. These two instances alone illustrate how Judaism rejected Jesus and objected to His application of the Torah, ultimately leading to His crucifixion. Similarly, in Acts, Peter's speech at Pentecost (Acts 2:22–36) and Paul's defense speeches (Acts 22:1–22) illustrate continued Jewish persecution of the Way throughout the development and expansion of the gospel. These narrative details portray a definitive anti-Jewish sentiment (or anti-Christian Judaism) in Luke-Acts. In fact, as Bruce adequately illustrated, the reason for any hostilities against Christianity by Rome, who was initially indifferent toward the sect, was because of the persecution of the Palestinian Jewish authorities.⁴⁵ Bruce noted,

It was the chief-priestly establishment in Jerusalem that prosecuted Jesus before Pilate and, a generation later, Paul before Felix and Festus; and most of the disturbances which broke out when the gospel was introduced to the Roman provinces were fomented by local Jewish communities, who refused to accept the saving message themselves and were annoyed when their Gentile neighbors believed it.⁴⁶

⁴³ As in Acts 17:13. Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 2; Bruce, *Acts*, 25.

⁴⁴ In many places, proponents of the Way called out errant Jewish practices or actions. For instance, Peter called out the Jewish leadership for murdering the expected messiah in Acts 2. This, however, is not a condemnation of Judaism by Christianity. Even Paul's decision to refuse to go to "the Jews" is not a repudiation of Judaism, especially considering that he did, in fact, go to them later, as in the events in Acts 28.

⁴⁵ Bruce, *Acts*, 25.

⁴⁶ Bruce, *Acts*, 25.

The relationship between Judaism and Christianity was strained, not because of any hostility originating from the latter, only from the former. Luke highlighted this aspect as a point of argument against charges that Christianity was somehow a rogue, heretical, blasphemous offshoot of Judaism.

Formal Charges against Christianity

The persecution of the Way by the Jewish religious leaders in Palestine gave rise to serious charges involving violations of both Jewish and Roman law. One of the metanarratives of Luke-Acts revolves around the trials of the principal figures (Jesus and Paul in particular). Trials form one of the unifying features of Luke-Acts. In the case of Jesus, He was tried on both religious and Roman infractions. Jesus' hearings before the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66–71) describe the religious proceedings. There, Luke showed the primary accusation against Jesus was that He claimed to be the Christ and the Son of God. Jesus' response was ambiguous, seeming to neither confirm nor deny the accusation.⁴⁷ His response, however, was enough to settle the issue in the minds of the Sanhedrin. He was sent from there to Pilate to stand for more formal civil charges (Luke 23:1–2).

The charges levied against Jesus before Pilate were significant. The religious leaders claimed that Jesus was misleading the nation by dissuading the paying of taxes and proclaiming

⁴⁷ There is some controversy on how Jesus' reply, "Ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι" should be interpreted. The literal meaning of the phrase is "you say that I am." However, at least one translation renders it in a more positivistic manner, "Yes, I am" (NASB). The note from the NET Bible suggests that Jesus meant it as a positive affirmation, stating, "Jesus reply, "*You say that I am,*" was not a denial, but a way of giving a qualified positive response: "You have said it, but I do not quite mean what you think." See *The NET Bible, New English Translation* 1st ed. (Biblical Studies Press, 2005).

Himself a king (Luke 23:2). These accusations amount to the charge of treason.⁴⁸ It was not enough to simply accuse Jesus of religious heresy. They needed more serious charges to garner the support of Roman law in their push for the death penalty. Allegations of treason became their charge of choice. Their strategy failed. After briefly questioning Jesus, Pilate was inclined to release Him. Pilate's only inquisition was whether Jesus considered Himself to be the King of the Jews (Luke 23:3). Jesus' response to Pilate, "Σὺ λέγεις ("you are saying") was equally vague as was His response to the same question posed by the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:7). It is difficult to discern which connotation Jesus meant. The NASB rendered it affirmatively, "it is as you say" while the NET Bible renders it more accusatory, "You say so." Both interpretations have merit.⁴⁹ Ultimately, Jesus' response did not change Pilate's conclusion. Pilate was apt to set Him free (Luke 23:4).

Realizing this, the Jewish accusers then turned to charges of inciting riots, accusing Jesus of "stirring up" the crowds. Inciting riots is another serious accusation that religious leaders thought would accomplish their goal.⁵⁰ It was, however, no more effective than their previous attempt. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod who unsuccessfully interrogated him. Herod returned Jesus to Pilate, evidently finding no real fault in Him either, despite Jewish insistence (Luke 23:8–12, 15). Twice more, Pilate acquitted Jesus of all charges of serious violation against Roman law (Luke 23:14–15, 22). What these scenes illustrate is that Jesus (and by extension, the Way) was

⁴⁸ Marshall, *Luke*, 852; Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 75; Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, "Lk 23:2;" Parsons, *Luke*, 327; Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 601.

⁴⁹ Refer to the previous note on Jesus' response to the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:70). The same concerns apply here. The notes in the NET Bible are helpful.

⁵⁰ Marshall, *Luke*, 852; Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 75; Keener, *Bible Backgrounds*, "Lk 23:2;" Parsons, *Luke*, 327; Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 601.

innocent of charges of inciting riots and treason. The religious leaders had falsely convicted Jesus of heresy but were unsuccessful in convicting Him of charges worthy of death from a Roman legal perspective. In all of this, Luke presented evidence that Jesus (and Christianity) was not guilty of heresy or any civil infraction. Luke revealed that it was the Jews who were causing problems, not Jesus, the founder of the Way.

The prosecution of Paul in Acts mirrors that of Jesus in Luke. Like Jesus, Paul was first accused of religious crimes. James and the elders of the Jerusalem Church had already warned Paul that Jewish Christians believed Paul had been teaching Hellenistic Jews to forsake Moses (Acts 21:21). Their suspicion was founded on rumors from Hellenists abroad. Jewish leadership was searching for an opportune moment to arrest and try Paul. They believed they had their opportunity when they saw Paul in the temple, having assumed that he brought Trophimus in with him (Acts 21:28–29). They would have been successful in their attempt to kill Paul had it not been for the Roman commander Claudius Lysias (Acts 21:31–32).⁵¹ Initially, Lysias suspected Paul may have been the Egyptian who had previously caused a revolt and led his followers into the wilderness (Acts 21:38).⁵² That would have been equivalent to sedition and causing a revolt, both serious charges worthy of death, had it been true of Paul. Still, that episode led to a sequence of events that would place Paul on trial before various Roman officials, and ultimately lead him to answer charges in Rome. Paul's consistent defense was that his only crime was preaching the hope of Israel found in Jesus' resurrection. Of course, as was previously noted in this study, Paul was acquitted three times of this charge. Even the Pharisees stood with Paul and acquitted him based on their own affirmation of the resurrection (Acts 23:9). In addition to

⁵¹ The name of the Roman tribune was later revealed in Acts 23:26. See Polhill, *Acts*, 453.

⁵² This event is also reported by Josephus (*J.W.* 2.261–63). See also Polhill, *Acts*, 455.

the charges of sedition and causing a revolt, Paul faced charges of inciting riots in Thessalonica (Acts 17) and Ephesus (Acts 19).⁵³

The main point here is that trials are a major focus of much of Luke-Acts. It is an important metanarrative. The details in Luke and the speeches in Acts reveal the charges and their defense. It is argued here that this is a purposeful literary strategy Luke employed to present Christianity's defense. Luke used these narrative details as legal background material.⁵⁴

Pro-Jewish Christianity

It has been shown that Luke-Acts portrays a less than favorable picture of Judaism in relation to the Way. Conversely, Luke's narrative description of the Way's relationship to Judaism was more favorable. Christianity was not attempting to start a new religion. At every turn, the Way seemed to try to remain attached to Judaism. Robert Stein noted, "For Luke Christianity was not a new religion. It was not even a revised form of Judaism resulting in a new Israel. On the contrary, the Christian church is the present-day expression of the religion of Abraham, Moses, and the prophets."⁵⁵ Luke introduced his Gospel account with the revelation that the arrival of Jesus and John was the fulfillment of the messianic promises of the Scriptures (Luke chapters 1–2).⁵⁶ Jesus was a good Jew, faithfully participating in Jewish rituals and obedient to all the Law of Moses. Luke made sure the reader was aware of this in his description of both Jesus' circumcision (Luke 2:21) and even when He became separated from His parents

⁵³ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 6–9. Mauck proposes other possible charges in addition to those mentioned here.

⁵⁴ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 202.

⁵⁵ Stein, *Luke*, 40.

⁵⁶ More will be said on this and how the first two chapters evidence the apologetic purpose of Luke-Acts.

(Luke 2:41–52). Luke is the only Evangelist that offered a glimpse into the early years of Jesus showing true Jewish piety.

In Acts, the birth of the church is described as a fulfillment of several key Hebrew prophecies. Peter's sermon at Pentecost connects what took place to the prophet Joel. Believers in Christ in Acts did not consider themselves to be anything other than Jews.⁵⁷ It was not until the message began to spread outside of Palestine that followers of the Way began to be called Christians (Acts 11:26). Even then, the distinction was being drawn by oppositional Jews, Saul included, not followers of the Way (Acts 11:19). Paul argued vehemently that he was being persecuted, not because he violated any Jewish ethic, but because of his hope in the promise of the resurrection (Acts 23:6).⁵⁸

If anything can be referenced to suggest that Christianity had any animosity towards Judaism, it would be Paul's declaration that he was not going to preach to the Jews anymore (Acts 13:46–47).⁵⁹ Of course, Paul made that statement out of frustration. He did not follow through on that promise since, shortly after in Iconium, he followed his normal practice and visited the Jews first (Acts 14:1). At the close of Acts, upon arrival in Rome, the first thing Paul did was call together the Jewish leaders (Acts 28:17). Luke's narrative strategy in Luke-Acts was to show that the Way was the prophetic evolution of Judaism. Paul did not abandon his Jewish roots to start some new religion among the Gentiles. His heart was always for his Jewish

⁵⁷ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 34–40.

⁵⁸ See also Acts 24:15, 21; and 26:8, just to name a few.

⁵⁹ Jesus' denouncement of the Scribes, Pharisees, and Teachers of the Law should not be seen as an attempt to distance Jesus's work from Judaism. Jesus Himself proclaimed that he had not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17), and that the law has an eternally enduring quality (Luke 16:17).

brethren. Paul also understood the inclusive nature of salvation through Christ. The prophetic fulfillment afforded the Gentiles the same opportunity available to the Jews.

Keeping Christianity connected to Judaism presented additional benefits. That Rome granted Judaism certain religious liberties is well documented.⁶⁰ These liberties were afforded the Jews because they had rendered important assistance to emperors like Julius Caesar, serving as a buffer state between Rome and her rivals. This position, known as *religio licita*, granted exception to Judaism from certain Roman requirements. Emperor Claudius exempted Jews from military service and emperor worship.⁶¹ Since the Jews had an ancient religion and had formerly been independent allies of Rome, the Romans allowed the Jews the free exercise of their religion.⁶²

Not everyone agrees that Rome had a category of permitted religions. Robert Maddox, for one, questioned the entire notion of a *religio licita*.⁶³ Maddox argued, “Recent studies have sufficiently refuted the idea that Luke was indirectly pleading for the extension to Christianity of formal recognition as a *religio licita*,” calling it “unfounded and now discredited.”⁶⁴ He argued this because he failed to find sufficient evidence in history to support such a definite category of permitted versus non-permitted religions in Rome. Maddox acknowledged that Judaism did enjoy certain “privileges and protections,” but doubts that it fit in any “framework of a doctrine

⁶⁰ Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 428–29, 601; Longenecker, “Acts,” 755–56.

