

Christian Origins and Narrative Openings: The Sense of a Beginning in Acts 1-5

Mikeal C. Parsons

The Acts of the Apostles is “A Tale of Two Cities”—it is the story of courage amidst conflict and crisis as the early Christian community bursts forth from its chrysalis in Jerusalem, the religious center of Judaism, to migrate and take residence in Rome, the political capital of the gentile world. Acts 1-5 is not only part of the story about the historical beginnings of the Christian Church; it is itself a literary beginning to a wonderfully complex narrative. Acts 1-5, then, is the literary beginning to a story about beginnings. These opening chapters have a certain shape and function because of their placement in the narrative as the literary beginning of the book of Acts. In this survey, I will take seriously the understanding that chapters 1-5 are about the historical origins of Christianity, but I will also attend to the fact that these chapters function as the narrative to the story called the Acts of the Apostles. What sense of a beginning—historical and literary—do we find here?

The Beginning of the Church (1:1-26)

The Acts of the Apostles is the sequel to the Third Gospel.¹ The opening chapter of Acts serves not only to set the stage for the emergence and spread of the earliest Christian community, it constantly refers back to the previous story of the founder of that community, Jesus of Nazareth. Acts 1:1-14 functions to orient the reader to the story.² The remainder of chapter one (1:15-26) is devoted to the accounts of the defection of Judas from the circle of the Twelve and the selection of his successor.

Introduction (1:1-14)

The surface structure of Acts 1:1-14 falls into three parts: Acts 1:1-5 represents the literary preface—the introduction proper—and includes several formal features common to prefaces of antiquity. Acts 1:6-11 describes the departure of Jesus and the response of his disciples; Acts 1:12-14 forms a summary statement at the end of the episode.

Sequential books in antiquity could begin in any number of ways.³ Luke apparently followed the pattern of presenting a retrospective summary and an outline of what was to follow.⁴ Acts contains a brief, retrospective summary which describes the contents of the Third Gospel as “what Jesus began to do and

teach until the day he departed" (1:1-2). A prospective outline of the contents of Acts is given in Acts 1:8. Significantly, the outline is given by Jesus and is couched in the narrative as a promise. Luke accomplishes this effect by shifting abruptly in 1:4 from indirect to direct discourse (cf. Luke 5:14; Acts 23:22).⁵

The ascension account in Acts (1:6-11) borrows its formal features primarily from Greco-Roman assumption stories, while its terminology is heavily dependent on the assumption stories of Elijah.⁶ Whether Jewish or Greco-Roman, assumption stories typically accentuate the exalted status of their subjects. Likewise, the ascension of Jesus functions to underline his exaltation. It is the fitting conclusion to the ministry of Jesus (see Luke 2:50-53); more importantly here, it is the foundation of the church which makes the life of the church both possible and intelligible. The ending of the story of Jesus then serves as the appropriate beginning of the story of the church.

The departure of Jesus signals the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the beginning of the worldwide mission. To speak of an "absentee Christology" in Acts, however, is unnecessary. Though absent as a character from the narrative of Acts after chapter 1 (though see Acts 7:56), the influence of Jesus throughout the rest of the narrative is profound. His name occurs no less than 69 times in Acts. He is at the center of the church's controversy with the Jews. He guides the church in its missionary efforts; he empowers the disciples to perform miracles. The ascended and exalted Christ, though absent as a character, is curiously present throughout the narrative.⁷

Despite the significance of the ascension for Luke's story and theology, these opening verses focus as much on the response of the disciples to Jesus as they do on his words and deed. This second section contains two parts, and each one concludes with a reproof of the disciples (1:7; 1:11a) followed by a promise to them (1:8a; 1:11b).⁸ Despite the reproaches, the fact that both dialogues end with promises to the disciples invites a favorable judgment of the disciples by the audience.

By being chosen through the Holy Spirit, fully instructed for forty days by the risen Lord, praying together with one accord, and performing the delicate and crucial task of selecting Judas' replacement without incident, the disciples are depicted by the formal features of the opening scene as theologically informed, spiritually mature, and administratively equipped. All these are signs that they are prepared to undertake the task of worldwide mission which lies before them.

In the summary of 1:12-14, Luke "laundry lists" the disciples who have gathered together in the upper room. The names of the disciples in Acts 1 are the same as those in Luke 6:13-16, though the order is slightly different: Luke's list "Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John," is shuffled in Acts to read "Peter and John and James and Andrew." The fact that only the first three named in Acts receive any attention beyond this list (on Peter and John, see Acts 3-4; Luke only gives notice of James' death, 12:2) may explain this shift (cf. Stephen and Philip in Acts 6).

The list of followers is also extended in Acts to include women and the

family of Jesus. To mention women is unusual for a succession list. Mary the mother of Jesus stands as a bridge figure between the women who followed Jesus (see Luke 8:2; 23:49, 55; 24:10) and the family of Jesus, who (except for James) receive no further mention in the text. The omission of Judas' name from the list, of course, prepares the reader for the report of Judas' death and the choice of his replacement.

The Demise of Judas and the Election of Matthias (1:15-26)

Before Luke narrates the fulfillment at Pentecost of Jesus' promise that the disciples will be empowered by the Holy Spirit, he addresses what for him was a problem of the first magnitude. The circle of the Twelve has been broken and must be restored. This section divides into three parts: 1) an introduction (v. 15); 2) Peter's speech (vv. 16-22); and 3) the election of Matthias (vv. 23-26).

The omission of Judas from the list of disciples in 1:12-14 has already alerted the reader to the fall of Judas from the circle of the Twelve. Now, in this narrative, Peter stands in the midst of the believers to address this problem (1:15). The situational irony of this first apostolic speech within the post-Easter community should not be lost. The irony is created by the similarities in the pre-Easter actions of Judas and Peter. Judas betrayed Jesus (Luke 22:47), thus fulfilling Jesus' prophecy (Luke 22:21-22). Peter denied knowing Jesus three times (Luke 22:54-62), thus fulfilling Jesus' prophecy (Luke 22:34). The actions of both Judas and Peter were associated with the work of Satan (Luke 22:3; 22:31). And so in Acts 1:15 we have the ironic predicament of the one who denied Jesus standing up to retell the story of the one who had betrayed him.

