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"THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

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The Acts of the Holy Spirit

Editorial

The articles in this issue of *Mishkan* all deal with topics related to the book traditionally known as the Acts of the Apostles.

There may, indeed, be better names for the fifth book of the New Testament than the Acts of the Apostles. "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" has been suggested.[1] It is undeniably a book which testifies that Jesus' works did not end with his death and resurrection. Pentecost followed! The crucified and risen Jesus continues to work after his death, resurrection, and ascension. In glimpses, the Acts of the Apostles shows how the absent Jesus is present through the Holy Spirit. We modern readers also become involved, namely as "writers" who record the continuing acts of the Holy Spirit — and our own acts!

The book of Acts demonstrates that the acts of the Holy Spirit and the acts of human beings do not stand in opposition. Without the Holy Spirit there is no faith; without human acts and words and sacrifices there is no progress.

The purpose of the book can hardly be reduced to a single formula. Some have suggested that its primary purpose is apologetic: either to prove to the Romans that the new faith was politically harmless,[2] or to prove Paul's "orthodoxy" before his critics.[3] It is more natural, however, to regard it as an edifying text which, in a literary form, brings consolation and encouragement by drawing the reader's attention to God's acts in salvation history.

Luke in a Storm

Because of what he wrote in the Acts of the Apostles, Luke has found himself at the center of a storm. His books have received no shortage of criticism. In the last century, a great many scholars thought that Luke tried to cover up the profound differences allegedly found between so-called Jewish Christianity, represented by Peter, and gentile Christianity, with Paul as its exponent.[4]

Leading German scholars of this century have regarded Luke as an independent theologian, meaning that his account first and foremost gives the reader an impression of his way of thinking rather than an insight into the thinking of his main characters. He has often been considered a

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[1] The expression was first used by J. Bengel in 1742; cf. F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, revised edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 31.

[2] See I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Leicester/Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press/Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 21-22.

[3] See J. Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979), 185-207.

[4] On F.C. Baur and the so-called T□bingen school of criticism — and a critique of these — see W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 21-95. Cf. also J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SMC Press, 1959), 69-86.

mediocre historian.[5]

A number of English scholars have opposed this critical picture of Luke and his presentation in Acts.[6] It is true that Luke does not write like a twentieth-century historian — but what writer in antiquity did? It is also true that our understanding of church history between 30 and 60 AD — the period which Luke covers — contains many gaps. But we would have been in an infinitely worse situation without the book. Together with Paul's letters, the book gives us a certain idea of the peculiarity and expansion of the Jesus movement, its external as well as internal struggles, and not least the problems connected with the conditions for including the gentiles in that Jewish movement.

Luke did not intend to give an exhaustive description of the church's history in the first three decades after Jesus' death and resurrection. Rather, he concentrates on his two principal characters, Peter and Paul, and focuses on separate events. Perhaps he had both oral and written material at his disposal; perhaps he himself experienced some of the occurrences which he describes, depending on whether or not the so-called "we-sections" (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16) originate with Luke himself.

It is certain that Luke did not experience everything himself and therefore had to rely on the accounts of others. Some believe that descriptions of the church's activity and mission were included in the early preaching and that Luke knew and used these.[7]

When Luke leaves out things which modern historians would have included and repeats important matters which modern historians would have relegated to a footnote, he is adopting the style of contemporary writers who endeavored in this way to make the description vivid, creating the maximum effect on his readers. It is obvious that everything has passed through Luke's pen.

But Luke is more than an ordinary historian. When writing about the past he preaches to his own time. Luke's subject is, above everything else, salvation history.[8] He is writing the last chapter in the history of God's people, as it were. His pre-eminent source is the scriptures. Through these the God of Israel gave promises which he has now fulfilled in Jesus. And God still steers the course of events in "the last days", the era of the Holy Spirit, the age of mission.

Not the Birthday of the Church

Some gentile Christians call Pentecost the birthday of the church. They want to say by this that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit created something new in God's salvation history. Although this is

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5 M. Dibelius is one of the leading German exponents of this critical view; his articles are listed in Gasque, 201-250; among others are H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960) and E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971). Among German scholars who have defended Luke is M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1979). Hengel maintains that Luke "is no less trustworthy than other historians of antiquity" (p. 60).

6 At the turn of the century, not least through Sir William Ramsay's writings and later through F.F. Bruce's; cf. I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, 34-35. Also worth mentioning is A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). See also note 9 below.

7 See Jervell, 19-39, who argues that the apostles' activities and the establishment of congregations were events which formed part of the missionary proclamation of the church; cf. Marshall, 38.

8 For a discussion of the concept of "salvation-history", see I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970), 53-115.

true, the description is misleading. God also had an assembly before Pentecost, in the desert, for example (7:38). With Pentecost, God's church for the last days begins its ministry. It is the renewed Israel which steps forward, the people of the Messiah, with a message to Jews as well as gentiles. Since gentiles are now given a share in the blessing to Israel, the church consists of both Jews and gentiles.

Consistently in Acts, the way to be incorporated into the church is through repentance, faith, and baptism, whereby one receives the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38).

On the Day of Pentecost, 3000 people accepted the gospel in Jerusalem (2:41); the number soon increased to 5000 (4:4). These are the kind of figures with which Luke deals when he describes Jews accepting the gospel.[9] When Luke records Paul's work among the gentiles he speaks of figures less two or even three zeros!

An Idealized Picture?

Some expositors think that Luke has idealized the picture of the church in Jerusalem. Not all was pure idyll, it is argued. Doubtless this is true, and Luke was well aware of it. He uses bold strokes of the brush, but as soon as he has done so, he is not afraid to record problems and disagreements in the young movement.

When Luke says that the believers had "everything" in common (2:44), he makes it clear (5:4) that "everything" does not mean "everything without exception": a believer was allowed to have private property. A study of Luke's usage of "everything/everybody" reveals that it usually means "very much/very many".

One should not therefore too quickly assume that Luke presents a idealized picture of the church. A careful reading of the texts shows that Luke does relate quite a lot about problems and difficulties in the first church. It was not a golden age without human weakness and sin.

The account of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11) is a horrifying example of this. The neglect of the Greek-speaking Jewish widows in the daily distribution of food (6:1-6) is another example. Church growth gives rise to problems, and since the apostles were responsible for the relief of the poor they also shared the responsibility for the problems. In other words, the apostles are not depicted as perfect but as troubleshooters worth following.

The church in Jerusalem cannot agree whether or not to welcome Paul as a Jesus-believer; they are afraid of him, and it is only through Barnabas' intervention that he is welcomed (9:26-27).

Disagreement over the conditions for the inclusion of gentiles in the church — whether gentiles had to become Jews in order to be genuine Jesus-believers — is a fourth example of crisis. Chapter 15 is evidence of this. They found the solution, but only after much discussion (cf. 15:7).

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9 For these large numbers compared to the size of Jerusalem in the first century AD, see Wolfgang Reinhardt, "The Population Size of Jerusalem and the Numerical Growth of the Jerusalem Church", in Richard Bauckham (ed.), *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (*The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting IV*), (Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Eerdmans Publishing Co./The Paternoster Press, 1995), 237-265.

When Disagreement becomes Theology — the Example of Paul and Barnabas

Luke's account in 15:36-41 of the bitter controversy between Paul and Barnabas is perhaps the strongest evidence that a golden age never existed among the first Jesus-believers.

The way Luke presents the account makes the dispute seem to center around differences of opinions over a person: Was John Mark suited or not suited to take part in the second missionary journey, considering that he had left them on the first journey? Luke does not mention the reason why he had left them (13:13). Nor does he theologize the problem. He does not even commit himself directly on this point. Luke's account does not acquit Paul of his share in the unhappy conflict; who was at fault remains an open question. Nevertheless, Paul's relationship to the church in Antioch is not influenced by it. And Luke shows that there is more to be said about the believers in the first church than that they were "one in heart and mind" (4:32).

Some expositors are not content with Luke's explanation, however. They insist on seeing a more profound theological disagreement which Luke should have hidden from his readers. They assert that Mark and Barnabas had a theological disagreement with Paul over the question of the gentile Christians' position regarding the Law.[10] But this does not harmonize with what is said in 15:22, 32.

If there is anything positive at all in this dispute, it is that the gospel is spread in spite of people's disagreement and that it is proclaimed in more places because there are now two teams operating independently.

We must admit that it can often be said about us that we theologize — or spiritualize — problems which have little to do with theology — or spirit — because in this way we can feel superior to our opponents.

Concluding it can be said that the acts of the Holy Spirit are greater than the acts of men, even the acts of the apostles, so that the gospel is spread in spite of the disagreements of believers. If people were to wait to spread the gospel until they were perfect, no one would ever have heard it.

The call is: Be of one mind! However, Luke has shown that even if believers are not of one mind the gospel must still be proclaimed.

Kai Kjær-Hansen

10 For example, Haenchen, 475-77.

Christology in the Early Jerusalem Community

Rainer Riesner[11]

How far back in the history of the primitive community of Jerusalem does the book of the Acts of the Apostles take us? This question is hotly disputed in New Testament studies. The problem is further sharpened when we ask about the Christology of Jesus' followers in the first and second decade after the crucifixion. The Christological material in the first twelve chapters of Acts is mainly embedded in speeches. Some historians in antiquity gave accurate summaries of actual speeches; others composed speeches seeking to suit them to the historical and literary context.[12] Unfortunately, one cannot speak of a scientific consensus regarding which of the two categories Luke's speeches belong to.

A certain trend in the contemporary discussion can perhaps be discerned, however.[13] The speeches recorded in Acts are not word-for-word transcriptions; they are all too short. Apparently, Luke only provided summaries. Certain peculiarities of language and style indicate that Luke indeed had a hand in composing the speeches. However, other peculiarities strongly suggest that Luke did not freely invent them but worked with older traditions. We should also remember that as a co-worker of Paul,[14] Luke was close enough to the foundational phase of Christianity to have been able to interview members of the first Christian generation (cf. Luke 1:1-4). The author of Luke-Acts had visited Jerusalem at least once,[15] around 57 AD (Acts 21:17ff).

We will see that Luke's picture of the Christology of the early Jerusalem community can hardly be explained as an anachronistic reading back into the beginnings of the community the situation which prevailed in gentile Christian communities in the second half of the first century. For this period, the Pauline epistles serve as our main sources. In 1 Corinthians 15:3, Paul explicitly writes that he is citing a credal formula (*euaggelion*), ultimately stemming from the early Jerusalem community (cf. 1 Cor 15:9, 11), which he handed down to the Corinthian believers. It was always highly likely that this should not be the only primitive tradition Paul knew and used in his letters. In this respect, form criticism has brought forth some rather conservative results in its identification of some of this older material.[16] This allows us to check Luke's description in Acts to a certain extent.

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[12] C.J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: 1989), 63-100.

[13] F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: 3d edition, 1990), 34-40.

[14] See C.J. Thornton, *Der Zeuge des Zeugen. Lukas als Historiker der Paulusreisen* (Tübingen: 1993).

[15] M. Hengel, "The Geography of Palestine in Acts", in R. Bauckham, *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (*The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* IV) (Grand Rapids: 1995), 27-78.

[16] P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments I: Grundlegung. Von Jesus zu Paulus* (Göttingen: 1992), 179-196.

The first Jerusalem believers were all Jews and had to explain their Christology to their Jewish brothers and sisters. One would expect that they used not only Old Testament but also contemporary Jewish concepts. Here, a source problem even greater than the problem concerning Acts has long existed. The rabbinic tradition was fixed as a public written edition in the Mishnah at the end of the second century AD,[17] and the Jewish apocalyptic literature reached us mainly through Christian transmission and redaction. The discovery of the Qumran texts created a great breakthrough in recovering the past. Now we possess messianic texts which are undoubtedly Jewish and clearly date before 68 AD.[18] They provide us with an additional instrument to check and see whether Luke's picture fits the Palestinian situation before 70 AD or belongs to a gentile Christian milieu at the end of the first century or even the beginning of the second century AD.

What were the main factors behind the development of a high Christology in the first two decades before Paul's gentile mission and his letters? There can be no question that Jesus' resurrection appearances formed the catalyst for the development of a Christology in the early Jerusalem community. However, a comparison with Jewish messianic expectations can teach us an important lesson. Many Christian theologians claim that Easter was the origin of the belief in Jesus as the Messiah. But we have not the slightest proof from Jewish sources that rising from the dead automatically designated someone as the Messiah. Neither the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11ff) nor Lazarus (John 11:1ff) were suspected of being messiah figures. Jesus was crucified by the Roman authorities as a messianic pretender (Mark 15:26) after he was handed over by the Sanhedrin on the accusation of being a false prophet (cf. Mark 14:65). For the Jerusalem believers, Jesus' resurrection signified his vindication by God (Acts 2:22-24; 3:13-15). Since Jesus was not a pseudo-Messiah but indeed God's Messiah, everything which he said and did before Easter now became most meaningful. Jesus' implicit (cf. Matt 11:2-6) and explicit Christology (Mark 14:61-62)[19] formed the main source of the Christology of the early Jerusalem community. It is interesting to note that, according to Luke, the risen Jesus referred the disciples primarilt to his pre-Easter proclamation (Luke 24:44; Acts 1:4, 7), the messianic exposition of Scripture (Luke 24:25-27, 45-48), and the promise of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

Jesus had consistently explained his mission in terms of scripture before his death and resurrection.[20] The Old Testament thus became a central source for the believers' deeper grasp of the person of Jesus. Nor should we underestimate the strong charismatic element: visions and inspired speech, not the least in worship, played their role in early Christological development.[21] In

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17 For an appropriate methodology for discerning older materials, see S. Safrai, "Talmudic Literature as an Historical source for the Second Temple Period", *Mishkan* 17/18 (1992/93), 121-137.

18 Cf. J.J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: 1995). A nearly-complete text can be found in F. Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden: 1994).

19 See B. Witherington, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: 1990); M. Hengel, "Jesus, der Messias Israels: Zum Streit über das 'messianische Sendungsbewusstsein' Jesu", in I. Gruenwald, S. Shaked, and G.G. Stroumsa, *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity Presented to David Flusser* (Tübingen: 1992), 155-176.

20 R.T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (London: 1971).

21 See R.T. France, "The Worship of Jesus: A Neglected Factor in Christological Debate?", in H.H. Rowdon,

the Pauline letters we find Jewish Christian credal formulae which attest to deeper reflection and the beginnings of systematic thought. This should not surprise us, since the picture of the primitive community as constituted purely by Galilean woodsmen and Judean stone-cutters before the glorious appearence of Paul's theological genius was simply a romantic fancy or a caricature. The Jerusalem community did not only consist of simple people; there were also converts from Pharisaism (Acts 15:5), Essenism (Acts 6:7),[22] and therapeutai diaspora Judaism (cf. Acts 18:24-25),[23] people educated in the scriptures and versed to expound them in a sophisticated form. The first Christian mission developed in the context of the synagogues which meant quite an intellectual milieu in antiquity.[24] Contrary to some recent doubts, the synagogue was an established Jewish institution in Eretz Israel and the diaspora in the first century AD.[25]

Common Christology

We naturally meet many Christological features in the first chapters of Acts which are common in later New Testament writings. This is to be expected, given the continuity between Jesus and the Jerusalem community and Paul.[26] At the beginning of Acts, as throughout the whole New Testament, the most frequent title for Jesus is the Greek *christos* (Acts 2:31, 36; 3:18, 20; 4:26; 5:42; 8:5, 12; 9:22, 34; 10:36; 11:17). The word as a name or title sounded very unusual in Greek ears; it would have come across as something like the "painted" or "colored one", or possibly been misunderstood, as in Tacitus (*Annals* XV 44:2), as *chrestos* — "good". The title *christos*, which very early turned into something like a second name for Jesus, can only be explained as a verbal translation of the Hebrew *mashiah* "anointed" (Aramaic: *meshiha*). The widespread use of *christos* in gentile Christian communities demonstrates how deeply the early community was impressed by the fact that the crucified criminal, Jesus of Nazareth, was vindicated by God as the bringer of the end time (Acts 2:32-36) for which all pious Jews so hopefully longed. Baptism as initiation into the new separate Jewish group was administered "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). The early believers were thereby distinguished from their fellow Jews through their confession that this man, Jesus, was the Messiah promised by scripture. This distinctiveness was so manifest that the first mixed community of Jewish and Gentile believers in Antioch were called "Christians" by the local Roman authorities — in Greek, *Christianoi*, from the Latin *Christiani* (Acts 11:26), that is, "those

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Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology presented to Donald Guthrie (Leicester: 1982), 17-36; M. Hengel, "Hymns and Christology", in *Between Jesus and Paul* (London: 1983), 78-96, 188-190.

22 R. Riesner, "Jesus, the Primitive Community, and the Essene Quarter of Jerusalem", in J.H. Charlesworth, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: 1993), 198-234; and "Das Jerusalemer Essenerviertel und die Urgemeinde", in W. Haase, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Rzmischen Welt* II 26.2 (Berlin/New York: 1995), 1775-1922.

23 See J. Taylor, "Les origenes de la comunidad cristiana de Alejandria", *Revue Biblique* 102 (1995), 403-412.

24 See R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer. Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-□berlieferung* (Tübingen: 3d edition, 1988).