⁶¹ Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 601–602.

⁶² Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 428–29.

⁶³ Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, 91–97.

⁶⁴ Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, 91, 93.

of ‘permission.’”⁶⁵ That said, Maddox acknowledged the use of the phrase in ancient literature by Tertullian (*Apology*, 21:1), though he dismissed that reference as “not completely certain.”⁶⁶

Maddox’s objection to the concept of *religio licita* seems unfounded. His own alternative explanation is unconvincing. He stated, “that Luke was seeking (without any reference to ‘religio licita-idea) to persuade the Roman authorities of the political innocence of Christianity, in order to win a favorable attitude from the magistrates in case of need.”⁶⁷ Maddox’s reasoning failed to dismantle what is portrayed in history through the writings of Roman and Jewish historians.⁶⁸ Maddox’s explanation is inconsistent and insufficient. That Judaism enjoyed special privileges from Rome seems certain.

Initially, Christianity enjoyed the same legal accommodations that Rome afforded Judaism. Rome did not distinguish between Judaism and Christianity. This is especially seen in the book of Acts. Rome saw much of the tension between the Jews and the Way as internal struggles and was often disinterested and indifferent (i.e., Acts 18:12–17).⁶⁹ Luke’s portrayal of Rome, and her relationship to the church was much more favorable. At several key junctures, Rome sided with significant Christian figures against Jewish accusations.⁷⁰ Ferguson does well to note that Luke “may have had apologetic reasons for emphasizing favorable treatment of Christians by the authorities, but the non-antagonistic attitude was correct to the legal situation

⁶⁵ Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, 92.

⁶⁶ Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, 92.

⁶⁷ Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, 91.

⁶⁸ “Religio Licita,” *AYBD*, 666.

⁶⁹ Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 602–3.

⁷⁰ This has already been demonstrated above in the discussion regarding trials in Luke-Acts.

(Acts 13:4–12; 19:23–41; 25:13–19, 25; 26:30–31).⁷¹ The further Christianity spread throughout the Empire, the more legal problems arose. The events in Philippi (Acts 16:21) exemplify this as Paul and Silas were accused of disturbing the peace and advocating practices illegal for Romans.⁷² These troubles always came at the instigation of the Jews.

The Way is portrayed in Luke-Acts as a valid sect of Judaism, perhaps on par with other factions like the Essenes or the Qumran community.⁷³ Luke's purpose for his authorial audience, when viewed from this perspective, was to argue that the "Way" was not a heretical offshoot but a logical progression of Judaism considering recently fulfilled prophecies. Furthermore, viewing the authorial audience as, principally, one individual, namely Theophilus, allows for the logical conclusion that the purpose could have been apologetic. Whereas the Jews in Luke-Acts reflects a negative attitude toward the Way, the opposite is true initially with Rome.

Concluding this section, what can be seen is that the two most consequential charges against Christianity were being a heretical group and a *religio illicita* (illegal religion).⁷⁴ Luke demonstrated how these charges were introduced in various episodes throughout Luke-Acts. Each of those charges were answered, from the Roman perspective, positively in favor of the Way. Jesus was acquitted by Rome but condemned by the Jews (Luke). Stephen and James (the brother of John) were both executed at the behest of the Jews (Acts). Paul was arrested and accused of teaching things that were unlawful for Judaism (heresy) and for practicing things

⁷¹ Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 602.

⁷² Longenecker, "Acts," 755–56.

⁷³ For an explanation of sects within Judaism, especially the Essenes and Qumran, see Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 521–31.

⁷⁴ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 6–8; 202–12. Mauck lists fourteen specific incidences of charges levied against Paul in Acts, including charges beyond the two mentioned here. Although Mauck deals specifically with Paul and Acts, the charges can be seen in episodes in Luke as well, as Mauck mentions toward the end of his monograph.

forbidden by Rome (*religio illicita*). Rome acquitted him of all those charges. Tradition suggests his ultimate release at the end of his two-year imprisonment.⁷⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has presented functional literary clues that Luke-Acts was written as a defense to Christianity and a defense for Paul prior to his trial in Rome. The prologue to Luke's Gospel, which also covers Acts of the Apostles, reveals that Luke-Acts is something other than an ancient history or Greco-Roman biography. While Luke is historically grouped with the Synoptic Gospels, it is the only account that has a dedication to an individual. Luke's prologue does not fit the *bios* format and is not consistent with an epistolatory formula. What has been shown is that Luke-Acts fits better in the ancient apology category than history or biography.

This point was further demonstrated by comparing Luke-Acts to other ancient apologies. Similarities were found between Luke-Acts and the writings of Justyn Martyr, Josephus, Plato, and, internally within Acts, Tertullus' speech before Felix. Additionally, the way that Luke portrayed Jewish hostility toward the Way and Roman sympathies for the same, provided additional functional clues that Luke wrote for apologetic reasons. The focus of trials as a metanarrative and Luke's effort to depict Christianity as a valid sect of Judaism for the purpose of maintaining its legal status, all support the defense theory. All these functional clues were designed to assure Theophilus that Christianity was the logical fulfillment of Jewish messianic hopes and was no threat to Rome. This was the case that Paul made before the Roman Jewish community, out of which Theophilus came or was employed. In the chapter to follow, specific content clues will be addressed that further validate the thesis of this study.

⁷⁵ Bruce, *Acts*, 352–3; Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 260; Keener, *Bible Backgrounds*, “Acts 28:31.”

CHAPTER FIVE: THE PURPOSE OF LUKE-ACTS: CONTENT CLUES

Introduction

Throughout this study it has been argued that Luke gave more generalized detail than any of the other Evangelists. In doing so, Luke is employing a descriptive rhetorical literary pattern to make his apology. Grant Osborne defines a descriptive rhetorical literary strategy as “the clarification of a topic by means of further information.”¹ In other words, Luke used additional details to argue the case that Christianity is an extension of Judaism and is no threat to Rome. These details may appear to be superfluous on the surface but, considering Luke’s apologetic purpose, these details are both germane and essential.

The argument here is that Luke’s affinity for detail reflected his theological aim of arguing that Christianity was the fulfillment of Jewish messianic hopes and that Paul, who was currently awaiting trial, was innocent of all charges. This chapter will demonstrate that Luke was employing a rhetorical strategy to argue his case and, through the seemingly insignificant details, provided crucial evidence of his thesis. There are several areas throughout Luke-Acts that demonstrate this rhetorical strategy. These areas include the birth narratives of Luke chapters one and two, Luke’s use of political figures, Luke’s theme of the Gentile mission, and the extensive travelogue of the final two chapters of Acts. These areas are representative of patterns found throughout Luke-Acts and are not meant to be exhaustive. These four areas were chosen because they best demonstrate Luke’s rhetorical strategy.

¹ A descriptive rhetorical literary strategy is defined as the clarification of a topic by means of further information. See Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 53.

Rhetorical Strategy Found in the Birth Narratives

After the prologue (Luke 1:1–4), Luke began his Gospel with a flurry of prophetic activity. The Intertestamental period is often described as the prophetic silent years, years where a major prophetic voice was absent, and God seemed to be silent.² To suggest that God was silent does not imply that He was not at work among His people. It only posits that between the ministry of Malachi (the last of the Minor Prophets) and the Advent, there was an absence of any real prophetic voice.³ With the announcement of the birth of John (Luke 1:5–25), Luke made it clear that the silence of the previous four hundred years was over.

The angelic activity of the first two chapters of Luke illustrates this point. Of the twenty-five times ἄγγελος appears in Luke’s Gospel, fifteen of them are in the first two chapters alone, with a third of those uses related to John’s birth.⁴ This was no ordinary angel. This was the archangel Gabriel, God’s specific messenger and prophetic voice. This was the same Gabriel who

² R. C. Sproul, *What Is Baptism?* vol. 11 of *The Crucial Questions Series* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2011), 15. Sproul says, “But then, suddenly, the prophetic Word of God had ceased in the land. Malachi had been the last prophet in Israel. There had been no word from God for four hundred years.” Sproul is among many evangelicals who believe that the intertestamental period was a period of prophetic silence. David, Fausset, and Brown say of this period, “The long silence of prophets from Malachi to the times of Messiah was calculated to awaken in the Jewish mind the more earnest desire for Him who was to exceed infinitely in word and deed all the prophets, His forerunners. The three prophets of the restoration being the last of the Old Testament, are especially distinct in pointing to Him who, as the great subject of the New Testament, was to fulfil all the Old Testament.” Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 1:15. The *BEB* calls it “the silent years.” Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Intertestamental Period, The,” *BEB* 1:1044. Henry Dosker calls it, “The interval between the Old and the New Testaments is the dark period in the history of Israel. It stretches itself out over about four cents., during which there was neither prophet nor inspired writer in Israel.” Henry E. Dosker, “Between the Testaments,” *ISBE* 1:455; Leon Morris suggests that the way John’s ministry is introduced (Luke 3:1–20) “reflects the critical importance of the revival of prophecy.” Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 110.

³³ It is important to note that Chronicles, not Malachi, is the last book of the Hebrew Bible. Malachi is the final book of the Minor Prophets (the Book of the Twelve) written during the early post-exilic period (ca. 450 BCE). For additional information, see Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, NAC 21A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 206; Gary V. Smith, *Interpreting the Prophetic Books: An Exegetical Handbook*, ed. David M. Howard Jr., Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2014), 94.

⁴ Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, “ἄγγελος,” *EDNT* 1:13–15.

revealed God's will to Daniel (Dan 8:16; 9:21).⁵ Gabriel's presence offers a sense of weight and validity to the narrative surrounding him.

The birth narratives of John and Jesus reveal Luke's apologetic and theological purposes. Luke's aim was to show that what was promised long ago was about to be fulfilled. Darrell Bock noted, "Luke emphasizes that God has made promises. The material on the birth of Jesus in Luke 1–2 makes clear that God is carrying out a plan according to his promise and that he will deliver his people."⁶ I. Howard Marshall stated, "The way in which the story is told indicates that these events are the fulfillment of what was promised in the Old Testament and that they are therefore part of the ongoing dealings of God in history."⁷ Luke's introduction to John and Jesus presents an opening statement for his argument for the legitimacy of the Way.

The way John's birth narrative begins reveals a connection to Hebrew Scripture.⁸ John's story begins,

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years (Luke 1:5–7).

The connection to the prophet Samuel is evident (1 Sam 1:1–3). Both prophets are introduced as children of righteous but infertile parents. The connection goes back further. Similarities to the

⁵ Gabriel is a prominent angelic presence in other Hebrew literature, including 1 Enoch (9:1), Testament of Solomon (18:6), Apocalypse of Esdras, and the Apocalypse of Moses, to name a few. See William Arndt et al., "Γαβριήλ," BDAG, 186. See also Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 101.

⁶ Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 122.

⁷ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 132.