The contrast between these two characters, however, must also be noted. Though the actions of both are somehow related to Satan, there is a sharp distinction. "Satan entered Judas" (Luke 22:3), indicating that Judas' actions were under the jurisdiction of the "power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). His act of betrayal and subsequent demise fulfill Jesus' pronouncement of curse: "woe to that man by whom he [the son of Man] is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22). In the case of Peter, Jesus' warning, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat," is followed by an exhortation "when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).

The difference between the two is in Jesus' revelation to Peter: "but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:32). The appearance of Jesus to Peter (Luke 24:34; [24:12?]) provides Peter with his opportunity to repent. Hence, the situation of having the "rehabilitated" denier of Jesus speak of the divine necessity for the one who betrayed Jesus to go to his "own place," however ironic, is certainly justified from the perspective of the narrator. If Judas' death fulfills the woe of Jesus, then Peter fulfills the exhortation of Jesus to "strengthen your brethren" when he stands in their midst and delivers this speech.

Before leaving this verse, we should note the narrator's use of a narrative aside to address the reader directly about the size of the assembly gathered with

Peter: “the company of persons was in all about one hundred and twenty” (1:15). The number is significant since one hundred and twenty is not only a multiplication of the Twelve but also since one hundred and twenty *men* were necessary to constitute a local sanhedrin (*M. Sanh.* 1.6). Even if Luke is not making the point that the early church is also a “properly constituted” community according to Pharisaic standards, it is still clear from the narrative that in this newly formed community women count! (See 1:14; also Luke 8:1-3, 23:49.)

Peter’s speech (vv. 16-22) turns upon the Old Testament quotation cited in verse 20. The first half of the quotation taken from Psalm 69:26 deals with the demise of Judas; the second half, which is a citation of Psalm 109:8, addresses the election of Judas’ successor. The double use of the *dei* of divine necessity is the textual clue to this division.⁹

Peter depicts the defection of Judas and his subsequent judgment in the language of economics.¹⁰ Judas does not repent and return the betrayal money (see Matt. 27:3-5), but rather purchased a farm with the money (1:18). Such a self-serving purchase not only stands in sharp contrast to the way the believers sold their farms and laid the proceeds at the apostles’ feet (see 4:32-35), it also is juxtaposed to Peter, who along with James and John “left everything” to follow Jesus (see Luke 5:11). From the Lukan perspective, Judas’ purchase of property is a symbol of his apostasy from the circle of the Twelve.

Ironically, Judas dies on this same property. There is no hint of suicide here (cf. Matt. 27); the death is apparently the result of divine judgment. It is for this reason, namely that Judas meets his death on this property, that the field is called the “Field of Blood.” And just as the purchasing of a field symbolized Judas’ defection, so also the fact that his property is doomed to perpetual desertion (v. 20) is a sign of his judgment.

Either the authorial audience of Acts was assumed to be familiar with the practice of casting lots or the narrator judged such information to be irrelevant to the telling of the election of Matthias (1:23-26).¹¹ At any rate, the crucial feature of this scene is that the number of the Twelve is full again. Joseph and Matthias are put forward, and the assembly prays for divine guidance in the selection process. Matthias is chosen as the replacement. Note the play on words throughout this scene: Judas has forfeited his share (*kleron*) in the apostolic ministry and gone to his own place (*topos*). In contrast, the lot (*kleron*) now falls to Matthias, and he takes his place (*topos*) alongside the eleven in the apostolic ministry. The scriptures are fulfilled, the circle of Twelve is reconstituted, and the stage is set for Pentecost.

Pentecost (2:1-47)

Just as the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus at the outset of his public ministry (Luke 3:22; 4:1; 4:14), so now the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples at the inauguration of their public ministry. The second chapter of Acts is comprised of three parts: the narrative recounting the Pentecost event itself (2:1-13), Peter’s interpretation of Pentecost (2:14-40), and a summary statement which brings this

section to a close (2:42-47).

The Miracle of Pentecost (2:1-13)

"How to make a bagel? First you take a hole . . . And how to make a narrative text? In exactly the same way."¹² All narratives have gaps in the telling of a story, and what a narrator decides not to say is sometimes as important as what is said. The story of Pentecost is one such story—the story itself fills a gap created when Jesus instructs the disciples to stay in the city for an indeterminate length of time until "they receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon them" (1:8). We now learn in 2:1 that the length of time is fifty days. That time has not been idle time for the disciples—they spent forty days being instructed about the kingdom of God by the Risen Lord (1:3) and an unspecified time electing Judas' replacement.

But gaps still remain within the story itself. In this Pentecost narrative, the reader encounters rather large gaps over the nature of the miracle of glossalalia and the overall background against which the passage should be read. How one chooses to fill those gaps will determine in large measure the interpretation assigned to this particular passage.

What is the nature of the miracle recorded here in Acts 2? The coming of the Spirit is joined by two manifestations—a loud noise and tongues of fire. But the function of these audible and visual signs in this narrative is unclear. When the apostles speak "in other tongues" (v. 4) are they speaking in ecstatic, unintelligible speech (see 1 Cor. 12-14) or are they speaking in the languages of the many foreign peoples gathered together there? There is evidence for both interpretations. Those gathered there heard in their own languages (2:6-7); but others mistook the disciples as drunk (2:13), suggesting that at least for some the apostles' speech was unintelligible. The weight of the evidence seems to favor a miracle of hearing, but the "correct" interpretation is perhaps finally undecidable. Such rich ambiguity may underscore the multi-layered understanding which Luke himself had of this event.

A. R. C. Leaney has suggested that the background of this passage has been understood in various ways as "the reversal of Babel, the proclamation of the New Law, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, of the threat of John the Baptist, and of the promise of Jesus, and an earnest of the spread of the gospel throughout the world."¹³ Each of these options has something to commend itself (as proponents point out with glee), though each (as opponents are equally happy to report) is fraught with exegetical problems.¹⁴

In the Pentecost narrative, the reader, standing at a crossroads, is faced with choosing among these various options. The road signs are few, and the exegetical path one chooses will determine the direction of interpretation when one encounters the next crossroad. Reading the passage against these various backgrounds at times sheds new light; at other times, such choices perpetuate certain misreadings.