25 See R. Riesner, "Synagogues in Jerusalem", in Bauckham, 179-211.

26 See M. Hengel, *The Son of God* (London: 1976); I.H. Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (Downers Grove: 2nd edition, 1990).

belonging to Christ".[27]

In the Old Covenant, the Davidic king, priests, and prophets were all spoken of as "messiahs" because they were anointed with oil, either physically or figuratively with the Holy Spirit. When Jesus is called "the Anointed", he is almost always declared to be the promised last heir of King David, bringing God's end-time rule for Israel and the world (2 Sam 7:12ff). The Qumran texts attest to the expectation of a priestly messiah only in addition to a royal messiah of Davidic descent (cf. $1QS^b$ 5:21, 27; 4Q174; 4Q252; 4Q285; CD 7:19). Not even the Qumran covenanters, as a priestly-oriented and rather strict branch of Essenism, could ignore the Davidic expectation[28] so common in other Jewish circles (cf. Philo, *De Praemiis* 95; *Ps So*l 17-18; *Shemoneh Esreh*, benedictions 14-15; *4 Ezra* 7:30-44; 11:1ff; *mBerakhot* 1:5).

In the first chapters of Acts, Jesus' Davidic descent is signaled by the mysterious term *Nazoraios* (Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10). The probable reference to Jesus' home town, Nazareth, does not exclude an allusion to the messianic prophecy of the "branch" (*nezer*) from the house of Jesse (cf. Matt 2:23), since the Davidic hope of Isaiah 11:1 may lie behind the name of the town; Isaiah 11:1ff was interpreted messianically in Qumran (4Q285).[29] The term *Nazoraios* takes us back to the Hebrew language and to a time when Hebrew was still understood by believers in Jesus' messiahship.[30] Only once in the first chapters of Acts is it said that Paul preached Jesus as the "Son of God" (Acts 9:20). This need not be more than a messianic designation. In Qumran, the term "Son of God" carried messianic connotations, as a text from Cave Four (4Q246) testifies; its close resemblance to Luke 2:32 suggests that a common tradition between them is plausible.[31] According to Psalm 2:7, which is interpreted messianically in Qumran (4Q174 2:18-19) and in the first half of Acts (13:33; cf. 4:25-26), a Davidic king could be designated as God's son. But, as we shall see, the meaning of the term "Son of God" depends on the context in which it is used.

The first Jerusalem believers experienced Jesus not only as resurrected but also as exalted by God to a heavenly place of honor and power. They also remembered Jesus' words at his trial before the high priest. When he was asked about his messianic claims he alluded to two scriptural texts (Mark 14:62). As the "Son of Man" from Daniel 7:13, "he will come with the clouds of heaven"; until then he will "sit at the right hand of God", as it says of a future Davidic king in Psalm 110:1. Psalm 110 seems very important for the development of early Christology; it is already cited in Peter's Pentecost speech (Acts 2:34). It also played a central role in making "Lord" into the most frequent address for Jesus (cf. Acts 1:6, 21; 2:34; 9:5-6; 10:36). Since David was presumed to be the author of the psalm, the words "the Lord spoke to my Lord" (Ps 110:1) were interpreted as a heavenly exchange between God and his Messiah who is called "Lord". But again, the meaning of the title also depends on the context in which it occurs.

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27 See R. Riesner, *Die Frühzeit des Apostels Paulus. Studien zur Chronologie, Missionsstrategie und Theologie* (Tübingen: 1994), 95-101.

28 Collins, 49-73.

29 R. Riesner, "Nazarener/Nazaret", in M. Gɜrg and B. Lang, *Neues Bibel-Lexikon* (Lieferung 10) (Solothurn - Düsseldorf: 1995), 908-912.

30 H.P. Rüger, "NAZARETH/NAZARA NAZARENOS/NAZORAIOS", *Zeitschrift fur die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 72 (1981), 257-263.

31 See O. Betz and R. Riesner, *Jesus, Qumran and the Vatican: Clarifications* (London: 1994), 93-97.

Jesus as the Messiah of Davidic descent and appointed as Son of God to a status of heavenly power is the subject of an early Jewish Christian credal formula prominently cited by Paul at the beginning of his letter to the Romans (1:3-4). Behind the formula stands the messianic promise of Nathan to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-14, which is also interpreted messianically in Qumran (4Q174 1:10-13).[32] While Paul frequently speaks of the "holy spirit" (*pneuma hagion*), only here does he use the expression *pneuma hagiosynes* (Rom 1:4). "Spirit of holiness" reminds us of the expression *ruah ha-qodesh* frequently used in the Qumran texts (1QS 1:24; 1QH 7:7 etc.). Apparently this Jewish Christian confession was originally formulated in a Semitic language closely resembling that of the Dead Sea Scrolls, pointing to a Palestinian origin. Romans 1:3-4 is also very similar to the Christological verse in Luke 1:35, where the angel announces Jesus' birth.[33] It thus seems that Paul knew a pre-Lukan form of the gospel tradition emanating from conservative Jewish Christian circles around James of Jerusalem.[34]

It is quite astonishing that Jesus is only called "Son of Man" once throughout the book of Acts — when Stephen, shortly before his martyrdom, saw a vision of "the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). Apart from Old Testament quotations (Heb 2:6; Rev 1:13; 4:14), the expression "Son of Man" is used only by Jesus in the New Testament. The best explanation of this fact remains that this was the way in which Jesus cryptically referred to himself as the Son of Man from Daniel.[35] Although the early community faithfully remembered and transmitted this fact, the "Son of Man" never became a common title for Jesus. In its original context in Daniel 7:13 (cf. God's address to the prophet Ezekiel), the term expressed the seer's astonishment that a man could be transferred to the heavenly sphere without dying. It is doubtful, despite the passages *1 Enoch* 46:1, 47:3, 48:10, 52:4, 70:1, and *4 Ezra* 13, that "Son of Man" (*bar enash, ben adam*) was ever a fixed title in Jewish messianic expectation. Consequently, the early believers did not use it either in a Jewish context or in the gentile communities where the strange Semitism *ho hyios tou anthropou* was very difficult to understand.

Specific Christology

In the early chapters of Acts (3:14; 7:52), Jesus is twice designated as "the righteous one" (*ho dikaios*). The Hebrew equivalent, *ha-zaddiq*, is one of the most important honorific titles in Judaism until today. The rabbis spoke of the righteousness of the Messiah,[36] for example in the Palestine recension of the *Shemoneh Esreh* (benediction 14), a usage also reflected in the *Psalms of Solomon* (17:23-51; 18:8-9). As a messianic title, "the righteous one" seems to occur only in the Enochic

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32 The credal formula was not originally an expression of an adoptionist Christology, as is often thought. Cf. T. Eskola, *Messias da Jumalan Poika. Traditiokriitinen tutkimus kristologisesta jaksosta Room. 1:3, 4* (Helsinki: 1992) (with English summary).

33 See L. Legrand, "L'arriere-plan notestamentaire de Luc 1,35", *Revue Biblique* 70 (1963), 179-185.

34 See R. Riesner, "Prהgung und Herkunft der lukanischen Sonderberlieferung", *Theologische Beitrהge* 24 (1993), 228-248. This article is summarized in R. Riesner, "Luke's Special Tradition and the Question of a Hebrew Gospel Source", *Mishkan* 20 (1994), 44-51.

35 See recently C.F.D. Moule, "'The Son of Man': Some of the Facts", *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995), 277-279.

36 See G. Schrenk, *TDNT* II, 186-187.

literature (*1 Enoch* 38:2; 53:6), and perhaps in the complete Isaiah scroll (1QIs^{a} 51:5) from Qumran. In the New Testament, Jesus is called righteous only in a Jewish context (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14) or in documents of Jewish Christian provenance such as Luke's special Hebraic tradition (Luke 23:47), James (Jas 5:6), and probably 1 Peter (1 Pet 3:18) and 1 John (1 John 2:1). The designation "the Servant" (cf. Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30) is rooted in Jesus' own allusions (cf. Mark 10:45), and carries strong Davidic connotations, such as are found in the eucharistic prayers in the *Didache* (9:2-3 and 10:2-3). It is possible that these prayers go back to the Jerusalem community before 70 AD.[37] The servant passages in Acts do not clearly allude to Isaiah 53 and the suffering servant of God. Only in Acts 8:32-33 is Isaiah 53:7-8 quoted and Jesus expressly identified with the slain lamb (*amnos*). It seems as though the three other New Testament designations of Jesus as "lamb" (1 Pet 1:19; 1 John 1:29, 36) also point to a Jewish Christian background.[38] It is difficult to know whether or not Isaiah 53 was interpreted messianically in Qumran (cf. 4Q541).

Jewish Christianity possessed a highly developed theology of "the name of Jesus".[39] Traces of this theology appear in Peter's speeches (cf. Acts 2:21; 4:12), especially in Acts 3:16, where the strange wording has led some exegetes to think that the text has been translated from the Aramaic.[40] The blasphemy of "the good name" in James 2:7 is a hidden reference to Jesus . Similar traces are also found in Paul in the context of a Jewish discussion (Rom 10:13) and in a credal tradition of Jewish Christian background (Phil 2:9-10), as we shall see. Designations of Jesus as the eschatological "Stone" were very popular in Jewish Christianity as well.[41] Jesus himself formed the ultimate source for this expression when he linked the verse from Psalm 118:22 to the parable of the wicked tenants (Mark 12:1-12). The messianic exegesis of the stone motif presupposes a knowledge of Hebrew.[42] A comparison with the scriptural exegesis in the Qumran text 4Q500/1 demonstrates that Jesus' parable is completely plausible in an early Jewish context and does not have to be a late Christian allegory.[43] Apart from the synoptic logion of Jesus and Acts 4:11, Psalm 118:22 is only cited in the New Testament in 1 Peter 2:4, 7, a fact which some scholars see as a support for a Petrine tradition in Acts 4:11.[44] The reference to Caiaphas and his colleagues, i.e., the religious leaders of Israel, as "builders" (Acts 4:11 cf. Mark 12:10) recalls the language found in the Essene Damascus Document (CD 4:12, 19; cf. 1QpHab 10:5-13).

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37 See S. Heid, "Das Heilige Land: Herkunft und Zukunft der Judenchristen", *Kairos* 34/35 (1992/93), 1-26 (5-12).

38 See R.N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (London: 1970), 49-50.

39 See J. Dani'lou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity (A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea I)* (London/Philadelphia: 1977), 147-163.

40 See C.C. Torrey, *The Composition and Date of Acts* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1916), 14-16; F.J.F. Jackson, *The Beginnings of Christianity* II (London: 1922), 42. Cf. C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* I (Edinburgh: 1994), 198-199, however, who sees in the clumsiness of the sentence an indication of an underlying tradition.

41 Longenecker, 50-53.

42 K. Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants. An Inquiry into Parable Interpretation* (Tübingen: 1983), 113-118.

43 G.J. Brooke, "4Q500 1 and the Use of Scripture in the Parable of the Vineyard", *Dead Sea Discoveries* 2 (1995), 268-294.

44 P. Rolland, *L'origine at la date des 'vangiles. Les T'moins oculaires de J'sus* (Paris: 1994), 96.

The great investigator of Jewish Christianity, Jean Dani•lou, has demonstrated that an angelomorphic Christology, not necessarily but quite often heretical in nature (cf. Heb 1:2ff), was widely known in Jewish Christian circles.[45] We find no clear trace of it in the Acts of the Apostles, unless one likes to speculate about the "angel of the Lord" (*aggelos kyriou*) who released Peter from prison (Acts 12:7). New Testament polemics against angelic worship, as in Hebrews or Colossians (2:18), call for a discussion of interesting Qumran parallels.[46] There, the archangel Michael (1QM 9:14-15; 17:6-8) played an important eschatological role, while Melchizedek (Gen 14:18ff; cf. Hebr 5-7) was also apparently considered to be an angelic being (11QMelch). A unique post-Easter designation calls Jesus "the Prophet like Moses" (Deut 18:15,18), a term found in the speeches of Peter (Acts 3:22) and Stephen (Acts 7:37). Deuteronomy 18:15,18 was interpreted messianically at Qumran (4Q175 with 1QS 9:11; 4Q377; cf. *Sibylline Oracles* V:256-259 and John 1:21, 25) and in Samaritan eschatology, but apparently not by the rabbis. Of course, the mere designation of Jesus as a prophet could be misunderstood.[47] Indeed, as we learn from the Pseudo-Clementine literature (cf. *Homilies* I 40-41; *Recognitions* I 43), in the strongly Essene-influenced Jewish Christian heresy of the Ebionites a prophetic Christology was developed against the Nazorean Jewish Christians and the Gentile church who together confessed the deity of Jesus.[48]

Beyond Messianology

Jesus is never called "God" in the book of Acts, and in the New Testament as a whole only a handful of examples indicate that *theos* was used as a Christological title (definitely John 1:1; 20:28; very probably Rom 9:5; Tit 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1; John 1:18).[49] These facts have led many scholars to conclude that belief in the deity of Christ was a very late development in gentile Christianity. However, the Johannine prologue (1:1-18), which was so important for the incarnational Christology of the later councils, speaks of the deity of Jesus in the context of Jewish speculation on God's word and wisdom in creation (cf. Gen 1:1; Prov 8:22-23; *Wis Sol* 9:1).[50] In the light of this, many other scholars are prepared to concede Jewish influence of a type of diaspora hellenistic philosophical mysticism or religious syncretism. But we now know that no clear-cut cultural and ideological barriers existed between the diaspora and Eretz Israel.[51] Philo of Alexandria was not an isolated thinker but had contacts with the Essene-like therapeutai; the

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45 Dani•lou, 117-146.

46 See M. de Jonge and A.S. van der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament", *New Testament Studies* 12 (1966), 301-326; C.E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Tübingen: 1995), 96-98.

47 O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: 1963), 49.

48 See R.A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Leiden/Jerusalem: 1988). Barrett remarks: "At Clem.Recog. 1.43 it is assumed that Jews give a messianic interpretation to the passage of Deuteronomy. This is justified only in respect of the Qumran passages ..." (p. 208).

49 See M.J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: 1992).

50 See O. Skarsaune, *Incarnation — Myth or Fact?* (St. Louis: 1991).

51 M. Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (London: 1989).

Alexandrian therapeutai had connections with Palestinian baptist groups and circles of Jewish Christian hellenists.[52]

Wisdom Christology remembered those sayings of Jesus (cf. Matt 11:19; 12:42; Luke 11:49) in which he spoke of himself as God's wisdom.[53] Part of such wisdom Christology were reflections about Jesus as the "beginning" (*arche*), "head" (*kephale*), "first-born" (*prototokos*), "form" (*morphe*), and "image" (*eikon*) of God. The pre-Pauline traditions in Philippians 2:6 (*en morphe theou*) and Colossians 1:15 (*eikon tou theou, prototokos pases ktiseos*), which were originally formulated in either Hebrew or Aramaic,[54] confess the pre-existence and deity of Jesus in wisdom terminology. Traces of such a wisdom Christology are also found in the Jerusalem speeches of Peter, where Jesus is designated the "beginning (*archegos*) of life" (Acts 3:15, "beginning (*archegos*) and savior at the right hand of God" (Acts 5:31), and the "head (*kephale*) of the corner" (Acts 4:11). These motifs were widely elaborated in later Jewish Christianity, as the writings of Justin Martyr (*Dialogue* 61,1; 62, 4), Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* VI 7:58), and Jerome (*Commentary on Isaiah* IV [on Isa 11:2]) all testify.

We should not think that the perception of Jesus' deity was only a process of developing reflection. The early chapters of Acts provide us with some insights into the charismatic experience which led some of the believers to go beyond traditional messianology. Stephen had a vision of the heavens opened and the glory of God (Acts 7:55-56). Although the martyr saw the glorious throne of God (*merkavah*), he addressed his prayer to the "Lord Jesus" (Acts 7:59-60). God's privilege of receiving prayers was transferred to Jesus. The fact that this is not only a Lukan construction but reflects the practice of the early Aramaic-speaking community is demonstrated by the prayer *marana tha*, "our Lord come!", cited by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (16:22; cf. Rev 22:20). Paul's epistles also demonstrate how the address "Lord" developed from a messianic title to express Jesus' uniqueness and supremacy, similar to the way in which *kyrios* was used in the Septuagint as a substitute for the tetragrammaton. We know from a Aramaic targum found in Qumran (11QtgJob24:7; cf. 11QGenAp 20:12-13,15; 4QEn^{b} 1: 4:5) that the absolute "Lord" (*mare*) could be used as designation for God in first century Palestine,[55] contrary to Bultmann.[56] In the praescripts of his letters, Paul programmatically greets his reader with the phrase, "grace with you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. Gal 1:3; 1 Cor 1:3; etc.). Although Paul does not explicitly call Jesus *theos,* he ran the risk of being accused of "di-theism" by his fellow Jews.[57]

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52 See P.F. Beatrice, "Apollos of Alexandria and the Origins of the Jewish-Christian Baptism Encratism", in Haase, 1232-1275; C. Spicq, "L'epitre aux Hebreux: Apollos, Jean-Baptiste, les Hellenistes et Qumran", *Revue de Qumran* 1 (1958/59), 365-390; and O. Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle* (Philadelphia: 1976).