⁸ To this point, Marshall notes, "The story follows familiar OT patterns...and are related in deliberately reminiscent language." Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 49–50. Darrell Bock suggests that the style of the infancy narratives "mimics the style of the Greek Old Testament." Bock, *Luke*, 33; Leon Morris argues that the infancy narrative reflects a Semitic background. Morris, *Luke*, 84.

narrative of Abraham/Sarah and Isaac/Rachel can be seen in that the patriarchs struggled to conceive their sons of promise. John, like Sampson or Samuel, was to dedicate himself to the Lord, taking the Nazirite vow by abstaining from drinking wine or liquor (Luke 1:15, cf. Num 6:3; Judges 13:4).⁹ These allusions are significant. By including all these comparative features, Luke is attempting to draw parallels between the promises of the Old Testament and the ministry of John.¹⁰

Furthermore, John is revealed to be the forerunner for the Messiah, the coming “Elijah,” prophesied in Malachi (Matt 11:14; 17:10–13, Mark 9:11–13, Luke 1:17; 76, John 1:21, Mal 3:1; 4:5–6, Is 40:1–4). Introducing John first, followed by Jesus, sets up the narrative to show the forerunner/fulfillment motif between John and Jesus.¹¹ Both birth announcements contain elements common to Old Testament angelic birth announcements.¹² Jesus, of course, is introduced as the fulfillment of several Old Testament prophecies. He would be the son born to a virgin (Luke 1:27–31, cf. Isa 7:14), rule on the throne of David (Luke 1:32–33, cf. 2 Sam 7:12–13), and, as Simeon prophesied, would bring salvation to the Gentiles (Luke 2:25–32; cf. Isa 9:2;

⁹ Morris, *Luke*, 86.

¹⁰ The NET Bible study notes add an apropos comment stating, “With this language, reminiscent of various passages in the OT, Luke is probably drawing implicit comparisons to the age and barrenness of such famous OT personalities as Abraham and Sarah (see, e.g., Gen 18:9–15), the mother of Samson (Judg 13:2–5), and Hannah, the mother of Samuel (1 Sam 1:1–20). And, as it was in the case of these OT saints, so it is with Elizabeth: After much anguish and seeking the Lord, she too is going to have a son in her barrenness. In that day it was a great reproach to be childless, for children were a sign of God’s blessing (cf. Gen 1:28; Lev 20:20–21; Pss 127 and 128; Jer 22:30). As the dawn of salvation draws near, however, God will change this elderly couple’s grief into great joy and grant them the one desire time had rendered impossible.”

¹¹ Bock notes how the infancy narratives of Luke 1:5–2:40 are built around the three hymns, The Magnificat, The Benedictus, and the Nuc Dimittis, all arranged to highlight the forunner/fulfillment motif. See Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 67, 100.

¹² These elements include 1.) Entrance of heavenly messenger (1:11; 1:28), 2.) Perplexity of recipient (1:12; 1:29), 3.) Deliverance of the heavenly message (1:13–17; 1:30–33), Objection of recipient (1:18; 1:34), and Reassurance and sign (1:19; 1:35–37). Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 41; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I–IX*, 335.

42:6, 49:6, 9; 51:4; 60:1–3).¹³ Jesus would later go on to reveal that his mission was the fulfillment of what Isaiah prophesied (Luke 4:14–21; cf. Isa 61:1–2). This event, of course, led to the crowd attempting to throw Jesus off a high cliff (Luke 4:29–30).

All of this illustrates how Luke used the infancy narratives to show that what was happening with the arrival of John and Jesus was the fulfillment of the messianic expectations of the Old Testament. John was the forerunner and Jesus the fulfillment.¹⁴ Those first two chapters are placed strategically to show the reader that the details to come were what was hoped for by the Jews of the first century. If Luke was trying to convince the Jews of Rome that the Way was not a heretical offshoot, he began his argument with a strong start by connecting what they would have known of the Hebrew Bible with the origins of the Way. In this context, the reason for including these details is clear. From Jesus' circumcision and presentation at the Temple, to his being separated from his parents and being found conversing with the teachers (Luke 2:21–52), Jesus is portrayed as fulfilling all righteousness. Even John's birth narrative is portrayed in a manner that shows a fulfillment of all righteousness. John's parents are both from priestly lineage, which was a preferable situation, but also considered a special blessing.¹⁵ Luke described them as being "righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord (Luke 1:6). The narrative is presented in a way that would ease the concern of critical first-century Jewish seekers. Luke emphasized that what was taking place was consistent with Old Testament messianic hope.

¹³ The theme of salvation to the Gentiles is another important theme that this study argues supports the apologetic purpose of Luke-Acts. It will be fully extrapolated under its own section.

¹⁴ Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 100–101.

¹⁵ Zechariah was from the eighth division of Abijah according to 1 Chr 24:10. Elizabeth was a daughter of Aaron. *NET Bible*, "Lk 1:5;" Marshall, *Luke*, 52; Edwards, *Luke*, 32.

By suggesting that Luke arranged his material theologically, in a manner that draws allusion from the Old Testament, is not meant to suggest that Luke simply adapted Old Testament narratives and attributed them to these New Testament figures. As a theologian-historian, Luke arranged factual events and speeches in a way that served his theological aims while remaining true to the nature of the events.¹⁶

Of the four Evangelists, only Matthew and Luke provide detail of the early, pre-ministry years of Jesus.¹⁷ Luke is the only Evangelist giving the birth narrative of both John and Jesus. The inclusion of these details is indicative of Luke's apologetic strategy.¹⁸ If Luke's desire was to show that Christianity is the fulfillment of Jewish messianic hope, then these details are not only pertinent but vital to the discussion. Charles Barrett argued against the apologetic purpose for Luke-Acts because he felt that "no Roman court could be expected to wade through so much Jewish religious nonsense in order to find half-a-dozen fragments of legally significant material."¹⁹ His argument would be valid if the only purpose for writing Luke-Acts were to

¹⁶ Padilla, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 88. I Howard Marshall argues that Luke serves as both theologian and historian and that, "as a theologian, Luke was concerned that his message about Jesus and the early church should be based upon reliable history." See Marshall, *Luke: Historian & Theologian*, 18. See also Puskas and Crump, *An Introduction to the Gospels and Acts*, 105–9.

¹⁷ The argument can be made that John 1:1–5 could also be included. John's description reveals the pre-advent activity of Christ whereas Matthew and Luke illuminate His early earthly years. The differences between Matthew and Luke should not be construed as conflicts between the narratives. It reflects a difference in emphasis between the Evangelists. Matthew's focus was on the visit of the Magi whereas Luke's emphasis was on the obligation of the Roman census. Again, this reflects the different theological aims of the Evangelists. Luke's apologetic aim can be seen in his emphasis on the census. See Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 67.

¹⁸ Luke's apologetic strategy reflects his theological purpose. John Martin suggests that the inclusion of these details reveals Luke's theological purpose. See Martin, "Luke," in *BKC*, 2:201. Marshall agrees. See Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 131.

¹⁹ Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, xxxvii. A similar concern is raised by H Wayne House in his review of Mauck's *Paul on Trial*. See House, review of "Paul on Trial," 706. See reviews of Mauck's monograph by Epling, review of "Paul on Trial," 122; and Ronald W. Williams, review of *Paul on Trial: The Book of Acts as a Defense of Christianity*, *Review & Expositor* 101 (2004): 320.

defend Paul in Rome.²⁰ However, as has been suggested in this study, the defense of Paul was only part of the apologetic purpose for writing Luke-Acts. The primary focus was on the Jewish elders in Rome, as well as any other Jewish seeker interested in understanding the Way. The argument was for their benefit, to show that the Way was not a heretical sect “spoken against everywhere” (Acts 28:22).²¹ For them, the details that Barrett considered “Jewish religious nonsense” were vital. It was important that Luke prove that John and Jesus were the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecies. That is exactly what Luke provided. This was background material that was necessary for the Jewish elders, and any other Jewish seeker questioning the Way.

The Role of Political Officials in Luke’s Rhetorical Strategy

Of all the Evangelists, Luke introduced more events using specific time references related to political leaders.²² These details may appear to be superfluous on the surface but, considering Luke’s apologetic purpose, these details are both germane and essential. The events of John’s birth were said to have taken place during the time of Herod the Great, king of Judea (Luke 1:5). Jesus’ birth was described as happening during the reign of Caesar Augustus, during the first census of Quirinius (Luke 2:2).²³ John’s ministry began during the reign of Tiberius Caesar, the governorship of Pontius Pilate, the Galilean tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, the tetrarchy of Herod

²⁰ This was Mauck’s primary argument in his monograph. Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 31.

²¹ Barrett does not deny the apologetic aspect of Acts. He acknowledged that “it is in the most general sense of the word a piece of apologetic is undoubtedly true; in this sense apologetic shades into evangelism, and there can be no question that Luke wished to commend the Christian faith as true, and as truth that all should, for their own good as well as simply because it was true, accept.” Barrett, *Acts*, xxxvi.

²² Bock, *Luke*, 65–67; Edwards, *Luke*, 102; Marshall, *Luke*, 132; Parsons, *Luke*, 64.

²³ The historicity of this census is one that sparks much controversy. That such a census took place is attested to in extrabiblical sources. See, for example, Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.3–5; 18.1.1–10, and Tacitus *Annals* 2.30; 3.22, 33, 48. Reconciling the date of the event between the Gospel and the extrabiblical sources is where the controversy lies. For a fuller discussion, see Bock, *Luke*, 54–5; Morris, *Luke*, 3:98–9; Martin, “Luke,” BKC, 2:208; Marshall, *Luke*, 99; Edwards, *Luke*, 68; Parsons, *Luke*, 49–51; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 28:398–405; and Stein, *Luke*, 105.

Antipas' brother Philip, and the tetrarchy of Lysanias (Luke 3:1).²⁴ In Acts, the Gospel spreads abroad with the baptism of a eunuch who was a court official of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia (Acts 8:27). The famine that sent Saul and Barnabas to bring relief to the Church in Jerusalem happened during the reign of emperor Claudius (Acts 11:28; 18:2). Formal persecution in the region began under Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1). Gallio was proconsul of Achaia during the events of Paul's ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:17). This study has already discussed in previous chapters the roles of Felix, Festus, and Herod in Paul's trials.²⁵

Furthermore, including prominent Greek and Roman officials illustrates how the Way was favorably looked upon. Not only were key officials sympathetic to Christianity, but they were also some who became converts. Luke narrated the events of two specific centurions in Luke-Acts, the healing of the centurion's servant (Luke 7), and the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10). Both narratives illustrate this point. With the centurion in Luke 7, Luke illustrated the respect that this official had for the Jews and the respect the Jewish leaders had for this official. It also revealed at least a burgeoning faith the centurion had in what he was hearing about Jesus. Jesus held this event up as a paragon of sincere faith (Luke 7:9). This miracle foreshadowed the later Gentile mission in Acts (Acts 1:8). The healing of the Centurion's servant happened not long after Jesus revealed His messianic calling (Luke 4:18–19). Then, in Acts, Cornelius, a devout God-fearer, becomes a convert and was baptized in the Holy Spirit, along with several members of his household (Acts 10). A Roman soldier, likely loyal to the empire yet sympathetic

²⁴ Bock, *Luke*, 65–7; Morris, *Luke*, 3:110; Marshall, *Luke*, 132–34; Martin, *Luke*, BKC, 2:210.

