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### The Significance of the Progress Reports in the Book of Acts

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROGRESS  
REPORTS IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

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A Thesis Presented to the faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Exegetical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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## CHAPTER I

### SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

#### The Problem

This paper proposes to investigate theologically and philologically several passages in the Book of Acts. The texts which form the object of this study have often been called "progress reports" and will usually be designated by that name throughout the paper.

The name has been applied most often to six verses from Luke's hand (Ac. 6:7; 11:21; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31). Several others have vied for election to that circle of progress reports, and some have occasionally been nominated. They could easily be multiplied at the whim or fancy of the interpreter. This paper confines its attention to three of the passages, which read, "The Word of God (of the Lord) grew and multiplied (increased in strength)" (Ac. 6:7; 12:24; 19:20).

The name given to the family of which these passages are prominent members is quite apt. They occur at fairly regular intervals and mark the stage of progress reached in Luke's narrative. They punctuate the history and focus the reader's attention on what is really taking place.

Sometimes they are called "summaries" (Sammelberichte). And they certainly do summarize, although commentators

have never agreed whether they sum up the preceding context or the following or serve as transition from the one to the other.

These passages are instances of a striking and unusual treatment of the familiar and nearly shopworn phrase, "the Word of God." The progress reports sound off key to modern ears attuned to hearing the phrase in more familiar contexts. But they are interesting for more weighty reasons, too. The Word of God looms large in Luke's theology. To understand him at this point is to have an important clue to his whole thought. Luke appears to write each report as an editorial remark, guiding the reader to a deeper understanding of the narrative, and giving testimony to his own interests and penchant.

In the mid-twentieth century eschatology and history are burning issues. It is tempting to ask Luke some modern questions, as unfair as that may be. This paper makes no attempt to relate in a systematic way Luke's theology of history and modern issues. It is merely an effort to listen obediently to what Luke has to say through the progress reports. As much as interest in twentieth century theological problems prompted this study, no systematic relationships have been explored or enunciated.

#### The Plan

This paper has a simple enough plan. The following three chapters focus attention on the progress reports

from different vantage points.

Chapter Two studies the reports by way of their vocabulary. The phrase, "the Word of God (of the Lord)," is traced in broad outline from the Old Testament to the New, and special attention is accorded Luke's own usage. Luke uses the phrase more often than any other writer in the New Testament. This fact is partially understandable on the basis of Luke's manifest interest in missions and is compatible with his whole outlook. For Luke, as for every other inspired writer, the proclamation of the Church is powerful and vibrant with the living presence of the risen Lord Himself. By the verbs of the progress reports Luke places the Word into redemptive history in a direct line with Israel and Jesus Christ. The progress reports witness that the Lord is moving triumphantly forward toward His goal, the Transformation of all things (Ac. 3:21).

Chapter Three deals with the literary structure of the book of Acts. It seeks to demonstrate the importance and the meaning of the progress reports by elucidating their structural relationship to the rest of the book. It is shown that they are editorial remarks, that clearly indicate Luke's intention as an author. The summaries punctuate and articulate the history. They report in summary fashion the entire action and success of the budding Church.

Some little space in this third chapter is allotted a brief survey of secondary sources with regard to Luke's point of view as an author. His work can best be understood

as testimony to the gracious fact that the Word of God has passed from the Jews to the Gentiles, among whom Luke had been numbered. His whole history is a paean of praise to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who in the course of time had become his God.

The formulation in which Luke articulates his real purpose and interest as an author is the progress report. For Luke the Word of God stands for the missionary proclamation in which Christ is present with saving power, gathering a New Community and marching in triumphant procession from Jerusalem to Rome, from Jew to Gentile, from a small corner of an isolated Oriental country to the very ends of the earth. Luke tells his story in the conviction that all this is God's act and not the product of any human hand.

Chapter Four turns its attention to Luke as a writer of history. He is no mean chronicler of past deeds and words, writing only to preserve events from being lost in the trackless wastes of time. He reports the facts together with his belief and conviction concerning the facts. Luke ardently desires to be an evangelist in both parts of his authorship. He bears witness to Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, who is present in the missionary proclamation of the young Church. He testifies that the Church is the New Israel, God's new instrument for working out His purposes in history. The Church turns her attention to the present and expends her efforts in missionary activity.

## The Results

Some few conclusions concerning the meaning of the progress reports are derived from this study. First of all, the success of the Church is God's own progress as He continues on His way toward His final goal, the New Creation. Israel in the Old Testament was God's saving instrument through which He acted and spoke in power and promise. Jesus, the Son of God, fulfilled the task of Israel in His earthly career. The Church, which proclaims the Gospel, is the locus of the saving activity of the risen Lord. The Word of God will continue to increase until the Parousia.

The Church is a missionary force. The entire Christian enterprise and all the activity of the missionary Church is summed up by Luke in the pregnant phrase, "the Word of God." The proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the task of the Church with reference to the world.

The success of the Christian mission is sure. The primitive Church knew schism within and persecution without. The earliest congregation was not immune to hypocrisy and deceit. She also had her fair share of heroes, great men and true. Luke pleads with his readers to remember that the church does not stand or fall with her human leaders of whatever size or shape or stature. He writes in the conviction that the mission cannot fail and will not, because God is at work, giving the increase.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PROGRESS REPORTS CONSIDERED LINGUISTICALLY

Any interpretation of the progress reports with a claim to credibility must be not only theologically possible but also linguistically probable. This paper turns its attention to a brief overview of the vocabulary of the progress reports.

#### The Word of God in the Old Testament

It is generally agreed that the Old Testament usage of the phrase, "Word of God," lies behind and informs the usage of the New Testament. "Word" in the Old Testament therefore receives first treatment because of its logical and chronological priority.

The etymology is important and informative. The most important Old Testament equivalent of  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  is  $\aleph \beth \daleth$ .  $\aleph \beth \daleth$  is the fundamental and classic equivalent of  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  in the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.<sup>1</sup> So the remarks made in this section will refer to  $\aleph \beth \daleth$  and not necessarily to any other vocable. Etymologically the basic meaning of  $\aleph \beth \daleth$  seems to be the back or the background of any thing

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<sup>1</sup>Albert Debrunner, Otto Procksch, Gerhard Kittel and Hermann Kleinknecht, " $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ ," in Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, begründet von Gerhard Kittel, herausgegeben von Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1942), IV, 90. Hereafter the dictionary is cited as TWZNT.

or event.<sup>2</sup> Nothing in itself is a  $\bar{\eta} \bar{\nu} \bar{\eta}$ , but everything has a  $\bar{\eta} \bar{\nu} \bar{\eta}$ , that is to say, its background and meaning in a conceptual sense.<sup>3</sup>

The word and the speaker stand in the closest possible relationship. However, at times the word seems to be a meaningful and powerful entity in and of itself. It was commonly held in antiquity that a word once uttered had a strange inherent power of its own.<sup>4</sup> When a word has been spoken, it is depersonalized, assumes objective power beyond the speaker, and enters upon its own independent history.<sup>5</sup> But this is not the full picture, and it is surely more than slightly misleading, if not corrected by a further statement. The word has meaning and content in reference to him who spoke it. The ancients conceived a person's word as an extension of his own personal presence.<sup>6</sup> The word is never an independent, objective power.<sup>7</sup> The speaker

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

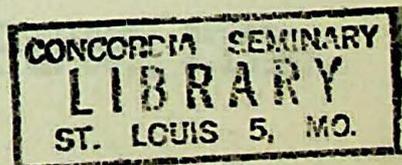
<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>J. Y. Campbell, "Word," in A Theological Wordbook of the Bible, edited by Alan Richardson (New York: The Macmillan Co., c.1950), p. 284.

<sup>5</sup>H. Wheeler Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 170.

<sup>6</sup>G. E. Wright, "The Faith of Israel," in The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, c.1952), I, 366.

<sup>7</sup>TWENTY, IV, 102.



is decisive, for the speaker endows the word with whatever content, meaning, qualification and power it bears.<sup>8</sup>

The basic elements in "word" can be classified as the dynamic and the dianoetic. The word has a double content, both power and meaning.<sup>9</sup> It is characteristic of the word of God in the Old Testament that it designates both the powerful redemptive acts of God and also the inspired prophetic utterance.<sup>10</sup> The twofold content of the word is especially evident in the word of God, where both elements appear most powerfully.<sup>11</sup>

Since it is impossible for one person to express verbally two different ideas simultaneously, the two elements of the word are next considered separately. The word is a power. Especially God's word contains power.<sup>12</sup> His word is always active in character.<sup>13</sup> The word is a creative

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<sup>8</sup>H. D. Wendland, "Logos," in Biblich-Theologisches Handwoerterbuch zur Lutherbibel und zu neueren Uebersetzungen, herausgegeben von Edo Osterloh und Hans Engelland (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1954), p. 358.

<sup>9</sup>Otto Procksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, c.1950), p. 469.

<sup>10</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, "Der Begriff des Wortes Gottes in Neuen Testament," in Glauben und Verstehen, Gesammelte Aufsätze (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1954), I, 269. Hereafter the essay will be cited as Begriff des Wortes.

<sup>11</sup>TWENT, IV, 91.

<sup>12</sup>Begriff des Wortes, p. 269.

<sup>13</sup>Ethelbert Stauffer, New Testament Theology, translated by John Marsh (New York: The Macmillan Co., c.1955), p. 266.

power calling into being this world and the new creation (Is. 55:11).<sup>14</sup>

The emphasis on the power and activity of the word in the Old Testament is to be attributed in part to the fact that the matter or thing described is not distinguished sharply from the word itself.<sup>15</sup> The modern American and European habit of opposing word and deed is far from the Hebrew mind. The man of old Israel saw in words more than something that differs from the actual matter. For the Israelite the matter and the event inhere in the word.<sup>16</sup>

With respect to the dynamic element *λόγος* depends on the Old Testament. In the Septuagint and the other Greek translations of the centuries before the New Testament the Greek *λόγος* encountered the Hebrew  $\aleph \beth \daleth$  and imbibed a new content. Originally the Greek vocable was overwhelmingly dianoetic in character and value.<sup>17</sup> Only in the Hebrew vocable,  $\aleph \beth \daleth$ , does the power and energy of the word make itself felt with so much vitality that it actually appears as a force that runs a purposeful course in history and is able to give life.<sup>18</sup> It is this

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<sup>14</sup>Procksch, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

<sup>15</sup>Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), I-II, 167f.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>17</sup>*TWZNT*, IV, 91.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

conception of the word that informs the New Testament use of the Greek λόγος .

Yet the word is not merely a blind and mysterious force striking random hammer blows in history and human hearts. The word makes sense and has meaning. Thus even the word of God is a word of instruction to men as it is spoken by prophet, priest and wise man.<sup>19</sup>

Since the word and the object inhere in one another, the word has truth as one of its most important attributes.<sup>20</sup> Truth is conceived as a relationship between the word and the object. In every spoken word there should be a "Wahrheitsverhaeltnis" between the word and the object and a "Treuverhaeltnis" between speaker and hearer.<sup>21</sup>

God's word is always true and God's word always seeks a response of faith in the hearer. As time went on, the word, often accompanied by or borne upon a vision in the early history of Israel, was more and more loosed from that association and developed into the purest expression of revelation.<sup>22</sup>

The dianoetic element frees the word from the darkness which so easily comes to cling to the working of the

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<sup>19</sup>Begriff des Wortes, p. 270.