Whichever of these paths the interpreter chooses to follow, one oft-neglected

emphasis of this passage remains constant. Alongside the theme of the Holy Spirit empowering the disciples (Acts 1:4) is the counter-theme that Pentecost also hints at the benefits of waiting, of being patient (Luke 24:52; Acts 1:8, 12; 2:1). And so Pentecost celebrates an empowered church as well as a patient God who endures the church's abuse of that power. Filling the interpretive gap left by the Pentecost narrative with an emphasis on the patience of waiting disciples and a faithful God also picks up on a major point of the text from Joel which serves as the basis for Peter's Pentecost sermon.

Peter's Pentecostal Sermon (2:14-40)

Interestingly, Peter's interpretation of the Pentecost experience is nearly three times longer than the narrative account detailing the event itself. The speech divides into two main parts (17-21; 22-36), with an introduction (14-16) and conclusion (37-40).

Peter stands again to strengthen the brothers and sisters (2:14-15). The narrator's introduction (14a) anchors the speech firmly within the narrative framework of 2:1-13. The linguistic connections are strong. Peter raises his voice (*phonē*, v. 14) in harmony with the sound (*phonē*, v. 6) which had drawn the multitudes to the company of believers in the first place. Furthermore, the word Luke uses to describe the address of Peter to the crowd (*apophtheggomai*) is the same used to describe the inspired speech which the Spirit gave to the believers who were speaking in "other tongues" (see 2:4—*apophtheggomesthai*). The effect is to underline not only that the "tongues" at Pentecost are divinely inspired, but that Peter's interpretation of that event is likewise authoritatively inspired.

The introit of the speech itself is a response to the exasperated question which some of them were posing to each other, "What does this mean?" If Peter rejects the mockery of some that the believers are drunk (2:15; see 2:13), in the remainder of his speech, he affirms the understanding of others that the believers are rehearsing the "mighty deeds of God" (2:11). This citation of Joel 3:1-5 functions as the bridge both to what precedes and follows it. Note first of all the remarkably inclusive nature of this citation. This community which Joel speaks about and which Peter says is realized in the earliest Christian community is remarkably inclusive. It is gender inclusive: "your sons" and "your daughters" (v. 17); "my male servants" and "my female servants" (v. 18). It is age inclusive: "your young people" and "your elders" (v. 17). And if we are to take seriously the opening of this citation ("all flesh"), then this community is also destined to be ethnically inclusive.

The Joel citation has been modified by the addition of several significant terms and phrases. That this new community itself is an eschatological sign is underscored by the change from "after these days" (*meta tauta*) in the Septuagint text of Joel to "in the last days" found here in Acts. That this sermon is inspired speech is further underscored by the addition in verse 17 of "God says." Peter has assumed the role of the narrator in this speech, but quickly yields the floor to Joel who, in turn, defers to God. The effect of these narrative layers—"Luke said

that Peter said that Joel said that God said"—is to reinforce the utterly reliable and authoritative character of the speech here. This point is made again by the next Lukan addition to the quotation at the end of verse 18, "and they shall prophesy." This promise is fulfilled not only in the Pentecost event; Peter is fulfilling it himself in this very speech.

The last element added to the Joel citations, "signs" (*sēmeia*, v. 19) is perhaps the most significant addition. The phrase, "wonders and signs" or "signs and wonders" becomes something of a refrain throughout the first half of Acts.¹⁵ Of course, it first recurs in the context of this very speech when Peter refers three verses later to "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and *wonders and signs* which God did through him in your midst" (2:22). Jesus is the primary referent to the prophecy that God would work wonders and signs as eschatological portents of the coming Day of the Lord.

But Jesus is not the only referent. Later in this chapter we find wonders and signs being done through the apostles (cf. 4:30; 5:12). Stephen, one of the seven Hellenists selected to assist the Twelve (see 6:1-6), is described as one who did great "signs and wonders among the people" (6:8). Stephen, then, describes Moses as "having performed wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years" (7:36). Philip also works "signs" (8:6, note the absence of "wonders"). Finally, the Lord grants "signs and wonders to be done by the hands" of Paul and Barnabas (14:3; see 15:12).

Signs and wonders, then, accompany the ministries of the leaders of God's community in unbroken succession, from Moses to Jesus, to the Twelve, to Stephen and Philip the Hellenists, to Paul and Barnabas, the leaders of the Gentile mission. Luke is struggling to demonstrate that the early church has been more faithful to the traditions of Moses than other groups making the same claims. Membership in this radically inclusive community is restricted in only one way: "It shall be that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v. 21). The identity of this "Lord" is explored in the second part of this sermon (vv. 22-36), and the call to "be saved" is the focus of the invitation at the end (37-41).

Acts 2:22-36 is marked with several appeals for attention which serve as indicators of rhetorical shifts. This part of the speech forms the following chiasmic structure:¹⁶

- | | |
|---|---|
| (A) the kerygma (22-24) | (A') the kerygma (36) |
| (B) Proof from Scripture
(25-28) | (B') Proof from Scripture
(34b-35) |
| (C) Interpretation of
Scripture (29-31) | (C') Interpretation of
Scripture (34a) |
| (D) The exaltation of Jesus and
the mediation of the Holy Spirit (32-33) | |

The heart of the Pentecost sermon is to be found in verses 32-33. The echoes of these verses reverberate in both directions. First, of course, Peter identifies the

unnamed Christ who “was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption” (2:31) as Jesus (2:32). What distinguishes Luke’s messianic exegesis from that of his Jewish contemporaries is his identification of this Messiah with Jesus.¹⁷ The identification is further strengthened by the use of resurrection language. David foresaw and spoke of the resurrection (*anastaseōs*) of Christ, who is “this Jesus God raised up” (*anestēsen*—32a). These verses also point in the other direction with the link to the exaltation language of “sitting at the right hand” (see 33 and 34).

Finally, the verses serve to link the speech with the Pentecost narrative and its interpretive framework provided by the Joel citation. The reference to the “promise” (*epangelian*) which Jesus “received from the Father” (2:33) recalls the Pentecost event in the same way that Jesus himself anticipated in Luke 24:49: “And behold, I send the promise (*epangelian*) of my Father upon you.” Further, Acts 2:33 identifies that promise as the “Holy Spirit.” That Jesus “poured out this which you see and hear” (2:33) echoes the Joel prophecy (“I will pour out my Spirit”) and explicitly interprets Pentecost as a miracle of both sight and sound.

