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THE AUTHOR ARGUES THAT LUKE-ACTS MUST BE READ AS A SINGLE WORK IN TWO volumes, whose author is a brilliant theologian. Acts 28:17-31 provides a window through which the reader can begin to penetrate and to ponder the theological message of Luke-Acts.

The Book of Acts has a message, and its author is a theologian. This topic sentence does not compel universal assent and must therefore be expounded at least briefly here before turning to the questions that will shape the major portion of this essay: How can we approach Acts so as to hear its theology? What is the theological message of Acts?

1. ACTS AS THEOLOGY

Before one can enter fruitfully into conversation with any author, he must tune him in and hear him on his own terms regarding his particular specialty. For a long time Acts was regarded as a history of the early church, written by Luke the first church historian. The work was defended by conservative churchmen as totally reliable, while more skeptical critics delighted in pointing out how it diverged, for example, from information supplied by Paul in his epistles. In such familiar cases both defenders and detractors were agreed in assessing Acts as history. Both friends and foes regarded Acts as a collection of the adventures of the apostles and their helpers, as fabulous tales of derring-do performed by heroes at the church's dawning, as a series of incidents gathered for the sake of informing people about how things used to be in the past golden era.

Fortunately, that evaluation of Acts has receded as it has become more common to speak of "Luke-Acts." That hyphenated label may seem inelegant or even barbarous, yet it is useful in the extreme; for it handily summarizes a hard-won position that is (or should be) a presupposition for all investigation of the Third Gospel and the Book of Acts: the entire work from Luke 1:1 to Acts 28:31 is a unified whole. The Gospel and Acts are not just two books chancing to derive from the same pen. They are part one and part two of a single book, and neither should be studied in isolation from the other.

Recognizing that Luke-Acts is a single work means on the one hand being protected from thinking that the Third Gospel portrays Jesus as a sentimental do-gooder; for in Luke's portrait of Jesus the gospel declares only "what He *began* to do and teach" (see Acts 1:1). As a gospel is not mere biography but proclamation, Good News, so the author of Luke-Acts is "Luke the Evangelist" or "Luke the Theologian" in both parts of his authorship, for in the undivided unity of Luke-Acts he proclaims the Good Word of the action of

God through Jesus Christ, and he does it — this is what it means to engage in the task of theology — on behalf of his contemporaries in terms relevant to the deepest needs of his own time and place.

Luke does, of course, employ certain devices common to ancient historians and biographers. For example, he intersperses sections of narrative with speeches, but his work as a whole is not simply "history" or "biography." Acts is a theological statement or confession of faith in narrative form by a member of a religious community that stands at least one generation removed from its founder's activity. (Toward the end of this essay will be some further and perhaps more positive remarks on Acts as history, but the first point to be established is that Acts really is theology.)[1]

Unlike a set of hymns or a collection of proverbs, narratives have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and in their recital of recent events they usually designate particular persons and places as actors in and locales for those events. Moreover, it is usually not difficult to tell which events, persons, and places a writer of a narrative takes to be particularly important. He gives his story a certain shape, and beginning and ending are especially significant.

Luke 1:1-4 is preface and Acts 28:17-31 is conclusion to the entire work of 52 chapters, the longest writing in the New Testament. Since the preface has been much studied and the ending much neglected, the focus of the following remarks will be Acts 28:17-31. It will serve as a window into the theology of Acts. This essay will by no means exhaust Luke's theology. It will not even touch every aspect. By examining one key passage, however, the essay will attempt to take a sounding of the theology of Acts. The final pericope of the book tells how Paul arrived as a prisoner in Rome, engaged local Jewish leaders in dialog, spoke to them of God's opening the way for Gentiles, and preached openly and unhindered in the capital for two years. Paul came to Rome as Jonah to Nineveh, out of storm and water with a word of testimony. (Compare Luke's version of the Jonah saying, Luke 11:29-32, with Matthew 12:39-42.)

2. No Third Volume

This ending raises a series of questions. First of all, is it really the end? There is a certain incompleteness about this conclusion of the narrative. Biographical details are lacking. What disposition was made of Paul's case? Was he convicted? Or was he released and permitted to continue his travels? Did Peter also get to Rome? The reader is left up in the air.