53 See B. Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: 1994).

54 See P. Grelot, "Deux notes critiques sur Philippiens 2,6-11", *Biblica* 54 (1973), 169-186; J.A. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Background of Philippians 2:6-11", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (1988), 470-483; C.F. Burney, "Christ as the ARCHE of Creation", *Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1926), 160-177; W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: 1955), 150-152.

55 See J.A. Fitzmyer, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Kyrios-Title", in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Missoula: 1979), 115-142.

56 R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* I (London: 1956), 51.

57 See L.W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*

Another incident reported in the early chapters of Acts may perhaps shed further light on the fact that we meet such a high Christology so early in the history of the first community. On the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3), Paul was overwhelmed by a heavenly light, heard a voice, and asked: "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). It is not impossible that even as a Pharisee Paul had some visionary experience of the throne of God.[58] Although he certainly expected an appearance of God in response to the address "Lord" (*kyrie*), the answer he received was, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). Later, Luke summarizes Paul's early kerygma in the synagogues of Damascus in the proclamation that "Jesus is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). Although this expression might not be more than a messianic title (cf. Acts 9:22), it is striking that Paul himself describes his Damascus experience in the following words: "It pleased [God] to reveal his Son to me" (Gal 1:16). In the Pauline letters, the term "Son of God" is more than a messianic title: it represents Jesus' unique relationship to God as his father. The early believers could remember those words of Jesus where he spoke of himself in a very distinct way as "the Son" (cf. Matt 11:27; Mark 12:6; 13:32). Apparently, Paul knew the logion (Matt 11:25-27; Luke 10:21-22) about the exclusive revelation of the heavenly father to Jesus his son (cf. 1 Cor 1:19-21; 2:6-11).[59]

Chronology and Christology

Some years ago, Martin Hengel pointed out the relationship between New Testament Christology and chronology. He wrote: "The christological development from Jesus as far as Paul took place within about eighteen years, a short space of time for such an intellectual process. In essentials more happened in Christology within these few years than in the whole subsequent seven hundred years of church history."[60] Indeed, Paul, the former Pharisee and scribe, confessed the crucified Jesus of Nazareth not only as the Messiah of Israel but as the sole mediator of salvation for all men, as pre-existent agent of God's creation, and even as divine in nature. This high Christology is very often expressed in pre-Pauline credal formulas and other traditional material (cf. Rom 8:3; 1 Cor 2:7; 8:6; Gal 4:4; Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20). When is the most likely date for Paul to have received these traditions? We should bear the following chronological considerations in mind.[61] Jesus was crucified on 14 Nisan (7 April) in the year 30 AD. According to the oldest and most reliable tradition, Paul was converted in the second year after the resurrection. Two or three years later the apostle left the Holy Land for Cilicia (Gal 1:15-24). It is most probable that he received the credal formulas dear to him in Damascus and Jerusalem and not only when he became a member of the community in Antioch about 42 AD. As late as his epistle to the Romans (57 AD), Paul looks to the Jerusalem community as the source of the "spiritual blessings" for all gentile believers (Rom 15:27). It was from Jerusalem that the eschatological word of God went forth (1 Cor 14:36; cf. Isa 2:3; Mic 4:2). But after the persecution by Agrippa I (c. 41/42 AD) the twelve were no longer a

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(London: 1988).

58 Segal's controversial book is inspiring in this regard: A.F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Paul the Pharisee* (New Haven/London 1990), 34-71.

59 See D. Wenham, *Paul — Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: 1995), 129-136.

60 Hengel, "Christology and the New Testament Chronology", in *Between Jesus and Paul*, 30-47, 156-166, (39-40).

61 Riesner, *Frühzeit*, 31-110.

collegium residing in the Holy City (cf. Acts 12: 17) and preserving the tradition (cf. Acts 2:42). So we may reduce the formative years of the New Testament Christology to even less than a decade.

Paul the Jew — According to Acts

Reidar Hvalvik[62]

When Paul — or rather: Saul — is introduced in the book of Acts, he is described as a zealous Jew persecuting the first Jesus-believers. On the road to Damascus he had a radical experience which is normally called his "conversion", a term which denotes a turning around, a change of mind. According to modern usage, Paul's conversion would thus mean that he turned away from Judaism and became a Christian. Such an interpretation does not, however, accord with the record in Acts: after his "conversion" Paul still talks and acts as a Jew, even as a Pharisee, and is loyal to his people and to his Jewish heritage.

The Paul whom we meet in his letters, particularly in Galatians, however, seems to be another Paul. There he stresses freedom from the Mosaic law and fights against those who demand circumcision and other forms of Torah observance.

These observations raise two questions. First, why does Luke emphasize Paul's Jewishness? And second, is his picture of Paul trustworthy? In other words: is the "Lukan Paul" (the Paul described by the author of Acts) compatible with the "Pauline Paul"? We will try to answer these questions in this article. As an introduction, we will give a short survey of how Paul is depicted in Acts, focusing on his Jewishness.

The Description of Paul in Acts

Although Paul is the central figure in the last part of Acts (chapters 13-28), most of the biographical information given about him is limited to the four defense speeches in chapters 22-26 (before the crowd in Jerusalem, before the Sanhedrin, before the governor Felix, and before king Agrippa). In these speeches, Paul presents himself as a Jew, loyal to the law. The presentation may be summarized as follows:

1. Paul was raised as a Jew and educated at the feet of Gamaliel "in the law of our fathers" (22:3). He presents himself as "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (23:6), and stresses that from the very beginning he lived as a Pharisee (26:5).

2. The God whom Paul serves is none other than "the God of our fathers" (22:14). Paul's continuity with his ancestral faith is very much in focus in his defence before Felix:

> I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked (24:14-15).

Again and again, Paul repeats that the charges against him are closely connected with his hope in the resurrection (23:6; 24:15; 26:6-8), a hope which he holds in common with most other Jews.

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3. After his "conversion" Paul continued to behave as a pious Jew. This is clear, for example, from the fact that he visits the temple to pray (22:17).[63] Furthermore, he describes the purpose of his last journey to Jerusalem as being to worship (24:11) or to "present offerings" (24:17).

4. Paul is loyal to the Jewish authorities. When he speaks against Ananias, he excuses himself by saying that he did not know that he was a high priest (23:2-5).

The picture based on Acts 22-26 can easily be supplemented by incidents elsewhere in the same book. Paul's loyalty to his people is further evidenced by his missionary method: he always begins his witness in the synagogues, preaching the gospel to the Jews first (cf. 13:14; 14:1; 17:10; 18:4-6; 19:8f). His loyalty to the law and Jewish customs is exemplified by his participation in Jewish religious festivals (cf. 20:16) and his willingness to participate in a nazarite vow (21:18-28; cf. 18:18). Even in connection with such a burning issue as circumcision he acts according to the law by circumcising Timothy (16:3).

This brief presentation leaves no doubt about the "color" of Luke's picture of Paul: it emphasizes his Jewishness. Why? Today there seems to be broad consensus within New Testament scholarship that Luke depicted Paul as a loyal Jew *for theological reasons*. A popular explanation is that Luke is defending Paul in connection with the charges brought against him by Jews or Jewish Christians, charges such as the one recorded in Acts 21:21: "that you teach all the Jews who live among the gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs." In other words: "Luke's brief biography of Paul is more than a report; it is an apology, arguing that Paul was 'orthodox' and belonged within the family of Jews who believed Jesus to be the Messiah."[64]

Although much can be said in support fof this view, I think it is even more likely that the presentation of Paul is part of Luke's overall purpose in Acts. Since this is not the place to discuss this question in detail;[65] I shall limit myself to a summary of the solution which I myself find most convincing.

At the time Acts was written, a majority of the Christian communities were composed of gentiles. Even if a considerable number of Jews had come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, the majority of the Jews were to be found in the synagogues rather than in the churches. This reality undoubtedly gave rise to a burning question: were the promises of the Old Testament fulfilled within the church, among the Christians? According to Luke, the answer was affirmative. In line with the promises, the gospel was first proclaimed to the Jews and was accepted by a considerable number of them (cf. Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14). The fact that the majority of the Jews had rejected the gospel did not mean that God's word had failed (cf. Rom 9:6). The promises found their fulfilment in the *Jews and Gentiles* who came to faith in Jesus. Together they constituted the true people of God.

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63 It should also be noted that the Lord there appeared to him in a vision and commissioned him — just like the prophet Isaiah (Acts 22:17-21; cf. Isa 6:1-10).

64 Donald Juel, *Luke-Acts: The Promise of History* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 86 — depending on Jacob Jervell, "Paul: The Teacher of Israel", in *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 153-183.

65 See further, Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (FRLANT 126; Gɜttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982). My own interpretation is found in my (Norwegian) book, *Fra Jerusalem til jordens ender. Hovedtrekk i Apostlenes gjerninger* (Oslo: Credo forlag, 1992^2), 23f, 131f.

This was Luke's conviction. For this reason he was eager to emphasize the *continuity* between Old Testament history and the history of the early church. He does this by emphasizing two factors:

1) He underscores the fact that the God who is acting is "the God of the people of Israel" (13:17), "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (3:13; 7:32), "the God of our fathers" (3:13; 5:30; 7:32; 22:14; 24:14). It is this God who raised Jesus from the dead (3:13; 5:30) and who chose Paul to be his witness (22:14).

2) He repeatedly focuses on God's promises and their fulfilment (cf. 2:39; 7:17). Typical is the record of Paul's saying in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch: "We tell you the good news: what God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm ..." (13:32).

In all probability, Luke's presentation of Paul should be seen in this perspective. The continuity between the people of Israel and the church comes to expression in Paul's person and teaching. Paul is a Jew and continues to live as a Jew — even if he has come to faith in Jesus. He still serves the God of his fathers and in his teaching says "nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen" (26:22; cf. 28:23). Moreover, Paul's missionary work explains why and how the gentiles were included in the people of God. Paul proclaimed the gospel first to the Jews, but when they (read: the majority of the Jews) rejected it, he turned to the gentiles (13:46; 18:6; 28:28) — quite in accordance with the promises in the Old Testament and his own calling (13:47; 22:21; 26:17f).

This way of explaining Luke's presentation of Paul seems well founded, and takes into account the fact that Luke writes not only as a historian but also as a theologian. However, in a situation where many scholars tend to focus solely on Luke as a theologian, I think it is necessary to emphasize that Luke was *both a historian and a theologian*. And I think it is likely that Luke managed to present his own theological concerns without creating a story *ex nihilo* — out of nothing. Undoubtedly he made a selection among the traditions available to him, stressing certain features which suited his purposes and coloring the material in varying degrees with his own language. But Luke wanted to be a historian (cf. Luke 1:1-4) and should be regarded as "no less trustworthy than other historians of antiquity."[66] In general, Graeco-Roman historians had three purposes: "History ought to be *truthful, useful,* and *entertaining*, but it should not be entertaining at the expense of truth or utility."[67] Since Luke is concerned with the reliability and certainty of the instruction which Theophilus had received (cf. Luke 1:4), it is most likely that he was also concerned about the truth of his own account. To what extent he succeeded in giving a reliable historical report is, of course, another matter. Undoubtedly there are historical problems with Acts.[68] However, there is no reason to radically suspect the books value as a historical source of early Christianity — including the picture of Paul. To this question we now turn.

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66 Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 1979), 60.

67 David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelhpia: Westminster, 1987), 95; cf. W.C. van Unnik, "Luke's Second Book and the Rules of Hellenistic Historiography", in *Les Actes des Apɔtres: Traditions, rʿdaction, thʿologie,* ed. J. Kremer (BETL 48; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979), 37-60 (50-51).

68 For a short but helpful survey of the historical problems in Acts, see Gerhard A. Krodel, *Proclamation Commentaries: Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 90-113.

The "Lukan" and the "Pauline" Paul

To what extent does Luke's picture of Paul fit the picture Paul gives of himself in his letters? If we start with Paul's Jewishness in general, Paul plainly expresses this himself. He calls himself "a Hebrew born of Hebrews" (Phil 3:6; cf. 2 Cor 11:22), a statement which corresponds to the information in Acts that Paul spoke Hebrew (or rather, Aramaic) (21:40; 22:2; cf. 26:14). Twice he says that he was a member of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5), a detail which fits the information that his Jewish name was Saul (Acts 7:58ff; 13:9); in all probability he was named after the most distinguished member of that tribe, the first king of Israel (cf. 1 Sam 9:1f). In line with the record in Acts Paul also claims to be a Pharisee (Phil 3:5) and stresses his zealous attitude to the traditions of the fathers (Gal 1:14).

With regard to his theology, the "Pauline Paul" is eager to stress the connection between God and people of Israel. The gospel he proclaims is "promised beforehand through his [God's] prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (Rom 1:2); what happened to Christ is "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3f). Paul is proud of being a descendant of Abraham (Rom 11:1) and frequently uses his ancestor as an example (cf. Rom 4:1ff; Gal 3:6ff). His Jewish heritage lies in the background of all his letters. Nor can there be any doubt of his sincere sympathy towards his own people — even when many of them rejected his gospel (cf. Rom 9:1ff; 10:1).

In general terms, therefore, few, if any, scholars would deny the Jewishness of Paul and his theology. When it comes to his practice, however, opinions differ. We shall thus focus on some disputed features concerning Paul's Jewishness as recorded in Acts.

1. We start with Luke's picture of Paul's missionary practice, a practice which presupposes a continuing relationship with the synagogue. When Luke depicts Paul as always visiting the synagogues this is, according to a widespread opinion, nothing more than an expression of "the Lukan scheme of going to the Jews first".[69] In other words, it is part of Luke's theological concern and, consequently, its historicity is suspect. In his treatment of this question, E.P. Sanders asserts that the picture in Acts differs quite substantially from the picture which emerges from Paul's letters. There, his ministry is restricted to the gentiles (cf. Rom 11:13; Gal 2:9), with no special concern for the Jews in the diaspora. "Paul was apostle to the Gentiles. So he styled himself, and so he acted."[70]

Paul undoubtedly understood himself to be an apostle to the gentiles. But that did not exclude him from also embracing the Jews. This situation is clearly presupposed, for example, in Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 9:20 ("to the Jews I became as a Jew in order to win Jews").[71] His continued contact with the synagogues is also confirmed by the fact that he "five times ... received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one" (2 Cor 11:24).[72] Since the context clearly refers

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69 Gerd L□demann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 159 (in relation to Acts 14:1; cf. a similar evaluation of 17:2-3, p. 185).

70 E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 190; cf. 181.

71 Cf. G□nther Bornkamm, "The Missionary Stance of Paul in I Corinthians and in Acts", in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays presented in honour of Paul Schubert,* ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (London: SPCK, 1968), 194-207 (200); and Arland Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from his Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 137-143. I am not convinced by E.P. Sanders' argument to the contrary (187ff).

72 On this, see A.E. Harvey, "Forty Strokes Save One: Social Aspects of Judaizing and Apostasy", in

to his apostolic ministry there can be little doubt that these incidents are related to his missionary work among Jews.

It has been argued on the basis of Galatians 2:7-9 ("we should go to the gentiles and they to the circumcised") that Paul restricted his ministry to the gentiles. This is an unconvincing argument, however. In the framework of the texts just mentioned, I think it is more plausible to understand the "Jerusalem agreement" as implying a division of missionary responsibility in geographical rather than ethnic terms.[73]

The picture of Paul's missionary practice found in Acts is also supported by Paul's theology as it is reflected in Romans. In the same letter in which he calls himself an apostle to the gentiles (11:13), he stresses that the Jews have a prerogative of the gospel (1:16).[74] Paul also demonstrates his deep concern for the salvation of Israel (cf. 9:1-3; 10:1) and explicitly links his ministry to the gentiles with the hope that he may save some of his fellow Jews (11:13-14).[75] It would therefore be natural for Paul to start in the synagogue. Even if Paul wanted to reach gentiles, the synagogue was a useful place to be, since not only Jews but also a considerable number of god-fearers, i.e., gentiles who believed in the God of Israel and observed some part of the Torah, congregated there. The synagogue was thus an important bridgehead for his mission to the gentiles.[76]

2. According to Acts 16:3, Paul took steps to circumcise Timothy. How could the author of Galatians who says, "I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all" (5:2), himself circumcise someone else? In Galatians, Paul further emphasizes that the Jerusalem authorities did not even compell the Greek Titus to be circumcised (2:3). According to one scholar, "the statement about the circumcision of Timothy stands in direct contradiction to the theology of Paul"; for Paul, "circumcision is never a matter of indifference".[77]

Although this conclusion seems convincing, on a second reading it loses much of its validity. The situation in Galatia was quite different from the circumstances of Timothy's circumcision. According to Acts 16:1, Timothy was the offspring of a mixed marriage: his mother was a Jewess, his father a Greek. According to modern thinking, Timothy was thus a Jew. This may also have been the case in New Testament times. Although the principle that Jewish descent was traced matrilineally cannot be dated with certainty before the Mishnah (see *m.Qidd.* 3:12; *m.Yeb.* 7:5), Acts seems to presuppose the same principle.[78] Luke explains Paul's action by saying that the Jews

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Alternative Approaches to New Tetsament Study, ed. A.E. Harvey (London: SPCK, 1985), 79-96, especially 93.