The conclusion of Peter’s sermon (vv. 37-39) is interrupted by the audience who are cut to the heart and ask Peter and the rest of the apostles, “What shall we do?” (cf. Luke 3:10). The interruption by the audience is a common device in the speeches in Acts and provides Peter with the opportunity to offer a soteriological conclusion to his sermon: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (2:38a). His invitation echoes the preaching of John the Baptist, who preached “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Luke 3:3). He also promises that they too will receive the “gift which is the Holy Spirit” (2:38b). This promise (*epangelia*, see 2:33) is not only for Peter’s audience but for their children and “to all that are far off” (2:39).¹⁸ The final phrase of Peter’s speech, “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him,” takes the last phrase of the Joel citation (2:21) and turns it on its head. The invitation to salvation is reciprocal: Those “who will call upon the name of the Lord” will be those whom “the Lord our God calls to him.”

Narrative Summary (2:41-47)

Luke concludes this section with the first of a series of long summary statements. Some summaries, like Acts 1:12-14, are brief (see 6:7; 8:14; 9:31-32; 11:19-20); others, such as 2:41-47, are longer and more detailed (4:32-35; 5:12-16). These summaries are quite common in the early chapters of Acts and serve a double purpose to divide and connect. They divide the narrative into segments but serve also as connective tissue or “narrative glue” shaping the episodes into a continuous narrative. In that sense, the summaries are “revolving doors” which look back at the previous unit and at the same time anticipate the next scene.

In this particular summary, the first major section of the narrative beginning of Acts is brought to a close. Jesus departs from the disciples, but only after fully instructing them. The circle of the Twelve is restored with the election of Matthias, and the new eschatological community is formed and sealed with the

giving of the Holy Spirit. This new community is marked by gender, age, and racial inclusiveness.

The summary begins and ends with reference to the numerical growth of the community (2:41b; 2:47b). In between, the narrator depicts the shared life of the community, which for Luke is the life of the Spirit. The believers who accepted the word and were baptized now devote themselves to the teaching of the apostles, to the shared life, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. These four elements characterize the life of the Spirit and are illustrated by the examples given in verses 43-47.¹⁹

The Healing of a Lame Man (3:1-4:31)

Acts 3:1-4:31, according to Robert Funk, is a narrative stretch “readily isolated from what precedes and what follows.”²⁰ This section is clearly set off from the rest of Acts by narrative summaries on either side (2:41-47; 4:32-35). The passage itself displays a certain internal coherence and is divided into four segments or scenes which are marked by shifts in space, time, and/or participants. The first two scenes take place in and around the temple: Scene I (3:1-10) is set at the gate of the temple; Scene II (3:11-4:4) is set at Solomon’s Portico. Both these scenes occur on the same day and are united by this common temporal period.

After a nocturnal pause (see 4:5), the second half of the narrative is set more generally in Jerusalem: the council chambers of the religious leaders is the locale of Scene III (4:5-22); the place where the friends of Peter and John are gathered is the setting for Scene IV (4:23-31). Along with these shifts in time and setting, there is also a corresponding shift in terms of participants in these scenes. While these changes in time, setting, and characters provide clear rhetorical markers for dividing the text into four scenes, these segments are also united by several thematic links. The theme of healing is found in every scene, either with specific reference to the lame man at the Beautiful Gate (3:7; 3:16; 4:9-10; 4:22) or to healing in general (4:30). Likewise, references to “the name of Jesus” are found throughout this stretch of narrative on the lips of Peter (3:6, 16; 4:10, 12), the religious leaders (4:7, 17, 18), and the community of believers (4:30). We now turn to examine each scene more closely.

Scene I: At the “Beautiful” Gate (3:1-10)

The opening verses (3:1-2) particularize the general description of the community of believers found in the preceding narrative summary. Two of these apostles, Peter and John, are going to worship in the temple on a specific day at a specific time, the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. With the setting, time, and characters in place, the stage is set for a specific *sign* of healing (2:43; see 4:22).

This beggar sits at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple doing the only thing he knows to do: he begs for alms. But to his surprise, he receives the mercies of God. “Silver and gold have I none,” Peter responds, “but I give that which I do have;

in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (3:6). The name of Jesus Christ is introduced into this story for the first time and will remain the focus of attention throughout this stretch of narrative. The lame man's feet and ankles are made strong, and Peter and John, like Jesus before them (Luke 5:17-26), and Paul after them (Acts 14:8-18), command the lame to walk, confirming and extending the programmatic ministry of Jesus (Luke 7:22).

The once-lame man leaps and praises God (echoing Isaiah 35:6; see also Luke 7:22). A third group of participants, "all the people," who now enter the scene, recognize him as the one who sat for alms (v. 9). For the second time, the Beautiful Gate of the Temple is mentioned. Historical reconstruction has failed to locate this gate. But with this second reference to the Gate, one wonders if the narrator may be less interested in the specific locale and more interested in working a word play between the repetition of "hour" (*hōra*—"hour of prayer, the ninth hour" v. 1) and the Beautiful (*Hōraia*) Gate. Within the semantic domain of *hōraia* is the meaning, "the opportune moment" or "timely" (see Rom. 10:15 quoting Isa. 52:7). Could the narrator be hinting that this ninth hour, the hour of prayer, is the "timely" moment of opportunity for this lame man who sits begging, ironically, at the Gate of Opportunity? Such word plays are certainly not beyond the repertoire of our narrator (see *klēron* in 1:15-26).

Scene II: In Solomon's Portico (3:11-4:4)

The change in locale from the "Beautiful" Gate to Solomon's Portico indicates a scene change (3:11). The pattern of Pentecost is repeated here: A miraculous event (2:1-4; 3:1-10) draws a crowd (2:5-12; 3:11), and Peter delivers a speech (2:14-40; 3:12-26).

The outer frame of the first half of Peter's speech (3:12-16) deals with the healing of the lame man (vv. 12, 16) which is interpreted by the inner frame, a traditional christological kerygma (3:13-15). This kerygmatic statement is arranged in a chiastic pattern:

- A "The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob . . . glorified his servant Jesus" (v. 13a)
- B "whom *you* delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate" (v. 13b)
- B' "But *you* denied the Holy and Righteous One . . . and killed the Author of life" (vv. 14-15a)
- A' "whom God raised from the dead" (v. 15b)

The loaded christological titles, "Servant," "Holy and Righteous One," and "Author of life," along with this traditional kerygma, provide the foundation for the correct interpretation of the healing of the lame man. While some observers of this sign might conclude that Peter and John through their "own power or piety made him walk" (3:12), Peter denies this interpretation and argues rather that "the faith which is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all" (3:16).