<sup>20</sup>TWZNT, IV, 92.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

Spirit in the Old Testament.<sup>23</sup> The word and the Spirit are closely bound together in the New Testament. This is not the case in the Old Testament.<sup>24</sup> No prophet has spoken so forcibly concerning God's word as Jeremiah, and yet he never mentions God's Spirit.<sup>25</sup> Word and Spirit are related theologically in the Old Testament in that both contain a dynamic element; but they are theologically distinguished by the fact that the word has a conceptual, dianoetic content, which the concept of the Spirit originally lacked.<sup>26</sup>

In the Old Testament the word is active in several spheres: creation, history and human relationships.<sup>27</sup> Since brief mention has already been made of the activity of the creation-word, the following remarks are confined to history and humanity as spheres of the working of the word.

One of the constitutive features of the word of God in the Old Testament is the constant reference to history, which is conceived as a unity ordered by the acting and the speaking of God.<sup>28</sup> From the days of Samuel onwards the

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<sup>23</sup>Procksch, op. cit., p. 464.

<sup>24</sup>TWZNT, IV, 93.

<sup>25</sup>Procksch, op. cit., p. 464.

<sup>26</sup>TWZNT, IV, 90.

<sup>27</sup>Wendland, op. cit., p. 358.

<sup>28</sup>Begriff des Wortes, pp. 287f.

word of God is the decisive power in the history of Israel.<sup>29</sup> Through the proclamation of His Servants, the Prophets, God directed the course of His people's life.<sup>30</sup> The Word of God in history is both promise and demand, Law and Gospel.<sup>31</sup> The word is filled with dynamite that blasts with hard judgment the great sin of mankind in human history.<sup>32</sup>

The spoken word is the living instrument through which human community and fellowship is realized.<sup>33</sup> The Word is "Anrede," speech to, creating a relationship between the speaker and the person addressed.<sup>34</sup> The whole relationship of God with man can be described in terms of speaking and hearing. God, as the one who reveals and discloses Himself to man, calling men to fellowship with Himself, is said to "speak" with men.<sup>35</sup> It is exactly in His word that God comes close to man in judgment and grace.<sup>36</sup> The record of God's acts and words in history is not merely reportorial, but it is address, verbal confrontation, in which history

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<sup>29</sup>TWENT, IV, 94.

<sup>30</sup>Wright, op. cit., p. 366.

<sup>31</sup>TWENT, IV, 94.

<sup>32</sup>Procksch, op. cit., p. 472.

<sup>33</sup>Wendland, op. cit., p. 358.

<sup>34</sup>Begriff des Wortes, p. 269.

<sup>35</sup>Wendland, op. cit., p. 358.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

comes to life in the word spoken in the present.<sup>37</sup>

It is the unanimous witness of both testaments that God's word is by no means spoken in vain, but is like a seed that shoots up living and fruitful.<sup>38</sup> In His word God is driving forward through all circumstances toward the fulfillment of His work. And God's work is the wonder of the New Creation.<sup>39</sup>

A remark concerning the usage in late pre-Christian Judaism is in place here at the end of the section on the Old Testament. The "memra of the Lord" is, of course, a reverential periphrasis for the "Lord," a usage confined to the Targums.<sup>40</sup> That the word is God's power active in creation often comes to expression in this period.<sup>41</sup> However, the dominant notion is that God's word is the Law.<sup>42</sup>

#### The Word of God in the New Testament

It is not long after one starts reading the New Testament that he discovers that  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  is used to designate what might be called common, profane, non-theological subjects

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<sup>37</sup>Begriff des Wortes, p. 268.

<sup>38</sup>Julius Schniewind, Das Evangelium nach Markus, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, herausgegeben von Paul Althaus (Siebente Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1954), I, 74.

<sup>39</sup>Procksch, op. cit., p. 474.

<sup>40</sup>Campbell, op. cit., p. 284; Begriff des Wortes, p. 272.

<sup>41</sup>Begriff des Wortes, p. 272.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

in many passages. What is said here refers with equal validity to ἔημα, which appears to be used in the New Testament with no discoverable difference in meaning.

In itself, the vocable, "word," is neutral. A word, words or talk can be false, πλαστός (2 Pet. 2:3), malicious or slanderous, πονηρός (3 Jn. 10; cf. Mt. 5:11), unwholesome or evil, ἐκπρός (Eph. 4:29) or empty, κενός (Eph. 5:6; 1 Cor. 3:18 in MS, D). The words of a person can even be as terrible and dangerous as cancer (2 Tim. 2:17).

On the other hand a person's speech and word may be sound or healthy, ὑγιής (Tit. 2:8). The Christian words are correct, since they are reasonable and appeal to sound intelligence, ὑγιαίνοντες (1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13). A word charitably spoken is good, ἀγαθός (2 Th. 2:17). Paul encourages the Colossians to speak gracious words, ἐν χάριτι (Col. 4:6; cf. Lk. 4:22, τῆς χάριτος).

The word or saying is true, ἀληθινός (Jn. 4:37), when it corresponds to the facts. The words of God are true (Rev. 19:9), as the words of Him who sat on the throne are true and trustworthy (Rev. 21:5; 22:6), because what He says will be done.

Sometimes the word stands for mere empty talk as opposed to the deed and the truth (1 Jn. 3:18). The word is weak in contrast to the act and power (1 Th. 1:5; 1 Cor. 4:19,20; 1 Cor. 2:4). Some of the Corinthians had complained that in comparison with Paul's weighty letters and the weakness of his bodily presence, his speech, λόγος, amounts to

nothing, ἔξουθενημένος (2 Cor. 10:10). In other instances the word stands alongside the deed as a complementary equivalent (Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 3:1; 1 Tim. 4:12; Rom. 15:18; 2 Th. 2:17; Lk. 24:19). And there are times when the word is the bearer of miraculous power and the doer of mighty acts (Mt. 8:8,16; Lk. 7:7).

Λόγος is a perfectly good designation of a written document, speech or section of a book, such as the Scriptures (Ac. 1:1; Heb. 5:11; 13:22; Jn. 12:38; 15:25; 2 Pet. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:54). Words are a proper designation for the written works of a prophet (Ac. 15:15; Lk. 3:4) or of a writer of the New Testament (Rev. 1:3; 22:7,9f.,18f.). The written letter is the bearer of the word (2 Th. 3:14). On the other hand, word can designate the spoken word in contrast to the written letter (2 Th. 2:2; 2:15; 2 Cor. 10:10; Ac. 15:27).

Two letters from the pen of Paul illustrate the varied relationships between word and knowledge. The word can contain knowledge and wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8). The word stands next to knowledge as a congenial and correlative complement (1 Cor. 1:5; 2 Cor. 8:7). And the word stands opposed to knowledge (2 Cor. 11:6). Five words spoken with the mind are worth more than a thousand words spoken in a tongue (1 Cor. 14:19), because words uttered in a tongue are not clear and intelligible, μὴ εὐβημος λόγος (1 Cor. 14:9).

Λόγος can designate the subject of discussion, matter or thing in the sense of that about which one speaks (Mk.

9:10; Ac. 8:21; 15:6; 19:38 and perhaps Mt. 5:32). This usage is a Semitism.<sup>43</sup>

The dianoetic element comes to light in some technical uses where the general meaning is that of computation or reckoning. *Λόγος* is the word for an account or accounting. At the judgment seat every one will have to give an account of himself or his actions to God (Rom. 14:12; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5; Lk. 16:2; Mt. 12:36). The town clerk in Ephesus feared that he and the crowd would be called upon by the officials to give an account for disturbing the peace (Ac. 19:20). Peter exhorted Christians to be ready to give an account of their hope to any one who called upon them (1 Pet. 3:15). In the papyri *εἰς λόγον* was a technical term with the meaning, "in settlement of an account."<sup>44</sup> This significance stands behind several passages in the New Testament (Phil. 4:15,17; Mt. 18:23; 25:19). *Λόγος* designates the reason, cause or motive behind an action (Ac. 10:29; 18:14 and possibly Mt. 5:32).

#### The Theological Usage

As in the Old Testament the basic religious relationship of the New Testament is commonly expressed in terms of hearing and speaking, announcing and witnessing. *Λόγος*

<sup>43</sup>Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

<sup>44</sup>W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, "*λογος*," in A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1957), p. 479.

is a designation of God's revelation, His command, word or commission. The Word is God's elder revelation, the Old Testament. The singular, *λόγος*, designates a particular passage, promise or command of the Old Testament (Jn. 12:38; Mt. 15:6; Rom. 9:9; 13:9; 1 Cor. 15:54; Gal. 5:14; Mk. 7:13; Heb. 2:2). Word can mean prophecy (2 Pet. 1:19), revelation (Jn. 10:35), purpose or plan (Rom. 9:6) of God without explicit mention of any particular passage or words. God created the world by His word (Heb. 11:3; 2 Pet. 3:5) and has by the same powerful word stored up the creation for judgment (2 Pet. 3:7). Only Luke uses the plural, *λόγοι*, as designation of the message of a prophet (Lk. 3:4; Ac. 15:15; cf. Ac. 20:35).

#### Jesus and the Word

The Logos is related with special closeness to Jesus. It is important to note that the New Testament never reports that the *λόγος* or *ἔφημα* "came" to Jesus. The phrase, "the word of God (of the Lord) came," is met repeatedly in the Old Testament as a formula of prophetic inspiration. The Word of the Lord came to Samuel (1 Sam. 15:10), to Gad, David's seer (2 Sam. 24:11), to Jeremiah (Jer. 1:2; 2:1; 7:1), to Hosea (Hos. 1:1), and to other prophets. The formula of prophetic inspiration appears only in Luke in the New Testament and only in his pre-history. In the Nunc Dimittis Simeon implies that the *ἔφημα* of the Lord had come

to him (Lk. 2:29). The highly stylized, formal, and somewhat regal introduction to the ministry of John the Baptist climaxes in the declaration: ἐγένετο ἔφημα θεοῦ ἐπὶ Ἰωάννην (Lk. 3:2).

Luke's use of the prophetic formula signifies that he places Simeon and John the Baptist into the Old Testament, pre-Christian, prophetic period.<sup>45</sup> That "the word of God" is never used of a special direction or revelation from God to any individual in the New Testament, except in the pre-history, suits perfectly the primitive Christian conviction concerning the finality and exhaustiveness of the revelation which is in Jesus Christ.<sup>46</sup> For the early Church the word of God has received a new content and character from the moment of the coming of Jesus.

The New Testament does know of revelation to individuals, but the old prophetic formula is studiously avoided. Paul went up to Jerusalem by revelation, ἀποκάλυψις (Gal. 2:2). Luke reports that the Spirit (Ac. 16:6) of Jesus (Ac. 16:7) directed the course of Paul's itinerary in Asia Minor. Paul was told by an Angel of God that no lives would be lost among the crew on the storm-tossed ship (Ac. 27:23f.). The Lord directed Paul in a vision one night (Ac. 18:9), as He had previously revealed His will to Peter in a trance (Ac. 10:10).