²⁵ See chapter three of this study.

to the Way, came to faith in Christ. Cornelius was another example of Luke's focus on the Gentile mission of the Messiah.²⁶

These two episodes are important. Cornelius' conversion and baptism of his household are recorded to show that Gentile conversions are a "Jewish affair completely, not a break with Judaism but a fuller understanding of how the God of Israel seeks to be known by all through Jesus."²⁷ These events illustrate that Jews and Gentiles can exist in harmony.²⁸ The healing of the centurion's servant and the salvation of Cornelius and his household are programmatic examples of what Jesus proclaimed he had come to do (Luke 4:18–19). It had been prophesied that He would bring salvation to the Gentiles (Luke 2:25–32). Luke's inclusion of these events was significant, showing that Jesus was the awaited Messiah; these episodes are proof.²⁹

Luke gave all this precise information to make a point, not the least of which is that Luke wanted Theophilus to understand that none of what occurred, happened in a corner (Acts 26:26).³⁰ The events of Luke-Acts took place in plain view of the Roman empire. Luke was asserting that Rome was fully aware of what is taking place and was indifferent to it.³¹

²⁶ This information comes to Luke from a non-Markan source. Only Matthew and Luke recorded this incident. There are some key differences between the two Evangelists' accounts of this story. For one, Matthew has the centurion coming himself to petition Jesus whereas Luke has the centurion sending a delegation of Jewish elders to petition his cause. Perhaps the difference is best accounted for by theological goals. Where Matthew was content to show the inclusivity of the Gospel, he, as is customary of his narrative style, abbreviated the story. Luke felt it important to show the positive interaction between Jewish elders and the centurion. This was likely theological on Luke's part. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, Mt 8:5–Lk 7:10; Marshall, *Luke*, 276–80; Stein, *Luke*, 217–18.

²⁷ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 96–97.

²⁸ Bock, *Luke*, 131–34.

²⁹ Stein, *Luke*, 220–21.

³⁰ Stein, *Luke*, 130; Edwards, *Luke*, 106.

³¹ That Rome was initially indifferent towards the Way has been well documented. See, for instance, Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 601–2. Also, see chapter four of this study.

The Gentile Mission as Part of Luke's Rhetorical Strategy

Thus far this chapter has been alluding to the crucial theme of salvation to the Gentiles in Luke-Acts.³² It is a theme introduced at the beginning of his two-volume work and underscores the entirety of the text.³³ This is a theme that is critical for Luke's argument, as it supports his apologetic purpose. Luke's inclusion of prominent Gentile and Roman officials participating in the narrative, even coming to salvation, is just one example of the Lukan theme of salvation to the Gentiles. This focus on Gentile missions is seen in several places in Luke-Acts, not the least of which include Luke's genealogy of Christ, the programmatic statement in Acts 1:8, and the Gentile missions of both Peter and Paul.

Genealogies and the Gentile Mission

Among the lengthy (and sometimes seemingly superfluous) details that Luke provides includes his extended genealogy of Christ. Providing a genealogy is not something that is unexpected. Ancient histories often include the birth lineage of significant characters.³⁴ The Old Testament is filled with genealogies. What makes Luke's genealogy significant and relevant to the proposed thesis of this study is its length and inclusions, especially in relation to that of Matthew's gospel.

³² Puskas, *Introduction to the Gospels and Acts*, 130–34. Charles Puskas surmises that Luke's intention for focusing on the Gentile mission may have been to show that God's plan was always salvation to the nations. Such a sentiment is logical when considering the theory that Luke is trying to persuade the Roman Jews of the legitimacy of the Way and that what took place in Paul's ministry was a fulfillment of what was prophesied in the Scriptures. John Polhill conjectures similarly in his evaluation of the major themes in Acts. See Polhill, *Acts*, 57.

³³ Luke 2:25–32, cf. Is 9:2; Luke 4:14–21, cf. Is 61:1–2 as noted previously in the section discussing the birth narratives.

³⁴ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 487–90.

Matthew's Genealogy and Theological Purpose

First, only Matthew and Luke provide a genealogy of Christ. Both evangelists had their own theological reasons for providing it and for whom they included in their lists.³⁵ Luke's genealogy is significantly longer than Matthew's, containing seventy-eight names compared to Matthew's forty-two inclusions.³⁶ Matthew's genealogy focuses on Jesus' connection to Abraham and to David. David is a key figure for Matthew.

One key theme of Matthew's gospel is Jesus as the son of David.³⁷ This theme is illustrated in how he begins his gospel. Matthew begins with the "record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham," after which, he provides his table (Matt 1:1). Then, in verse seventeen, Matthew reveals that his list is divided into three groups of fourteen generations. There are fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian captivity, and fourteen generations from Babylon to the Messiah. The significance of this is important. Matthew appears to be employing an ancient practice called *gematria*, which is the process of assigning numerical values to the letters in a word or phrase.³⁸ Some scholars have pointed out that when *gematria* is applied to the name David, the total

³⁵ Both lists show evidence of redaction and selectivity based on genealogies given in the OT. This practice is neither alarming nor unexpected as generation-skipping was common in ancient genealogies. For more see Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, IVPNTC 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), "Mt 1:1–17;" Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 53; and Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 21–3.

³⁶ The number found in Luke's list varies between 75 to 78 names (including Jesus and God) depending on which Greek manuscript is referenced. See Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 490–91 for a fuller explanation.

³⁷ Morris, *Matthew*, 4.

³⁸ Eric W. Adams, "Numbers, Symbolic Meaning Of," *EBT*, 568; "Gematria," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, eds. Frank L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 662.

comes to fourteen ($7 = 4$ and $1 = 6$. Thus, $717 = 4+6+4 = 14$).³⁹ This, again, places the focus on David as God's divine regent, foreshadowing Jesus as the son of David. Matthew's genealogy highlights his theological theme and purpose for his gospel; namely, Jesus is the son of David and the prophesied King of the Jews.

Luke's Genealogy and Theological Purpose

Luke's theological purpose for his genealogy was different than Matthew's therefore his list and arrangement are different. This also accounts for the additional length compared to Matthew. For one, Luke did not begin his Gospel with the genealogy. He strategically placed his list between Jesus' baptism and the wilderness temptation. This move brings into focus the son of God motif.⁴⁰ Adam is described as "the son of God (Luke 3:38). Luke showed through his genealogy that Jesus was a direct descendent of Adam, the son of God. Darrell Bock noted, "The latter connection is especially important, since it directly suggests his divine sonship and his relationship to all humankind."⁴¹

Additionally, Luke's genealogy is in reverse order from Matthew's. By ending the list with Adam, Luke provided a logical and direct connection to Jesus' temptation, which immediately followed in the narrative. This is a move meant to show that Jesus was meant to reverse the curse of Adam's sin.⁴² Luke's genealogical list shows Jesus is not only the Jewish Messiah, but He is also the savior of all humanity. Luke's list underscores his theme of salvation to the Gentiles, directly tying into the programmatic prophecy of Simeon (which alluded to

³⁹ Keener, *Matthew*, "Mt 1:1-17;" Blomberg, *Matthew*, 53; Morris, *Matthew*, 22.

⁴⁰ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 489.

⁴¹ Bock, *Luke*, 79-81.

⁴² Bock, *Luke*, 79-81; Parsons, *Luke*, 70; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 491.

Isaiah), that Jesus would be a light to the Gentiles (Luke 2:29–32). Here, again, Jesus is revealed to be the fulfillment of Old Testament messianic hope.

Acts 1:8: Multiculturalism and the Gentile Mission

Acts, Luke's second volume, begins with a programmatic connection to Luke's theme of salvation to the Gentiles. First, after Jesus commanded those gathered to witness His ascension to wait for the promise of the Spirit, they began asking the Lord about the restoration of Israel (Acts 1:6). The question alone reflects the disciple's narrow vision of the restorative work Jesus had come to do. Jesus had come to save all humanity, not just the nation of Israel.⁴³ The question was more than just a passing inquiry. The imperfect tense of the Greek verb ἡρώτων is likely an ingressive imperfect, signifying an action that continued for some time.⁴⁴ Jesus redirected them and helped them focus on the wider mission. His charge in Acts 1:8 informed His disciples that they would be witnesses to the entire world of the revelation of the kingdom of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. This charge forecasts the movement of Acts, culminating with the arrival of the gospel in Rome through Paul. Polhill includes world missions, inclusivity of the gospel, and relationship to the world as three of the eight themes in the book of Acts, and rightfully so.⁴⁵ From the choosing of the seven in chapter six, until Paul arrives in Rome in the final chapter, the spread of the gospel to the ends of the Earth and the world's response to the

⁴³ Larkin, *Acts*, "Acts 1:6–11;" Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 205; Polhill, *Acts*, 84–6.

⁴⁴ The ingressive imperfect was used to emphasize the beginning of a continual action. For more information on the ingressive imperfect, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 544; *The NET Bible*, "Ac 1:6;" Larkin, *Acts*, "Acts 1:6–11."

⁴⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, 69. Three of Polhill's suggested eight major themes found in Acts relate to salvation to the Gentiles. See also Puskas, *Introduction to the Gospels and Acts*, 130–34.

message, are the clear focus. Thus, most of the book of Acts reflects the Lukan theme of salvation to the Gentiles.

This study argues that multiculturalism in Luke-Acts functions as a sub-theme of salvation to the Gentiles.⁴⁶ One aspect where Luke seems to provide a great deal of seemingly insignificant detail is connected to the theme of multiculturalism. As with Luke's referencing certain Roman and Hellenistic officials, the multicultural undertones help to support the fact that the Christian movement did not happen in a corner (Acts 26:26), further arguing for the apologetic purpose of Luke-Acts. Prior to discussing this topic, it is necessary to clearly define key terms like race, ethnicity, and culture, that will be part of the discussion.

Defining Race

Race is a term most often associated with skin color. A dark-skinned individual is considered "black," and a fair-skinned person of light complexity is thought of as "white." Olive-toned or persons with brown complexion are labeled middle eastern or Latino. Race, however, is deeper than that. The *Lexham Bible Dictionary* defines race as, "a modern concept that classifies people into distinct ethnic groups... race can designate a family, people group, nation, or group of descendants."⁴⁷ If race is merely a classification of ethnicity, whether that ethnicity is a family or nation, it seems difficult to distinguish between the two. Understanding that race runs deeper than skin color, Stephen Stallard questioned whether the heuristic concept of race should be

⁴⁶ Keener, "The Spirit and the Mission of the Church," 43; Larkin, *Acts*, "Acts 2:5-13."

⁴⁷ Sung Uk Lim, "Race," *LBD*.

studied.⁴⁸ These concerns are valid given the difficulty in distinguishing between race and ethnicity. Thus, ethnicity will be the default term used in this study.

Defining Ethnicity

Ethnicity is an equally complex term to define. Kieth Ferdinando is correct in saying, “while apparently self-evident, the notion of ethnicity is not a simple one.”⁴⁹ Ferdinando’s definition of ethnicity is, “a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members.”⁵⁰ In other words, any group of people from a common origin and ancestry, sharing unifying features like language, memories, and culture, make up an ethnic group.

Ethnicity is closely tied to nationality. In fact, the line of demarcation between the two is almost indistinguishable. While ethnicity seems more connected to the intrinsic properties of a group or individual, nationality speaks more of geographic location and autonomous rule. In this, ethnicity can be equivalent to, or distinct from nationality, depending on location. To exemplify this, one can speak of *ethnic* Israel and/or *national* Israel. Both represent a people of shared intrinsic cultural properties, yet national Israel speaks of those residing in a specific geographic location. Identifying and categorizing someone based on their ethnicity or nationality can be

⁴⁸ Stephen Christian Stallard, “The Development of Multicultural Teams in the Book of Acts: A Model with Application to Urban North America,” (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 7. Stallard uses ethnicity instead of race throughout his work.