"And now, brethren" is the rhetorical clue which marks the beginning of the second half of Peter's sermon (3:17-26). Here Peter extends an invitation to repentance undergirded by various citations of and allusions to scripture. He begins by acknowledging that his audience, though culpable for the death of Jesus, "acted in ignorance, as did your rulers" (3:17). Still, this ignorance produces a guilt which stands in need of repentance (3:19).

The call to "turn again" is accompanied by the promise of a number of benefits (3:19-22). These benefits carry with them the responsibility to listen to the "prophet like Moses" (3:22). The addition of the words "to you" in this quotation from Deuteronomy 18:15-20 in 3:22 is a rhetorical device the Lukan Peter employs to sharpen the challenge to his audience. The speech ends on a salvation-historical note. God, having raised up his servant (see 3:12), "sent him to you *first*" (3:26), hinting at least at the Gentile mission which will soon follow in Acts, led by Peter himself (see Acts 10).

In the concluding verses to this scene (4:1-4), we learn that Peter's speech was not finished, but interrupted. New participants are introduced—priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees—who take Peter and John into custody for "teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (4:2). It is late so their interrogation will have to wait until the morrow. The major temporal break between the first two scenes and the last two does not occur, however, before we learn in a brief aside that "many of those who heard the word believed; and the number came to about five thousand" (4:4). Even in the face of danger, the community of believers continues to add to its numbers!

Scene III: Before the Sanhedrin (4:5-22)

The next two scenes take place on the following day, and a formidable group of Jewish leaders gather for the interrogation of Peter and John (4:6). The apostles are set in their midst, and the inquiry by the Jewish leaders links with Peter's previous speech: "By what power (see 3:12) or by what name (see 3:16) did you do this?" Before recording Peter's response, the narrator reports that Peter was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (4:8), thus fulfilling Jesus' words of encouragement that when his followers are oppressed "the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say" (Luke 12:12). Peter, then, recapitulates his previous speech, echoing the traditional christological kerygma—the one "whom you crucified, God raised from the dead" (4:10; see 3:13, 15), reiterating the rejection of Jesus by his audience—"This one is the stone which was rejected by *you* builders" (4:11, see 3:13, 14), and underscoring the fact that the healing was through "the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (4:10; see 3:16).

Peter introduces a new element into his summary; he identifies the healing as a "good deed" or "benefaction" (*euergesia*—4:9). Later in Acts, Peter will characterize the healing ministry of the earthly Jesus with this same word, "benefaction" (10:38). This word is the technical term associated with the benefactor/client system so prominent in the social structures of the ancient Greco-Roman world. Benefactors gave support, financial and otherwise, to individuals, groups,

and sometimes whole cities. In return the recipients of such benefaction pledged and gave their loyalty to these benefactors.²¹ The disciples here have taken over the role of benefactor, though, like Jesus, that which they have to give—wholeness of life—is far more precious than the typical benefits of “silver and gold.”

This speech causes the Jewish leaders to identify Peter and John as bold, uneducated, and companions of Jesus (4:15). Unable to rebuke Peter and John because the lame man stood beside the apostles as empirical proof of the truth of Peter’s words, they order them outside of the Sanhedrin and take counsel as to what they should do. This scene heightens in tension when the council reaches the conclusion to issue a restraining order to the apostles (4:17).

The apostles are called back in and warned “not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” (4:18). They respond with the boldness the Sanhedrin has already observed: “we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” (4:20). Interestingly, the narrator depicts Peter and John speaking these words in unison (4:19), highlighting the unity of the apostolic witness. The Sanhedrin further threatens them and then releases them, unable to follow through on their threats because of the people (4:21).

This scene ends with a reference to the healing event of 3:1-10 (4:22). The reader learns that the lame man was more than forty years old, though the narrator does not disclose the significance of that reference. Is he old enough to be a reliable witness to the event? Does his age underscore the miraculous nature of the healing of this one who had been “lame from his mother’s womb” (3:2)? The reader must fill this gap.

More significant, perhaps, is the reference to this event as a “sign of healing” linking this miracle closely to the “signs and wonders” done through the apostles (2:43). The Sanhedrin had just acknowledged that this healing was “a notable sign” (4:16). And earlier Peter had made the connection between this man who had been “healed” (*sōzō*—4:9) “through the name of Jesus” and his soteriological conclusion that “there is no other name under heaven given among persons by which we must be saved (*sōzō*—3:12). The use of the word, *sōzō*, which bears the double meaning of “heal” and “save,” suggests that this healing story is more than a miracle devoid of theological content.

The narrator has now added a third perspective on this healing: it is a sign. The healed lame man has become the paradigm of salvation through Jesus’ name in Acts. Just as the blind man who sees in John 9 is the ideal disciple in the Fourth Gospel where believing is symbolized as a kind of seeing, so the lame man who walks of Acts 3 is the symbol of salvation in a story where journey narratives occupy much narrative space, and where the Christian movement is referred to simply as the “Way” (see 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

Scene IV: Reunited with Friends (4:23-31)

The finale to this episode is set in some unnamed place in Jerusalem where the apostles return to “their own” and recount to them what the reader already knows about the threats of the chief priests and elders. This recapitulation

prompts the community to pray with one voice to God in a show of solidarity with their beleaguered colleagues.

The prayer (4:24b-30) begins with an invocation of the Sovereign Creator (see Exod. 20:11; Ps. 146:6 et passim). Psalm 2 is then interpreted in light of the passion of Jesus. The kings—Herod and Pontius Pilate, and rulers—the Sanhedrin (by inference, see 4:5) gathered with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel against the Lord and his Anointed. Of course, even these acts are according to God's hand and plan which he "predestined to take place" (4:28; see 2:23).

This Psalm is also interpreted in light of the present circumstances of the believers. The believers pray that the Lord will "look upon their threats" and grant to his servants "to speak thy word with all boldness" (4:29). The final verse of the prayer is a precis of many of the issues addressed in this episode: "While you stretch out your hand to *heal*, and *signs and wonders* are performed *through the name of your holy servant Jesus*" (4:30).