Many have conjectured that Luke intended to produce yet a third volume, and that Acts 28:17-31 is at best only a milestone at the two-thirds mark. But that no-

[1] Martin Franzmann, in his classroom lectures, chapel sermons, and published essays and books, ever and anew startled and delighted his audiences with his ability to penetrate dense thickets of the most unpromising sort and flush out the theological game birds there hiding.

In his case a high estimation of the historical value of Acts in no way obscures his appreciation of the theology of Acts. For him the old slogan that Christianity is a historical religion is a vital confession, and he has taught impressively a lesson we can never learn well enough, that God reveals Himself precisely by entering into man's history as man's judge and redeemer to shape man's life in accord with God's primeval will and plan.

tion has weight only as long as one is thinking about Acts primarily as history. Once a person gives up the idea that Acts is a biography and recognizes that the author is not writing primarily to satisfy historical curiosity but has other purposes, he can appreciate Luke's ending as a fitting capstone to the religious message of Luke-Acts.

If in spite of an appreciation of Acts as theology the reader still feels uneasy, that may be because he is vibrating to the author's confession of faith which summons the reader to respond, to participate, to decide, to move in faith towards God and in love towards the brother and in mission to the unbeliever. The way continues in proclamation beyond Acts, as Jesus' activity continues beyond His death and ascension in the church.

3. The Meaning of Ending in Rome

A second peculiarity of the end of Acts besides the suspicion of incompleteness deserves attention: Luke-Acts concludes in Rome. A comparison of Acts with Paul on this simple point reveals a problem. In his letter to the Romans Paul wrote that he would soon travel to Rome and establish there a base for operations further to the west. Since Paul had preached the Gospel roundabout as far as Illyricum (Rom. 15:19), he announced his intention to go where the Gospel was yet unknown, lest he build on another man's foundation (Rom. 15:20-21). Spain was his goal, according to Romans (Rom. 15: 24, 28). Rome was not the end of his journey but was to serve him merely as a launching platform for work to the west, as Antioch in Syria had served him during his labors in the eastern Mediterranean.

In Acts, however, there is no hint that Paul is aiming at Spain. Rome, rather than being a staging area for forays westward, is itself the great goal toward which the action tends. Rome represents "the end of the earth" of Jesus' commission (Acts 1:8). Rome is named as the goal Paul "must" attain in 19:21; 23:11; 27:24.

The apparent discrepancy between the statements of Paul and Luke might be treated as a problem to be solved, as an uneven place to be made smooth, as an oddity calling for ingenious harmonization. But it is better to seize upon it as a positive contribution in the quest for the message of Acts.

Geography plays a major role in the structure and thought of Luke-Acts, and travels are a major organizing element. The journey of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51—19:27) distinguishes the central section of the Third Gospel from that of all the other gospels, and the Third Gospel ends and the Book of Acts begins with the command to sit tight in Jerusalem until the Spirit comes and only then to begin to move out (Luke 24: 47-49; Acts 1:4). Attention is especially called to this command because Mark and Matthew exhibit a different scheme, according to which the disciples were instructed to travel to Galilee for the final set of events climaxing the story of Jesus. (Mark 16:7; Matt. 28:7, 10)

Jerusalem and Rome are the cities in which Luke is most vitally interested. Other centers and movements are of lesser importance. Thus, for example, the old notion of a history book describing *Three Mission Journeys of Paul* simply does not reflect Luke's purpose or perspective. In the first place, Jesus, the Twelve, the

Seven, and Peter also journeyed. Second, Paul's final move toward Rome, declared and even begun already at Acts 19:21, is his fourth major movement. Third, the notion of mission trips seems to imagine that Jerusalem or Antioch was Paul's permanent or real home from which he made occasional brief forays outward, forgetting that he was gradually and steadily getting closer to Rome, and that Rome is the real target from the very beginning of the Third Gospel. Finally, the notion neglects the question of the ultimate meaning of the entire continuous motion from Galilee to Jerusalem to Rome exhibited in this long work.

Note that from beginning to end Jerusalem scenes (Luke 1:5—4:13; 19:28 to 24:53; Acts 1:1—7:60; 9:26-31; 11:1-18; 12:1-25; 15:1-35; 21:18—26:32) alternate with journeys (Luke 4:14—19:27; Acts 8:1—9:25; 9:32—10:48; 11:19-30; 13:1—14:28; 15:36—21:16; 27:1—28:16). At the end (Acts 28:17-31) Paul is settled in Rome, and there appears to be no opportunity or need to return to Jerusalem.