⁴⁹ Keith Ferdinando, “The Ethnic Enemy—No Greek or Jew ... Barbarian, Scythian: The Gospel and Ethnic Difference,” *Themelios* 33 (2008): 48.

⁵⁰ Ferdinando, “The Ethnic Enemy,” 48.

difficult. Attempting to classify a person who is ethnically Greek, religiously Jewish, but nationally Roman reflects the difficulty in applying such heuristic classifications.

Defining Culture

Culture is no easier a property to define than race or ethnicity. Stallard spoke well when he stated, “is a notoriously slippery concept to grasp, as well as a difficult term to define.”⁵¹

Elizabeth Sung defines culture as, “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”⁵²

Simply put, culture is the expression of society through art, architecture, mores, habits, and beliefs. However, not all these items need to be present together to identify the culture of an individual or group. A person could be considered of Arabic culture if they dress in middle eastern attire, speak Aramaic, live in structures with vaulted arches, and practices the Islamic faith. However, that same individual would still be Arabic if they were Christian and spoke English.

Culture, of course, can be subdivided into smaller sub-cultures within a culture. Thus, one can speak of American Culture and yet, looking deeper, identify African American culture, Hispanic culture, or hip-hop culture. This exemplifies some of the difficulties in precisely defining culture when evaluating the cultural background of any person or pericope. It must be noted the danger of over-generalization inherent in attempting the categorization of individuals or groups based on models of culture and ethnicity. Often, a person or group will not easily fit into any one ethnicity or culture. Stallard illustrates this difficulty with the question, “Would

⁵¹ Stallard, “Multicultural Teams,” 14.

⁵² Elizabeth Y. Sung, “Culture,” NDT, 239.

Lucius of Cyrene (Acts 13:1) have identified as an ethnic African? Or was he Jewish? These questions are difficult to answer. However, what is clear is that Lucius was, at least partially, culturally African.”⁵³ This discussion on race, ethnicity, and culture is important in the exploration of multiculturalism as a theme of Luke-Acts, especially when exploring scenes like the Pentecostal outpouring (Acts 2), which will be discussed in the following section.

Multiculturalism in Acts

One of the first signs of Luke’s employment of his rhetorical strategy through multiculturalism in Acts is found in the narrative of the Pentecostal outpouring (Acts 2). Luke described the event in detail. When he arrived at the point of describing the crowd (Acts 2:9–11), Luke was careful to provide a thorough list of the nationalities of the diaspora Jews gathered in Jerusalem. Mikael Parsons suggests that this list is given as an update to the table of nations found in Genesis 10.⁵⁴ If Parsons is correct, this would be further evidence of a connection to the Old Testament, showing how what was taking place was the fulfillment of messianic expectations.

These were ethnic Jews who were culturally Hellenistic.⁵⁵ Their religious faith was based on the faith of Abraham, but they were more influenced by the Greco-Roman culture of the cities where they lived than their Palestinian equivalents.⁵⁶ Significant in this list is Luke’s mentioning

⁵³ Stallard, “Multicultural Teams,” 13. Lucius of Cyrene is listed among the prophets and teachers in Antioch in Acts 13:1.

⁵⁴ Parsons, *Acts*, 38.

⁵⁵ Puskas, *Introduction to the Gospels and Acts*, 131; Parsons, *Acts*, 38–9; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 240; Polhill, *Acts*, 101–02; Touissant, “Acts,” in *BKC*, 2:357; Larkin, *Acts*, “Acts 2:5–13;” Marshall, *Acts*, 76.

⁵⁶ This is not to suggest that these diaspora Jews were living in apostasy. Everett Ferguson does well to note that the diaspora Jews tended to place even more emphasis on the distinctiveness of Judaism and upholding the core

of the “visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes” (οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες Ῥωμαῖοι, Ἰουδαῖοί τε καὶ προσήλυτοι, Acts 2:10). Prior to that point, the observers were all described as “Jews” (Ἰουδαῖοι, Acts 2:5). Then, suddenly, Luke introduced the element of non-ethnic Jews who were in the process of converting to Judaism.⁵⁷ It appears as if Luke thought it was important to insert the fact that not everyone present was of ethnic Israel.

Fitzmyer suggested that the entire clause was likely a Lukan addition to his “inherited list” since it names a city instead of a territory.⁵⁸ Regardless, Luke made use of this list to fulfill his theological purpose.⁵⁹ Luke could have more concisely summarized the crowd by saying that there were Jews and proselytes from East to West visiting Jerusalem. Instead, Luke provided far more than was necessary. Luke’s emphasis on cultural, ethnic, and national diversity is prominent in this pericope. This is significant as it shows that what was happening was not some isolated event affecting only the Jews in Jerusalem. Such detail would have been important to the Roman Jews, some of whom may have been present at this time.⁶⁰ The Way was not a movement that became preempted by non-Jewish encroachers. The Gentile inclusion was always part of God’s plan.

principles of the Torah than their Palestinian counterparts. The Hellenistic accommodations were more of the form (language, arts, and style) than spirit and content (religion and worship practices). Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 427–29.

⁵⁷ The exegetical clause “Ἰουδαῖοι τε καὶ προσήλυτοι” likely refers to the “visitors from Rome.” Polhill, *Acts*, 103. However, it is conceivable that it refers to all those listed. See Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 243, and Marshall, *Acts*, 76. An exegetical clause is one that is used to explain or clarify a previous word or phrase. For more information, see Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), xviii; or Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 459.

⁵⁸ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 31:243.

⁵⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, 103. Polhill argues that the list is “in line with Luke’s purposes in providing it.”

⁶⁰ Fitzmyer suggested as much. See Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 242.

Accusations of Discrimination among the Widows (Acts 6)

This Gentile inclusion became the cause of significant tension among those ethnic Jews who embraced Jesus as Messiah, so much so that it led to Stephen's murder (Acts 7), James' beheading (Acts 12:2), Peter's arrest and narrow escape from death (Acts 12:3–11), and Paul's imprisonment in Rome. All of them, at the beginning of the movement, were ethnic Jews. Not all were culturally Palestinian Jews. As is often the case, diversity often leads to accusations of discrimination.

An early sign of cultural and nationalistic tension in Acts is seen in the ministry to widows among Jewish believers in Jerusalem (Acts 6). In that scene, division and distinction between the Hellenists and the Hebraic Jews arose, leading to feelings of animosity and charges of neglect. While these were all ethnic Jews, like those witnessing the Pentecostal outpouring, they differed culturally. Hellenists were those who were from the dispersion, likely living outside of Jerusalem, who attended Synagogue where the primary language was Greek.⁶¹ This contrasts with the Hebraic Jews where Aramaic was the primary language of culture and worship.⁶²

The situation was resolved via the Spirit-led wisdom of the community, led by the Twelve, in choosing the first seven deacons.⁶³ The chosen seven were a diverse body themselves, consisting totally of Hellenistic Jews, except for Nicolas, whom Luke described as a proselyte. The purpose of this scene is summed up in the transitional statement (and major structural marker), "The word of God kept on spreading, and the number of the disciples continued to

⁶¹ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 228–31.

⁶² Not all Hellenists lived outside of Jerusalem. Some Greek speaking Jews lived in Jerusalem since there was a Greek synagogue present.

⁶³ "Deacons" refer to the service (*διακονία*) of the daily distribution of food to the widows within the community and not the office of the diaconate that came later. See Balz and Schneider, "διακονία," in *EDNT*, 1:302.

increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7)”⁶⁴ Despite issues of inner conflict, the gospel was unstoppable and continued to accomplish what was stated at the opening (Acts 1:8), that the gospel would be proclaimed around the world. This entire episode is indicative of Luke’s multicultural theme which supports the apologetic purpose of Luke-Acts.⁶⁵ Luke did not attempt to hide the ethnic and cultural tensions within the Way. On the contrary, he illuminated it, showing that diversity was an important part of the movement. The Way, from the beginning, was always inclusive and consistent with the messianic vision of the Old Testament.

The Gentile Missions of Peter and Paul

The resolution of the cultural and national division among the early church seems to be an important goal of Acts. Luke added additional details of the resolution of the conflict between the Hellenistic Jews and the Palestinian Jews with his description of Peter’s report in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1–18), and Paul and Barnabas’ appearance before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1–35). Both Apostles were called to minister beyond the boundaries of the ethnic and national Jews of Palestine. The commission of Acts 1:8 would be largely fulfilled by their ministries.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Several scholars assert that the seven were likely all Hellenists. Their names indicate as much. However, it is still possible that some may well have been Hebraic Jews who were better known by their Greek moniker (i.e., Andrew, Philip, and Bartholomew among the Twelve). See Polhill, *Acts*, 178–82; Peterson, *Acts*, 234; Parsons, *Acts*, 82.

⁶⁵ John Mauck argues that the choosing of the Seven contributes to Luke’s defense of Paul by emphasizing several legal defense strategies. See Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 75.

⁶⁶ Peter and Paul are two key figures in Acts and their ministries are often compared as a central theme to the book. See Toussaint, “Acts,” in *BKC*, 2:349. The expansion of the gospel outside of Jerusalem is described in other narratives, such as the narrative of Philip in Samaria and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:4–40).

First, Peter was burdened with expanding the gospel to the Gentiles.⁶⁷ Peter's evangelistic tour to the coastal towns of Lydda (Lod) and Joppa, areas located within the plain of Sharon, mark Luke's turning point of the gospel's wider witness (Acts 9:31).⁶⁸ There, Peter would perform healings reminiscent of some of Jesus' own miracles.⁶⁹ From there, the Gentile mission carried Peter into Caesarea on the coast where he would be instrumental in a seminal episode of the gospel's expansion to other ethnicities with the conversion of Cornelius' household (Acts 10). Jesus prepared Peter for this event through a vision while still in Joppa (Acts 10:9–16 and repeated in Acts 11:5–10). That vision was instrumental in Peter's understanding of what would happen when he arrived at Caesarea. Both Cornelius' vision and that of Peter are described in detail by Luke. This episode reflects Luke's rhetorical narrative strategy using details to present his apology. All the intricacies of the events of Cornelius' conversion would have been irrelevant if he were only writing of Paul's defense. However, since Luke is writing to show that Christianity is the fulfillment of Jewish messianic expectations, the full details become important for his case and for the Jewish leadership in Rome.

Paul was specifically set apart to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. His conversion experience on the road to Damascus was relayed to Ananias, whom the Lord sent to pray for Saul (Acts 9:10–16). In Ananias' instructions, he was informed by the Lord that Saul would be a witness to “the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Of course, all the details

⁶⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, 229–85; Larkin, *Acts*, “Acts 9:32–12:25;” Peterson, *Acts*, 323–349; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 31: 442–48; Parsons, *Acts*, 136–62; Marshall, *Acts*, 188–217.

⁶⁸ Polhill, *Acts*, 245.

⁶⁹ The similarities between the healing of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:40–42, Luke 8:50–56) and the healing of Tabitha (Dorcas) in Acts 9:39–41 is striking. Luke was careful to narrate Peter's incident using the child's Aramaic name, creating a linguistic connection to Jesus' miracle, of which Peter was a witness. See Polhill, *Acts*, 248.