The entire episode is brought to a close in 4:31. The place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit (recalling the Pentecost experience, 2:1-4). The first part of their petition, "to speak thy word with boldness," is fulfilled. In fact, this theme of speaking the word of God with "boldness" or "openness" (*parrēsia*) is another dominant theme, not only in this episode (see 4:13; 4:29; and here in 4:31) but throughout the book of Acts (see 2:29; 9:28; 13:46; 14:3, 18:26; 26:26; 28:31). Such boldness will surely be needed as the believers face conflict both within and without the community in the next episode.

The Company of Believers: Tensions Within and Without (4:32-5:42)

Attention is turned again by way of a narrative summary (4:32-35) to the shape of this company of believers. Two case studies follow which provide positive and negative examples of how believers dealt with their possessions and commitments within the community. This passage gives an "inside look" into the life of the community. This life within is marked both by great unity of purpose and signs of opposition.

The final episode, 5:12-42, depicts the life of the community from an outsider's perspective. Here many of the themes found in 3:1-4:31 are repeated: the apostles are found healing the sick (5:12-16; cf. 3:1-10), which prompts the religious authorities to arrest them again and to bring before the Sanhedrin for their second interrogation (5:17-42; cf. 3:11-4:22). As the community is marked by unity and tension within, so it is characterized by similar challenges from without.²²

Tensions Within (4:32-5:11)

In 4:32-35, Luke reiterates the point of emphasis of the summary in 2:41-47. But this summary also provides an interesting variation to the themes found in chapter 2. Now, the believers took the proceeds from their sales and "laid it at

the apostles' feet" (4:35). To assume the posture of being at another's feet is a gesture of submission in the Old Testament (Josh. 10:24; 1 Sam. 25:24, 41; 2 Sam. 22:39; Ps. 8:7; 110:1).²³ Luke also employs this language of being at another's feet as a symbol of submission (Luke 7:38, 44, 45, 46; 8:35, 41; 10:39; 17:16; 20:43; Acts 2:35; 10:35; 22:3). So here in 4:35, laying the proceeds at the apostles' feet is more than just a way of taking care of an administrative detail. As Luke Johnson has noted: "When the believers lay their possessions at the Apostles' feet, therefore, they were symbolically laying themselves there, in a gesture of submission to the authority of the Twelve."²⁴ Luke then provides two case studies of this submission to (or subversion of) the authority of the apostles.

Like Paul (Acts 7:58), Barnabas makes a cameo appearance before assuming the center stage of the Gentile mission (4:36-37; see Acts 11, 15). He provides a concrete example of those believers who demonstrated their commitment to the faith and loyalty to the apostles' authority by laying the proceeds from the sale of his property at the apostles' feet (4:35). The narrator supplies several interesting details about Barnabas; he is a Levite (who in the Old Testament had no portion in the land!—see Deut. 12:12; 14:29) and a native of Cyprus. But the most important detail is that the apostles have given him a surname, Barnabas. That the apostles have given this name is another indication that Barnabas has submitted himself to the authority of the apostles. As Johnson notes, "By having from the beginning one of the two great leaders of the Gentile mission express his submission to the Twelve by receiving from them a new name and laying his goods at their feet, Luke is subtly but effectively creating an image in the reader's mind: the image of the Gentile mission is under the authority of the Twelve."²⁵

Also noteworthy is the translation which the narrator provides for Barnabas' name, "Son of encouragement" (4:36). The significance lies less in the etymology of the Aramaic, as it does in the role Barnabas will play later in this story. Barnabas is a sign both of submission to the apostles and of encouragement to fellow believers.

While the Jews plot to kill Saul and the believers are afraid of him and doubt that he is a disciple (9:23-27), Barnabas takes the risk of befriending Paul, bringing him before the apostles, and confirming Paul's Damascus road experience before them (9:27). When the church in Jerusalem hears about Greeks "turning to the Lord" in Antioch (11:19-21), they send Barnabas to Antioch, and he "encouraged (*parakaleō*—see 4:36!) them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose" (11:23). When the disciples decide to send relief "to the brethren who lived in Judea," they send it by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (11:30).

But Barnabas' submission to apostolic authority is not blind loyalty. When he turns his attention to the Gentile mission, he is sent out, not by the apostles, but by the Holy Spirit (13:4; on Barnabas' role in the Gentile mission, see 13:43, 46, 50)! And the active role of Barnabas in the Apostolic Conference (ch. 15) is direct testimony to the way in which he (and Paul) held respect for the apostles' authority in tension with his submission to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This Barnabas who is (not blindly) loyal to the apostles and a continuing source of encouragement to the community (see also 15:36-40) stands in sharp contrast to

the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

Not everyone submitted themselves to the authority of the apostles, as Luke's second case study indicates (5:1-11). Though this story is linked linguistically to the previous two scenes by the words "at the apostles' feet" (5:2), this unit depicts a negative example of community life. Ananias and Sapphira sell a piece of property, but they mock the community's Spirit of unity, and they usurp the authority of the apostles when they lay only a part of the proceeds at the feet of the apostles.

Peter assumes the role of the prophet when he confronts Ananias with the conspiracy (5:3). Like Judas, Ananias has fallen prey to Satan (5:3; cf. Luke 22:3), and like Judas, Ananias will not live to enjoy the material gains of his deceit (5:5; cf. 1:17-18). Though Ananias has not lied verbally, the act of conspiracy itself *falsifies* the Holy Spirit.

The remainder of Peter's questioning suggests that Ananias and Sapphira were not required to dispose of their property in this way, but could retain *authority* over it (5:4). But by taking this duplicitous action, they did in fact usurp the authority of the apostles. The offense was not simply against the community, Peter argues; it was against God. The problem was not simply a human one; it had serious spiritual dimensions and, as Ananias soon found out, serious repercussions. Upon hearing Peter's words, "he fell down and died" (5:6).

After the disposal of Ananias and after an interval which the narrator describes as "about three hours" (5:7), Peter confronts Sapphira in what resembles a juridical trial. The story drips rich with irony because the reader has knowledge which Sapphira does not possess; the conspiracy is broken—"the jig is up." Unknowingly, she compounds the conspiracy with a verbal lie. Yes, she tells Peter, they sold the land "for so much" (5:8). Peter's role as prophet becomes even more active when he predicts that this one who conspired against the community and God with her husband would now suffer the same fate as he (5:8). And the final note of irony: Sapphira falls dead at Peter's feet. She who had feigned to lay her possessions at the apostles' feet now literally does fall at Peter's feet. The submission to apostolic authority which she failed to give while alive she now gives permanently in death! This grizzly story fulfills the threat of Peter's earlier sermon: "every one who does not listen to that prophet will be destroyed from the people" (3:23). No wonder that "a great fear came upon the whole church and all who heard of these things" (5:11)!