73 Cf. Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 30.

74 On this text, see my article, "'To the Jew First and also to the Greek': The Meaning of Romans 1:16b", *Mishkan* 10 (1989), 1-8.

75 On Paul's view of the salvation of Israel, see my article, "A 'Separate Way' for Israel? A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11:25-27", *Mishkan* 16 (1992), 12-29.

76 On the god-feares, see R. Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish -Christian Competition in the Second Century* (WUNT 2/82; T□bingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), 249-267.

77 Philipp Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts", in *Studies on Luke-Acts: Essays presented in honour of Paul Schubrt,* eds. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (London: SPCK, 1968), 33-50 (40, 41).

78 See Luke T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 283f. For a different interpretation, see Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1-3)? Patristic Exegesis,

"all knew that Timothy's father was a Greek" (16:3). The clear implication is that Timothy was expected to be a Jew and therefore to have been circumcised, but that his father had prevented his circumcision — being a gentile. In order not to cause difficulties amongst the Jews in the area Paul thus circumcised him, following the missionary principle stated in 1 Corinthians 9:20f.

The case of Titus was quite different. He was a Greek and accompanied Paul to a meeting in Jerusalem where the issue under discussion was whether circumcision was necessary for salvation. Some maintained that unless the gentiles were circumcised they could not be saved (Acts 15:1; cf. Gal 2:4). In such a situation Paul was unshakeable: he would not accept circumcision and Torah observance as conditions for salvation. That meant setting aside God's grace, "for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" (Gal 2:21).

Ultimately, however, circumcision was an indifferent matter for Paul; he explicitly says that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value; the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Gal 5:6; cf. 6:15; 1 Cor 7:19). Paul thus had no objections against circumcision among Jewish believers; for them it was part of their Jewish identity. As soon as circumcision was preached among gentiles, however, Paul raised fundamental objections because it impinged on the gospel and threatened Christian freedom.

3. Another example of Paul's attitude to Jewish customs and rites lies in his observance of Jewish religious festivals, such as Pentecost (20:16). The question is, however, if Paul actually observed certain days. Did he not consider "every day alike" (Rom 14:5)? Would the man who was dismayed that the Galatians observed "special days and months and seasons and years" (Gal 4:10; cf. Col 2:16) observe Jewish festivals? Again, we have to stress the difference in circumstances: Paul was a Jew; the Galatians were not. As F.F. Bruce points out:

> They were Gentiles: there was no reason for them to adopt the observance of the Jewish sacred calendar, least of all to adopt it as a matter of legal obligation. Once he himself had inherited the observance of that sacred calendar as a legal obligation, but now he had learned to exercise complete freedom regarding its observance or non-observance, and it was deplorable that gentile believers who had no ancestral motivation for doing so should place themselves under the yoke of the commandments in this or any other way."[79]

It is clear from Paul's letters that he regarded Christ as "the end of the law" (Rom 10:4; cf. Gal 3:25; Eph 2:15; Col 2:14). That meant freedom from the law with all its commandments and regulations. Freedom, however, is not the same as non-observance. For Paul, freedom also meant freedom to observe the law if that served his ministry. What freedom meant is clearly expressed in the important passage in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, a text already referred to more than once:

> Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this

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Rabbinic Law, and Matrilineal Descent", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105 (1986), 251-268.

79 F.F. Bruce, "Is the Paul of Acts the Real Paul?", *Bulletin of John Rylands Library* 58 (1975-76), 282-305 (295).

for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Although this passage should not be used as a blanket explanation to cover inconsistencies of any kind neither should its significance be minimized.[80] In fact, it provides a plausible explanation of Paul's continuing contact with the synagogue, his participation in temple worship, observance of Jewish festivals, performance of a nazirite vow, and participation in the vows of others.[81] The last example illustrates the point particularly well. To make a nazirite vow was a purely voluntary undertaking, not a general commandment. It consequently did nothing to compromise Paul's law-free gospel at the same time as it illustrates his freedom to observe the law. It has been argued that the motivation behind his participation in the vow (Acts 21:20-24) is "highly suspect".[82] Admittedly the whole episode is "imposed" on Paul; he did not choose to make the vow himself. It could be that he was slightly hesitant but nevertheless wanted to demonstrate that he was willing to become "all things to all men". We do not know. What seems clear, however, is that Paul certainly could have acted as Luke says that he did. His letter contains no evidence that he hindered Jesus-believing Jews from continuing to live as Jews. On the contrary, he admonishes his readers to *remain* in the same state or situation as they were when God called them (1 Cor 7:17.24) — and that includes being a circumcised Jew (7:18). The point is made clear by the Greek word *peripatein* (v. 17), which means to "walk" and is often used in the sense "to conduct oneself" or "to live". Those who were Jews by birth should go on behaving as Jews.[83]

Conclusion

Our investigation has shown that the "Lukan Paul" is compatible with the "Pauline Paul". Or, as Jacob Jervell puts it: "The Lukan Paul, the picture of Paul in Acts, is a completion, a filling up of the Pauline one, so that in order to get at the historical Paul, we cannot do without Acts and Luke."[84] That means that the historical Paul was more multifaceted than some critical scholars would lead us to believe solely on the evidence of the so-called undisputed letters of Paul. It must be remembered, however, that his letters give us only a partial picture of Paul. Jervell is probably right when he says that "that which lies in the shadow in Paul's letters Luke has placed in the sun in Acts."[85] What lies in the shadow in the letters is precisely the Jewish Paul. For that reason Acts is an indispensable source to the historical Paul, i.e., Paul, the Jew.

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80 Bruce, 294.

81 So also Vielhauer, 39.

82 Vielhauer, 39.

83 There was only one possible exception: if their conduct compromised or distorted the gospel for gentile believers. In a mixed congregation this could be a problem, as it became in Antioch; cf. Gal 2:11ff.

84 Jacob Jervell, "Paul in the Acts of the Apostles: Tradition, History, Theology", *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 68-76 (70).

85 Jervell, "Paul in the Acts", 71.

Were the Hellenists "Liberals"?

Oskar Skarsaune[86]

Having spent some time in Jerusalem engaged in theological research, I am sometimes asked what "the Jerusalem experience" does to one's theology. There are no brief answers to that question, of course. One thing has, however, struck me increasingly over the years: without being guilty of unhistorical or uncritical anachronism, I can state with some confidence that remarkable similarities exist between first century Jerusalem and the present-day city. Contemporary analogies may consequently be useful in illuminating some of the vexed questions of New Testament scholarship. In the following article, I offer a case study which, to my mind, may present a good example in this regard.[87]

I

When one looks at the political and religious attitudes of Jews in Jerusalem today, one quickly discovers the "immigrant-factor". The following rough sketch is based on my own observations and does not claim any "scientific" merit. Neverethless, I do believe that most Jerusalem residents will confirm its validity.

A large measure of tolerance for other groups and lifestyles characterizes the "well-established" Jewish citizens of Israel. Long-time residents of Jerusalem are accustomed to seeing the city as a city of plurality and have come to terms with this fact — an art learned over generations. This attitude is typical not only of the secular but also the Orthodox segments of society, including the well-established ultra-Orthodox Jews in Mea Shearim, who do not interfere with other groups as long as they are left in peace themselves.

Western Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox immigrants present a different picture. The best-equipped of these come from the USA, many of them from the main center of Orthodoxy in Brooklyn. They are a very select group who have immigrated to Israel for religious/national reasons. Many of them have purely religious motivations for settling in Israel: numerous commandments in the Torah can only be carried out in the land of Israel. According to some talmudic rabbis, every Jew has a religious duty to settle in Israel, if possible. In Jerusalem, these religious immigrants often settle together in strong and tight-knit communities. Some learn modern Hebrew for national or practical reasons, others refuse to do so on the grounds that Hebrew, the holy language, should not be profaned by daily speech. Thus they usually speak either English or Yiddish.

The major motivation of these immigrants is to live according to the Torah. Consequently, they

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87 This article is a revised version of a study published in a Festschrift for Professor Edvin Larsson: O. Skaursaune, "Var hellenistene "liberale"?, in *Ad Acta: Studier til Apostlenes gjerninger og urkristendommens historie*, eds. R. Hvalvik and H. Kvalbein (Oslo: 1994), 347-361.

find great difficulty with those people who ignore or even reject the commandments of the Torah. According to them, the Torah should apply to everybody living in the country. The Torah also contains commandments which apply to the foreigners living in the country. If the commandments of the Torah are not observed the land will be unclean; when Jews transgress the law, the welfare and happiness of the whole people come under threat. All of the people are collectively responsible for transgressions of the law committed by individuals.

This is one of the causes for the religious and political activity taken against the transgression of the commandments by other Jews or even non-Jews. If you drive in some areas in Jerusalem on the Sabbath, you risk having a stone thrown through your car window. The chances that this stone was thrown by an immigrant, whose mother-tongue is not Hebrew, are high. Such fanaticism, in the name of the law, is characteristic of these religious immigrants; it forms the rationale for their immigration in the first place.

II

The reader should understand that this description of Jerusalem today is somewhat stylistic and simplified in drawing comparisons with the Jerusalem of the first century. At that time also, there was an important group of immigrants in the city. Their mother tongue was Greek, not Hebrew or Aramaic, and they came from Alexandria, Asia Minor, Rome, and from large and small towns around the Mediterranean. Most of them immigrated to Jerusalem for religious reasons: to live according to all the commandments of the Torah near the temple and its activity — the very heart of the law of Moses. An initial evaluation might suggest that they were a selective group: intensely temple-orientated and devoted to living strictly according to the law. This is the very reason for their presence in Jerusalem. They might well contain in their midst the most religiously zealous and fanatical Jews in Jerusalem.

I am assuming that when Luke speaks in Acts about a group called the "hellenistai", he is referring to the presence of Greek-speaking diaspora Jews: Jews whose mother-tongue was Greek and who also worshiped in that language.[88]

III

The picture given of the hellenists in Acts research since F.C. Baur presents a diametrically-opposite view to that which I have proposed above. Baur's theory was that the hellenistic circles in Jerusalem reflected a "liberal" attitude towards the law and a critical attitude towards the temple, both of which tendencies were inherited by early Christian hellenistic groups. Thus, for example, Paul's criticism of the law was preceded by these "Paulines ante Paulum" — Pauline believers before Paul.[89]

This theory quickly became popular in scholarly research, although it has been developed in

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88 This interpretation of the "hellenistai" was put forward by the prominent exegete of the primitive church, John Chrysostom, and has recently been defended by Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* (London: 1983), 6-11.

89 Baur first set forth his hellenist thesis in detail in *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi* (Stuttgart: 1845). See the detailed report in Craig C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church* (Minneapolis: 1992), 5-8; and Edvin Larsson, Apostelgärningarna 1-12 (KNT 5a; Stockholm: 1983), 134, 195f.

different directions.[90] Ever since Baur, the story of Stephen has held center stage. The hellenist Stephen was the first martyr, and Baur assumes that the following persecutions were restricted to the hellenists to the exclusion of the "Hebrews" (cf. Acts 8:1). According to Baur, this indicates that the theology of the hellenists differed from that of the Hebrews (cf. Acts 6). The hellenists were more critical of the temple and the law, as illustrated by Stephen's speech. Baur's theory also included the premise that the hellenistic Jewish believers held similar opinions to those of their non-believing hellenist brethren; their hellenistic background continued to influence their beliefs following their coming to faith in Jesus.

This assumption gives rise to a difficulty, however. What drew such anti-temple diaspora Jews to live in Jerusalem? The scholar who, until recently, was most aware of this problem while simultaneously maintaining Baur's theory of the hellenists as liberals, is Martin Hengel.[91] Hengel argues that the hellenists came to the city precisely for the purpose of living near the temple and its service:

> The Jews who returned to Jerusalem from the Diaspora had primarily religious reasons for their homecoming: as a rule they were certainly not 'liberal' and were probably closer to the attitude which Paul says he had when he was a Pharisee and before he became a Christian. As returnees, they felt a very deep tie to the Temple and the Torah; otherwise they would not have returned to Judaea, the culture and economy of which was hardly attractive, and would have chosen somewhere other than Jerusalem to live.[92]

Although Hengel holds to the existence of "pre-Christian" liberal hellenists, he is forced to recognize that such attitudes were characteristic only of some of the hellenists in Jerusalem, and that they developed following their settlement in the city. Hengel here captures a psychological view:

> In some circumstances, the realities there [in Jerusalem] could have a negative effect on those who had returned; they could be as ambivalent and indeed disappointing as was the 'Holy City', Rome, of Martin Luther's time when he went there on pilgrimage. The intellectual arrogance of the Pharisaic sages and the necessary casuistry of their interpretation of the Torah could be as offensive as the exploitation of the pilgrims in the Temple by the Sadducean priestly nobility.[93]

These realities, Hengel suggests, influenced the hellenists' rejection of legal casuistry, ritual laws, and temple service and their contrary emphasis on the ethical monotheism of the prophets. The main lines of Christian hellenistic and Pauline theology were thus directly drawn from Jewish hellenistic sources.[94]

I believe that this view may represent an anachronistic projection of modern experiences onto first century events and phenomena. Such projection is misleading concerning Luther. Modern ideas

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90 See the detailed research in Hill, 7-17; (bibliography p. 5, n.1).

91 Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 1-29. See also his article, "The Origins of the Christian Mission" in the same volume, 48-64.

92 Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 18.

93 Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 28.

94 Hengel also assumes that an especially provocative element of the Christian Hellenists' behavior was their charismatic profile. This could also explain their very important role in the early mission. See E. Larsson's "Hellenisterna och urforsamlingen" for a critique of this view (see note 12 below), 161.

to the contrary, nothing indicates that Luther was especially disappointed, or shocked over what he saw in Rome.[95]

Luther did not visit the city in order to observe pious Christians but to visit "objective" realities: the tombs of the martyrs, the holy relics, and so forth. It was a moving experience for him — just as one can assume that the "objective experience" of the temple service was for the hellenists in Jerusalem. What the hellenists sought — and found — in Jerusalem is well expressed in the inscription found in the only hellenistisynagogue discovered by archaeologists: "Theodotus, Son of Vettenus ... built the synagogue for the reading of the law and instruction in the commandments [of purity]."[96]

This inscription is dated prior to 66 AD and also mentions that the synagogue was equipped with ritual baths. Hengel's interpretation of the inscription seems very reasonable:

> If we begin from the fact that the introduction of the synagogue to Palestine was encouraged by the Pharisees and moreover note the stress that is laid here not only on worship but also on "nstruction on the commandments" and ritual bathing, we may assume that the founder was associated with the Pharisaic programme of "educatin the people in the law."[97]

Does this brief description of hellenistic law and temple piety in Jerusalem present a credible background for the disappointment which Hengel postulates as lying behind the rise of hellenistic liberalism towards the law and criticism of the temple? I find this doubtful.

IV

More recently, two scholars have radically broken with Baur's hellenistic theory: Edvin Larsson[98] and Craig C. Hill.[99] Both Larsson and Hill argue that the girders of Baur's thesis cannot stand the weight of his construction. They make three points regarding the Baurian theory: (1) It is not evident, according to Acts 8:1, that the persecution which followed the Stephen incident only affected the hellenists. On the contrary, the whole community seems to have been immediately affected.[100] (2) If this is true, the most important premise for assuming that the theology of the hellenists was more provocative than that of the Hebrews loses its applicability. (3) A closer reading of Stephen's speech in Acts 7 indicates that he was not more critical of the law or the temple than one would expect from "mainstream" theologians in the early church.

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95 See especially the chapter concerning Luther's journey to Rome in M. Brecht, *Martin Luther: Sein Weg zur Reformation* 1483-1521 (Stuttgart: 1981), 103ff.

96 *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum* no.1404; see Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 17, 148 n.119 (text and bibliography).

97 Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 18. This citation is immediate followed by Hengel's description of the diaspora Jews as not being liberals, quoted above.

98 In the article "Hellenisterna och urforsamlingen", S. Hidal and others (eds.), *Judendom och kristendom under de första århundradena* I (Stavanger: 1986), 145-164 (= German version "Die Hellenisten und die Urgemeinde", *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987), 205-25; and in the commentary on Acts, *Apostlagärningarna 1-12*, 125ff.

99 Hill, 17. Hill explicitly gives credit to Larsson for moving the debate concerning the hellenists out of the Baurian framework and onto a new track.

100 Hill doubts also the historicity of the persecution; see 32-40.

Larsson argues against the idea that the hellenists should be regarded as especially liberal in reference to the law and the temple:

> The Diaspora Jews were, in general, not liberals in their view of the Temple and the Law ... The Diaspora Jews who returned home to Jerusalem would have probably been rather zealous for the Law and the Temple.[101]

From this perspective, there are no grounds for postulating a theological difference between hellenists and Hebrews. Nothing prevents us from accepting Luke's account of the conflict at face value: namely, that the diaspora Jews living in Jerusalem were dependent to a higher degree than most others on the goodwill of the native residents. This provides a plausible context for the conflict in Acts 6 (as it also does for the tension amongst many of Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox immigrants today as well).