Luke provided in narrating this episode could have been much more concisely presented. Instead, Luke has Paul fully recount the details of this conversion experience on three separate occasions (Acts 9:1–19; 22: 3–16; 26:9–18). With each retelling, Luke was careful to stress that Saul was being sent to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:11; 26:17). This repetition is consistent with Luke’s rhetorical strategy and emphasizes the importance of Paul’s Gentile mission.⁷⁰ Luke shows the divine hand of God at work in Paul’s conversion and is driving the mission of salvation to the Gentiles, of which Paul would be instrumental. All these details would be important for the Jews in Rome who desired to hear more about the “Way” which was spoken against everywhere.

Section Summary

What becomes clear in this section is that Luke used details to support his theme of salvation to the Gentiles. Many of these details would have been irrelevant if Luke’s only purpose was to defend Paul. However, in arguing that Luke was providing relevant factual background of the growth and expansion of the Way for the benefit of the Jewish leaders in Rome, it becomes evident that these seemingly insignificant details would be vital for that group. Luke’s attention to detail helps with understanding the apologetic purpose of Luke-Acts as primarily a defense for Christianity and, secondarily, a defense for Paul.

Luke’s Rhetorical Strategy in the Travelogues of Acts 27:1–28:13

One finds a significant illustration of Luke’s rhetorical strategy in Luke’s detailed travelogue. The narrative encompasses the final two chapters of his second volume (Acts 27–28).

⁷⁰ Paul’s repetition of his salvation experience parallels his ministry and Peter’s. Luke has both apostles recounting significant experiences related to the Gentile mission.

Luke wove a harrowing tale of peril at sea in the final two chapters of Acts, beginning with a violent storm known for its destructive power (Acts 27:12) and ending with a lethal snake bite on a remote island (Acts 28:1–6).⁷¹ One cannot help but wonder why Luke provided so much detail about Paul’s voyage to Rome and his shipwreck en route. The information hardly seems relevant for strictly historical or biographical purposes.⁷² Not even Paul, when mentioning his own calamities at sea, goes into such detail. Paul simply stated he had been shipwrecked three times (2 Cor 11:25).

Polhill summarized the perplexity many feel about Luke’s detailed narration by chiding, “From the perspective of Luke’s purposes as a historian and a theologian, one is at somewhat of a loss to explain his detailed treatment of this voyage.”⁷³ It must, therefore, be significant that Luke included these details. The argument here is that Luke’s travelogue, of which Luke was an active participant, had theological and apologetic value by providing evidence of Paul’s

⁷¹ Luke identified the wind that led to the shipwreck as “Euraquilo” (Εὐρακύλων, Acts 28:14). This was a powerful storm known in ancient times for its life-threatening potential. For a more detailed description of this storm, see Polhill, *Acts*, 520; Colin J Hemer, “Euraquilo and Melita,” *JTS* 26 (1975): 110–11.

⁷² The suggestion here is that Luke included these details for theological purposes, of which apology is at the forefront. That does not negate the possibility of other, equally important theological purposes. The possibility that Luke included some of these details to highlight the parallels between Christ and the apostle Paul cannot be overlooked. There are many parallels between the progression of the gospel in Luke (Christ) and the progression of the gospel in Acts (Peter and Paul). Henry Wansbrough listed the possibility that Luke used the parallels between the two volumes to illustrate the succession of the gospel. To that point he suggested, “in a period of controversy between different interpretations of Christianity, Luke intended to show that Pauline Christianity is the true successor of Jesus.” Henry Wansbrough, *Introducing the New Testament* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 166. Others have made similar observations, suggesting that Luke presented these parallels for theological reasons. Salvation arrived through the passion of Christ just as salvation arrived in Rome through the suffering of Paul in shipwreck. For more on this, see Polhill, *Acts*, 42; Andrew Jacob Mattill, “Jesus-Paul Parallels and the Purpose of Luke-Acts: H. H. Evans Reconsidered,” *NovT* 17 (1975): 15–46; Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Cambridge, MA: SBL, 1974), 17–18.

⁷³ Polhill, *Acts*, 514.

innocence.⁷⁴ The suggestion is that Luke was appealing to ancient near eastern notions of pollution and divine retribution, a point that will now be explored. The idea that the gods often punished the wicked through calamities at sea is one that is well documented. Homer's *Odyssey* (12.127–141, 259–446) and Chariton's *Callirhoe* (3.3.10, 18: 3.4.9–10) are just a few. Even the Old Testament reflects these ancient near eastern notions of pollution and divine retribution. The narrative of Jonah (Jonah 1) is a prime example.⁷⁵

Luke and Antiphon

A few scholars have made interesting connections between Acts 27–28 and the Graeco-Roman sensibilities of pollution and divine retribution.⁷⁶ Gary Miles and Garry Trompf found a connection between Luke and Antiphon, a fifth-century BCE classic orator.⁷⁷ According to Miles and Trompf, the entire shipwreck narrative encompassing Acts 27–28 links Luke-Acts to ancient Greco-Roman notions of pollution and divine retribution. They argue that “the misfortunes which befall the wicked are, in reality, punishments meted out by the gods for their crimes was deeply ingrained in Greek thought.”⁷⁸ Antiphon's speech was typical of legal speeches by Greek

⁷⁴ Mickael Parsons suggests that a main purpose of the sea-voyage narrative is to “indicate God's declaration of Paul's innocence.” See Parsons, *Acts*, 352. See also Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 178–81.

⁷⁵ Parsons, *Acts*, 353.

⁷⁶ See Miles and Trompf, “Luke and Antiphon,” 259–67; Ladouceur, “Hellenistic Preconceptions,” 435–49; Susan Marie Praeder, “Acts 27:1–28:16: Sea Voyages in Ancient Literature and the Theology of Luke-Acts,” *CBQ* 46 (1984): 683–706; Parsons, *Acts*, 353; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 31:767.

⁷⁷ Miles and Trompf, “Luke and Antiphon,” 261; Antiphon, *Andocides. Minor Attic Orators, Volume I: Antiphon. Andocides*, trans. K. J. Maidment, LCL 308 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941).

⁷⁸ Miles and Trompf, “Luke and Antiphon,” 260.

orators of the era and is particularly revealing of the ancient's views of divine retribution and pollution, and is “of specific relevance to the interpretation of Paul’s voyage in Acts.”⁷⁹

Antiphon’s speech was written for his client Euxitheus, a citizen of Mytilene, who was accused of murdering his traveling companion Herodes as they traveled from Mytilene to Aenos (ca. 419 BCE).⁸⁰ During the sea voyage, the ship encountered bad weather and was forced to land in Methymne, where a drunken Herodes mysteriously disappeared. Euxitheus continued his journey after a lengthy investigation that failed to link him to Herodes’ disappearance. Herodes’ family sued to have Euxitheus return to Athens to stand trial for Herodes murder, charging him as a “malefactor.” There were several points of argument made on behalf of Euxitheus, but two points are of particular relevance. First, Euxitheus argued that he should be acquitted because the trial was being held in a marketplace instead of the Areopagus (Antiphon, *On the Murder of Herodes*, 10–11). By holding the trial in the marketplace, it risked harm to the entire population who would be exposed to the dangers of pollution.⁸¹ The second point is the most relevant. In this point, Euxitheus argued,

I hardly think I need remind you that many a man with unclean hands or some other form of defilement who has embarked on shipboard with the righteous has involved them in his own destruction. Others, while they have escaped death, have had their lives imperiled owing to such polluted wretches. Many, too, have been proved to be defiled as they stood beside a sacrifice, because they prevented the proper performance of the rites. With me the opposite has happened in every case. Not only have fellow-passengers of mine enjoyed the calmest of voyages: but whenever I have attended a sacrifice, that sacrifice has invariably been successful. I claim that these facts furnish the strongest presumption in my favour that the charge brought against me by the prosecution is

⁷⁹ Miles and Trompf, “Luke and Antiphon,” 260.

⁸⁰ Miles and Trompf mistakenly identify the accused as Helos instead of Euxitheus. This is a common but old mistake based on an inferior manuscript of section nineteen of the speech. See “Ladouceur, Hellenistic Preconceptions,” 436; Antiphon, *On the Murder of Herodes*, 19.

⁸¹ Miles and Trompf, “Luke and Antiphon,” 262.

unfounded; I have witnesses to confirm them. (Antiphon, *On the Murder of Herodes*, 82–83 [Maidment])

The final sentence is key. Euxitheus' point is that, if he were guilty, surely the gods would have killed him and his traveling companions at sea. The fact that he survived such a calamity was proof he was innocent of the charge of murdering Herodes. It is this point that Miles and Trompf suggest Luke was making in his travelogue. If Paul were guilty, surely, he would have been killed at sea, along with the 276 lives that traveled with him. While this comparison is significant, there is still another that is more relevant.⁸²

Luke and Andocides

David Ladouceur found what he believed to be a more relevant parallel in Andocides, another fifth to fourth century BCE classic orator.⁸³ Andocides was being tried for the crime of impiety by profaning the Eleusenion mysteries in that he had placed a suppliant branch on the altar of Eleusenion, apparently a forbidden act. This act was punishable by death. During the trial, it was noted that Andocides was a merchant who owned ships and had frequented the seas because of his commerce. Andocides had experienced perils at sea but was never killed, neither he nor his crew (Andocides, *On the Mysteries*, 137–39).⁸⁴ Andocides rebuttal to his accusers was significant. He argued,

No, gentlemen. I for one cannot believe that if the gods considered me guilty of an offence against them, they would have been disposed to spare me when they had me in a situation of the utmost peril—for when is man in greater peril than on a winter sea-passage? Are we to suppose that the gods had my person at their mercy on just such a voyage, that they had my life and my goods in their power, and that in spite of it they

⁸² Ladouceur, though seeing the value of this argument, objects on the grounds that Paul's situation was not an exact parallel. For Euxitheus, his voyage was marked by calm seas. The opposite was true for Paul. See Ladouceur, "Hellenistic Preconceptions," 436. Also, see Praeder, "Acts 27:1–28:16: Sea Voyages," 704–6.

⁸³ Ladouceur, "Hellenistic Preconceptions," 436–38. Antiphon, Andocides. *Minor Attic Orators*, 1–18.

⁸⁴ Ladouceur, "Hellenistic Preconceptions," 438.

kept me safe? Why could they not have caused even my corpse to be denied due burial? Furthermore, it was wartime; the sea was infested with triremes and pirates, who took many a traveller prisoner, and after robbing him of his all, sent him to end his days in slavery. And there were foreign shores on which many a traveller had been wrecked, to be put to death after meeting with shameful indignities and maltreatment. Is it conceivable that the gods saved me from perils of that was, only to let themselves be championed by Kephisios, the biggest scoundrel in Athens, whose citizen he claims to be when he is nothing of the kind, and whom every one of you sitting in this court knows too well to trust with anything belonging to him? No, gentlemen; to my mind the dangers of a trial like the present are to be regarded as the work of man, and the dangers of the sea as the work of God. So if we must perforce speculate about the gods, I for one am sure that they would be moved to the deepest wrath and indignation to see those whom they had themselves preserved brought to destruction by mortal men. (Andocides, *On the Mysteries*, 137–39 [Maidment]).

Andocides' situation more directly parallels that of Paul. His claim was that the gods had ample opportunity to punish him if he were guilty of pollution. The fact that he was still alive was proof of his innocence. The only ones unconvinced were the human courts. It is conceivable that Luke's inclusion of Paul's voyage was to make a similar argument, a point that would not be lost on the Roman courts set to hear Paul's case.⁸⁵ With these classic examples of ancient near eastern conceptions of pollution and divine retribution as a backdrop, Luke's inclusion of so much detail surrounding Paul's voyage to Rome makes sense.