Some have pondered the deliberate way in which Luke has portrayed the progress of Jesus and the Gospel from Galilee to Jerusalem and then to Rome and have concluded that Luke wishes to declare in Acts that the Gospel traveled triumphantly to the capital of the pagan world and that the Gospel is powerful in every circumstance and victorious against every obstacle.

A second way in which the journeying can be understood is more personal and existential. The geographical mobility mirrors the spiritual pilgrimage of the Christian. The pattern of Jesus' life—elect and anointed, teaching and serving, healing and exorcising, opposed and opposing, moving through suffering to glory—is reenacted in successive stages of the church's life. When there was no such word as *Christianity,* the believers were known and knew themselves as "belonging to the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22). Saul attempted to stem the movement outward of the Way, to return its members to Jerusalem, and to immobilize them there. After his conversion Paul was the great protagonist of movement outwards. He came at last to Rome paradoxically in chains and in triumph. He explained part of the significance of that kind of motion in words, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (14:22). According to Luke alone of the evangelists, the Christian must take up his cross "daily" (contrast Luke 9:23 with Mark 8:34 and Matt. 16:24) and, like Simon of Cyrene, bear it "in the steps of Jesus" (contrast Luke 23:26 with Mark 15:21 and Matt. 27:32), that is, through service and even suffering to triumph.

A third way is more satisfactory. The movement from Galilee to Jerusalem to Rome has ecclesiological and not just personal significance. Bold and unhindered preaching closes the Book of Acts, as it climaxes Luke's Gospel. Luke emphasizes testimony by the power of the Spirit in Luke 24:48-49 and in Acts 1:8. He says in fact that the Scriptures of the Old Testament (he names the three standard parts of the Hebrew Bible: the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms [or Writings]) had specifically prophesied two things: (1) "that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and (2) that

repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Luke 24: 44-47)

There is continuity between the Jewish Scriptures and Jesus and the preaching of the church. It is not just a Pauline word that Paul took to Rome. It was the Christian proclamation, the word that had been accepted at Jerusalem (Acts 15), so that Jerusalem and Rome are bound together in a new manner as the two foci of a new community in the last times.

It is not the case that Paul's work in Rome was to accomplish the separation of the church from the synagog (in spite of arguments based on Acts 13:46; 18:6; 19: 8-10; 28:25-28; usually overlooked is Luke 4:28-30). Rather Jews and Gentiles together, when they repent and believe and are baptized, form one new people.

The Gentiles are no longer automatically excluded from God's people (nor must they become proselytes or Jews before becoming persons who belong to the Way), nor is it enough to say one has Abraham for his father (Luke 3:8). In Jesus and the Gospel there has appeared "salvation for all flesh" (contrast Luke 3:4-6 with Mark 1:2-3; Matt. 3:3; John 1:23). Jesus is "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to Thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32), and Paul and his co-workers are also designated as "a light for the Gentiles" (Acts 13:47; 26:17-18; Isaiah 49:6) "to bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth" (13:47). Both Jews and Gentiles collaborated to martyr Jesus in accord with prophecy (4:25-28; Ps. 2:1-2), and also Paul suffered attacks from "the people and the Gentiles" (26:17). Likewise any man, Jew or Gentile, who calls on the Lord's name will be saved. (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:21, 39; 4:12)[2]

4. Roman Preaching and Jesus' Ascension

Paul's triumphant proclamation of the Gospel in Rome balances or rather completes the account of the ascension of Jesus at the beginning of Acts. When Paul in the Gentile capital "proclaimed with all boldness and without any opposition the kingship of God and the things concerning Jesus" (Acts 28:31), then Jesus sits as king in fulfillment of 2 Sam. 7:12-16, which stands at the head of the Third Gospel in the word of Gabriel (Luke 1:26-38) and is plainly alluded to again in Peter's sermon in Acts 2:30. Jesus, son of David, son of God, has since His exaltation through resurrection and ascension (2:32-36; 13:30-33) sat at God's right hand and ruled as king of God's people (see Ps. 2:7 in Acts 13:33). The episodes of the Book

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[2] Martin Franzmann took one of the repeated summaries of Acts (6:7; 12:24; 19:20) as title for his introduction to the New Testament, *The Word of the Lord Grows* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961).