Larsson and Hill consequently reach a "negative" conclusion: The theory of a theological conflict or difference between hellenists and Hebrews has not been proven and therefore should not be taken for granted or repeated as an established truth in any representations of the history of the early church. Larsson suggests that the fact that the hellenists came to play a much more important role than the Hebrews in the early history of the mission can be sufficiently explained by their language, culture, and general background. Their dual cultural background, use of the common language of the time, and wide contact with non-Jewish "God-fearers" in the diaspora synagogues in their native countries gave them natural advantages not possessed by the Hebrews. There is no need to postulate in addition that they also had a theology which was more mission minded than the theology of the early Hebrew church.[102]

V

One difference between the hellenists and Hebrews which remains to be resolved relates to the persecution of the early church. I agree that it is difficult to build an argument on Acts 8:1 in this context; the verse does not prove that the hellenists were persecuted on that occasion and that the Hebrews were not. However, if we look more closely at the stories of persecution in Acts, we will clearly see that two quite different basic patterns emerge.

(1) In Acts 3-5, the pattern is unambiguous. "The people" have a positive attitude towards the community (2:47; 4:21; 5:13); the persecution comes from the high priest as the person responsible for temple authority, and is directed against the preaching of the apostles in the temple area. They are arrested by the temple guard and the legal steps taken against them are a matter for the council. Gamaliel, the leader of the Pharisees, defends them.

(2) In the Stephen episode the pattern is almost the opposite. The persecution has a "popular" origin in the diaspora synagogues in Jerusalem. First, the people, the elders, and the scribes agitate against Stephen (6:12); then his case is brought before the council and the high priest. The story of Stephen's martyrdom in Acts 7:54ff presupposes a lynching carried out by a furious crowd and

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101 Larsson, "Hellenisterna", 160.

102 Larsson, "Hellenisterna", 162; *Apostelgärningarna 1-12*, 197.

corresponds to an immediate continuation of 6:12a.[103]

While the "people" seem friendly towards the early church in Acts 3-5, the persecution against Stephen (and later against the whole community — Acts 8:1) has its origin in the Greek-speaking synagogues in Jerusalem. The following conclusion then appears reasonable: The reason that the hellenist, Stephen, became the first martyr, does not lie in his more provocative theology but in the fanaticism demonstrated by the public whom he challenged — the immigrant Jews of Jerusalem.[104] It is as the originators of persecution that the (non-Christian) hellenists differ from the Hebrews. In other words, the special characteristics of the hellenists explain why the conflict in the diaspora milieu of Jerusalem became more violent than usual in the encounter with Christian preaching. The causes therefore lie with the persecutors rather than the persecuted.

We have suggested that two main reasons attracted the diaspora Jews to Jerusalem: the law and the temple. This view conforms to the accusations brought against Stephen:

> We heard him speaking against Moses and against God ... This man is always talking against our sacred Temple and the Law of Moses. We heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will tear down the Temple and change all the customs which have been passed down to us from Moses (Acts 6:11-13).

Because the diaspora Jews in Jerusalem considered the temple and the law to be holy and inviolable institutions they guarded them with a fiercer zeal than other Jews of the time.

VI

This second pattern repeated itself in a remarkable way in the next persecution of a diaspora Jew in Jerusalem — Paul. Luke uses the term *hellenistai* for the second time in Acts here, to describe the zealous persecutors:

> And so Paul stayed with them [the apostles] and went all over Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. He also talked and debated with the Greek-speaking Jews [hellenistai], but they tried to kill him ... (Acts 9:28).

In Acts 21:17ff, Paul comes to Jerusalem where the early community, under the leadership of James, the brother of the Lord, seems to live in peace and harmony with the environment. This is the very reason why the community is known for living faithfully according to the law. Paul's arrival therefore creates a problem, given the rumor that he had taught the Jews in the diaspora not to observe circumcision or halakhah. To convince the most skeptical in the community that the rumors were not accurate, James asked Paul to assist four men from the community to redeem their nazarite vows. This may have calmed the most zealous for the law in the community, but it also led Paul to the temple area. There he was confronted by the same group of people which had acted against Stephen:

> Some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple. They incited the whole crowd and grabbed Paul. "Men of Israel!" they shouted. "Help! This is the man who goes everywhere teaching everyone against the people of Israel, the Law of Moses, and his Temple and now he has even brought

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103 This is stressed, among others, by Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 19-21.

104 Larsson also assumes this: "It is significant that it is precisely former Diaspora Jews who react most vehemently to Stephen's preaching" (*Apostelgärningarna 1-12*, 196).

some Gentiles into the Temple and defiled this holy place!" (Acts 21:27).

Once again, those responsible for the disturbance are diaspora Jews. Similarly, the same accusation is brought against Paul as against Stephen. Paul is charged, as was Stephen, with preaching against the Torah and the temple, thereby breaking down the wall between Jews and Gentiles (teaching against the people).

The diaspora Jews from the province of Asia organized a public riot in the temple area, and Paul would have been lynched if the Roman commander at the Antonia fortress had not interfered. It was at this point that the high priest and the council entered the picture. Paul, however, neatly succeeded in splitting the council by raising the issue of the resurrection.

Further on, we hear about the 40 Jews who conspired to kill Paul. They went to the high priests and the elders and said:

> We have taken a solemn vow together not to eat a thing until we have killed Paul. Now, you and the Council send word to the Roman commander to bring Paul down to you, pretending that you want to get more accurate information about him. But we will be ready to kill him before he ever gets here (Acts 23:14).

Although the identity of these 40 men is not clear they are obviously not the same group as the members of the council. Whereas the council could summon Paul, these men did not have similar authority We might not be wrong to identify them with the same group which started the riot against Paul in the temple area, the Jews from "Asia" (Acts 21:27ff). Later, when Paul is defending himself before Felix, he makes a distinction between the Jews who wanted to kill him on the one side, and the present representatives of the council on the other (Acts 24:19f).

A common pattern thus begins to emerge. The popular persecution initiated in Jerusalem originates with the diaspora Jews and affects some of the members of the early community (Stephen and Paul), although it may also have involved many more (cf. "all"). The hellenists thus distinguish themselves as originators of the persecution rather than as its victims.

VII

So far, we have not mentioned the stories about Paul in Acts 8f. The reason for this derives from a wish to save what I consider to be the most convincing argument to the end. I have often been surprised by the small role Paul's own story plays in defining the hellenists as "Paulines before Paul". As we have seen, it is frequently assumed that the Christian hellenists were much "freer" in their attitude towards the law and the temple than the Hebrews in the early community because the diaspora Jews in Jerusalem were more liberal in general. As a corollary, it is also supposed that Christian liberalism has its roots in a pre-Christian liberalism. But the Paul story demonstrates that a "liberal" Christian Jew did not necessarily have to be "liberal" before his conversion. Paul himself, before his Damascus experience, perfectly fits into the picture of the diaspora Jews in Jerusalem drawn above. He was above all a zealot for the law, he persecuted his Jesus-believing fellow Jews, he took the initiative to involve the council in his own actions, and, according to Luke, he was one of those who helped the diaspora Jews in their persecution of Stephen.

Why should the Paul story not have representative value? Psychologically, it seems to me a more credible scenario that those who, before their conversion, were the most zealous for the law and the temple should afterwards develop the most profound theological insights concerning the same institutions, as in the example of Paul. This is not to say that all the converted hellenists necessarily agreed with all of Paul's conclusions; we have no reason to draw "Luke's Stephen" as theologically identical with Paul. However, at one point the (unknown) conversion of Stephen and that of Paul may overlap. If we assume that Stephen himself came from the hellenistic circles that reacted so violently against his preaching, his own past would have been characterized by the same zeal for the law as we find in the pre-Christian Paul.

In conclusion, it seems to me that the theory of liberal hellenistic Judaism as kind of a "forerunner of Paul" is based on an overly-simplified psychological model. If it is not true where Paul is concerned, why then should it be true regarding other groups? All the information we gain from Acts about the hellenists in fact points in the opposite direction. It seems to me that the picture of the hellenists presented in Acts is historically, sociologically, and psychologically plausible.

A Light to the Nations — a Jewish Perspective

Jacob Chinitz[105]

The concept of *or lagoyim*, a "light to the nations," like the phrase the "Chosen People," has been used as a badge of honor, by secular Jews such as Ben Gurion, as well as by Christians who desire to do homage to the Jewish origins of their religion. Both expressions, and the ideas they incorporate, sound nice and edifying, and come easily to the tongue. They also appeal to the mind, especially to the mind of those who aspire to brotherhood, nobility, mission, and a sense of noblesse oblige.

Unfortunately, many mottos based on scriptural language do not always reflect accurately the intentions of the scriptural text. Moreover, even if we disregard the text, and justify, as have learned colleagues with whom I have discussed these issues, taking noble passages out of context, we cannot ignore the fact that noble passages have often been used in ignoble ways.

Christians who are most friendly to the Old Testament, to current Jewry, and motivated by the highest ideals of brotherhood and ecumenism, recognize that the doctrine of the Chosen People has been used in the past, and sometimes in the present, not to elevate the Jewish people but to degrade them. By uttering the word "Chosen" sarcastically, or by mouthing the phrase "light to the nations" ironically, both Jews and Christians often point to the failure of "the Chosen" to act accordingly. The phrase has thus become a means of demonstrating just how far short of shedding inspiring light to others the State of Israel has fallen.

In the interests of scholarly honesty, and to avoid burdening Jews and the Jewish State with impossible goals, it is vital to examine the idea of being a "light to the nations" in its scriptural context; to see how the relevant verses fit into the context, and look at how they were interpreted by Jewish exegesis. We must also ask the question whether the idea is a moral one to begin with.

Or lagoyim. In none of the three biblical sources of this phrase does it occur in the exact form of *or lagoyim*. All three sources are in the book of Isaiah.

1. Chapter 42, verse 6 reads: "I, the Lord, in My grace, have summoned you ... and appointed you a covenant people, a light of nations."

The Hebrew reads: *l'or goyim* not *or lagoyim*.

2. Chapter 49, verse 6 reads: "... I will also make you a light of nations, that My salvation may reach the ends of the earth."

The Hebrew reads: *l'or goyim* not *or lagoyim*.

3. Chapter 60, verse 3 reads: "And nations shall walk by your light, Kings, by your shining

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radiance."

The Hebrew reads: "Veholkhu goyim lorekh ..." not "or lagoyim". One can offer the rejoinder: are you quibbling about letters? The purpose of this article is to show the difference in doctrine as well as in syntax.

Before we get to interpretation let us look at the context of the three references. To whom is God through the prophet speaking in Chapter 42? It is quite possible that he is speaking not to Israel as a people but to a single ideal servant, such as Cyrus, King of Persia, or to King Messiah, or to Isaiah himself. Of whom is he speaking in Chapter 49? Verse 1 reads: "The Lord has called me from the womb." Again, the singular is used, and Isaiah is speaking about himself. Chapter 60 opens: "Rise and shine …" and the reference is to Jerusalem. If Jerusalem is a symbol of the Jewish people, we are told that "nations shall walk by your light". What is this light? Is it moral excellence, a "model" state, as seen by Herzl and Ben Gurion, or is it another kind of brilliance? Let us look at how the Jewish commentators interpret these verses:

Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 75: The remainder of the skin of Leviathan will be spread by the Holy One be He on the walls of Jerusalem, and its light will shine from one end of the world to the other, as it is written: They shall walk by your light.

Yalkut Shimoni: Jerusalem will, in the future, be as a torch for the nations of the world, and they shall walk by its light.

Rashi: Each tribe of Israel is called Goy (nation) separately. To prophesy concerning the fall of Babylon, which will be a source of joy for the entire world.

Ibn Ezra: I shall not return Israel to be their spoil, but I shall make you a light of the nations, to be My salvation, to make it known before it happens. It is customary for those who dwell in darkness to see those who are in the light.

Kimchi: For it is for your sake that the entire world exists. Covenant means existence. And so shall you also be the light of nations, as it is said: Nations shall walk by your light. Light is Torah, which shall go forth to them from Zion. Israel shall sustain the nations in two ways: One, for their sake there shall be peace among all nations, as he says concerning the Messiah: He shall speak peace to the nations. And he shall chastise many nations, and they shall beat their swords etc. Secondly, because of Israel the nations will observe the seven (Noachide) laws and follow the path of goodness.

Your prophecies will, in the future, be a light of the nations, for they shall see that your prophecies will have been fulfilled, and they will return to the path of goodness. Thus they shall enlighten you to be the source of My salvation unto the end of the earth, for in the salvation of Israel shall they be saved.

Shadal (Samuel David Luzatto): You shall be famous and praised among the nations. Your name shall be honored among them. I will cause it to be that the salvation with which I am going to save you will be known and publicized to the end of the earth.

At first I was moved to interpret that through Israel the eyes of the nations shall be enlightened, and thus all of them will be saved. But I deserted this interpretation, because it is not the habit of the prophets to use the term salvation for the nations, in the sense of their giving up idolatry. For, in truth, the nations are not punished for idolatry.

Sefer HaIkkarim (Joseph Albo): Because light shows man the path in which he should walk,

light is a symbol of decency and proper behavior, as it is written, And nations shall walk by your light, which means they shall live properly according to the guidance reaching them from you.

We see from the above survey of text, and commentaries that, in addition to the concept of "light to the nations" in the sense of a moral model, two other possibilities exist. One is that scripture is referring to the prophet himself, not to the people of Israel. And the second is that it is not moral perfection which is the source of the light to the nations, but rather the wonders of God's salvation for Israel.

Unfortunately, the option of interpreting *or lagoyim* in connection with the moral model usually links the phrase with another concept from Isaiah: the Suffering Servant. While the Jewish reading of Isaiah prefers the idea that the prophet himself is the suffering servant (Isaiah, not Jesus), the preferred non-Jewish reading is that the Jewish people are to be the suffering servant.

I shall never forget the great protest rally in New York City following the "Zionism is Racism" resolution in the United Nations. To add an ecumenical note to the meeting, the organizers invited a Christian clergyman (and the leading feminist of the day; this was 1974) to participate from the platform. He said: "Do not be dejected. You Jews are fulfilling your biblical role in history. The Jewish people were meant to be the Suffering Servant of the Lord. This anti-Zionist resolution is another example of biblical prophecy coming true."

From this point of view, the greatest "light to the nations" is the Holocaust. Its fires were seen to the ends of the earth. This is like the story of the Baal Shem Tov (the founder of Hasidism) who wanted to know who his roommate in Paradise would be. He is shown a hugely fat man. The Baal Shem asks why he eats so much. The fat man tells him that his father, who was burned to death by Cossacks because he would not kiss their crucifix, was so thin that the fire made no impression. The son vowed that he would eat and eat until he was so big that if he were burned, the fire would be seen to the ends of the earth.

Another form of light to the nations provides an alternative type of Kiddush Hashem, glorification of God's Name. Instead of the light of martyrdom there can be the light of triumph. A poem by Shimon ben Sirah, written in Jerusalem, about the year 200 BCE, puts it this way:

> Help us, God of all,
> Raise Your awe over all the nations.
> Let them see Your power.
> As You have been sanctified through us
> Before their eyes,
> So bring honor to Yourself,
> Through them,
> Before our eyes.

One of the concepts of Zionism is that it is not fair for one people to be chosen, either for morality, for intellect, or for suffering. Let each nation choose itself for excellence, if it chooses, or for normalcy, if it so chooses. It is not fair for one nation to be a light to all the nations. Let each nation be a light unto itself.

If one is moved to say: If Jews are like all other people, who needs Jews? the answer is: Jews need Jews. Jews are entitled to live even if they do not win Nobel Prizes or produce prophets. Jews are human beings, and humans beings have a right to live. We hope the Jewish people and the State

of Israel will not be worse than other nations, hopefully better than the average of peoples and states. But to demand the best, excellence, perfection, from a people, means to doom it to failure in advance. For we shall never be the best; necessarily. Therefore it is unfair to expect us to be so. We shall never be excellent. We shall never be perfect. And yet we have a right to live in this world, enjoying the light shed by other peoples and nations. If we can be a light to others, good. Let us enjoy each other's light, as we walk together in the light of God!

A Light to the Nations — from Progressive Reduction to Progressive Expansion

Kai Kjær-Hansen[106]

In the previous article Rabbi Jacob Chinitz has made a short and useful contribution to understanding the phrase "a light to the nations" from a Jewish perspective. Jacob Chinitz's contribution is critical of fellow Jews, for example Israel's first prime minister David Ben Gurion and others with similar opinions. Ben Gurion's understanding of Israel's role was more extreme than is often realized. He talked about how "The Tanakh shines with its own light", which to him meant that there is no need for traditional Jewish exegesis. J. Schoneveld comments on this in the following way:

> Ben Gurion values the Tanakh so highly because it is the "identity-card" of the Jewish people, and, with Israel's independence in its homeland, it declares again the glory of Israel — but not the glory of God, Ben Gurion adds, inveighing against a religious interpretation of the Bible.[107]

If it is true — as Schoneveld insists — that for Ben Gurion "the origin of Israel's peculiarity is not its election by God but God's election by Israel,"[108] then one can appreciate the critical comment Jacob Chinitz makes in his article. It raises the question, "Can the glory of Israel in the eyes of a Jew overshadow the glory of God?" Another question also becomes pressing: Has Israel chosen her God or is it God who has chosen Israel?