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<sup>45</sup>TWENT, IV, 114.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

Nor does the New Testament say that the word of God ever came to Jesus. The *φωνή* at Baptism and the Transfiguration was not a commissioning of the prophetic pattern but was confirmation and strengthening. It has its analogy not in the prophetic formula of the Old Testament but in the *זִיַּב מִן* of Judaism.<sup>47</sup>

It is questioned whether Jesus Himself ever used the vocables, "word" or "word of God." In the New Testament all the synoptists record the parable of the seed and the soil (Mk. 4:13ff.; Mt. 13:18ff.; Lk. 8:11ff.). This is the only place where Matthew and Mark report that Jesus Himself employed the term, *ὁ λόγος*. The difficulty is compounded for interpreters by the allegorizing explanation here attributed to Jesus, which very neatly suits the experiences of the apostolic community.<sup>48</sup> Interpreters hesitate to draw a conclusion from this parable about Jesus' use of *λόγος*. At any rate, the parable reflects the confidence that the word is the historical Christ-event.<sup>49</sup>

Luke has two further instances of *λόγος* in the mouth of Jesus (Lk. 8:21 and 11:28). The parallels of the first (Lk. 8:21) record the vocable, *δέλημα*, rather than *λόγος*. Since we cannot be sure which Aramaic term Jesus employed,

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 123f.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

no conclusion can be drawn from this occurrence. Luke alone records the other case (11:28), "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." The lack of synoptic parallel and the paucity of other evidence that Jesus employed the vocable, *λόγος*, combined with the fact that the early Christians frequently spoke of hearing the *λόγος* make it both possible and probable that the term is an intruder, while it still reflects for Luke the term that Jesus actually used.<sup>50</sup>

Jesus' word is a part of a greater whole. His words are viewed together with His acts and are always seen in the light of His death and rising.<sup>51</sup> The eschatologically new thing that has arrived with the coming of Jesus is no entity with independent existence and substantiality alongside and outside of His person. Jesus is not merely a teacher of the rabbinic pattern who developed a teaching, trained a circle of disciples, and handed down a tradition. The New Covenant has made its debut not in a doctrine, not with words, not in a new-fangled theology, but in His blood, in His person, in the historical event which He is.<sup>52</sup>

#### The Word as the Christian Kerygma

That which is most often meant by the phrase, "the

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

Word of God," in the New Testament is the Christian kerygma.<sup>53</sup> No perceptible difference in meaning exists among the phrases, ὁ λόγος, ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου, ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, as a comparison of Acts 6:2 and 6:4 shows. Luke-Acts has sixteen of the thirty New Testament occurrences of λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ with the meaning, "Christian message." Λόγος τοῦ κυρίου appears six times in Acts and twice elsewhere in the New Testament. The kerygma is designated simply λόγος forty times in the New Testament, thirteen of which appear in Luke-Acts. The primitive Christian proclamation can also be called "word of the reign" (Mt. 13:19), "of salvation" (Ac. 13:26), "of grace" (Ac. 20:32), "of the cross" (1 Cor. 1:18), "of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19), "of truth" (Col. 1:5; Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:15).<sup>54</sup> The word (of God or of the Lord) is the message concerning Christ, which is synonymous with "the Gospel" and "the kerygma."<sup>55</sup>

Paul's epistles abound in references to the λόγος as the Christian kerygma:

The Thessalonians received the word (1 Thess. 1:6. cf. 2:13). The word should speed on and triumph (2 Thess. 3:1). And indeed the word has sounded forth from Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:18). What came to the Corinthians was nothing but the word of God (1 Cor. 14:36); that which is taught among the Galatians is the word

<sup>53</sup>Begriff des Wortes, pp. 279f.

<sup>54</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1951), I, 88. Hereafter this work is referred to as Theology.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., I, 87.

(Gal. 6:6); Paul's imprisonment resulted in more courageous speaking of the word by the brethren (Phil. 1:14). The proclamation given to Paul is the word of God (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2), and it is not fettered even when the Apostle is in chains (2 Tim. 2:9). The mission of Timothy is to preach the word (2 Tim. 4:2). The word is the declaration of the mystery of Christ, for which Paul now lies in prison (Col. 4:3). Paul's divine office is to make known the word of God, the mystery hidden for ages but now revealed, Christ in you (Col. 1:25ff.). The word of truth is identical with the Gospel (Col. 1:5; Eph. 1:13). What God had promised long ages ago He has made known in His word through the kerygma entrusted to Paul (Tit. 1:2f.). The content of the λόγος is "that Christ came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15).<sup>56</sup>

The living and abiding word of God which accomplishes the new birth (1 Pet. 1:23) is nothing but the gospels word (1:25); the word implanted in the proclamation rescues the lives of men (Jas. 1:21).<sup>57</sup>

The power and vitality of the Christian kerygma derives from the fact that it has as its content nothing but Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Word (Jn. 1:1,14). Luke 12:8 interprets a verse of Mark (8:38) in such a way that it shows that the person of Jesus is contained in His word.<sup>58</sup> The friends and relatives of Jesus are they who do God's will, who hear His word and keep it (Lk. 11:28; 8:21; Jn. 15:14). Thus the closest relationship to Jesus is established by one's attitude toward the word. Jesus is God's last word (Heb. 1:2), and so He can rightly claim to speak

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<sup>56</sup>TWZNT, IV, 116.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>58</sup>Begriff des Wortes, p. 274; R. Newton Flew, Jesus and His Church (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), p. 59.

in God's name (Mt. 5:22,28,32,34,39,44: "But I say. . .").

Jesus is the content of κηρύσσειν and the κήρυμα. He proclaims light to the people and to the Gentiles through the Church's preachment (Ac. 26:23). Paul preaches Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:23). The Apostle rejoices that Christ is proclaimed whether in pretense or sincerely (Phil. 1:15ff.). Philip the Evangelist preached Christ to the Samaritans (Ac. 8:5). Paul preached Jesus in Corinth (1 Cor. 11:4), as he had at Damascus (Ac. 9:20; cf. 19:13). Indeed he preaches not himself but Christ Jesus as Lord (2 Cor. 4:5). Christ Jesus was preached (1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Cor. 1:19) as having risen from the dead (1 Cor. 15:12).

Jesus is the content of εὐαγγελίσειν and the εὐαγγέλιον. Philip spoke to the Ethiopian the good news, Jesus, εὐηγγελίατο αὐτῷ τὸν Ἰησοῦν (Ac. 8:35). God revealed Jesus to Paul that he might preach the Son of God among the heathen (Gal. 1:16). The beaten disciples did not stop teaching and preaching Christ Jesus (Ac. 5:42). The Christians scattered by persecution preached the Lord in Antioch (Ac. 11:20). These suffice to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is the essential content of the kerygma and gospel of the primitive Church.

#### Luke's Special Usage

Now it is time to attempt to characterize Luke's peculiar use of λόγος by taking a closer look at the Gospel

according to St. Luke and the Acts. The words, *λόγος*, *λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ*, and *λόγος τοῦ κυρίου*, occur more frequently in Luke-Acts than in any other writing of the New Testament. The explanation for this phenomenon is probably to be sought in Luke's interest in missions.

In Acts the word of God is the missionary preaching whose content is Jesus Christ and Him alone.<sup>59</sup> The Word of God is not the Old Testament (Ac. 17:11; 11:1), but it is the word concerning Jesus, to whom the Old Testament points a prophetic finger.<sup>60</sup> Acts records the speaking (*λαλεῖν*) of the word (4:29,31; 11:19; 13:46; 14:25; 16:32), its proclamation, *καταγγέλλειν* (13:5; 15:36; 17:13), *εὐαγγελίζεσθαι*, (8:4; 15:35), and teaching, *διδάσκειν* (18:11). Thereupon some hear the word, *ἀκούειν* (4:4; 13:7,44; 19:10), receive it, *δέχεσθαι* (8:14; 17:11), and thereby glorify the word, *δοξάζειν* (13:48). The growth, *αὐξάνειν*, of the word will be treated separately.

The *διακονία τοῦ λόγου* (Ac. 6:4) has caused difficulty among the interpreters. The phrase evidently means "proclamation of the Gospel."<sup>61</sup> The *διακονία τοῦ λόγου* is the content of the Apostolic office, and the unalterable

<sup>59</sup> TWENT, IV, 116.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Adolf Harnack, The Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries, translated by F. L. Pogson, edited by H. D. A. Major (London: William and Norgate, 1910), p. 337.

content of that office is testimony to Jesus.<sup>62</sup> Servants of the word are by no means repeaters of a tradition made up of sayings; they are not Tannaites.<sup>63</sup> They are eyewitnesses who testify to the Christ-event.<sup>64</sup> This is clear from the prologue of Luke's prior treatise. The ἄπ' ἀρχῆς κούβηται have become ὑπηρεταὶ τοῦ λόγου; these two are related functions. That they are eyewitnesses is a decisive presupposition for the service of the word. They know the περὶ αὐτῶν that have happened; that is, they are eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ, of whom the word is witness.<sup>65</sup>

Luke's witness to the power of the word is so striking that some have been led to remark that the word in Luke acquires a "mystical independence."<sup>66</sup> The word becomes materialized and nearly achieves hypostatization, says Harnack.<sup>67</sup> On this view the ministry of the word (6: 4) may mean that the word of God is the master of the apostles.<sup>68</sup> But such a conjecture lacks proof.

The power and liveliness attributed to the word are

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<sup>62</sup>TWZNT, IV, 116.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>66</sup>Harnack, op. cit., p. 348.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 337 n.

completely explicable on the basis of the personal presence of the risen Lord in the kerygma proclaimed by the young Church. While scarcely anyone disagrees that the exalted Jesus is the content of the missionary proclamation, a small but important group of passages continues to puzzle interpreters. They are the progress reports.

The progress reports with which this paper is concerned read as follows:

Acts 6:7, κὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἤρξανεν, καὶ ἐπληθύνετο ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν μαθητῶν.

Acts 12:24, ὁ δὲ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου ἤρξανεν καὶ ἐπληθύνετα.

Acts 19:20, οὕτως κατὰ κράτος τοῦ κυρίου ὁ λόγος ἤρξανεν καὶ ἴσχυεν.

The passages have been variously exegetized. As stated above, Adolf Harnack finds in Luke-Acts the beginning of the materialization of the word of God, so that it achieves a mystical independence and separate existence as a thing or person apart.<sup>69</sup> He adduces two passages as supporting his conjecture, including a progress report (6:7 and 6:4). He believes that ὁ λόγος is the regular term for the content of the new religion.<sup>70</sup>

Henry J. Cadbury lists λόγος as a designation of Christianity.<sup>71</sup> He denies that λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ (τοῦ κυρίου) or

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., pp. 337, 348.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>71</sup>"Names for Christians and Christianity in Acts," in

ὁ λόγος is hypostatized as a person in Acts, but it is a concrete thing and appears to designate not merely the preaching but the whole Christian enterprise, a usage which is especially clear in the progress reports.<sup>72</sup>

In his sprightly little commentary R. R. Williams interprets the progress reports as descriptions of the wide preaching of the Gospel.<sup>73</sup> But almost all commentators are of the opinion that the verses include more than the proclamation. A. W. F. Blunt says that the phrases refer to the effect of the proclamation.<sup>74</sup> And H. J. Holtzmann thinks that the word of God is shorthand for "the results of the word of God."<sup>75</sup> In exegizing the passages as references to the proclamation of the Gospel and the acceptance it won in human hearts, Hans Hinrich Wendt summarizes the thought of many of the interpreters.<sup>76</sup>

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The Beginnings of Christianity, edited by F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: The Macmillan Co., 1933), V, 391.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>The Acts of the Apostles, in Torch Bible Commentaries, edited by John Marsh, Alan Richardson and R. Gregor Smith (London: SCM Press, 1953), p. 106.