Writing of the religious message of Acts, he says in that book that the risen and exalted Christ "confronts all sorts and conditions of men, Jews, Samaritans, Greeks, Romans, the high and the lowly, the king and the cripple, suave metropolitan philosophers and superstitious excitable louts of the hinterland; and He confronts them all with the gracious claim of His saving lordship. Whether the response be the joyous and absolute submission of faith or the embittered resistance of unbelief or the polite mockery of skepticism, He looms divinely large as the Lord before whom the ways of men divide, as the Christ who is gathering the new people of God from among all the nations of the earth" (p. 207).

To all that, the present essay says a glad "Amen" and tries to push forward a bit on the basis of a single pericope of Acts.

of Acts and especially the unhindered proclamation of Jesus in Rome by Paul declare that God has been subduing Jesus' enemies and making them the king's footstool, as Psalm 110 says (Acts 2:34). Thus, kingship has been restored to Israel, but not as the disciples initially wanted (1:6) or as many of their contemporaries wanted (Pss. of Sol. 17 and 18). (2 Sam. 7 was interpreted through Is. 55:3-5 and Psalms 2, 16, 88, and 110 in a nationalistic fashion in the pharisaic Psalms of Solomon and also at Qumran, that is, in documents in circulation at the inception of the church.) [3]

As early as Luke 10 the meaning of the mission movement was exhibited: the workers were appointed, traveled forth, healed, proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom of God, experienced both acceptance and rejection (Luke 10:1-15). The Seventy returned with joy, whereupon Jesus offered the commentary: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." (Luke 10:18)

Satan has been cast down from heaven — by the action of Jesus and by the work of those sent by Jesus to the end of the earth — and Satan has been bound (Luke 11:21-22). Jesus Himself could not be bound even by death or Hades (Acts 2: 24), but was resurrected by God and ascended to heaven. The mission carries to the uttermost part of the earth, to those near and far, the news of Satan's defeat and of Jesus' enthronement, so that Jesus becomes king indeed as men repent and believe. The progress of the mission is accompanied and the truthfulness of its message is confirmed by healings, exorcisms, and escapes.

The enthronement of Jesus as universal Lord, which means turning to (in the sense of inclusion of) the Gentiles (28: 28), is the fulfillment of "the hope of Israel" (23:6; 24:15, 21; 26:6-7; 28:20), promised in Scripture (28:26-27 and other passages just too numerous to list).

In fact Luke is without peer in the New Testament as the leading theologian of the Word of God. In continually new phrasings he sets forth his conviction that God's "Word" (*logos* in Luke 1:2, 4; 4:22; 5:1; 8:11, 12-13, 15, 21; 11:28; Acts 4:29, 31; 6:2, 4, 7; 8:4, 14, 25; 10:36; 11:1, 19; 12:24; 13:5, 7, 26, 44, 46; 14:3, 25; 15: 35-36; 16:6, 32; 17:11, 13; 18:5, 11; 19: 10; 20:32; or *rêma* in Luke 1:38; 2:29;

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[3] See Eduard Schweizer, "The Concept of the Davidic 'Son of God' in Acts and Its Old Testament Background," in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (New York: Abingdon, 1966), pp. 186—193. For similar material on the role of 2 Sam. 7 in early Christianity, see Otto Betz, *What Do We Know About Jesus?* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), especially pp. 83—112, and Otto Betz, "The Kerygma of Luke," *Interpretation*, 22 (1968), 131—146.

The entire volume of *Studies in Luke-Acts* is a well-planned introduction to current issues surrounding Luke-Acts and the vast literature on the subject. Also very helpful for its summaries and critiques of the ways in which numerous German scholars are approaching Luke-Acts is Joachim Rohde, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists*, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), pp. 153—239. A brief and reliable report on research is C. K. Barrett, *Luke, the Historian in Recent Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press Facet Books, 1970).

A treasury of information on Luke-Acts, including a fine commentary on Acts, is the five-volume set edited by F. J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1920—1933). One of the collaborators in the latter is Henry J. Cadbury, whose *The Making of Luke-Acts* (New York: Macmillan, 1927; reissued in 1958) is a classic description of Luke's artistry and thought. Cadbury has also supplied the article on "Acts of the Apostles" for *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, I (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 28—42.