Jacob Chinitz's article is also critical of Christians who, with good intentions,interpret the expression "a light to the nations" as the moral perfection of a collective body, be it the Jewish people or the State of Israel. Again a question arises: How and to what extent should Christians, who confess Jesus to be the light of the world (John 8:12), understand Israel as being a light to the nations?

Jacob Chinitz seems to indicate that the phrase "a light to the nations" is not to be understood as a "moral code" but rather as an expression of "the wonders of God's salvation for Israel". Unfortunately, he does not develop this understanding further and therefore leaves me, as a gentile Christian and perhaps others as well, in the dark. What does the "wonders of God's salvation for Israel" mean *for the nations today*? And what is the connection between the wonders of God's

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107 Cf. J. Schoneveld, *The Bible in Israeli Education. A Study of Approaches to the Hebrew Bible and its Teaching in Israel Educational Literature from Israeli Schoolbooks* (Assen/Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1976), 99. The book has interesting examples of how Israel's election implies that she possesses more obligation than on any other nation; see pp. 206-222.

108 Schoneveld, 96.

salvation for Israel and the final comment Jacob Chinitz makes, that "It is not fair for one nation to be a light to all nations. Let each nation be a light unto itself"? What does Chinitz mean when he says "Let us enjoy each other's light, as we walk together in the light of God!" Reading the article, I cannot find sufficient affirmation of the expression "a light to the nations". Perhaps the article is too short for that, or perhaps the reason is the perspective with which I read it.

In the New Testament we do find such an affirmation. A few examples will suffice here, taken from the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. The purpose is to show how the Jewish Jesus-movement in the first century AD used the expression about Jesus individually and collectively about believers.

Before that we shall make a few comments about the expression and the problems relating to it.

"Progressive reduction" in salvation history

There are four songs in the Book of Isaiah, often called the songs of the Servant of the Lord (42:1-4; 49:1-5; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). In two of these, the expression "Light to the gentiles" (*l'or goyim*, 42:6; 49:6) is used. Jacob Chinitz rightly mentions that the expression is found also in Isaiah 60:3. The context in which it is found makes it not only legitimate but necessary to relate it to the Servant of the Lord. Strangely enough, for Jacob Chinitz this is an unfortunate. circumstance. However, this understanding does not detract from therole of the nation. In Isaiah 60:1-3 Zion is addressed as a collective entity.

A parallel expression in Isaiah, not to be omitted in this connection, is *l'or ammim* (51:4), a phrase synonymous with *l'or goyim*. R.N. Longenecker has shown that in the Qumran community Isaiah 51:4-5 was understood messianically.[109] It can hardly be emphasized enough that in Isaiah 51:4 it is the *mishpat* of the Lord that is *l'or ammim* and not the moral perfection of the people (cf. Is 49:5, "that my [God's] salvation shall reach the ends of the world"). For Longenecker, the textual variation in IQIs^{a} 51:4-5 indicates that the covenanters of Qumran understood God's functions and attributes as messianic titles (for example, "my Judgement", "my Righteousness", "my Salvation"). Longenecker's translation of IQIs^{a} 51:4 is as follows,

> Attend to me, my people;
> and give ear to me, my nation.
> For a Torah from me goes forth,
> and my Judgement [*Mishpati*] I will establish as a light for peoples.

If Longenecker is right, the example from Qumran shows that messianic concepts and the expression "a light to the nations" were combined in some Jewish circles even before the first century AD.

Another familiar problem in the Servant songs lies in discerning which aspect is more prominent, the individual or the corporate. In chapter 49 the two are combined. The Servant is in part identified with Israel and in part appears as God's messenger to Israel.[110] In some of the texts Israel seems to be identified with the Servant, the *ebed*; in others the *ebed* is part of Israel, probably

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109 R.N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 99-101.

110 C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: The University Press, 1968), 246.

the "remnant", and finally the *ebed* is seen as a single man.[111] O. Cullmann interprets this in light of what he calls the "progressive reduction" in the biblical *Heilsgeschichte*. By this he means that "a plurality is progressively reduced as an always decreasing minority takes over the task which was originally that of the totality". The first essential characteristic of the Servant of the Lord is "that his vicarious representation is accomplished in suffering … Through suffering he takes the place of the many who should suffer instead of him. A second essential characteristic of the *ebed Yahweh* is that his representative work *reestablishes the covenant* which God has made with his people. "[112]

In light of this, weshould look at the way in which the concept of "a light to the nations' is applied in the New Testament.

Jesus is the Servant and the Light to the Nations

Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6 are quoted in the story of Simeon and Jesus in the temple in Luke 2:29-32. Jesus is God's salvation. Salvation and light are parallel concepts. The light is for the gentiles, the nations, and thereby also the light for the people of Israel. The expression "light to the nations" is not used again in Luke, but in 22:37 we have a direct quote from the Servant Songs (Isa 53:12). Concepts from the Servant songs are, however, important elements in New Testament theology, hinted at, for example, in the story of Jesus' baptism and transfiguration (Luke 3:22; 9:35).[113]

For Luke and the other evangelists there is no doubt that Jesus possesses the qualities of the Servant of the Lord from Isaiah. He is the *chosen* servant (Matt 12:18; Is 42:1; cf. also Acts 4:11, 26), But it is in Acts the question is made explicit: "Of whom does the prophet speak [in Is 53:7-8]? Is it about himself or about someone else?" We find the words on the lips of the Ethiopian eunuch. He was hardly the first to ask the question and it has become a classic theological question which is raised whenever the texts from Isaiah are analyzed. Part of modern critical theology is less clear in its answer than Philip is when he identifies the Servant with Jesus (Acts 8:35).

According to Luke, Philip was not the first making this identification. In Acts 3 and 4, Jesus is already referred to as the Servant (3:13, 26; 4:27, 39). Nowhere in the gospels does Jesus say: "I am the Servant"; it is the first Jesus-believers who use it about him. According to O. Cullmann, this confirms the existence of a very old Christology on the basis of which Jesus was called the *ebed* of the Lord.[114]

For Luke, Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises concerning the Servant of the Lord. He – Jesus — is the servant par excellence and therefore he is a light for the gentiles. (cf. Acts 26:23). However, the New Testament also applies the words from the Servant Songs to Jesus' disciples. They, too, can be referred to as "a light to the nations".

The best example of an *ebed* text being used about the followers of Jesus is Acts 13. The

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111 O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 54. The thought has been developed further in O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London: SCM Press, 1951).

112 Cullmann, 55. Cullmann even says that "the *ebed himself is* the berith in person" (p. 65). Daniel Juster insists that "Indeed, as representative Israel, Yeshua is the light to the nations as predicted" (Isa 42:1-7), *Jewish Roots* (Rockville: Davar Publishing Co., 1986), 47.

113 See for example J. Jeremias' article, "Pais Theou" in *TDNT*, vol. V, especially pp. 705-717.

114 Cullmann, 73.

context speaks of Paul and Barnabas visiting the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch (Asia Minor). Here the missionaries Paul and Barnabas are "a light to the nations", for God has made them "bring salvation to the ends of the earth". The story goes as follows:

> On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.
>
> Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us "I have made you a light for the gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:44-47).[115]

The context in Acts 13 explains why Barnabas and Paul turned to the gentiles. The negative reason — that the Jews in Antioch rejected the gospel — is, however, not the main reason for gentile mission. Just as the basis for mission to Israel is found in the Scriptures, so, too, is the basis for mission to the gentiles. The positive reason is found in one of the Servant Songs. In other words: the Old Testament already commissions Israel to mission to gentiles. The Jewish missionaries are a light to the nations by proclaiming the gospel. The expression "to the ends of the earth" carries a certain weight in Acts since it repeats the last words of Jesus to the apostles: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judaea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (cf. Acts 1:8).

When this example is combined with Paul's words to Agrippa II in Acts 26, the close relationship between what Jesus did and what the apostles are to do becomes very clear — expressed in Servant terminology. Paul is *appointed a servant* who will be rescued from *the people and from the gentile*s (Acts 26:16f). He is to *open their eyes* (26:17; cf. Luke 4:18). He is to witness about Jesus, of whom the prophets and Moses said that he would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the gentiles (Acts 26:23). Acts 22:14-15 could also be alluded to here. God has chosen Paul and let him to see the Righteous One (Is 53:11; cf. Acts 3:14; 7:52) and he will be a witness to all men.

From this follows that, according to Luke, Christian mission is a continuation of the mission of Jesus. Jesus is the Servant par excellence, the light to the people of Israel *and* to the nations. But there is an aspect of the ministry of the Servant of the Lord that the followers of Jesus are to fulfill. "His 'fulfillment' of the Servant's role in his death and resurrection does not exhaust the meaning and application of the Servant Songs for the messianic era."[116]

In other words: "the light" about which Isaiah talks is identified with Jesus in Luke 2:32, i.e., an individual personality and not a plurality. But it does not follow that the role of the "people" is eliminated. The people — or the part of the people which receives Jesus — are, like him, chosen to be servants for the Servant Jesus, to be a light for Jesus, who is the Light. They are to reflect the light, and as a collective body represent him here on earth. In themselves they are not the light.

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115 The double "you" in the quote can refer to Jesus, but the introduction makes it likely that it refers to the disciples, especially Paul.

116 D. Peterson, "The Motif of Fulfilment and the Purpose of Luke-Acts", in B.C. Winter and A. D. Clarke (eds), *Ancient Literary Setting,* vol. I of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* (Grand Rapids/Carlile: Eerdmann Publishing Co./The Paternoster Press, 1993), 95.

"Progressive Expansion" and Moral Perfection

The crucial events in the history of salvation take place in Jerusalem and have as their center Jesus, the suffering Servant of the Lord. They initiate a movement opposite to the progressive reduction in salvation history. This could be called "progressive expansion". Jesus not only *brings* light and salvation, in his person he *incorporates* light and salvation. The part of Israel, the remnant, which receives him is called to be a light for the people of Israel and for the nations. The remnant is a collective entity, shedding light on the individual person, Jesus and his saving acts. The New Testament points to a time when all Israel shall be saved. When this happens — when the people receive Jesus — the people will finally be a light to the nations. They will reflect God's salvation, Jesus.

This raises the question of moral perfection which both Jews and Christians have to struggle with if they take seriously the words, "You shall be holy for I am holy" (Lev 11:44-45). The words are repeated in the New Testament (1 Pet 1:16).

In another article in this issue of *Mishkan* I have underscored how the first disciples were not perfect people.[117] Classic Christian theology, based on New Testament exhortations, underlines the tension between this and the righteouness *in Christ* which God gives to men as a free gift (Rom 3:24; 4:5; Gal 2:16). Classic theology also emphasizes that the imperatives in the New Testament do not have a final, but rather a consecutive, character. The Jesus-believers are urged to love and to do good, but not in order to earn salvation. Because they are partakers of salvation — through grace and faith — they are encouraged to live in a way that is right for the people of God.

Classic Christian theology also underlines that Jesus is not only the redeemer; he is also an example for the believers. He is the gift (*sacramentum*) and the model to follow (*exemplum*). The words of the Old Testament, "Be holy for I am holy", still challenge those sanctified through faith in Jesus (Acts 26:18).

It should also be noticed that texts from or allusions to the Servant Songs in Isaiah are used in the New Testament exhortations. The disciples are to serve *like* Jesus served (Mark 10:45). They are to show unselfishness *like* he did (Phil 2:5-11). Jesus suffered innocently and voluntarily and they are to do the same (1 Pet. 2:21-25). Suffering and commitment are, according to the New Testament, part of being "chosen". So it was for Jesus and will be for his followers.

Summary

Inspired by Jacob Chinitz's statement about ethical perfection we can say not only concerning the Christian church but also about Messianic believers today, that we are not perfect. But we also dare to say that by God's mercy and in his eyes we are made perfect in the perfect man, Jesus the Jew. This is the Good News. And the challenge of the Good News is this: Be like he is, you who are the light of the world (Matt 5:14). This is what disciples are, to the extent that they reflect Jesus, the light of the world (John 8:12).

When we apply this conclusion to ourselves, considering the fact that Jesus the light has come, we can say to ourselves and to Israel in the words of Isaiah, "Arise, shine, for your light has come"

117 See pp. 4-5.

(Isa 60:1).

Jesus, the light and the salvation, has come from Israel. This has ramifications for both Jews and non-Jews. Therefore we must say more than "Let each nation be a light unto itself".

We prefer the words of David H. Stern, an Israeli Messianic Jew who, in the introduction to his book *Messianic Jewish Manifesto,* states:

> The goal of the Jewish people is to praise, thank, confess, and make known the living God — in Isaiah's words, to be a light to the nations [Is 49:6]. But the Jewish people will never be that light to the nations without shining forth him who is the light of the world [John 8:12].[118]

118 David H. Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto* (Jerusalem: Jewish New Testament Publication, 1988), 3.

Jewish and Gentile Evangelism: Acts 17 as a Paradigm

Ray Pritz [119]

Acts 17 provides us with side-by-side accounts of the apostle Paul's evangelistic approach to Jews and to gentiles. A word of caution is, of course, necessary: Since Paul does not seem to have had a single approach either to all Jews or to all gentiles, we should not expect to find here the one and only way to go about our evangelizing.

With that in mind, let us look at several general principles which present themselves in this chapter of Acts. First of all, we see that Paul's evangelism was both to Jews and to non-Jews. We all know that although Paul was the "apostle to the gentiles" he usually took his message first to Jews. There is no contradiction here; the two complemented each other, and for Paul the one was not complete without the other.

It is amazing to me that there are serious Christians, even evangelical Christians, who maintain that the gospel is intended only for gentiles. The person who is determined to maintain this idea is highly recommended to avoid the book of Acts (and several other New Testament books). In verse two we are told that it was Paul's custom to go into the synagogue. We cannot say for certain that he went only to evangelize, but we must note that in the instances Luke preserves Paul usually found opportunity to preach the gospel. We will return later to the measure of success he had in Thessalonica.

So, first of all, the gospel is for all: Jews and non-Jews.

No Gospel without Yeshua's Resurrection

Secondly, Paul's approach to both Jews and gentiles contains the element of Yeshua's resurrection. One cannot overemphasize the importance of the message of the resurrection. The scriptures make belief in very few things absolutely essential for salvation. Nowhere, for example, will you find a verse which says, "If you do not believe that Yeshua was born of a virgin you cannot be saved." However, belief in Yeshua's resurrection is a *sine qua non* for salvation, clearly stated in Romans 10:9-10, and it figures in all of Paul's preserved sermons.

Packaging the Gospel with the Customer in Mind

The third element common in Paul's approach to both Jews and gentiles is his ability to tailor his message to his audience. First, let us note how he goes about speaking to Jews. Again a word of warning: Paul worked within his own context. His message was the gospel; his audience in the

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synagogue in Thessalonica were primarily Jews.

Evangelism is communication. There are three basic elements in a communication event: the person communicating, the person communicated to, and the thing being communicated — the message. Paul's essential message (please note the word "essential") is the same as ours and has not changed in two thousand years. None of the events of history, the technological advances, the persecutions and holocausts, can change that message, because it transcends history. It is this truth which the post-Auschwitz non-evangelism school of thought fails to realize. However, the other two elements in our evangelism event are not so immutable as we might like to think.

First of all, of course, we are not Paul. Our experience is not his, our training is different, even our personalities and our spiritual gifting are different. Secondly — and this is a point which it seems to me is often overlooked by bible-believing, bible-preaching evangelists to the Jewish people — our target audience, the recipients of our communication, are not the same as Paul's. "Wait a minute", you say, "are we not talking about Jewish evangelism? Paul preached to Jews, we preach to Jews."

Yes, Paul did preach to Jews, generally hellenistic Jews who attended the synagogue with some regularity. But I would suggest that his audience should not be compared too closely with ours of today. None of Paul's listeners responded with the objection that the church has persecuted Jews for centuries. Not one of them, when Paul quoted a messianic prophecy, said "Hold on a second, I want to check how Rashi interprets that." None of them rejected his message on the ground that they did not even believe in God in the first place.

Some would say that our challenge today, at least regarding communicating the gospel to Jews, is greater than Paul's. I would not be so quick to say "Amen" to that statement. But surely our conditions are different, our audience comes with an entirely different set of baggage. Let us beware of a simplistic approach to our task or to our audience.

Am I suggesting, then, that the scriptures or Paul's methods and experience have nothing to say to us today? *Has veHalila, me genoito*, may it never be. First of all, there will be those who do believe in God and honor the scriptures above rabbinic traditions and will be able, like those in Berea, to search the scriptures to see if these things are really so. When relating to Jews in this category, I note that Paul did not start from Yeshua but rather from the biblical idea of the Messiah and what the scriptures indicated he would do. The New Testament (Acts 3:18, 24) and rabbinic literature (San. 99a) agree that the essential and interconnecting thread of biblical prophecy is the figure of the Messiah. Maimonides included belief in the coming of Messiah as a foundational element of Jewish faith. To fail to believe in the Messiah's coming — according to Jewish self-definition — is to fall short of full Jewishness. Perhaps we could express it in this way: The question should not be "Can a Jew believe in Yeshua and still be a Jew?" but rather "Is Yeshua the Messiah?"