<sup>74</sup>The Acts of the Apostles, in The Clarendon Bible, edited by Thomas Strong, Herbert Wild and George H. Box (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 194.

<sup>75</sup>Die Apostelgeschichte, in Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament (Dritte Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1901), p. 52.

<sup>76</sup>Die Apostelgeschichte, in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, begründet von H. A. W. Meyer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1913), p. 199.

R. Newton Flew, who has evidently learned and borrowed from Harnack with regard to the word of God, takes another tack. The word of God is a divine message of mighty power which constitutes the Church.<sup>77</sup> So he conceives the growth of the word of God as a synonym for the growth of the Church.<sup>78</sup> Alphons Steinmann hesitates to pin down the precise content of the phrase, but it appears that the Church has a slight edge in his opinion.<sup>79</sup> Erwin Preuschen likewise interprets the progress reports as descriptions of the growth of the Church.<sup>80</sup>

It is not surprising that commentators find in the progress reports a reference to the parable of the seed and the soils. Richard Belward Rackham<sup>81</sup> and Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer<sup>82</sup> believe that the word of God which grows and multiplies is the seed that was sown (Mt. 13:31f.; Lk.

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<sup>77</sup>Op. cit., pp. 154, 122.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>79</sup>Die Apostelgeschichte, in Die Heilige Schrift des Neuen Testaments, herausgegeben von Fritz Tillmann (Vierte Auflage; Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1954), p. 65.

<sup>80</sup>Die Apostelgeschichte, in Handbuch zum Neuen Testament (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1912), p. 36.

<sup>81</sup>The Acts of the Apostles, in Westminster Commentaries, edited by Walter Lock (8th edition; London: Methuen and Co., 1919), p. 528.

<sup>82</sup>Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles, translated by Paton J. Gloag, revised by William P. Dickson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, c.1883), p. 127.

8:11). Elsewhere Rackham declares that the progress reports describe the Church's growth.<sup>83</sup> They are not pious platitudes but joyful testimony to the great development within the Church.<sup>84</sup>

According to Ernst Haenchen the growth of the word of God is a synonym for the spread of the kerygma of Jesus Christ.<sup>85</sup> The word of God is the divine act of salvation which traveled to Rome from Jerusalem in the thirty years covered by Acts.<sup>86</sup> It impresses the reader as a living entity; a modern would express the same thought by saying, "Christendom grew."<sup>87</sup> Thus Simon Magus, who was denied a share in the word, was excluded from Christianity.<sup>88</sup> Both ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου (Ac. 19:20) and ἡ πίστις τοῦ θεοῦ (Ac. 19:20 D) mean the same thing: Christendom.<sup>89</sup> Haenchen appears to vacillate somewhat in his definition. Elsewhere he says that the word of the Lord (of God) is the Christian missionary proclamation and the Church which lives by and for

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<sup>83</sup>Op. cit., p. 222.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>85</sup>Die Apostelgeschichte, in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar ueber das Neue Testament, begruendet von Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer (10. Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, c.1956), pp. 92f.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 508, note 3.

that preachment.<sup>90</sup> And he believes that the word of the Lord is the growing missionary Church, for which there had not yet been coined the title, "Christendom."<sup>91</sup>

Whatever the precise content of the phrase, word of God, in connection with the progress reports may possibly be, Haonchen focuses attention on the importance and the significance of these passages as a whole. He reminds the reader that the chain of events of which the Book of Acts treats does not have any human hero nor even the Church as subject but the high and holy God Himself.<sup>92</sup> Luke pictures the entire course of the Church in apostolic times as an act of God, and a redemptive act of God at that.<sup>93</sup> The indomitable growth of the Christian Church is a sign of God's blessing which rests upon her.<sup>94</sup>

#### The Action

Surprisingly enough, the verbs that Luke employs in the summaries, although Gerhard Kittel did not think them theologically pregnant enough for comment in his dictionary, turn out on closer inspection to be quite as significant as the subject of the action. The verbs suggest an

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 509.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., pp. 90f.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 425.

inner relation among Israel, Christ and the word of God.

The action is variously described in the progress reports:

Acts 6:7,  $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\xi\alpha\lambda\epsilon\nu$ , καὶ ἐπληθύνετο

Acts 12:24,  $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\xi\alpha\lambda\epsilon\nu$  καὶ ἐπληθύνετο

Acts 19:20,  $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\xi\alpha\lambda\epsilon\nu$  καὶ ἴσχυεν

Robert Morgenthaler brings these together with several other occurrences in the Lukan corpus:<sup>95</sup>

Luke 1:80,  $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\xi\alpha\lambda\epsilon\nu$  καὶ ἐκραταιούτο

Luke 2:40,  $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\xi\alpha\lambda\epsilon\nu$  καὶ ἐκραταιούτο

Luke 13:19,  $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\xi\alpha\lambda\epsilon\nu$  καὶ ἐγένετο

Acts 7:17,  $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\xi\alpha\lambda\epsilon\nu$  καὶ ἐπληθύνθη

The verb  $\kappa\upsilon\acute{\xi}\alpha\lambda\omega$ , used in all three progress reports, is evidently the key word. This verb is used in Luke-Acts of the growth of plants (Lk. 12:27 v1; 13:19). It twice turns up describing the development of infants (Lk. 1:80; 2:40). Luke employs the verb once in reference to a multitude (Ac. 7:17). This verb is not found in Luke's version of the parable of the sower, where he has used  $\rho\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$  instead.

In every case  $\kappa\upsilon\acute{\xi}\alpha\lambda\omega$  stands not alone but coupled with another verb. Morgenthaler sees this group as another fine example of the law of doubling by which Luke shows that the events which he describes together with their results are witnesses to the truth. He is further concerned

<sup>95</sup> Die lukanische Geschichtsschreibung als Zeugnis: Gestalt und Gehalt der Kunst des Lukas (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1949), I, 27.

to show the importance of geography in Luke's scheme. With two exceptions the group of passages deal with spatial, geographical remarks. One exception is a quotation from the Septuagint (Ac. 7:17), the other is a mixed figure from Q and Mark (Lk. 13:19). And so he calls the list of passages a "small but instructive group."<sup>96</sup> His solution is not quite comprehensive enough. He is embarrassed by Acts 7:17, since it does not bend to his schematization.

The instruction is to be found not in a spatial but in a heilsgeschichtlich direction. Acts 7:17 is the clue and not the stumbling block. The coupled verbs witness that Israel (Ac. 7:17), John the Baptist (Lk. 1:80), Jesus Christ (Lk. 2:40), and the word of God (Ac. 6:7; 12:24; 19:20) stand in a continuous historical line.

#### Recapitulation

קָוַן in the Old Testament has two sides, the dynamic and the dianoetic. The New Testament inherits the powerful, creative force of the Hebrew vocable. Λόγος is a garden variety word, pressed into service on countless occasions by New Testament authors. In both Old and New Testament the basic religious relationships are expressed in terms of hearing, on the one hand, and speaking, witnessing and announcing, on the other.

The witness of the whole New Testament, and not of

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

John alone, is that Jesus is the Word. The theological entity most frequently designated by *λόγος* in the New Testament is the Christian kerygma, the gospel, through which the risen Lord declares Himself and in which He is present in might and mercy.

In the progress reports the word of God most probably stands for the Christian missionary proclamation and the Church which lives by and for that preachment. That the success of the Church is expressed in the phrase, "The Word of God grew and multiplied," points the reader away from the human agents to the God who acts.

The action of God has a history. He created Israel and Israel grew and multiplied. After long centuries He raised up John the Baptist, and he grew and increased in strength. God spoke His ultimate word in His only Son, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who grew and increased in strength. When Jesus' career had run its appointed course, God did not retreat from the world and leave it to its own designs. But according to His design He continues to act and speak through His Son in the word proclaimed by the Church, forging ahead toward the New Creation.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE PROGRESS REPORTS IN THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF ACTS

The place of the progress reports in the literary structure of Luke-Acts and in the context of the author's purpose reveals something of their importance and meaning. Luke-Acts is not the work of some incompetent amateur. It is a carefully planned literary unity. Luke is no mean author.

#### The Unity of Luke-Acts

Acts, though unique in early Christian literature, has much in common with the Third Gospel. Indeed, the two parts of Luke's authorship together form one work.<sup>1</sup> Acts is not at all an independent writing penned by the author of the Third Gospel. Nor is Acts an appendix or an after-thought.<sup>2</sup> Luke is witnessing to a mighty event in two stages, both of which are supernatural and told parallel with one another.<sup>3</sup> The parallelism is substantial and deliberate, constructed on a framework of prophecy and

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<sup>1</sup>Martin H. Franzmann, "Introducing the New Testament," mimeographed notes (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, n. d.), p. 132.

<sup>2</sup>Henry J. Cadbury, The Making of Luke-Acts (New York: The Macmillan co., 1927), pp. 8f.

<sup>3</sup>R. R. Williams, The Acts of the Apostles, in Torch Bible Commentaries, edited by John Marsh, Alan Richardson and R. Gregor Smith (London: SCM Press, 1953), p. 26.

fulfillment, on the one hand, and on a scheme of recapitulation, on the other.<sup>4</sup>

The content of the narrative of Acts is the continuing career of Jesus Christ<sup>5</sup> working powerfully in the world through His Church and her proclamation.<sup>6</sup> In the last analysis all the words and works of the apostles acting in Jesus' name are deeds of the exalted Christ,<sup>7</sup> who is the central and dominant figure in Acts.<sup>8</sup>

Luke reports in his writings the history of salvation in Jesus Christ. The story is not simple but complex. In His earthly life Jesus was the salvation of many men. After He had been done to death on the gallows, God raised Him up and appointed Him the one in whom there is salvation now. Luke, in order to do full justice to the

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<sup>4</sup>F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity (London: The Macmillan Co., 1922), II, 180. Hereafter this set is cited as BC.

<sup>5</sup>Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, Die Apostelgeschichte, in Das Neue Testament, Deutsch, herausgegeben von Paul Althaus (6. Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1951), V, 1.

<sup>6</sup>Alfred Wikenhauser, Die Apostelgeschichte, in Das Neue Testament, herausgegeben von Alfred Wikenhauser und Otto Kuss (2. Auflage; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, c. 1951), p. 7.

<sup>7</sup>Alphons Steinmann, Die Apostelgeschichte, in Die Heilige Schrift des Neuen Testaments, herausgegeben von Fritz Tillmann (4. Auflage; Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1934), p. 2.