Tensions Without (5:12-42)

This third and final summary (5:12-16) which describes the Jerusalem church recalls a previous episode (3:1-4:31) in several ways. First, there is the setting of Solomon's Portico, which was the site of Peter's speech and the apostles' arrest (3:11-4:4). Second, the other half of the believers' prayer that "signs and wonders" be performed (4:30) is now fulfilled when the narrator reports: "Now many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles" (5:12). Finally, the healing of one man in chapter 3 has now been generalized so

that people carried their sick into the streets (5:14-15), where the apostles continue their benefaction (see 4:9), and "they were all healed" (5:16). And, of course, the narrator does not miss an opportunity to record that "more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of men and women" (5:14). This summary is, however, distinct from the previous two in at least one important way. In contrast to the previous summaries (2:41-47; 4:32-35), "which looked inward at the internal life of the community, Luke's new summary looks outward at the public effect of the apostles on the Jewish people."²⁶

The public character of this summary scene is presumed in the closing episode of the chapter, 5:17-42. The reader now learns of another response to the apostles than that of the people who "held them in high honor" (5:13). The high priest and the party of the Sadducees were "filled with jealousy" (5:17). This response also explains further the timidity of the people who dared not join the believers (5:13).

There is also remarkable redundancy between 5:17-42 and Acts 4:1-22. Both include the arrest of the apostles, their appearance before the Sanhedrin, short speeches which highlight the apostolic witness to Jesus and their commitment to obey God rather than the Sanhedrin, and the decision to release the apostles with the warning not to preach in Jesus' name. Variations in detail between these two accounts serve to heighten the tension of the narrative between the believers and the religious establishment. How will the church respond to these challenges from without?

In this closing episode, the conflict broadens; all of the apostles are placed in prison, not just Peter and John (cf. 4:3). This scene also adds the new dimension of divine intervention with an ironic twist. The narrator winks at the reader when he reports that the apostles are released from prison by an angel, whose very existence the Sadducees deny (see 23:8)! On the next morning, the officers find the prison guards standing watch over an empty cell (5:23). The liberated apostles are found teaching in the temple as they were instructed to do (5:20), and they are quietly returned to the Sanhedrin (5:26-25).

The stage is set for the second interrogation (5:27-32). The old charge of "teaching in this name" (cf. 4:7) is coupled with a new reaction by the Sadducees to the accusation that the apostles' teaching is intended to "bring this man's blood upon us" (5:28). The stakes have been raised considerably since the last confrontation. Peter responds with a confession similar to the one he made at the first interrogation (see 4:19): "we *must* obey God rather than people" (5:29). But now what was a conditional sentence becomes a divine imperative. And the duet of Peter and John now becomes an apostolic chorus led by Peter!

They then employ the christological kerygma typical of the previous speeches (2:23-24; 36; 3:13-15; 4:10): "The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree" (5:30). But rather than calling down this man's blood upon the Sadducees as the high priest feared, the apostles insist that the exalted Jesus is the Leader and Savior who gives repentance and forgiveness of sins (5:31). The speech concludes with the apostles' reaffirming in unison their role as witnesses along with "the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who

obey him" (5:32).

The apostles' insistence on the culpability of the religious leaders in Jesus' death, the need for Israel's repentance, and the reference to the gift of the "Spirit" (in which the Sadducees also did not believe—see 23:8) now cause the Sadducees not merely to be annoyed (see 4:2) but rather to be enraged and to want to kill them (5:33). A Pharisaic member of the Council, Gamaliel, who was "held in honor by all the people," swiftly stands up and orders the apostles taken outside. In this tense moment, he offers a brief speech marked by restraint and caution. Citing the historical examples of Theudas and Judas the Galilean, who were leaders of revolutionary movements which "came to nothing," Gamaliel advises the council that "if this plan or this undertaking is merely of humans, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them" (5:38-39).²⁷

Of course, Luke's reader already knows from the divine intervention, the miraculous healings, and other signs and wonders that "this plan" and "this deed" are, indeed, "of God." The only conclusion for the one who would identify with the narrator's point of view to draw is that the Sanhedrin has already been found opposing God! (5:39). Just as the angel had intervened on behalf of the apostles in freeing them from prison, so now the agent of intervention is a human one who compels by the wisdom of his argument.

So the Sanhedrin took Gamaliel's advice and released the apostles (5:40). Again, the religious leaders charge them not to speak in the name of Jesus (see 4:18), but the conflict is heightened as the threats turn into beatings. Once again, the apostles boldly defy the Sanhedrin's instructions; every day in their expressions of corporate worship, publicly in the temple and privately at home (see 2:46), the apostles "did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (5:42). This plan and this deed must surely be of God!

On this passage, Richard Pervo has written: "... observe what Luke has accomplished within the compass of twenty-five verses: a frightening arrest, a marvelous delivery, a thrilling trial, and suspense galore. Two concise speeches enliven the narrative. Despite the escalation of real and potential violence, witness goes consistently on."²⁸ That faithful witness continues, even when in the story of Stephen (6:11-8:1) the persecution moves beyond the stages of threats and beatings to martyrdom. But that is another part of the story

Conclusion

In these early chapters, first impressions go a long way in shaping the reader's response to the apostles as a group. This *primacy effect* is a typical feature of narrative beginnings and, according to Meir Sternberg, is "the sequential manipulation of the reader's attitudes and sympathies, norms and hypotheses."²⁹ By characterizing the disciples in a generally positive light at the beginning, the narrator has shaped the reader's response to the disciples for the rest of the narrative. The reader is so impressed by this initial exposure to the disciples that questionable behavior in later parts of the narrative is overlooked or absorbed into the reader's otherwise positive attitude toward the apostles. Philip will have

to fulfill their assignment to take the gospel to Samaria; Peter will vacillate in his dealings with the Gentiles. But this primary effect causes the reader to preserve these positive first impressions for as long as possible, even in the face of conflicting evidence.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times"—so opens Charles Dickens' classic novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. Are these words not also an apt description of the opening chapters of our "Tale of Two Cities"? The followers of Jesus shared all things in common and were of one accord. They proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ boldly and openly, and the church added daily to its numbers. It was the best of times. But it was also the worst of times. This story is not one of a simple "idealized" utopian Christian community. Turmoil brewed within the community. One of the twelve had betrayed Jesus and abandoned his share in the ministry, creating a void in the apostolic leadership. Two followers lied about their gifts to the church and were struck dead for their apostasy. Externally, the Jewish leaders persecuted the apostles, imprisoning them, threatening them, and finally beating them. It was the worst of times.