While Paul's specific methods may not always apply in our circumstances, the principles behind those methods should be applicable in any generation. In Thessalonica, Paul went to the synagogue and preached from the scriptures. While our audience may not be in the synagogue and, in large, do not believe the scriptures, we can learn from Paul that we need to go where the people are, physically as well as intellectually or spiritually. Start where they are. Use language they understand, not some kind of holy-speak, understood only inside the church by the initiated.

This, by the way, includes the Bible translation we use. Some feel we should preserve the Bible in a higher level of language, one which sounds reverent and not similar to everyday use. To my mind, this perverts the reason why the Bible was given in the language of humans. The message is supreme; anything which hinders its being understood should be relegated to a lower seat. It was not by accident that the Holy Spirit chose to give the New Testament in koine Greek, the common language of everyday people.

When Paul goes to Athens in the latter half of Acts 17, we find him adhering to this principle. He starts where they are. He picks out an object from their surroundings, something from their own pagan worship, and begins his sermon there. During the course of his short message he twice quotes from their own writers, once even taking a poem which was dedicated to the pagan god Zeus, ignoring its polytheistic origins and implications, and reapplying it to the one God. While it is true that Paul met with relatively little success in Athens, he was consistent in his method, following the Thessalonian pattern.

While we are in Athens, I would like to note another element in Paul's evangelistic methods. Compare Paul's own feelings with his words. Verse 16 says that his spirit was provoked, agitated, upset. And yet, when he opens his mouth, his words are respectful. Later on he will write to the church in Colossae (Col 4:6): "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned as it were with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person." No matter what we may personally feel about our unsaved audience, we must approach them with great respect. If we do not love them and respect them, then we have nothing to say to them. And I hasten to add that in the area of Jewish evangelism this needs to be said not only to the non-Jews among us.

To Make Them Jealous

Let us now return to the beginning of our chapter and note the sequence of events in Thessalonica. Paul goes into the synagogue to preach. There he encounters both Jews and gentiles. Among the Jews he has limited success, while more non-Jews are ready to accept his message. As a result, some of those Jews who had not accepted the gospel reacted violently and instigated a persecution. He repeats exactly the same pattern we saw in Acts 13:42-50: preaching in the synagogue, provoking a positive response mostly from gentiles, and engendering persecution from Jews who had not accepted the message.

These gentiles in the synagogue, the "god-fearers", were a common element in the first century. They were the "almost-Jews", who were attracted to Jewish monotheism, contributed financially to the synagogues, and regularly attended synagogue services. Two things basically prevented them from full conversion: social ostracism by their families and the unpleasant prospect of circumcision.

Now along comes Paul with his message: "You can be full partakers in the God of Israel and you don't have to be circumcised." It is no surprise that here, in chapter 13 and elsewhere, the same pattern is repeated: some Jews responded, but many more gentiles believed.

As is now well known, Judaism at that time had quite an active program of proselytism. To put it in more modern terms, it was a missionary religion. This does not mean that people were specially commissioned to go out and make converts. However, the many Jews who were travelling around engaged in commerce were active spokesmen for their religion, and the synagogues were open to all

who were interested. Nevertheless, the program was not very successful. Yeshua expressed it like this: “You travel over land and sea to make one convert” (Matt 23:15). Over land and sea: active. One convert: not very successful.

This lack of success seems to have been something of a frustration to Jewish leaders, who took seriously their call to be a “light to the gentiles”. It would seem that Paul held out hope that this heavy gentile response to his preaching would be seen as proof of the truth of the gospel message. Perhaps here at last was the fulfillment of the commission to be the light to the gentiles (cf. Acts 13:47). Maybe his fellow Jews would see his great success in bringing the gentiles to the God of Israel and would acknowledge that Yeshua must indeed be the Messiah, who, in the context of Isaiah 42 and 49, was himself to be the light to the gentile nations.

Such a hope is most clearly seen in Paul’s letter to the Romans. In 11:13-14 we read: “Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.” As we all know well, Paul’s first desire was always for the salvation of his family, his fellow Jews. Although his assignment to go to the gentiles might have presented him with a certain frustration, we see here that he worked it out by finding a link between gentile evangelism and Jewish salvation. His success among gentiles would, he hoped, make other Jews so envious that they would take seriously the Messiah he was preaching.

But jealousy is a funny thing. If I see how well you do something and envy you, I can respond by trying to imitate you, by becoming “zealous” (it is the same word) for the thing which has caused your success. But I may also react in quite a negative way; I may demonstrate my jealousy by attacking you. Paul hoped for the former, but his experience was of the latter. In both chapters 13 and 17, the word jealous/zealous is used of those who saw Paul’s success among the gentiles. In both cases they chased him out of town.

In passing, let us note this original meaning of making the Jews jealous. I often hear it said that we should live lives of such love and care for each other that Jews will envy what we have and will want it for themselves. Of course, it is true that our lives as God’s community of believers should exemplify love and mutual concern. But this is not Paul’s meaning. And anyway, at the risk of over-generalizing, we have a lot that we can learn from Jewish history about communal care.

Paul’s actual experience, in contrast to his hope, is nicely summarized in Romans 11:28: “As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs” (NIV). This is a fairly literal reflection of Paul’s Greek, which, in the original, contains no verbs. In typical Pauline fashion, it is a multiple parallelism. Note the repetition of the prepositions translated “as far as X is concerned” and “on account of”.

The first phrase in the parallel reflects Paul’s experience: The gospel has gone to “you”, meaning the gentiles, bringing about their enmity. Please note that they, the Jews about whom Paul is speaking, have reacted in opposition to the gospel or, alternately, to those who preach it. This is exactly what Paul had experienced in Thessalonica. This verse does not say that the Jews are God’s enemies. Some of our translations have added the word God here, but it does not appear in the Greek and does not fit either the immediate context or the wider context of scripture.

Now, we may better understand the second phrase if we place it parallel to the first. This may be done graphically like this:

went to [causing them (Jews) to be]
gospel ----> gentiles ----> enemies [to the messengers]

went to [causing them (Jews) to be]
election ----> patriarchs ----> loved [by whom?]

A Nation God Loves

One of the most important lessons which comes out of this analysis is the title which is applied at the end to the Jews. The emphasis here is not on election, which this verse specifically relates to the fathers. No; here Paul places the emphasis on their status as beloved. It has long seemed unfortunate to me that so much of our Israelology focuses on the "chosenness" of the people and overlooks the simple and repeated statement of scripture that God loves them. Here Paul may be challenging us to take the same approach. God loves them, and so should we.

This does not lessen their need for Yeshua, just as a proper understanding of election does not lessen the imperative to preach the gospel to Jews. To state that they are beloved does not, of course, mean that God does not love other nations just as much. When my children were smaller, they used to ask, "Abba, whom do you love more, us or Ima ("Mom")?" The answer, naturally, was that I love them the same amount but in different ways. God loves all people and has sent his son for the salvation of all. But let us not forget that he has a special love relationship with this tough nation which presents such a challenge to our evangelizing efforts.

Let me conclude with a home-grown parable. Like all human productions it is imperfect, but perhaps it can help us to understand what I have been saying. My apologies in advance for a depiction of more traditional male-female roles.

A man loved a woman and chose her to be his wife. Implied in that choice were certain expectations of the role each would play. She would bear the children, take care of the house, love her husband, and serve him. He, too, would love her, serve her, and take care of her. One day she was involved in an accident and was partially paralyzed. She was no longer able to bear children, no longer able to serve him in the ways she had. This, however, had no effect on his love for her. If anything, he loved her even more, caring for her every need.

In an admittedly imperfect way, this is how we may understand God's relationship to the Jewish people. Israel bore the son and took care of the house, until the house was destroyed and the former service was no longer possible. But God's love was not diminished. He continues to love with an everlasting love. As he is our example, so we, too, should love. The essence of divine love is selfless giving of the very dearest possessions to the beloved. We can show no greater love for the Jewish people than to give them the very best thing we possess, the knowledge of God's good news that salvation from sin is available to them through faith in their own Messiah, God's son.

Jewish Evangelism and the Gentile World

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum[120]

The Messianic Jewish Believers' Need to Relate to the Gentile Church

The primary foundation for the need of Jewish believers to relate to the larger gentile church lies in the fact that once a Jew comes to believe in the messiahship of Yeshua he is no longer only part of the Jewish people but is also part of the church, which today has a majority membership of gentiles. Born a Jew, all his life he has been part of Jewish history; and whether the larger Jewish community likes it or not, he is still part of Jewish history. By having become a believer in the messiahship of Yeshua, he is also now part of church history. Although many Jewish believers do not like the very idea of it, may rebel against it, and use all kinds of semantical gymnastics to avoid being identified with it, whoever is biblically honest must acknowledge that he is, indeed, now part of church history. The importance of recognizing this lies in the fact that many of the theological issues comprising the basics of the faith have been thoroughly debated and settled in church history. If this knowledge is not apprehended, a tendency arises to start fighting over these very issues all over again.

We are not talking here about denominational distinctives but about basic fundamentals of the faith recognized across denominational lines by those who affirm the evangelical faith. These basic elements include: the triune nature of the God of Israel; the deity of the Messiah; the God-Man concept (the hypostatic union); and the inspiration and canon of scripture (including both the Old and New Testaments). These were issues which caused divisions in the early church and were then debated and settled by various church councils. However, certain segments of the Messianic movement often think that these issues have never been questioned before and consequently start examining the basics once again. As a result, wheels are being spun unnecessarily. Joseph Good, for example, clearly denies the trinity and the deity of the Son.[121] Yet it is amazing how many Messianic Jews are not perceptive enough to realize this, accepting him as one of their own; (Joseph Good is not even Jewish, although many think he is). A relationship with the larger gentile church would be helpful in avoiding these pitfalls. True, we may not necessarily wish to use the same terminologies, given that their meanings in the Christian community might well differ from those in the Jewish community. Nevertheless, whatever terms we use as substitutes must still convey the same content and message.

Another need for building a relationship with the wider gentile church concerns developing an appreciation for the positive gentile impact upon our faith. Some Messianic circles tend to totally denigrate everything that is "non-Jewish" in the Christian church. A complete dismissal of gentile culture would be just as wrong as a total removal of Jewish culture, since both cultures have

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[121] Christian Research Institute International, Statement No. 4.109 (Irving, CA: 1994).

contributions to make. The Jewish believer needs to learn to appreciate the gentile contribution to the faith. For example, just as the Jewish people have suffered a long history of persecution, so have true gentile believers suffered a long history of persecution.

Furthermore, the vast majority of martyrs for the faith, even before Christianity became the state religion of Rome, were gentile believers. The vast majority of martyrs for the Messiah after the christianization of Rome have been gentiles. Just as the Jewish people should be appreciated for having preserved the Hebrew Old Testament text, the gentiles should be appreciated for having preserved the New Testament text. Most of the great systematic theologies and expository works on the Bible were also written by gentiles. As the church became more missionary-minded over the last two centuries, the vast majority of all the missionaries sent throughout the world have been gentiles. Moreover, the vast majority of the Jewish people who are believers in the Messiah today have been led to the Lord through gentile witness.

This was not only true prior to the emergence of the modern Messianic movement but it is also true to this day. Nor were these gentiles necessarily trying to communicate the gospel in any special "Jewish way". The last book I would have ever recommended for the purpose of Jewish evangelism would have been Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Yet, to my own surprise, as well as that of many veteran missionaries to the Jews, that book was the cause of many Jewish people coming to the Lord, a number of whom are leaders in the Messianic movement today. Messianic Jews have not always clearly spelled out their appreciation to the larger gentile church for its contribution, and unless some kind of relationship is established the appreciation may grow less rather than more.

This relationship could be established in at least two different ways. One option is for Jewish believers to worship in local churches which are primarily gentile in number. Alhough I personally believe in Messianic congregations (and Ariel Ministries has planted some), I do not know of any biblical mandate which says that every Jewish believer must only be part of a Messianic congregation. In fact, on more than one occasion when I was uncomfortable with the teachings and doctrines (or lack thereof) of a specific Messianic congregation in a specific geographical area, I have directed Jewish believers to gentile churches because I was much more comfortable with the soundness of the teaching available there. The fact remains that certain Jewish believers would often fare better as part of a gentile church; and, of course, Messianic congregations are frequently not even viable options because they do not exist in many places. Furthermore, I know of several people who left gentile churches for Messianic congregations expecting to feel more comfortable, only to return to the gentile church after several years with the realization that a church must be more than a "pep rally" for Jewishness. Whether the attraction be stronger teaching or simply that of necessity, Jewish believers who attend local churches and have ongoing relationships with non-Jewish believers are more apt to appreciate the gentile segment of the church and its contributions to the faith.

What about those who are part of Messianic congregations? Even in Messianic congregations with a large percentage of gentile members there may be very limited exposure to the larger gentile church and, therefore, too little opportunity to develop the necessary appreciation for that other wing of the church. Efforts must be made to connect, and this can be done in several ways. First of all, it is important that leaders of Messianic congregations have at least a basic course in church

history: as believers in the Messiah, whether they like it or not, they are now part of that history. Studying that history in its totality, and not only periods during which the church persecuted the Jews, will effect a greater appreciation for the bigger picture and the contributions the gentiles have made.

While these leaders would certainly want to emphasize the usage of Jewish terms and symbols, they must not go so far as to condemn gentile terms and symbols. One can be "for" something without necessarily being "against" the other, although this issue is not often presented in a non-dichotomous way. Just as being pro-Israel does not necessarily mean one has to become anti-Arab, being pro-Jewish does not mean that one must automatically become anti-gentile, although the option is often conveyed in those terms. Another avenue for connection is to conduct various joint services or fellowships with gentile groups. For example, many Messianic groups invite churches to participate in Jewish festivals to expose them to Jewish practices and strengthen the roots of their Christian faith. Similarly, Jewish congregations should be willing to attend gentile celebrations of various kinds and learn to appreciate them. They may not particularly care for the style of music in which hymns are sung; but if they focus on the content of the hymns rather than on the music accompanying the words, they will often find a great amount of theological depth lacking in many of our modern choruses — Messianic or otherwise.

For the sake of sharing a common sound theology, and for the sake of mutual appreciation of what both Jews and gentiles have contributed to the faith in church history, the Jewish believer needs to maintain his relationship with the larger gentile church.

The Gentile Church's Need to Relate to Messianic Believers

Just as Jewish believers need to learn about and grow to appreciate the contributions of gentile Christianity, the larger church needs to learn about Jewish believers and their special sensitivities. Gentile churches do not always understand why Jewish believers have problems being part of their local congregation. Few local churches with Jewish believers as members have seen them leave over any theological issues — only over "not feeling comfortable" in that church. This has often led to unnecessary tension. One church in Orange County, California, for example, hosted a Messianic fellowship, but a good portion of the Jewish believers eventually left and began their own congregation. The gentile leaders of that church did not understand the reason behind the move, and bad feelings between them exist to this day. By maintaining a relationship with Jewish believers, these gentile leaders would perhaps have been more sensitive to the sensibilities of the Messianic congregation and become more supportive of Jewish believers in the gentile church as well as of Messianic congregations.

The problem of gentile relationships with Messianic Jewish believers falls on both sides of the equation: on the side of a local church and on the side of the Messianic Jew.

On the side of the socal church

One observation concerning the local church is that today it is largely a gentile-cultured church which is foreign to most Jews. A Jew tends to shy away from this culture, sometimes because he feels the Jewish culture is superior but in most cases only because the gentile culture is strange to him. Such things as crosses, legalistic do(s) and don't(s), and typical church procedures are very

gentile. Frequently, they do not come out of the scriptures but have developed in the course of history as a result of gentile domination of the church. This does not mean that the influence of gentile culture is always biblically wrong; it simply means it is not Jewish.

A second problem is that antisemitism often exists in many local churches. This may reveal itself theologically, with an especially strong emphasis on replacement theology, or it may come out in many other subtle forms in which the Jewish believer is pressured into giving up his Jewishness while being told that practice of any Jewish traditions, from Sabbath to Passover, is sinful.

A third difficulty occurs in the local church that displays insensitivity to the needs of Jewish believers. Messianic Jews, by virtue of their position, face certain identity problems never usually posed to gentile Christians. Gentile churches are often well equipped to handle the problems of gentile believers, but not those of Jewish believers. This insensitivity is mostly the result of ignorance and misunderstanding rather than deliberate neglect. It is unfortunate that while gentile Christian churches are frequently acquainted with the problems of former alcoholics, drug addicts, divorcees, and single parents, for example, they do not realize that the problems of new Jewish believers are equally great.

A fourth problem is that of pro-Semitism. Jewish people are often so "fussed over" that the impression is conveyed that God expends more energy and grace in saving a Jew than a gentile. On one hand, some Jewish believers revel in this attention and enjoy being idolized in this way. Others find it is strange and unnatural, making them shy away from the church.