Storms, Snakes, and Ships: Additional Evidentiary Details

If there was any ambiguity in whether Paul was deemed innocent by the gods, Luke attempted to put all doubts to rest with the events on the island of Malta (Acts 28:3–6). Again, here, Luke provided details that seem irrelevant from a purely historical or biographical standpoint. From an apologetic perspective, the Maltese incident was crucial. Having survived the shipwreck, Paul and company landed on the island of Malta where they were warmly received (Acts 28:1–2). The islanders built a fire to protect the weary travelers. Paul, the ever-

⁸⁵ Parsons, *Acts*, 352.

serving apostle, gathered sticks to lay on the fire and was bit by a viper (Acts 28:3). This was a poisonous serpent that was believed, at least by the islanders of Malta, to be deadly.⁸⁶ Their first reaction reflects their beliefs of divine retribution and punishment stating, “Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live (Acts 28:4).” Justice (δίκη) is not being used as just a metaphor. This is likely a reference to the Greek goddess of justice (Δίκη). The islanders believed punishment had finally come to this “murderer” by the hand of the god of justice (Acts 28:4). After realizing the viper had no effect on Paul, they “changed their minds and began to say that he was a god” (Acts 28:6). It seems clear why Luke would include this event in his apology. Fitzmyer sums up Luke’s purpose well “heaven has saved him once again.”⁸⁷ The divine court has already acquitted Paul. He was not “polluted” or guilty of anything worthy of death.

Luke continued to give more details that seem to carry more apologetic than historical or biographical significance. Luke tells of Paul and company leaving Malta, boarding an Alexandrian ship that had “the Twin Brothers for its figurehead” (Acts 28:11). The Twin Brothers (Διοσκούροις) refer to the twin sons of Zeus, Castor and Pollux. These twin gods were worshipped as the patron gods of sailors.⁸⁸ One must wonder why Luke would deem this information important considering it relates to gods not recognized by Christianity. If Acts were simply a history of the birth and spread of the church, this detail would be out of place. Marshall

⁸⁶ The Greek ἔχιδνα refers to a venomous snake like the Adder or Asp. See Werner Foerster, “ἔχιδνα,” *TDNT* 2:815; Balz and Schneider, “ἔχιδνα,” *EDNT*, 2:94; Polhill, *Acts*, 532; Parsons, *Acts*, 360; Miles and Trompf, “Luke and Antiphon,” 265–66.

⁸⁷ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 83. See, also, Parsons, *Acts*, 360; Polhill, *Acts*, 532; Larkin, *Acts*, “Acts 28:1–6;” Marshall, *Acts*, 437.

⁸⁸ Walter A., Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Dioscuri,” *BEB*, 629; “Castor and Pollux,” *LBD*; Polhill, *Acts*, 535; Ladouceur, “Hellenistic Preconceptions,” 444–46; Marshall, *Acts*, 439.

opined “Some living detail is given to the story by the (useless) information that its sign was the *Twin Brothers*: the sons of Zeus, Castor and Pollux, were the patrons of navigation, and their constellation (Gemini) was a sign of good fortune when seen in a storm.”⁸⁹ The reason he considers the information to be “useless” is likely because it does not fit with any strictly evangelistic or historical purpose. However, if Luke was attempting to make a case that Paul (and the other 276 souls on board) were not polluted and thereby judged innocent by the gods, then that detail is anything but useless. It becomes a crucial piece of evidence. After surviving so many perils thus far in the story, Paul and company complete their journey under the protection of the *Dioscuri*.

The final two chapters of Acts are filled with details most significant to Luke’s apology, especially regarding Paul’s innocence. Seemingly superfluous details like these are what led some to believe that Luke wrote to defend Christianity and Paul. Mauck sees the entire sea voyage narrative as a crucial piece of evidence in Paul’s legal case, and rightfully so.⁹⁰ David Ladouceur argued that “it is an important element in one closely-linked chain of arguments for Paul’s innocence—perhaps even a symbolic, favorable rendering of the imperial verdict.”⁹¹ Mikael Parsons concluded that the entire unit functions as a declaration of Paul’s innocence.⁹² Luke was not just filling pages, he was presenting a logical argument for Paul’s innocence based upon ancient near eastern notions of divine retribution and pollution.

⁸⁹ Marshall, *Acts*, 439; Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 180–81.

⁹⁰ Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 178–81.

⁹¹ Ladouceur, “Hellenistic Preconceptions,” 449.

⁹² Parsons, *Acts*, 352.

Other explanations for the inclusion of the sea voyage narrative have been suggested. For instance, Polhill notes that the entire narrative exemplifies the theme of the providence of God.⁹³ It seems evident that the Lord protected Paul and his fellow travelers throughout their many calamities. It is reasonable to argue that the point of that protection was for the furtherance of the gospel. The thesis here does not negate that aspect. Another suggestion is that the sea-voyage narrative provides a parallel to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in Luke's Gospel.⁹⁴ Paul's calamities at sea provide a literary resurrection narrative comparable to Christ, providing a further parallel to the Gospel account. While this is an interesting explanation of why Luke might have provided such details, it does not provide the cohesive answer that apology offers. The argument here, that Luke included these details as evidence of innocence for Paul, seems more appropriate.

Conclusion

This aim of this chapter was to show why Luke included so much detail in his gospel and historical account of the church. It has been suggested that he was using a rhetorical literary strategy in building an apologetic argument for Christianity and Paul. If Luke-Acts is only considered to be a biographical, evangelistic, or historical work, then these details would be “useless,” as Marshall claimed, or “Jewish religious nonsense” as Barrett suggested. However, when viewed through an apologetic lens, every word becomes important.

This chapter first illustrated Luke's rhetorical strategy by examining the birth narratives of John the Baptist and Jesus. It was shown how the details of these chapters argued for the

⁹³ Polhill, *Acts*, 512; Marshall also makes mention of this point in his commentary. See Marshall, *Acts*, 447.

⁹⁴ Vadim Vitkovskii, “Paul's Death and Resurrection in Acts 27–28? A Literary Comparison with the Gospel of Luke,” *The Biblical Annals* 10 (2020): 93–101.

legitimacy of Christianity. The resurgence of prophetic activity and the numerous allusions to Old Testament messianic prophecy all come together to emphasize that Christianity was the logical fulfillment of the messianic hopes of major Old Testament figures. The forerunner/fulfillment motif was clearly exemplified in the ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist. Next, it was shown how Luke used prominent political figures to illustrate the core theme of Luke-Acts, salvation to the Gentiles. Luke time-marked significant events, like the birth of John and Jesus, with the ruling of people like Herod the Great and Augustus Caesar. Invoking these names added veracity to the events described and would have been significant to both the Jews in Rome and those who would be hearing Paul's case. Furthermore, the sympathetic participation of the centurion in Luke and the conversion of Cornelius in Acts would have indicated that Christianity was no threat to Rome, nor was it something that was spoken against everywhere. In every corner of society, the Way was being embraced by people of all nationalities and ethnicities.

Related to the prior point is Luke's focus on the Gentile mission. It has been argued that this was an important part of Luke's argument. Only Matthew and Luke provided genealogies of Jesus, and Luke's version was significantly longer. This was another reflection of his rhetorical strategy. It also underscored Luke's theme of salvation to the Gentiles by highlighting the universality of salvation. Matthew limited the genealogy to Abraham. Luke went all the way back to Adam. This argued that Jesus was more than just a Jewish messiah. He was the savior of all humanity. The theme was seen in the programmatic statement of Acts 1:8 and in the Gentile missions of Peter and Paul. Luke used repetition to help drive the point. Peter recounted his vision twice and Paul his conversion experience three times. Finally, the importance of multiculturalism was discussed and how it is related to the Gentile mission. It was important that

Luke's audience understand that the Way was not just a Jewish affair. It was an inclusive movement from the start, and that was by divine design.

Finally, and quite significantly, Luke's rhetorical strategy was illustrated in the travelogue of the closing chapters of Acts. The enormous amount of detail included is puzzling when only viewed through an evangelistic, biographical, or historical lens. When understood from the lens of apology, its function became clear. By comparing Luke's travelogue to the works of Antiphon and Andocides, orators who wrote legal briefs, a clear purpose arose. Luke was arguing Paul's innocence based upon ancient near eastern notions of pollution and divine retribution. This point was saliently expressed in the shipwreck, the incident of the viper in Malta, and the invocation of the *Dioscuri*. Luke was arguing that Paul's safe arrival in Rome illustrated his acquittal before a divine counsel. Therefore, the human courts must conclude the same. This was not a message that was important to the monotheistic Jews in Rome. This message was meant for the polytheistic rulers of the Empire. All of this has helped to show how Luke used seemingly insignificant details to present an apology for Christianity and Paul and support the thesis that Luke-Acts is primarily an apologetic work.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter will provide a conclusion, synthesis, and application of the research presented in this study. The conclusion will be presented in three parts. First, it will reiterate the purpose and thesis of the study along with the research methodology used. Next, a summary and synthesis of the argument of each chapter will be presented. Finally, the application of the study and opportunities for further research will be extrapolated.

Reiteration of the Purpose and Thesis of the Study

This study sought to answer the problem of why Luke wrote such a lengthy narrative. Luke-Acts alone account for more than a quarter of the New Testament. Luke's writing surpasses that of all other New Testament authors. Considering that Luke-Acts is a single work in two volumes, another problem presents itself in that it has historically been a challenge to place the work in any single genre. Luke was separated from Acts quite early in history and the two volumes began to be read individually. Even then, comparing Luke to the other Synoptics raises additional questions. Luke showed a propensity for details that exceed other Evangelists. When taken alone, Acts resemble other ancient histories, except for a large amount of kerygma. Generic questions remain. Thus, the problem of purpose and genre has been one of the foci of this dissertation.

This study has proposed that the answer to the research problem, namely why Luke wrote Luke-Acts and included so many details, is that Luke-Acts is primarily an apologetic text. It has been argued here that Luke-Acts is a continuous work over two volumes. Luke wrote primarily for the defense of Christianity against charges of being a *religio illicita* and, to a lesser degree, a

defense of Paul in preparation for his trial in Rome. Viewing Luke-Acts through this lens helps the interpreter understand why Luke included so many irrelevant details for a Greco-Roman *bios* or historiography. Additionally, it was suggested that Paul's gathering of the Jewish elders upon his arrival in Rome was the event that prompted the production of Luke-Acts. Those elders desired to hear more about the Way and Paul presented them with a detailed account that was historically sound and apologetically persuasive. It has been contended here that what Luke wrote contained much of Paul's argument, with additional details pertinent to Paul's own defense. Understanding that Luke-Acts was written as a defense brief helps the interpreter find importance in every detail presented by Luke.

Summary and Synthesis of the Argument of the Chapters

Introduction and Chapter Two

The primary methods involved in this study included a historical-critical and literary analysis of Luke-Acts. After the introduction (chapter one), this study provided a brief but pertinent literary review of historical and contemporary approaches to Lukan studies. This was important to show the contrast between the unanimity of scholarship on historical-critical issues of the first eighteen centuries and that of the critical scholarship that marked the nineteenth century. Until then, assumptions about the authorship of the two-volume work were settled. It was not until the skepticism of the nineteenth century, spearheaded by the influence of Ferdinand Christian Baur and his Tübingen school, that many of those assumptions came into question.