<sup>8</sup>Franzmann, op. cit., p. 134.

salvation which has appeared in Jesus, has written a double volume.<sup>9</sup>

Besides sharing subject matter, the two parts of Luke's work also have a common purpose. In Acts, as in the Gospel, Luke remains an evangelist, proclaiming the saving act of God in Christ.<sup>10</sup> Luke traces in Acts the unified, purposeful history in which Christ becomes the Lord of the world.<sup>11</sup>

#### Luke as an Editor and Literary Man

No one before Luke had undertaken to tell the continued history of God's salvation. Luke's second treatise is a product of a new generation who no longer appear to expect the imminent end, who think historically, that is, who attribute to the interim a peculiar importance.<sup>12</sup> The lack of predecessors in treating this same post-Easter period gave Luke the opportunity to exercise his individuality to a degree not permitted in composing the Third Gospel.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ernst Haenchen, Die Apostelgeschichte, in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar ueber das Neue Testament, begründet von Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer (9. Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1913), p. 92.

<sup>10</sup>Martin Dibelius, Studies in the Book of Acts, edited by Heinrich Greeven, translated by Mary Ling (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), pp. 107, 185.

<sup>11</sup>Beyer, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>12</sup>Haenchen, op. cit., pp. 86f.

<sup>13</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., pp. 192-3.

Luke was an editor in writing Acts. The complicated, comprehensive, varied material demanded selection, arrangement and interpretation, if a unified narrative was to rise from the mass of facts and traditions.<sup>14</sup> More than likely, the primitive Christian communities preserved stories of some events that had occurred among the, stories of healings, conversions and martyrdoms.<sup>15</sup> History is not simple storytelling. An author who wishes to write history must mold his material into a significant sequence and bring to light the meaning involved in the events.<sup>16</sup>

The impression that Luke-Acts makes on its reader is that the author was an artist and a literary man, whose treatment of his sources bears the marks of orderliness, explanation, simplification and illustration.<sup>17</sup> The entire modern criticism of Luke-Acts agrees on the high literary quality of the Lukan writings.<sup>18</sup>

The recognition of the essential unity of Luke-Acts

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Sir Edwyn Hoskyns and Francis Noel Davey, The Riddle of the New Testament (3rd edition; London: Faber and Faber, 1947), pp. 96, 195.

<sup>18</sup>Robert Morgenthaler, Die lukanische Geschichtsschreibung als Zeugnis: Gestalt und Gehalt der Kunst des Lukas (Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1949), II, 31.

leads to the conclusion that the light from each of the two parts can be used to enlighten the other.<sup>19</sup> That Luke is an editor and literary man means that the reader must take Luke's remarks, and especially his repeated statements, seriously. It is not the mark of literary men and careful editors that they allow themselves the luxury of senseless remarks and repetition of trivia. The repeated progress reports cannot, therefore, be dismissed lightly.

#### The Plan and Purpose of Acts

The purpose and plan of Acts have puzzled many. The points of view assumed by commentators vary considerably. Some assert that Luke's purpose was the transmission of historical data.<sup>20</sup> Others attribute to him an apologetic interest in showing the political harmlessness of the Christian religion.<sup>21</sup> Some see in Luke a great universalist who was attacking sectarianism and particularism.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps Luke-Acts is a defense of Christianity as the true

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<sup>19</sup>Edgar J. Goodspeed, An Introduction to the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1937), pp. 180f.

<sup>20</sup>Hans Hinrich Wendt, Die Apostelgeschichte, in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar ueber das Neue Testament, begründet von H. A. W. Meyer (9. Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1915), pp. 12f.

<sup>21</sup>Wikenhauser, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>22</sup>A. W. F. Blunt, The Acts of the Apostles, in The Clarendon Bible, edited by Thomas Strong, Herbert Wild, and George H. Box (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), pp. 11f., 164; Frank Stagg, The Book of Acts: The Early

religion of Israel, as the Judaism of the true Messiah, as God intended it to be.<sup>23</sup>

### The Occasion

The occasion for writing and the point of view from which Luke authored his work are informative for understanding his purpose. Luke was a Greek and formerly a heathen. It is not difficult to understand the interest of one born a heathen in the growth of the mission to the heathen.<sup>24</sup> The story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch hints at missionary advances and progress to the southwest of Jerusalem, to what is now called the Sudan. Yet Acts records the missionary advance from Jerusalem westwards to Rome. Luke selected this stream of progress, because he had been a Greek and a heathen. For Luke the question about the heathen was the question about the grace of God.<sup>25</sup> The Gospel had come to Luke because Israel had hardened its heart. But God so directs history that His salvation in Jesus Christ comes even to the most remote in

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Struggle for an Unhindered Gospel (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, c.1955), passim.

<sup>23</sup>A. H. McNeile, An Introduction to the Study of the New Testament, revised by C. S. C. Williams (2nd edition; London: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 96. See also BC, II, 180.

<sup>24</sup>Wikenhauser, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>25</sup>Morgenthaler, op. cit., I, 193.

space and time and race and heredity.<sup>26</sup> Luke writes as one thankful for the grace of God in bringing the heathen to a knowledge of Jesus Christ.

### History and Evangelism

Luke records facts. He is attempting in Acts to reproduce from traditional material the continuous account of an actual period in history.<sup>27</sup> The narrative Luke has constructed intends to supply the reader with information about the past.<sup>28</sup> None of the Synoptists but Luke is interested in supplying a life of Jesus.<sup>29</sup>

But Luke did not intend to be a mere reporter and chronicler of events as they happened. In fact, his work is altogether too skimpy and fragmentary to be a mere history of the Church or of apostolic times.<sup>30</sup>

The author of Luke-Acts uses the historical technique and sets himself historical goals, but ultimately he is not an historian but a preacher.<sup>31</sup> The question concerning the authenticity of the speeches in Acts should not cloud

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>28</sup>Cadbury, op. cit., p. 299.

<sup>29</sup>Haenchen, op. cit., p. 88.

<sup>30</sup>Wikenhauser, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>31</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., p. 183.

one's perception of their primarily kerygmatic character.<sup>32</sup> The governing principle of Acts is the idea of witness.<sup>33</sup> Luke is a herald and evangelist.<sup>34</sup> In his work historical fact is wed to kerygmatic interpretation, so that his whole literary effort is both testimony and history.<sup>35</sup> The entire work aims not so much at accurate reporting as at helping the reader to understand what the invasion of the world by the Church means, so that the reader recognizes and cherishes the Gospel and the success it achieves among the nations.<sup>36</sup>

The kerygmatic aim of the author is enunciated and elucidated by a variety of expressions. From his writings it is clear that Luke is a faithful theologian who recognizes and records the hand of God in events.<sup>37</sup> Luke proclaims Jesus Christ as the God-appointed Savior from every need for every person in every situation.<sup>38</sup> This concern

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<sup>32</sup>Bertil Gaertner, The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation, translated by Carolyn Hannay King (Uppsala: C. W. K. Beerup, 1955), p. 7; Dibelius, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>33</sup>Morgenthaler, op. cit., II, 7-24.

<sup>34</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., pp. 134f.

<sup>35</sup>Morgenthaler, op. cit., II, 96.

<sup>36</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>37</sup>Beyer, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>38</sup>Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, Das Evangelium nach Lukas, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, op. cit., III, 2f.

for proclaiming Jesus as Savior for the whole world colors the entire Lukan authorship.<sup>39</sup>

Luke is convinced that the history he preaches has the power and energy to build and strengthen the Church.<sup>40</sup> The primary interest of the author is the mighty march of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.<sup>41</sup> Both volumes of Luke's work report the history of the powerful and triumphant progress by which Jesus Christ becomes Lord of the world.<sup>42</sup>

#### The Theme

That Acts 1:8 states the theme for the second part of Luke's work is not often disputed. The statement outlines the book in summary fashion: Jerusalem, Chapters 1-5; Judaea and Samaria, Chapters 6-12; from mission to universal Church established in Rome, Chapters 13-28.

Some difference of opinion exists concerning the meaning of the theme. To say that the theme introduces the Book of Acts as the record of the progress of universalism over particularism<sup>43</sup> is to attribute humanitarian and humanistic ideals to Jesus and Luke that scarcely do justice to the strength and depth of their intention.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Haenchen, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>41</sup>Wikenhauser, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>42</sup>Beyer, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>43</sup>Stagg, op. cit., passim.

Other interpretations of Luke's theme do more justice to the evidence. One exegete advances the idea that Jesus is the Savior from every need.<sup>44</sup> Another suggests as a motto for the Lukan authorship, "Nothing can stop the Gospel."<sup>45</sup>

Another group of interpreters suggest as theme or controlling idea the confession that the Gospel actually progressed the way that God desired and directed.<sup>46</sup> Another way of putting the same idea is to state the theme as "the power of the Spirit of Jesus in the Apostles manifested in history."<sup>47</sup> More accurately stated, the theme is the idea of the continued working of Jesus into history.<sup>48</sup>

#### The Structure of Acts

The outlining of Acts is governed by the conclusions reached by considering theme, purpose, and occasion. The difficulty in outlining Acts has long been noticed.<sup>49</sup> To many commentators it seems that Acts ought to fall into two sections, I Peter and II Paul, or I Primitive Community

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<sup>44</sup>Rengstorf, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>45</sup>Williams, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>46</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>47</sup>Harnack, op. cit., p. xviii.

<sup>48</sup>Steinmann, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>49</sup>Wendt, op. cit., pp. 4f.

and II Paul's mission.<sup>50</sup> But Luke has clearly not intended to write a biography of the great men in the early Church. He has made no effort to characterize different people in their sermons. He makes a distinction between a mission sermon in a synagogue and one delivered before a heathen audience, but no distinction between a sermon of Peter and one of Paul.<sup>51</sup> Luke omits large portions of Paul's life and missionary activity. To Luke only those evangelizing activities were important which headed westward and led at length to Rome.<sup>52</sup>

However, Luke is not guilty of a haphazard, chance arrangement of memoirs and stories in constructing Acts. The basic, controlling element in the architectonic structure of Luke's literary production is the geography.<sup>53</sup> The theme (Acts 1:8) lays down the order in which the history proceeds.<sup>54</sup> Luke has selected his materials carefully and told the story of the progress of the Gospel from Jerusalem, through Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor and Europe, to Rome.<sup>55</sup> The scheme adopted by the author allows him to portray the

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.; Blunt, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>51</sup>Haenchen, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>52</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>53</sup>Morgenthaler, op. cit., I, 159-188.

<sup>54</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., p. 175; Blunt, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>55</sup>Steinmann, op. cit., p. 11; Foskes-Jackson and Lake, op. cit., II, 176.

gradual expansion and progress of the Gospel in its career from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.<sup>56</sup>

The concluding verses (Ac. 28:30f.) are the perfect ending for the Lukan authorship. It is a triumphant cry celebrating the unhindered preaching of the Gospel in Rome, which emerged from the original Dominical commission and overcame every obstacle and threw down every barrier on the way.<sup>57</sup> The conclusion needs no expansion and asks for no sequel. Alphons Steinmann aptly remarks,

The conclusion fits perfectly the acknowledged aim of Acts. Once the Gospel had thrust its way to the heart of the Roman Empire, Luke's history had arrived at its goal and resting place: the Jews had rejected the Good News and even tried to stamp out its preachment; but now in the center of the heathen world the proclamation of the Gospel found a permanent home and an appreciative audience.<sup>58</sup>

"Outline" and "structure" are redolent of frozen stability and are nearly unfit for use as labels of the plan of Acts. The plan of Acts attempts to make clear the progress and march of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, from Jew to Gentile. The whole book witnesses to the continued powerful activity of Jesus Christ through the Gospel proclaimed in the missionary Church.