7:1; 9:45; 18:34; 22:61; Acts 2:14; 5:20; 10:22; 11:14, 16), the "will" of God (*thelêma,* Luke 22:42; Acts 13:22; 21:14; 22:14), the "counsel" or "plan" of God (*boulê,* Luke 7:30; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:38-39; 13:36; 20:27) has appeared in Jesus and the church, or has been done, spoken, or fulfilled in accordance with the Scriptures, with the divine "must" (Luke 4:43; 9:22; 13:16, 33; 17:25; 21:9; 24:7, 26, 44; Acts 1:16; 3:21; 4:12; 14:22; 17:3; 23:11) or with that which has been decided or spoken by God in His wisdom ahead of time (Luke 22:22; Acts 1:16; 2:23, 31; 3:18, 20; 4:28; 7:52; 10:42; 13:24; 17:26, 31; 22:14; 26:16). Many times Luke uses nouns and verbs compounded with *pro-,* "fore-" (*proeipon,* Acts 1:16; *prognôsis,* 2:23; *prokatangelô,* 3:18, 24; 7:52; *prokêrussô,* 3:20; 13:24; *prooraô* or *prooida,* 2:31; *proorizô,* 4:28).

From the beginning of the Third Gospel to the end of Acts, Luke by many and various devices confesses his faith that the promise of the Old Testament has attained fulfillment in the lordship of Jesus (or "in Jesus and the resurrection," 17:18; see 4:33; 26:6, etc.) and in the community where Jew and Gentile are one because of repentance and faith in Jesus.

5. The Figure of Paul in Acts

A third peculiarity of Acts 28:17-31 (besides a feeling of incompleteness and concluding in Rome rather than Spain) can be dealt with more briefly but dare not be overlooked. Luke concludes his work with *Paul's* preaching in Rome.

Why Paul? The author knows he was not the bearer of the Gospel to Rome—at least not in the sense that he first introduced the Good Word to Rome. Luke exhibits knowledge of a Christian community in Rome before Paul. Christian brothers came out from Rome to greet Paul on his arrival at the way stations known as the Appian Market and Three Taverns, some 43 and 33 miles respectively from the capital (Acts 28:14-15). These brethren were an honor guard escorting the chained Paul in triumphal procession to the city.

Paul's position is emphatic in Luke-Acts. His is not simply the last in a series of parallel accounts. He is climax and capstone of the entire movement set going by Jesus. It may be asked why Luke ended with Paul. Why not close with Peter, whose call was so impressively told especially in the Third Gospel (Luke 5:1-11)? Peter's conversion of Cornelius, a Gentile, receives lavish attention (Acts 10—11). Might not the story end well there?

How does Luke represent Paul? Some have pointed to the conservative colors with which Luke has painted him: he was baptized by Ananias, who was pious according to the Law (9:10-19; 22:12); his earliest companions and helpers were trusted members of the Jerusalem church —John Mark (12:12), Barnabas (4:36-37; 9:27), Silas (15:22-23); he circumcized Timothy (16:3); he took a vow and cut his hair in pious Jewish fashion (18:18); he observed the festivals (20:6, 16) and in Jerusalem purified himself in the temple (21:23-26); in his apologetic speeches he continually returned to the theme of his unflagging zeal for the religion of his fathers. (Chapters 22—26)

As for Paul's relations with Jerusalem, Luke says he was approved by the leaders there (9:17-30; 15:1-35; 16:4). Luke also makes plain that Samaritans were admitted to the church before Paul was converted

(8:4-25), and Gentiles were baptized by Philip (8:26-40) and Peter (10:1—11:18) before Paul joined the work begun by Barnabas and others at Antioch (11:19-26). Paul is not represented as a great innovator. As much as Luke emphasizes the continuity between the Twelve, the Seven, Peter, and Paul, it appears to be something else about Paul that intrigues him.