The rationalism of the nineteenth century influenced biblical studies in the same way it did most other disciplines. A key feature of what became known as classical liberalism was the search for natural explanations for anything supernatural. With the Bible, narratives that contained supernatural elements were explained away as hyperbolic, or theological

interpretations of naturally occurring events. Critical challenges to the authenticity of many books of the Bible arose. Tübingen scholars like Bruno Bauer, David Strauss, Gustav Volkmar, and Eduard Zeller rejected the authenticity of most of the Pauline corpus and declared Acts non-historical. Likewise, many of the long-held historical-critical assumptions about Luke-Acts were challenged. It was no longer assumed that the author was Luke, Paul's traveling companion, or that Luke even participated in the narrative as illustrated by the "we" passages. Several of those skeptical scholars concluded that author(s) of Luke-Acts never even knew Paul, and that he wrote long after the events recorded in the narrative.

Some corrections to the radical swing arose later in the century. Former Tübingen followers like Albrecht Ritschl, Joseph Lightfoot, and Philip Schaff began to promote moderate positions, moving scholarship back toward a more conservative view. However, the consensus among liberal scholars at that time was that Luke was written no earlier than 70 CE and as late as the latter half of the second century. By the twentieth century, many of those liberal challenges were overturned. Some Tübingen scholars even reversed their positions, as was the case for Adolf Harnack, who originally argued for a late first-century date for Luke-Acts, only to later settle on a date closer to 60 CE. He was also influential in reviving many of the traditional historical-critical views on Lukan literature. Critical methods arising from these periods included form and redaction criticism and were often applied to Lukan studies. These approaches continue to dominate the conversation. The influence of rationalism continues to be felt to this day.

Chapter Three

Having reviewed the ebbs and flows of New Testament thought (chapter two), chapter three sought to address those obstacles emanating from nineteenth century criticism that eliminate apology as a purpose for Luke-Acts. The three issues at stake included Luke's Gospel

and its relationship to Mark, the identification of Luke as author and Theophilus as recipient, and the unity of Luke-Acts.

First, the issue of the relationship between the Gospels of Mark and Luke was addressed. It was concluded that Luke largely depended on Mark as a source for his account. This dependence revealed the first problem regarding Luke-Acts as an apologetic text. Many critical scholars argued for a date for Mark's Gospel no earlier than the mid-sixties. If that was the case, then Luke-Acts could not have been written in time for use in Paul's defense in Rome. The key point of critical scholarship grounding their arguing for a late date for Mark's Gospel, and successively Luke-Acts, is their belief that the Olivet Discourse (found in all the Synoptics) was a *vaticinium ex eventu*, meaning that Mark could not have been present in a final form until after 70 CE. This position may reflect some of the lingering influence of Ferdinand Baur and the rationalism of the nineteenth century. Such assumptions about the impossibility of predictive prophecy, among other things, preclude the possibility that Jesus could have made such an accurate prediction forty years prior to what took place in 70 CE. Yet, when the possibility of predictive prophecy is seriously considered, the likelihood of Mark being written as early as the mid-forties is both possible and plausible. Furthermore, if Luke-Acts were written after 70 CE, the omission of crucial events like the fall of Jerusalem or the outcome of Paul's trial is puzzling. The author would have been guilty of literary malpractice for purposefully excluding those key events. After giving so much detail in every other place, it makes no sense that the author would suddenly be silent on those two crucial historical events. The only logical conclusion is that the events had not taken place at the time of writing therefore the author could not have known about them. This argues for a date of writing in the early sixties, as is suggested here. That leaves more

than ample room for Luke to have written Luke-Acts, using Mark as one of his sources, and to be useful for Paul in his first imprisonment in Rome.

After addressing the prohibitive issues of dating, the argument turned to the identification of Luke as the author and Theophilus as the recipient. Historically, until the critical objections of the last few hundred years, the identification of the author of Luke-Acts was settled. The author of the two-volume work was Luke the physician and traveling companion of Paul as mentioned in Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11, and Philemon 24. The patristics were united in this position. The “we” passages of Acts provided an internal attestation to this conclusion. Adolf Harnack argued a convincing case in support of the traditional view based on the medical language found in Luke-Acts. However, this position was successfully refuted by Henry Cadbury, who was famously noted to have earned his doctorate by denying Luke his own.

This study agrees with the long-held tradition of the patristics that Luke, the physician and traveling companion of Paul, authored Luke-Acts. Luke himself was an educated person with extensive knowledge of both Greco-Roman literature and Jewish customs. Luke’s education and background provided the skill necessary to be able to produce an effective defense brief. Luke-Acts resembles features common to other ancient orators, who often wrote defense briefs, suggesting that Luke may have been functioning as a *logographer*. Identifying Theophilus precisely was more challenging. However, it became apparent that Theophilus was a Roman official of some rank based on how he was addressed in Luke-Acts. John Mauck provided an excellent argument for viewing Theophilus as a Roman special investigator tasked with gathering information on the case to be heard before Nero. Along with this identification is the assumption that Theophilus was a non-believer. Though this is the position adopted by this

study, the possibility that Theophilus could have been a Jewish proselyte and member of the community in Rome, or even a Gentile Christian, could not be excluded.

Finally, the chapter ended with a defense of the unity of Luke-Acts. This represented another position that was virtually settled until the critical challenges of scholars like Mikael Parsons and Richard Pervo. Their challenges were addressed and answered. Henry Cadbury's "hyphen" was defended and found to be appropriate, especially when considering apology as the purpose of the writing. That Luke-Acts is an apologetic text should not be surprising considering how much of Christian literature produced in the first and second centuries was written for apologetic reasons. Overall, the purpose of chapter three was to present a case that Luke-Acts could have been written in time for use as a defense for Christianity and for Paul, despite the critical challenges and presuppositions of scholars who, for various reasons, argued otherwise.

Chapters Four and Five: Literary and Content Clues

Having eliminated the objections to Luke-Acts as a defense for Christianity and Paul (chapter three), attention turned to the internal indicators of the text that argue the apologetic purpose. First, in chapter four, the functional literary clues were explored. These included the prologue to the Gospel of Luke, the comparison of Luke-Acts to other ancient apologetic texts, and the relationship between the Way, Judaism, and Rome. What was argued is that Luke's prologue made clear that Luke was writing to Theophilus to present a logical account of the things that had been reported related to the Way. After proper exegesis of Luke's use of *κατηχήθης* in the prologue (Luke 1:4), what became clear is that Luke was not writing to encourage Theophilus in his faith, as some conclude. Luke wrote to present an orderly account concerning the matters which had been reported to him. Luke was serving as a *logographer* in this regard, much like Antiphon and Andocides who wrote defense speeches of their own. Luke

was presenting a summary brief to the representative of the Roman judicial system tasked to sort out the details while simultaneously recording a text that assured the Jews in Rome that Christianity was the logical and expectant conclusion of Old Testament messianic hope.

After finding an apologetic purpose in the prologue, Luke-Acts was compared to the writings of Justin Martyr, Josephus, and Plato. It was found that features present in those apologetic works were also present in Luke-Acts. Luke-Acts resemble other apologetic texts of the time. It is understandable that many consider Luke to be the first Christian apologist. Finally, Luke made it a point to show that any hostility against the Way resulted from Jewish animosity against the Way and not the other way around. Christianity saw itself as the fulfillment of Judaism, not its usurper or supplanter. Furthermore, Rome was quite sympathetic to the Way throughout both volumes. Pilate was noted to have declared Jesus, the founder of the Way, innocent three times, while three other Roman officials (and even a sect of Judaism) had proclaimed Paul innocent of charges against him. This focus on trials and the relationship between the Way, Judaism, and Rome, all support the thesis that Luke-Acts was written as a defense brief. Luke was focused on arguing the legal status of Christianity through the narrative details of both volumes.

Finally, chapter five focused on the content clues that argue the apologetic purpose of the text. This chapter sought to show why Luke included so much detail in his two-volume work. It was argued that every detail was important to show that Christianity was the logical fulfillment of Jewish messianic hope. The detailed birth narratives, the extended genealogical table, the inclusion of prominent political and military officials, and the focus on the Gentile mission were all illustrative of Luke's rhetorical strategy. Every detail was pertinent to his defense of Christianity. Additionally, Luke's focus on Paul's voyage to Rome reflected a defense strategy

familiar to the time. Luke played on ancient notions of pollution and divine retribution to argue Paul's innocence. Luke had employed a strategy previously used by Antiphon and Andocides in building his legal defense. All those details were vital to the case when viewed through an apologetic lens.

In summary, this dissertation has argued that Luke-Acts displays all the markings of an apologetic work. The reason Luke was so detailed is because he was employing a rhetorical literary strategy to argue the legitimacy of the Way for the audience Paul had gathered on his arrival to Rome. A secondary application is that much of the detail also provided evidence for Paul's upcoming trial, especially those details found in Acts. The fact that Luke offered no conclusion to Acts argues for the success of Luke's strategy. It has been suggested that Paul was freed at the end of this imprisonment and continued his missionary work. If true, it is possible that Luke-Acts played a role in his freedom.¹ Regardless, Luke-Acts as an apology provides a better solution for the problem of genre than does the suggestion of biography or history. Luke-Acts as an apology allows the text to be treated as a whole and not only as separate parts.

Application, Limitations, and Areas for Further Research

As discussed in the previous chapters, much has been written about Luke the historian or Luke the theologian. However, when considering Luke as an apologist, there is a disproportionate amount of literature available. To the knowledge of this author, John Mauck produced the only full-length monograph addressing the apologetic purpose of Luke-Acts. Even then, his focus was on Acts alone. Most other scholars mention the idea of Luke-Acts as an apologetic text, or that certain aspects of an apology are present in the text. Rarely do they

¹ It is also possible that Paul was freed because of a statute of limitation. For discussion on Luke's ending to Acts, see Marshall, *Acts*, 447; Kent, *Jerusalem to Rome*, 196; Polhill, *Acts*, 547; Parsons, *Acts*, 365–70.

conduct in-depth exegesis considering an apologetic purpose behind the text. It is the hope of this researcher that future volumes on Luke-Acts will be produced with apology in focus. Any exegetical approach to Luke-Acts should have apology as a major consideration. To interpret the text without considering that Luke was writing a defense brief is to ignore a major contextual factor. Focusing on apology does not preclude evaluation based upon the multiplicity of other themes found within the text. It is simply argued here that, when understood from the apologetic perspective, the themes presented become even clearer.

This study was limited to the purpose of Luke's two-volume work. It did not explore in depth other critical issues such as Lukan sources or the Synoptic Problem. Only as those issues intersected purpose was limited treatment afforded. Any host of other issues are worthy of full discussion but fall outside of the scope of this study. One area that deserves further research is the comparison of Luke and other Greco-Roman orators. The comparisons made here were brief and suggest that there could be even more relevant connections. This needs to be the subject of further exploration.

As a concluding point of application, if Luke's purpose was to defend the legitimacy of Christianity, then modern scholarship has a responsibility to continue its defense in the face of current challenges. Luke laid the foundation for this kind of defense. The orderly account compiled so long ago is every bit as true and reliable today as it was then, regardless of nineteenth-century rationalism or skepticism. Modern believers can be just as certain as Theophilus, Luke's original recipient, that what Luke reported was thoroughly researched, historically accurate, and worthy of building a solid defense in support of the Way.

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