Insuring that the reader gains access to the story world is a crucial strategy of narrative beginnings. Just as the end of a narrative should function to exit the reader from the story world to the "real" world, so the beginning of a text should provide access from the world of the "flesh and blood" reader to the world of the text. In most narratives, then, beginnings serve to frame the story being told. The literary frame of a narrative—its beginning and ending—like its counterpart in art, marks the boundaries of the artistic work and separates it from the space of the real world which surrounds it. But often in a powerful narrative that distinction between real and depicted world blurs, and we find ourselves living out the story. The opening chapters of Acts speak a mighty word to us and invite us to ponder just how deeply we must be prepared to delve and whether or not we wish to risk our minds and hearts, if not our souls, in the reading and, ultimately, the doing of the Word.

¹On the whole notion of the unity of Luke and Acts, see the forthcoming volume by Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of "Luke-Acts"* (Minneapolis: Fortress, forthcoming). To accept the view that Acts is the best "commentary" on Luke and vice versa is not necessary to accept Henry Cadbury's notion that the two works were actually "a single, continuous whole."

²On the notorious problem of identifying the "reader" in literary studies of biblical texts I am attracted to Mary Ann Tolbert's discussion of the "authorial audience" in *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), pp. 52-55.

³See D. W. Palmer, "The Literary Background of Acts 1:1-14," *New Testament Studies*, 33 (1987), 427-38. For other Hellenistic parallels to Acts, see now the first fruits of the Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti project in Utrecht, published by P. W. van der Horst: "Hellenistic Parallels to the Acts of the Apostles: 1:1-26," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 74 (1983), 17-26; "Hellenistic Parallels to the Acts of the Apostles (2.1-47)," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 25 (1985); "Hellenistic Parallels to Acts

(Chapters 3 and 4)," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 35 (1989), 37-46.

⁴See, e.g., Polybius, *History*, II.1.4-8, III.1.5-III.3.3; see also his explanatory note in the fragments of Book XI; Diodorus Siculus, I.4.6-5.1; Philo, *Life of Moses*, II.

⁵For a similar rhetorical device, see also Josephus, *War*, I.76, *Antiquities* 1.100; Arrian, *Anabasis* 5.11.4; John 3:15-16.

⁶For details, see Mikeal C. Parsons, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplementary Series*, Vol. 21 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987).

⁷See R. F. O'Toole, "Activity of the Risen Jesus in Luke-Acts," *Biblica*, 62 (1981), 471-498.

⁸Talbert, *Acts*, Knox Preaching Guides (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), pp. 6-7.

⁹The shift in tense from imperfect to present also supports the view that the first half of the quotation is addressed by Peter's story of Judas and the second quotation anticipates fulfillment in the election narrative. On the various ways of understanding the relationship of this Old Testament citation to its surrounding narrative, see Jacques Dupont, "La Destinée de Judas Prophétisée par David (Actes 1,16-20)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 23 (1961), 41-51.

¹⁰I am indebted to L. T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*, SBL Dissertation Series, Vol. 39 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 179-181, for much of the argument in this section.

¹¹On the practice of casting lots, see, e.g., Prov. 16:33; Num. 26:55; 1QS 5:3; Livy 23.3.7.

¹²Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen Press, 1983), p. 127.

¹³A. R. C. Leaney, "Why There Were Forty Days between the Resurrection and the Ascension in Acts 1, 3," *Studia Evangelica* IV (TU 102), 419.

¹⁴On the various solutions to the problems confronted in the Pentecost narrative, see the insightful comments by Jacques Dupont, "The First Christian Pentecost," *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. John R. Keating (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 35-60.

¹⁵On the significance of the signs, see Leo O'Reilly, *Word and Sign in the Acts of the Apostles* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università, 1987); also the as-of-yet unpublished work of my colleague, Robert B. Sloan, "'Signs and Wonders': A Rhetorical Clue to the Pentecost Discourse."

¹⁶I have slightly modified the chiastic structure noted by Gerhard A. Krodel, *Acts*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1986), p. 83.

¹⁷See Donald Juel, "Social Dimensions of Exegesis: The Use of Psalm 16 in Acts 2," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 43 (1981), 544-545.

¹⁸There is a rich ambiguity in this phrase "to all that are far off." It may be a temporal reference to future generations, or a spatial reference to diaspora Jews living in areas beyond Jerusalem and Judea, or an ethnic designation referring to Gentiles who will now be included in God's mercies of salvation. In fact, from the narrator's perspective, all of these are true and will, in varying degrees, be fulfilled by the narrative's end.

¹⁹For the ways in which 2:43-47 provide illustrations of the activities listed in 2:42, see Johnson, *Literary Function of Possessions*, pp. 183-190.

²⁰Robert W. Funk, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Sonoma, Cal.: Polebridge, 1988), p. 83. Funk proposes a very helpful surface structure of Acts 3:1-4:31 which I have utilized here with slight modification. The interpretation of that "surface organization" is mine.

²¹See, e.g., Frederick Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New*

Testament Semantic Field (St. Louis: Clayton, 1982).

²²For this and other "echo effects" in Acts 3-5, see Robert Tannehill, "The Composition of Acts 3-5: Narrative Development and Echo Effect," *Society of Biblical Literature 1984 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent Richards (Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1984), pp. 229-237.

²³Johnson, *Literary Function of Possessions*, pp. 201-202.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 202.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 204.

²⁶Krodel, *Acts*, p. 124.

²⁷On the historical difficulties associated with these two references, see Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. Hugh Anderson et al. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), p. 257.

²⁸See Richard I. Pervo, *Luke's Story of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), pp. 27-28.

²⁹Meir Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1978), p. 96.

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