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<sup>56</sup>Wilfred L. Knox, The Acts of the Apostles (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 83; Harnack, op. cit., p. 275; Wendt, op. cit., p. 369; Steinmann, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>57</sup>Williams, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>58</sup>Steinmann, op. cit., p. 13.

## The Progress Reports

If progress and movement characterize the Book of Acts, then the summaries are more aptly called milestones than keystones, supplied by Luke to perform certain functions in his history. According to his own claim Luke is an editor (Lk. 1:1-4). When he came to write Acts, he had before him a vast array of materials covering a complicated thirty years of Church history. The summaries belong to the stage of collection,<sup>59</sup> when the need was felt for links between the traditional episodes and narratives.<sup>60</sup> The summaries are distinguished by their general, typical character<sup>61</sup> from the earlier traditional material derived from popular tradition, which is marked by singularity, individuality and particularity.<sup>62</sup>

The summaries perform a variety of functions. In the first place they fill the gaps left between the stones of the traditional mosaic and thus make possible a continuous narrative.<sup>63</sup> The editorial remarks summarize the action

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<sup>59</sup>Cadbury, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.; Dibelius, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>61</sup>Cadbury, op. cit., p. 58. Hereafter this work will be cited as Making. Dibelius, op. cit., pp. 10, 127; Cadbury, "The Summaries in Acts," in BC, V, 393.

<sup>62</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>63</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., pp. 9, 127; BC, V, 393; Cadbury, Making, pp. 329f.

that has preceded<sup>64</sup> or generalize on the events that happened in the interval between particular events.<sup>65</sup> They may be deductions from a mass of material that Luke sees no reason for including bodily and completely.<sup>66</sup> They serve as connective tissue to transform memorabilia into a meaningful history.<sup>67</sup> The remarks not only summarize the past but form the starting point for the future.<sup>68</sup> Thus they mark the transition to a new phase of the work.<sup>69</sup> They are gateways which divide and yet connect the preceding and the following.<sup>70</sup> Luke employs the summaries to report the stage of progress attained.<sup>71</sup>

By their very nature the editorial summaries are a good indication of the literary purpose the author is pursuing.<sup>72</sup> He uses the remarks to remind his readers of his

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<sup>64</sup>Richard Belward Rackham, The Acts of the Apostles, in Westminster Commentaries, edited by Walter Lock (London: Methuen and Co., 1919), p. 43.

<sup>65</sup>Wendt, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>66</sup>Cadbury, Making, p. 59.

<sup>67</sup>Cadbury, BC, V, 395.

<sup>68</sup>Rackham, op. cit., p. 271.

<sup>69</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>70</sup>Haenchen, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>71</sup>BC, II, 175.

<sup>72</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., pp. 193f.

theme.<sup>73</sup> The summaries are an effective device for underscoring the significance of events recorded in his history.<sup>74</sup> In other words one purpose of the progress reports is to articulate the history.<sup>75</sup>

#### In Conclusion

Luke writes history as a witness to God's grace in carrying the light of salvation from Jew to Gentile, from Jerusalem to Rome. The story that Luke narrates has for its hero and central figure none other than the risen Christ, who speaks and acts in the proclamation of the Church. In the progress reports Luke reminds the reader of his theme. As carefully planned editorial remarks, the progress reports summarize and articulate the entire action and success of the vigorous young Church.

<sup>73</sup>Williams, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>74</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., p. 194; Cadbury, Making, p. 25.

<sup>75</sup>McNeile, op. cit., pp. 97-99.

<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1951), II, 117.

<sup>2</sup>A. Gabriel Robert, Liberty and Empire (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), pp. 47-48.

## CHAPTER IV

### LUKE'S THEOLOGY OF HISTORY

Luke understands Christianity as an event or train of events in history. His presentation of holy history is simultaneously Christocentric and ecclesiocentric. A discussion of Luke's writing of history begins naturally with a consideration of the centrality of the Christ-event.

#### The Center of History

Jesus Christ in the totality of His person and action is the midpoint of sacred history. It might well be argued that Luke sees Christ as the fulfilment also of heathen history and culture.<sup>1</sup> It has been said that the role of Christianity towards religions, Jewish and pagan, is surely not that of destruction but of transformation, fulfilment and redemption.<sup>2</sup> Be that as it may, this chapter deals only with the relationship of Jesus with Old Israel and the Church.

Jesus was salvation come in the flesh. With Him a new

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1951), II, 117.

<sup>2</sup>A. Gabriel Hebert, Liturgy and Society (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), pp. 45-63.

epoch dawned in history, a time of salvation.<sup>3</sup> In Christ God climaxed the long series of events comprising the history of Israel. One theologian neatly comments,

He has reversed the work of Adam, fulfilled the promises to Abraham, repeated the deliverance from bondage, not indeed from Pharaoh but from sin and Satan, and inaugurated the new age and the new covenant.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus was quite conscious of a mission to Israel. He confined His activities to the territory of His people.<sup>5</sup> It was His common custom to visit the synagogue on the Sabbath (Lk. 4:16). The sacred books of the Jews pointed to Jesus, according to His explicit testimony both before and after His resurrection (Lk. 4:18ff.; 24:25ff.). The history of all Israel is the presupposition and the promise of the redemptive activity of Jesus of Nazareth.

The first three chapters of the Gospel impress indelibly on the reader's mind the fact of Jesus' continuity with the people of Israel. In the very beginning of the narrative Luke introduces his readers into the Jewish

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<sup>3</sup>Ernst Haenchen, Die Apostelgeschichte, in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, begründet von Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer (10. Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, c.1956), p. 89.

<sup>4</sup>G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, in Studies in Biblical Theology, edited by T. W. Manson et. al. (London: SCM Press, 1952), VIII, 57.

<sup>5</sup>Hans Conzelmann, Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas, in Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie, herausgegeben von Gerhard Ebeling (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1954), XVII, 164.

temple in the Jewish holy city (Lk. 1:8). And all the action of those grand opening chapters occurs in thoroughly Jewish locales: Galilee, Judaea, Bethlehem (the city of David), Jerusalem and three times the scene of action is the Temple (1:9; 2:27; 2:46).

The first person that occupies the stage in Luke's history is a Jewish priest named Zechariah (1:5). The angel Gabriel announces to a pious Jewish maid that she will mother the scion of the house of David (1:27,32). And the genealogical table recorded by Luke is a roll call of the princes and patriarchs of Jewish history (3:23-38).

Great psalms in the style and best tradition of the Old Testament enrich the story Luke recounts. Nor are these masterpieces the only example of Jewish piety found in the opening pages. According to Jewish law Jesus was presented at the end of eight days for circumcision (2:21). In His twelfth year He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover (2:41ff.); for His parents did everything required in the law of the Lord (2:39). Jesus' parents were Jews who took seriously the laws of their people. And Jesus' instruction in the law had been thorough enough to surprise the teachers in the temple (2:47).

Jewish places, persons and piety form the backdrop for the beginning of the earthly career of the promised Messiah. From the first Luke portrays Jesus as the fulfilment of the Jewish people, religion and history.

But Jesus not only fulfils but also breaks off and finishes a whole stream of tradition. The Old Israel is no longer the normal and natural instrument of God's saving activity in history. The New Israel promised by the history of the old has arrived. The final break between Jesus and the Israelites came at the passion.<sup>6</sup> From that time on the question was put to every single Jew: "Do you wish to belong in the future to the true or to the false Israel?"<sup>7</sup> Luke is quite clear that the time of the new is sharply divided from the old. Even John the Baptist belongs explicitly to the time of preparation. The revelation to John is expressed in a phrase typical of the Old Testament, "The word of God came to John" (Lk. 3:3).

The midpoint is a turning point. It is not uninterrupted continuation of everything that has been since the beginning of the world.

#### The Post-Paschal Present

The Christ-event is past. The earthly career of Jesus belongs to history. It is a part of the humiliation of the Son of God that the passing centuries leave him farther and farther behind.<sup>8</sup> Jesus' earthly career came to an

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Werner Elert, Der Christliche Glaube: Grundlinien der Lutherischen Dogmatik (3. Auflage; Hamburg: Furche Verlag, c.1956), p. 165.

end without visibly ringing in the eschaton.<sup>9</sup>

The history of salvation continues after Christ's departure from earth. The time following the Ascension has a special significance all its own. For Luke the Christ event at the midpoint of history and the Parousia at the end constitute the framework within which the course of history continues.<sup>10</sup> This time between the times is the period of the Church, which must be conscious of the value and dignity of the present. The disciples were impatient to have done with the present and seize the future. But Jesus charges them with the words, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you shall receive the Holy Spirit and you shall be my witnesses to the end of the earth" (Ac. 1:6f.). Attention is diverted from the future to the present time, in which the Church preaches the gospel of salvation to the farthest corner of the earth. Only after the kerygma has gone into all the world will the end come.<sup>11</sup> That the gospel must be proclaimed in all the world is the hidden

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<sup>9</sup>Haenchen, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>10</sup>Wright, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>11</sup>Erich Dinkler, "Earliest Christianity," in The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East, edited by Robert C. Dentan (New Haven: Yale University, 1955), p. 196ff.; Oscar Cullmann, The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology, edited by A. J. E. Higgins (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), p. 159.

motive of Luke's two volumes.<sup>12</sup>

Obviously in the present stage of redemptive history Christ is related to the world in a new way. The resurrection and the ascension intervene between the earthly career of Jesus and the period of the Acts. Since the resurrection and ascension Christ is present invisibly. He is represented in and by His apostles. When the apostles are no longer present, Christ is present in the apostolic witness and in the sacraments of the Church. The function of the apostolic men is witness (Ac. 1:8). It is of the nature of an apostle that he is the representative and bearer of the power and authority of Him who sent him. The Church is no independent entity. It is commissioned to continue the ministry set in motion by Christ.

#### Universal Proclamation

It was not Peter's or Paul's idea to evangelize the nations. Not mental exercises or humanitarian emotions but the hand of God in and through the brute facts of history turned Peter into a missionary.<sup>14</sup> Luke shows that in the narrative of Cornelius (Ac. 10). The zigzag course

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<sup>12</sup>Dinkler, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>13</sup>Martin Dibelius, Studies in the Book of Acts, edited by Heinrich Greeven, translated by Mary Ling (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), pp. 131f.

<sup>14</sup>Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, Die Apostelgeschichte, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, herausgegeben von Paul Althaus (6. Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1951), V, 70.

that Paul follows in Acts 16 demonstrates that it is the Spirit who sends the missionaries to Europe.<sup>15</sup> The universal character of Christianity is the point of the narrative of the baptism of the Eunuch.<sup>16</sup> Full participation in the Jewish community was denied him by the Law (Dt. 23:1). But in Christianity the distinction between a eunuch and a circumcised Jew meant as little as that between a Jew and a Greek.