Paul was not one of the Twelve (Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13), not an eyewitness of the baptism of Jesus (Acts 1:21-22), not a brother of Jesus (1:14), not numbered among the 120 (1:15), the 3,000 (2:41), or the 5,000 (4:4), not one of "the seven men of good repute full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (6:3), not disposed to be friendly like Gamaliel (5:34), but a persecutor (8:1-3; 9:1-2). It seems almost an accident when Luke calls Paul an "apostle" in 14:14, since Luke almost invariably reserves that title for the Twelve. The point is that Paul stood separated from Jesus by various kinds of distance.

Luke began his twofold work (Luke 1:1-4) by addressing directly the question of distances and of bridges over the gaps. That preface betrays a consciousness of the difficulty posed by the passage of time since the death and resurrection of Jesus. Stephen has also been killed (Acts 7), and James, the son of Zebedee, fell under Herod's sword (12:1-2). The fates of Peter and Paul are not divulged in Acts. The author almost certainly writes after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and that means that he lives in the period after the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul, who fell in the 60s. (Perhaps he omitted telling about their ends because he did not want their deaths to compete with that of Jesus for the reader's attention.)

6. Solving the Problem of Distance

Luke did not solve the problem of distance by declaring that the problem did not really exist. He did not regard the lapse of time with indifference by denying the importance of history and of life in the world.

His negative assessment of wealth is well known. He has no good words for rich or grasping people (5:1-11). Furthermore, the only word of Jesus quoted in Acts is about money: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (20:35). At the end of the book, Paul is preaching not for gain, like some wandering teachers of that age, but freely as he even pays his own rent in Rome (28:30). There is thus a certain detachment from the world discernible in Luke-Acts. But Luke's attitude to material things is not ascetic, and the religious posture he holds forth is not mystical or gnostic. Wealth is to be shared and used for the common good (2:44-47; 4:32-37; 6:1-3). Money is to be used as rich and poor embrace one another in one new family. Responsible engagement with the world and loving action toward the world is what Luke proclaims. His answer to the distance is not mysticism or other worldliness.

Nor is his answer to distance any form of institutionalism. Luke does not embrace the world and sacralize or canonize it. He is not an uncritical glorifier of history, comfortable in his worldly existence.

He does not say that contact with Jesus is mediated by historical institutions and external arrangements like church organization or ritual action or an official priestly

caste. Mere external participation is precisely what marked Judas (1:16-20), Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11), and Simon Magus (8:18-24). What counts is repentance and forgiveness, or a heart that is right with God. (8:21-22)

By singling out Paul and focusing on his work in bringing the call to repentance and the word about Jesus to Rome, Luke is describing how the enthroned Jesus is Himself the answer to the question of disance from the earthly ministry of Jesus. Jesus, born of the house of David, put to death by crucifixion, has ascended into heaven and is the contemporary of men in every passing generation of the church. He bestows the Spirit, appears in vision and audition, sends a prophet, is present as one who serves in the breaking of bread and in pondering the word of Scripture (Luke 24:13-35), and confirms the preaching of the Gospel by signs and wonders that He performs by the hand of His human agents (Acts 3:12-16). Jesus is very much involved in the community, suffering when it is persecuted (9:5) and acting to add men to the community as they come to faith (2:47; 4:11) and in fact is Himself in some way growing as "believers were added to the Lord." (5:14)

7. The Author and His Readers

The reader of Luke-Acts is in the same position as the author who hides and reveals himself in the "we" of Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 16:9-17; 20:5-16; 21:1-18; 27:1—28:16. These "we" passages have long been a problem, as investigators asked whether they represented a notebook of the author or the diary of another used as a source by the author. It seems more important for present purposes to recognize that the reader (ancient or modern) is very much in the same situation as the person who stands behind the "we." Not one of us today is anywhere near a contemporary of the events that occurred in Galilee and Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago. But we are not condemned to the alternatives of mysticism or gnosticism on the one hand and crass institutionalism or traditionalism on the other. At least Luke does not think so. He proclaims his faith that God has stunningly fulfilled His ancient promises in Jesus and His resurrection and has through Jesus created a new people, who come from east and west and north and south to sit at table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob (Luke 13:28-29), indeed to break bread with Jesus, who is Himself in their midst as one who serves (Luke 22:27). The exalted Jesus graciously bestows His presence and by His Word and Spirit freely breaks new ground and surprises His people with joy as He leads them to cross new boundaries into all the futures and towards all the people there are; for He yet seeks and saves all the lost. (Luke 19:10)

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