Philip the Evangelist is treated by Luke in typical fashion. After bringing the Gospel to the Eunuch, Philip has no further decisive significance for the propagation of the Gospel and accordingly disappears from the narrative.<sup>17</sup>

Miracles happen not for their own sake. In Luke's view they are the powerful acts of a gracious God, who thereby advances the mission.<sup>18</sup>

Universalism and missions together constitute the atmosphere pervading Luke-Acts. The early pages of Luke's prior treatise trace the ancestry of Jesus back through generations of human progenitors to Adam, the product of the hand of God (Lk. 3:38). Luke thus designates Jesus as the Second Adam in whom God begins afresh the work He had

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<sup>15</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., pp. 131f.

<sup>16</sup>Boyer, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

begun in Adam.<sup>19</sup> In the miraculous gift of tongues at Pentecost the Risen One lays claim to the faith and following of all mankind.<sup>20</sup> And when Paul in Rome proclaims unhindered the message of the Cross, Luke reminds us with his parting words that in the end the great world power which had nailed Jesus to the cross paid homage to the Crucified.<sup>21</sup> Beginning and ending of Luke's history of the Church bespeak his conviction that Christianity is commissioned to evangelize the nations.

Even the Spirit is a missionary force, because of which a contrast is evident between the Old Israel which degenerated into a "Society for the Preservation of the Law" and the New Israel, which conceived of itself as a "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel."<sup>22</sup>

#### Israel Old and New

In yet another way Luke reminds his readers that the nascent Church is the legitimate successor of Jesus Christ, who was the embodiment and fulfillment of the Israel of God. The career of Christ is reflected in the life of the

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<sup>19</sup>Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, Das Evangelium nach Lukas, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, herausgegeben von Paul Althaus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1952), p.3.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>A. W. F. Blunt, The Acts of the Apostles, in The Clarendon Bible, edited by Thomas Strong, Herbert Wild and George H. Box (London: Oxford Press, 1923), p. 39.

Church by a sort of parallelism.

As Jesus had done, the missionaries of the young Church went first to the Jews. The preachers found their first hearers in the synagogues (Ac. 9:20; 13:14; 14:1; 17:1,10; 18:4,19,26; 19:8, and others). The angry mob at Nazareth dragged Jesus outside the city and would have done away with Him (Lk. 4:28-30). At Lystra a crowd of Jews stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, leaving him for dead (Ac. 14:19).

An even more elaborate scheme of parallelism has been deduced as follows:

The birth of Jesus in the Gospel, through the overshadowing of Mary with the Holy Spirit, is paralleled in Acts by the birth of the Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The ministry of Jesus --healing and teaching--has its counterpart in the ministry of the Church which also consisted in healing and preaching. The passion of Jesus, solemnly prophesied and dramatically carried through, has a partial parallel in the persecutions to which the apostles are subjected, and particularly in the last journey of St. Paul to Jerusalem, in his arrest and trials, and in his terrible experiences in the shipwreck. It may even be held that the resurrection of Jesus has its counterpart in the escape of St. Paul from the terrible storm, and in his safe arrival and unhindered preaching in the mother city of the Empire.<sup>23</sup>

Luke witnesses that the Church is no illicit cult but is the true Israel of God. The truth inescapably revealed through the Resurrection is the key for understanding the

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<sup>23</sup>R. R. Williams, The Acts of the Apostles, in the Torch Bible Commentaries, edited by John Marsh, Alan Richardson and R. Gregor Smith (London: SCM Press, 1953), pp. 26f.

Scriptures (Lk. 24). The Church is the true Israel, for the Old Testament Scriptures belong to the Church.<sup>24</sup> Luke characteristically prefigures the role of Scripture for the Church in the life of Jesus. Jesus referred prophecy to Himself both during His lifetime (Lk. 24:44; 4:21) and following the Resurrection (Lk. 24:27). The Church in the Acts of the Apostles practiced the principle of interpretation taught by Jesus.<sup>25</sup>

Another important and substantial element of Israelite history which plays a prominent part also in the early Church is the Temple.<sup>26</sup> The Temple was the background for much of the infancy narrative. During His ministry it was Jesus' habit to teach in the Temple (Lk. 19:45-48; 21:37f.). The early Church did not forsake the Temple but used to attend regularly for worship (Ac. 2:46; 3:1). Following Jesus' example the disciples found many of their early audiences in the Temple (Ac. 5:21,42).

The relationship between the Israel of the Old Testament and Christ and between Christ and the Church might be explicated with a figure borrowed from Irenaeus, that of recapitulation. The author of Luke-Acts witnesses to the unity and continuity between Israel and Jesus, Jesus and

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<sup>24</sup>Conzelmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 139f.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 142.

the twelve, the twelve and Paul.<sup>27</sup> By his testimony Luke proclaims that the Church has taken the place of the Old Israel in the sacred history monitored by God.

#### The Church in the Plan of God

The primitive Church was conscious of its commission to carry forward the redemptive history. The sermons of Acts testify that Jesus is the culmination of Israelite history by witnessing to the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy in Him (Ac. 2:16; 3:18,24; 8:35; 10:43; 13:23,29, 32,35; 26:22). And the exalted Jesus is one with His Church. That is shown by the thrice quoted statement of Christ, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Ac. 9:5; 22:8; 26:15), when Paul had been relentlessly oppressing the Christian Church.

The will of God is that people repent, be baptized into Jesus Christ, and receive the gift of the Spirit (Ac. 2:38; 3:19,20; 5:31f.), so that they might be saved from their sin (2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38f.) and partake of peace (10:36) and salvation (4:12; 16:31). The proclamation of the Church confronts the will of man with the will of God made plain and clear in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. Missionary preaching with its testimony

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<sup>27</sup>F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity (London: The Macmillan Co., 1922), II, 182.

to God's ultimate act in Christ is the special task of the Church in these times between the times (Lk. 24:47f.; Ac. 1:8). The notion that the Lord will come again only when the Gospel has been preached to all nations (Mk. 13:10) pervades all of the Acts. The Lord commands the Church to make proclamation concerning Jesus (Ac. 1:8; 4:20; 5:20,29; 10:42; 16:10; 23:11).

### Jerusalem and Rome

Geographical place names constitute a significant element in Luke's writing of the history of the Church. The missionaries marched in many directions, scattered by persecution (Ac. 8:1) and sent out by God, to the South (Ac. 8:26) and to the North (Ac. 10), to Caesarea, Damascus, the cities of Phoenicia and Cyprus, Antioch, the villages and the metropolitan centers of Greece and Asia Minor. But Luke lavishes particular attention on the progress from Jerusalem to Rome. Luke could very likely have recorded the Church's growth in concentric circles from Jerusalem to its farthest expansion in all directions. Yet he chose to report the march of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.

Commentators have remarked the obvious propriety of a narrative which sets out from Jerusalem, the historic seat of the old religion, and ends finally in Rome, the heart of the world which was its field.<sup>28</sup> But Acts is not the bare

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<sup>28</sup>E. J. Goodspeed, An Introduction to the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1937), 189.

record of the movement of Christianity from Asia, "the continent of its origin," into Europe, "the continent of its destiny."<sup>29</sup>

The significance of the centrality of Jerusalem in the early chapters of Acts is a part of Luke's apologia for the Church as the true heir of Israel. It has also been suggested that Luke concentrates on Jerusalem as the city to which the Davidic Christ must return regnant and from which the propaganda of the Spirit must go forth.<sup>30</sup>

Rome is always the goal of the progress of Acts. The Lord said to Paul, "As you have witnessed about Me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome" (Ac. 23: 11). From the moment when Christianity reached Antioch, capital of the Roman province of Syria, the goal is never far from sight. The life and administration of the provinces focused in Rome. It has well been said,

The coloniae, or city-settlements composed, under the Empire, mainly of time-expired soldiers, acted, wherever they were placed, as centres of Imperial influence. In every important district the Roman roads provided main arteries of traffic and communication, and the Mediterranean sea-traffic was well organized and protected. . . . Roman jurisprudence was the universal law. The whole impression of the life is that of remarkable unity and centralization.<sup>31</sup>

The unity, of course, was largely illusory, but the

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>30</sup>Amos N. Wilder, "Variant Traditions of the Resurrection in Acts," in Journal of Biblical Literature, LXII, 312f.

<sup>31</sup>Blunt, op. cit., p. 29.

centrality of Rome is incontestable.

Luke's history, telling how they brought the good news from Jerusalem to Rome, witnesses to his conviction that salvation has passed from the Jews to the Gentiles.<sup>32</sup> This is a controlling conception in the structure of Luke's work.<sup>33</sup>

Other cities are important to Luke's scheme and history. The speech on the Areopagus was nearly a failure, but Luke recorded it because of the significance of Athens in his eyes.<sup>34</sup> For Luke Athens was the symbol of all that is Greek; Athens had a feeling for the unknown and a rare curiosity to hear something new.<sup>35</sup> Paul's speech in Athens marked the first momentous encounter of Christian faith and classical culture.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless Luke focuses his attention predominantly on the termini of progress, Jerusalem and Rome. Christianity has burst the bonds of rigid particularism and of nationalism. Jesus is the Savior of the world. He is salvation for all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel (Lk. 2:30-32). As long as

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<sup>32</sup>Robert Morgenthauer, Die lukanische Geschichtsschreibung als Zeugnis: Gestalt und Gehalt der Kunst des Lukas (Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1949), I, 188; Henry J. Cadbury, The Making of Luke-Acts (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 325.

<sup>33</sup>Morgenthauer, op. cit., p. 188.

<sup>34</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., pp. 75f.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

time runs its headlong course, the Good News of Jesus Christ must be proclaimed in all the world.

### Past, Present and Future

Luke differs from the Seer of Patmos. The writer of Luke-Acts turns his eyes not toward the distant future and the life of the world to come but to the recent past and to the present, which he views with a holy joy and a healthy optimism.<sup>37</sup> Speculation is avoided like leprosy. Of all the writers of the New Testament including Paul, Luke says the least concerning the Parousia.<sup>38</sup> He nowhere describes the Parousia or what follows in any detail. Some unwarranted conclusions have been drawn or wrenched from Luke's silence:

In the Acts of the Apostles the expectation of the imminent end no longer plays a role. The parousia of Christ has lost its theological import. The Gospel is on the march throughout the world in an apparently unthreatened continuity of time.<sup>39</sup>

Luke shares the general New Testament hope in the return of the triumphant Christ.<sup>40</sup> He mentions the Parousia explicitly or implicitly several times (Ac. 1:11; 3:21; 17:31; 10:42).

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<sup>37</sup>Alphons Steinmann, Die Apostelgeschichte, in Die Heilige Schrift des Neuen Testaments, herausgegeben von Fritz Tillmann (4. Auflage; Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1934), p. 2.

<sup>38</sup>Conzelmann, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>39</sup>Dinkler, op. cit., pp. 199f.

<sup>40</sup>Williams, op. cit., p. 36.

It cannot be denied that Luke has an eschatology. But he is no impractical, speculative dreamer. Jesus pointed the disciples to the proper understanding of the present and the future. He emphatically denied their request for a timetable of the end, and He pointed them from Israel into the whole wide world.<sup>41</sup> God alone is Lord of space and time, and His lordship He gives to no man. The Church is commissioned to fill all space and time with the preachment of Jesus Christ.

The early Church inherited its eschatology from Israel, but transformed it into Christology and ecclesiology.<sup>42</sup> God has given both present and future into the hands of Jesus Christ (Ac. 2:30,36; 3:15f.; 3:20f.; 4:10-12; 5:31; 10:40ff.). And the resurrected Jesus makes the Church His witness to preach in all the world all the time (Ac. 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 4:20; 5:32,42; 10:41f.; 23:11).

Luke by no means relinquishes hope in the Parousia. It might even be conjectured that he wishes to heighten hope in the imminence of the end by recording the fulfillment of the words of Jesus, "The Gospel must first be preached to all nations" (Mk. 13:10). And on another occasion Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all

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<sup>41</sup>Beyer, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>42</sup>Rengstorf, op. cit., p. 6; Beyer, op. cit., p. 23.

nations; and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).

Luke has written a history in two volumes that testifies to Jesus Christ. Luke is a genuine historian. His former treatise is the first "Life of Jesus" in the historical sense.<sup>43</sup> Luke shows a concern for the passage of time after Christ which could endure indefinitely into the future.<sup>44</sup>

### The Writing of History

Some contrasts with polytheism and classical Greek historiography aid towards understanding what it means that a Biblical writer is an historian.

Pagan, polytheistic man has no real interest in history. Nature is his sphere. His life is clearly and well characterized in the following:

Polytheistic man, borne on the rhythmic cycle of nature, has no primary concern with history; instead his focus of attention is upon the yearly cycle in which life is recreated each spring and the blessing of order re-established. He is 'bound in the bundle of life' with nature, which is the kingdom of the gods, and his existence moves with the natural rhythm.<sup>45</sup>

The Greeks were genuinely concerned with history, but their view is not shared by the Biblical writers. The Greeks conceived history as an impervious and impersonal

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<sup>43</sup>Haenchen, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>44</sup>Id.; Dinkler, op. cit., p. 197.

<sup>45</sup>Wright, op. cit., p. 24.

system with no room for the personal and purposive providence of the Bible.<sup>46</sup> Erich Dinkler summarizes,

From Thucydides to Toynbee the common and connecting assumption has been that history is a rational, intelligible continuity, an integrated nexus or concatenation, operating in a unified world, capable of investigation and illumination by historical method.<sup>47</sup>

The classical Greeks, as much modern scientific historiography, attributed to history shape but not direction. History moves, "like the planets, in perpetual cyclic revolution, an endless wheel of recurrence."<sup>48</sup>

Biblical man focused his attention neither on the cycle of nature nor on the closed harmony of the cosmos, but on what God had done, was doing and was about to do according to His proclaimed purpose.<sup>49</sup> Thus promise and fulfillment are central Biblical themes in the light of which the faithful interpreted their life and all history.<sup>50</sup> The historians of the Old and New Testament saw in the course of history no causal chain of an empirical or mechanical character.<sup>51</sup> Rather history is the workshop of the heavenly

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<sup>46</sup>J. V. Langmead Casserley, The Christian in Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 22.

<sup>47</sup>Dinkler, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>48</sup>Casserley, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>49</sup>Wright, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 25f.

<sup>51</sup>Bertil Gaertner, The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation, translated by Carolyn Hannay King (Uppsala: C. W. K. Beerup, 1955), p. 8.

Craftsman, and time is the means by which He achieves His saving purpose.<sup>52</sup> The whole Bible tacitly assumes that the revelation of the Lord of history is given in and through history; for, as Casserley finely remarks,

Neither in the speculative flights of philosophers--for God is not a concept--nor in the secret illuminations of mystics--for God is much more than warm consolation for the devout--but in the rough-and-tumble of events--for God is the living God and by no means squeamish--does He make Himself known.<sup>53</sup>

In the Biblical view time is no enemy but the very means through which God works out man's salvation.<sup>54</sup> The faithful of Scripture conceive of themselves as existing in a history filled with significance, because God in it and through it revealed Himself as on the way to redeeming all history.<sup>55</sup>

#### Historian and Evangelist

Was Luke an historian? Or was he a mere chronicler or editor? He is certainly far more concerned than the other authors of the New Testament to explore the meanings and explain the motives of the events which he investigates and shape them into a luminous and continuous narrative.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>T. A. Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, c.1954), p. 54.

<sup>53</sup>Casserley, op. cit., p. 230.

<sup>54</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>55</sup>Wright, op. cit., pp. 42f.

<sup>56</sup>Dinkler, op. cit., pp. 195f.

Besides reporting the facts, an author must work out the interpretation of events if he is to be an historian. And this Luke has done.<sup>57</sup> Luke is deserving of the title, "historian," because he did not stop after he had collected traditions. He made every effort to combine his materials into a significant, continuous whole whose meaning would be clear to the readers.<sup>58</sup>

History is much more than a naked chronicle or concatenation of events. History is fact plus significance. Luke has made a highly selective use of the available materials. The traditions, stories, letters, and diaries circulating in the early church dealing with the thirty years from the Ascension to the Roman imprisonment of Paul must have constituted an impressive and bewildering array. Luke chose to record a particular line of action, a selected chain of events, for a quite definite purpose.

Nor is it possible to end here; for Luke is not content merely to write history. He writes a particular kind of history. He wishes to be an evangelist in both parts of his dual authorship. Luke's entire historical work is a proclamation of the Gospel, that is, of Jesus Christ in His double career, earthly and exalted. Luke writes history and sets for himself historical goals, but in the final

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<sup>57</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

analysis he is really a preacher and not merely an historian.<sup>59</sup> The principle of witness governs Acts.<sup>60</sup> In his work Luke has wed historical fact to kerygmatic witness.<sup>61</sup> Luke aims at edification of his reader by proclaiming the story of the successful invasion of the world by the Church.<sup>62</sup> He wants the reader to recognize and trust the Gospel and the success it everywhere achieves.<sup>63</sup>

Luke recognizes and reports the working of the hand of God in events.<sup>64</sup> He preaches Jesus Christ as the God-appointed Savior from every need for every person in every situation.<sup>65</sup> Thus Luke's primary interest is the triumphant march of the Gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, from Jew to every man of the seventy nations.<sup>66</sup> Both parts of his authorship report the history of the progress of the Gospel in and through which Jesus becomes Savior and Lord of the world.

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., pp. 134f., 183.

<sup>60</sup>Morgenthaler, op. cit., II, 7-24.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., II, 96.

<sup>62</sup>Haenchen, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>63</sup>Dibelius, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>64</sup>Beyer, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>65</sup>Rengstorf, op. cit., pp. 2f.

<sup>66</sup>Wikenhauser, op. cit., p. 8. See also Beyer, op. cit., p. 2.

### God's Good Pleasure

According to Luke God's judgment is given in and through history. Luke carefully records the opinion of Gamaliel spoken before the council (Ac. 5:33-39). God had revealed His displeasure with Theudas and Judas by permitting the rebellious rascals to be slain. And their cause perished with them. Christianity will likewise go under, if it is a merely human enterprise. At any rate God will give His judgment in the events of history. Gamaliel suspends judgment and action, so that he may not be guilty of usurping God's prerogative to judge.

Gamaliel's opinion impressed Luke as important and true. And he proclaims the divine origin and leadership of the Christian enterprise by recording its continued success right into the very heart of the Roman Empire, where the Gospel was preached unhindered (Ac. 23:31). Thus God revealed His good pleasure.

### Summary

Luke understands Christianity historically. Jesus Christ is the midpoint and the turning point of a sacred history which takes its beginning with the creation of Adam. After the Resurrection and Ascension redemptive history is carried forward by the Church, which witnesses to Christ in all time and space.

Luke carefully and deliberately describes the progress

of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. He thereby witnesses to his conviction that salvation has passed from the Jews to the Gentiles. When the Savior of the world is preached in the heart of the world, then Luke's history has reached its intended goal.

Luke nowhere speculates about the Parousia. That which engages his attention is the missionary task of the Church in the present. Luke is interested in history, as all the Biblical writers are. And he writes a history aimed at edifying his reader through its proclamation of Jesus Christ in His progress through the world. The success of the Gospel is not the doing of any human hand but is the deed of the Lord of history Himself.

Luke's writing of history is generally propagandistic and clearly hagiographic. He bears witness, as an Evangelist, in both parts of his work, to the history of the acts of God from Adam and the first creation to the end last day and the Apokalipsia. In the center of this sacred history stands the Christ-event; for which all previous history yearned and upon which all subsequent history depends. Old Israel was God's instrument in the pre-Christian era. Jesus, as the quintessential Israel,

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

#### Conclusions

The progress reports are fascinating and exciting, since they quite clearly record Luke's own penchant and testify to his reading of history. The third chapter of this thesis gives good reason for taking seriously the witness of the summaries. It attempts to demonstrate that the progress reports are the pulse of the story, and that they serve as a reliable indicator of the heart of the history. The summaries are of the nature of editorial remarks, which thus illumine the author's purpose and goal. The whole history throws light on the progress reports, and the progress reports cast light on the entire narrative.

Luke's writing of history is patently propagandistic and clearly kerygmatic. He bears witness, as an Evangelist, in both parts of his authorship, to the history of the acts of God from Adam and the first creation to the dear last day and the Apokatastasis. In the center of this sacred history stands the Christ-event, for which all previous history yearned and upon which all subsequent history depends. Old Israel was God's instrument in the pre-Christian era. Jesus, as the quintessential Israel,

was God's Servant during His earthly career. And in the post-Ascension present the Church is God's servant, the New Israel, whose Head and Lord is Jesus, present with saving might and mercy in the Church's proclamation, the word of God.

Nothing in the progress reports contradicts the picture sketched above of Luke's theology of history. Indeed the progress reports can most satisfactorily be interpreted against the background of sacred history. The word of God stands in the stream of redemptive history in a direct line with Old Israel and Jesus. Luke's choice of verbs, doubled for witness, consciously and deliberately sets the word of God into its place in the history of salvation. A study of the vocables alone might not demonstrate that assertion at all conclusively, although even on purely linguistic grounds the conclusion is by no means farfetched. But if the conclusions reached concerning Luke's theology of history are correct, the assertion that the progress reports set the word of God into redemptive history as the successor of Old Israel and the instrument of the exalted Jesus Christ is nearly inescapable and incontestable.

#### Some Questions

Nowhere does this thesis intimate that writers of the New Testament other than Luke share the details of his reading and writing of sacred history. On the other

hand, he has been cast opposite the non-historical polytheists and the Hellenic and Hellenistic historians on the side of the Biblical writers in general. The similarities or the peculiarities among the Biblical writers have sometimes been considered separately, but rarely have both sides of the issue been faced fairly and squarely. This ought to be done. Moreover, a study of the varying presuppositions of the historians of Classical and of Christian antiquity could profitably be undertaken. By the very nature of the beast, such considerations are beyond the scope of a Bachelor of Divinity thesis.

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