On the side of Jewish believers

Probably the most obvious problem for Jewish believers is the fear of losing their Jewish identity, a fear which has played a large role in the creation of independent Messianic congregations. Coming into a local church dominated by gentile Christians and gentile culture poses a threat to Jewish identity. As his own culture is rich with heritage and history, The Jewish believer naturally does not wish to lose it. If he does not fear losing it for himself, he will often fear that his children will do so. In fact, many Messianic couples are quite content to be part of a gentile church until children come along and begin growing up; then, they become exceptionally concerned about the Jewish identity of their children. I personally know Messianic couples who have left a gentile church to attend a Messianic congregation for the sake of the children, even when the parents themselves are not all that comfortable with some of the teaching in that Messianic congregation.

In a typical gentile church, the children of Messianic believers are not likely to study Jewish culture or history in the church Sunday School program. Many Jewish believers do not want their Jewishness to be drowned in the sea of gentile culture. This, in fact, becomes the reason why they often leave, or simply do not even join initially. Just as it is important for Jewish believers to learn church history, it is very important that the larger gentile church also study Jewish history, particularly because for most gentile believers Jewish history ends somewhere in the book of Acts. However, Jewish history has continued, and it is unfortunate that it is not part of the curriculum of the larger church. It should be, and its study would help instill in gentile Christians a greater understanding and appreciation of the Messianic Jewish mind-set.

A second problem is that of legalism. Just as Judaism has developed many rules and traditions beyond those of scripture, so the church has done the same thing. Just as many Jewish people do not

always know how to distinguish between biblical and rabbinic laws, the church often does not know how to distinguish between biblical and church laws. Frequently, what is reckoned as being sinful among the gentiles is something very dear to Jewish believers, such as the drinking of wine and dancing. Although many of these rules and regulations in many different churches are not biblical, they often become so ingrained in the local church that they are viewed as possessed of equal inspiration with the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. To make sins of wine and dancing — both strong elements in Jewish culture — and tell Jewish people that they can no longer do these things, often alienates the Jewish believer. Just as Messianic Jews must learn to distinguish biblical imperatives from rabbinic traditions, the gentile churches also need to learn to distinguish between what is actually a biblical imperative or prohibition and church tradition.

A third problem is the desire on the part of Messianic Jews to continue practicing certain elements of biblical and/or rabbinic Judaism, such as Passover and Sabbath, as well as giving their children a Jewish education. The fact that such things are not possible in many gentile churches often becomes a barrier to the Jewish believer. The gentile church tends to put everything about Jewishness into one package and negate it all with Messiah's death. It is true, of course, that a number of elements either in biblical or rabbinic Judaism cannot be practiced by New Testament believers (e.g., offering a sacrifice for sin). However, many other things are quite neutral in and of themselves and, therefore, should be optional. Just as Jewish believers need to reevaluate their traditional practices to see which are negated by the New Testament and which are neutral, the church must also reevaluate its own traditions and make clear distinctions between which are really biblical and which are really neutral. After all, nowhere does the Bible mandate the use of Christmas trees. Just as the gentile church might like Jewish believers to appreciate some of its cultural practices, such as the Christmas tree, the gentile church must be equally willing to develop appreciation for Jewish practices and customs; the latter are at least more biblically based, even if some of the additional practices are of rabbinic rather than biblical origin.

Suggested solutions

A gentile church can do several things in order to develop a relationship with Messianic Jews. The first, as mentioned earlier, is to gain a knowledge of Jewish history in the post-New Testament period and, therefore, a better understanding of why Jews react to certain “Christian” symbols and terms, etc. The church needs to learn that what a gentile believer holds dear may have a completely negative connotation, for totally different reasons, for a Jewish believer. Second, the church should learn to distinguish between what is truly “Christian”, in the sense that it is New Testament practice, and what is merely a product of church history and church tradition. In learning to make that distinction, it will become more open to the appreciation of Jewish culture and tradition. Third, if a church is blessed by having Jewish believers become members, it must be careful not to smother their Jewishness on the one hand, or to elevate it in any extreme way on the other. Jewishness should be recognized as a distinctive cultural expression, and Jewish believers should be encouraged to maintain their Jewish identity, lifestyle, and practice, rather than discouraged. Fourth, just as gentile churches often bring in specialists for conferences and seminars dealing with specific areas in which the leadership of that church is not equipped, they should also invite Messianic Jewish speakers who can present a Jewish perspective on the scriptures and practice so that the

gentile church can benefit from what the Messianic Jew has to offer. Finally, even gentile churches who firmly believe in replacement theology should remember that although they may not hold to any special ethnic future of the Jewish people, the latter nevertheless make up one ethnic element of humanity. Replacement theology churches should develop appreciation for different ethnic expressions of the faith, including a Jewish inflexion, as an equal option.

The Tensions and How to Deal with Them

It is quite obvious that Messianic Jews, Messianic congregations, and the Messianic movement are the object of many criticisms from the Jewish community on the one hand and the gentile Christian community on the other. The attacks by the Jewish community are to be expected, but those from the gentile Christian community are not. Yet they do come from that source and must therefore must be dealt with and treated.

Many of these attacks come from people who have never actually had much, if any, contact with Messianic Jews or Messianic congregations. They therefore represent emotional reactions more than solid experience. One large church in Southern California has attacked the Messianic congregational movement in general, and another church has attacked Ariel Ministries in particular. I personally know that neither group has had any firsthand contact with Messianic Jewish congregations, nor have they carried out any personal investigation as to what we actually believe or the reasons why Messianic congregations even exist.

For example, a church in Southern California listed the following 12 objections to Messianic congregations:

1. The lack of definition of the title “Jew”.
2. Failure to distinguish between Old Testament theology and rabbinic theology and tradition.
3. Failure to properly interpret I Corinthians 9:19-23.
4. Failure to distinguish between the great principles of law and grace.
5. Failure to appreciate the implications of the atonement.
6. Failure to understand progressive doctrinal revelation.
7. Failure to understand the unique privileges, responsibilities, and limitations put on the Jews by God.
8. Misunderstanding of the Sabbath and the Lord's Day.
9. Misunderstanding of our freedom in Christ.
10. Misunderstanding of the unique but temporal role of the Jerusalem church in early Christian history.
11. The danger of deception in attempting to lure Jews to Christianity.
12. The danger of compromising accommodation to keep Jews within Christianity.[122]

These 12 “problems” were elaborated in several paragraphs, each one concluding with a specific “issue” that this church felt that a Messianic congregation was not facing. Anyone involved with the Messianic movement, whether part of a congregation or not, can quickly see that these

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122 Grace Community Church, Elders Council Handling Outreach, “The American Messianic Synagogue Movement: Deficiences, Mistakes, and Errors in the light of the Scriptures” (Los Angeles, CA: 1985).

criticisms came from people on the outside looking in. Moreover, they were observing from a distance where they could only see a few shadows in the dim light.

This paper is not intended to respond to these various issues; they are included to show how far off course gentile Christian churches can be in criticizing Messianic congregations. That they can be so far off course is incredible. Even more amazing is the unwillingness of either group to bother talking to leaders of Messianic congregations or to visit nearby congregations to see if any of them are really guilty of the 12 ”cardinal sins”.

I could not escape the fact that a measure of antisemitism underlies the criticism. The writers seem to be reacting to the practice of Jewishness itself; they would not even begin to think of questioning their own gentile practices or putting them in the same biblical light as they believe must be done with Jewish practices. The theological issues they seem to raise appear to me to be merely smoke-screens for antisemitism. Had they taken any time to learn the nature of Messianic congregations, most of their theological objections would totally evaporate as irrelevant, and the remaining two or three theological objections would only be applicable to a small minority of Messianic congregations rather than the majority with whom this author is acquainted.

These criticisms reveal that tension does exist. If it is based on antisemitism, I am not sure how much we can do except to show how antisemitism is contradictory to one who claims to uphold the scriptures. In regard to the other areas, we are largely dealing with the need to reeducate people concerning the nature of and need for Messianic congregations, instructing them, too, that the tendency towards heresy in some Messianic congregations is no different from the tendency towards heresy in many gentile churches. In other words, heretical tendencies and other problems are problematic for all churches, whether they are Jewish or gentile. They are hardly a problem unique to Messianic congregations.

The critics need to be challenged to make the effort to actually come to know Messianic congregations. What they will observe is that the content of the preaching and practice does not differ from that in gentile churches; only the style differs as you move from a Jewish music motif or Jewish style liturgy to gentile music and gentile liturgy. Non-charismatic gentile churches might criticize some Messianic congregations for being largely charismatic. However, many gentile churches are also charismatic, so that is not uniquely a Messianic Jewish issue either. Just as a variety of doctrines and practices exists in the gentile church there is a variety of doctrines and practices in Messianic congregations. And if varieties are allowed among the gentiles they should also be allowed among the Jews.

The best resolution of these tensions involves a process of reeducation in those areas where the misunderstanding — on both sides — is based upon just that, misunderstanding (as opposed to the issue of basic antisemitism underlying the positions of the two churches I have mentioned).

Another example of this unnecessary tension lies in the fact that some Jewish believers who appropriately use Jewish terminology in Messianic and Jewish circles sometimes wish to enforce that same terminology amongst gentile believers.

As Jewish believers, we deny gentiles the authority to force their terminologies on us. However, we should also recognize that we do not have the authority to force our terminology upon the gentiles either. As long as this mutual recognition is not acknowledged, tension will continue. Only when the two groups become better acquainted with each other can we avoid such tensions. The gentile church must recognize that not everything in gentile culture is good and not everything in

Jewish culture is bad. By the same token, the Jewish believer must recognize that not everything in Jewish culture is good and not everything in gentile culture is bad. By learning one another's history and background, we can learn to appreciate, cooperate, and be a part of each other while at the same time maintaining our own distinctiveness, either within a gentile church or as a separate Messianic congregation.

Gentile Believers among Messianic Believers

Barry R. Leventhal[123]

The relationship in the church between gentile believers and Messianic believers has always been one of agony and ecstacy. The agony is clearly reflected in the New Testament, from the first church council in Acts 15 (debating the significance of the new Spirit-imposed oneness of Jews and gentiles in the church) to Paul's ardent call to unity in Romans 14:1-15:13 (rectifying divisive matters of triviality between Jewish and gentile believers).

The ecstacy is also clearly reflected in the New Testament, from the historical description of the church at Antioch in Acts 11:19-30 (reporting the sacrificial love of the primarily gentile believers sending relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea) to the imposing Pauline apostolic revelation in Ephesians 1-3 (explaining the astonishing uniqueness of Jews and gentiles as one new man created in the Messiah).

What was true in the past is still true today, and probably will be true in the future, at least until the appearing of Yeshua, our Lord and Savior. With the astounding growth in Jewish missions worldwide, we can expect to encounter this ongoing tension between gentile believers and Messianic believers in the church. But we must always remember that, however uncomfortable the tension may become, the God-ordained goal is clear and still worth pursuing. As Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum has reminded us, "The local church must be composed *wherever possible* of both Jewish and gentile believers working together for the cause of Christ" (italics added).[124] So the question really is: What can we do about it? And the even more important question is: What does the Lord want us to do about it?

In considering the relationship between gentile believers and Messianic believers, let us begin by reflecting on two biblical domains, look at two biblical cautions, and finally explore two biblical models.

Two Biblical Domains

The first biblical domain is "the church gathered"; the second domain is "the church scattered".

The domain of the church gathered

The church primarily gathers together for worship, preaching, teaching, edifying, equipping, etc. (cf. Acts 2:40-47; 11:19-30; Eph 4:11-16). While it is true that unbelievers sometimes attend the gathering of the church (1 Cor 14:23-25), the primary purpose of the gathered church is to

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[124] "A.G. Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History, and Philosophy* (Tustin: Ariel Ministries Press, 1983), 96.

worship the Lord around the Lord's Supper and to mutually exercise the spiritual gifts (1 Cor 11:2-14:40; cf. John 4:20-26).

This domain of the church gathered presents a unique set of problems when considering the relationship between gentile believers and Messianic believers. For example, the following matters must be seriously pondered. What style of worship should be used (e.g., liturgy, music, lyrics, dance, decor, symbols, vestments, etc.)? What kind of materials should be used (e.g., Bible versions, hymnals, prayer books, educational curricula, literature, etc.)? What type of format should be used (e.g., days of the week, time of day, special holidays, ordering of the service, etc.)?

The domain of the church scattered

The church not only gathers, it also scatters. The church scatters primarily for evangelizing, enlightening, preserving, serving, influencing, etc. (cf. Matt 5:13-16; 28:18-20; Phil 2:12-16). One of the tests of how we are doing when we gather is how we are doing when we scatter. The overflow or spillover of the church gathered is seen in its impact (or lack of impact) when the church scatters. Our so-called measurements of success may be too centered on our gathering and easily yield to human quantitative evaluation (e.g., numbers, budgets, programs, etc.). Our scattering does not so easily yield to such measurement and often must be left to divine qualitative evaluation (cf. 1 Cor 4:15). In the meantime, let us remember the words of the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul: "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal 6:10).

This domain of the church scattered likewise creates a unique set of problems when considering the relationship between gentile believers and Messianic believers. For example, ponder the following questions. What kind of training or equipping should be used (e.g., Jewish or gentile culture, Jewish or non-Jewish gospel presentations, etc.)? What type of outreach should be planned (e.g., door-to-door in the Jewish community and/or in the gentile community, street evangelism in the Jewish community and/or the gentile community, seekers' home Bible studies in the Jewish community and/or the gentile community, evangelistic banquets in the Jewish community and/or the gentile community, etc.)? How should the media be used, if at all (e.g., the Jewish press, the Christian press, the secular press, including television, radio, video, etc.)?

To make matters more difficult, it must be remembered that when the church scatters it follows the Lord out into a world of at least one uniquely-scattered people: the Jewish people, God's nation in partial dispersion. The nature of Israel's divinely-imposed diaspora makes this issue even more complex, especially for the Messianic Jew, who himself is a part of that believing, and thus preserving, remnant of the nation of Israel.

In summary, if any vital and lasting solutions are to be found to the impasse between gentile believers and Messianic believers we must seriously think through the many twists and turns in the two domains of the church gathered and the church scattered.

Dr. Richard Halverson identified these dual domains in terms of an "elliptical emphasis":

> The Christian life [and church] is elliptical; it revolves around two foci: one an invitation [i.e., the gathering] and the other a commission [i.e., the scattering]. The invitation is that of Jesus Christ, "Come unto Me ...": The commission, also from Jesus Christ, is "Go ye into all the world ...": The healthy Christian life revolves around the coming and the going ... The healthy Christian experience is a

balance ... of intake and service, of receiving and giving, of nurture and labor.[125]

This leads directly to the two biblical cautions we must heed in the relationship between gentile believers and Messianic believers.

Two Biblical Cautions

In considering the relationship between gentile believers and Messianic believers, two biblical cautions are worthy of our attention. The first caution is to be careful of going beyond the Word of God. The second caution is to be careful of falling away from God's grace.

The caution of going beyond the Word of God

Centuries ago, the Holy Spirit laid down a universal imperative through the apostle Paul: Do not go beyond what is written1) : Cor 4:6). This command has never been rescinded. The apostles lived and taught in such a way that this divinely-ordained principle could be seen and understood by all. What makes this transgression so dangerous is that it easily leads to pride and division, usually going unnoticed by the very ones violating the commandment. Listen again to the words of the Holy Spirit: Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying: *Do not go beyond what is written*. Then you will not take pride in one man over against another1) : Cor 4:6).

Later in his first letter to the Corinthians (dealing with the issue of foods sacrificed to idols), the apostle Paul gave us the mind of the Spirit in regard to the danger of going beyond the Word, when knowledge becomes an end in and of itself rather than a means to the ultimate end of sacrificial love. Notice once more the inevitable correlation between knowledge and pride: Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up1) : Cor 8:1).

New Testament scholar Dr. Gordon Fee further explains 1 Corinthians 8:1 in the following insightful words:

> The problem of conduct predicated on knowledge is that it results in even greater sinfulness. Knowledge leads to pride; it puffs up: (cf. 4:6, 18; 5:2). But that is not true of love.: Not only is love not puffed up13:4) :, the final occurrence of this word in the letter), but quite the opposite, it builds up.: The aim of Christian ethics is not stoic self-sufficiency, which requires proper knowledge; rather, its aim is the benefit and advantage of a brother or sister.[126]

The caution of going beyond the Word of God raises a number of pertinent questions in regard to gentile believers among Messianic believers. Consider the following critical issues. Are we going beyond the Word when we add religious or cultural qualifications to the apostolic list of qualifications for New Testament leadership (e.g., elders or pastors must be Jewish; leadership must have been seminary (yeshiva) trained, or the reverse, leadership must not have been seminary

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125 ··R.C. Halverson, *How I Changed My Thinking About the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), 21, 23.

126 ··G.D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 366-67.

trained, etc.; cf. 1 Tim 3:1-13; Tit 1:59; 1 Pet 5:14)? Are we going beyond the Word when we establish quota-like requirements for congregational membership (e.g., a certain percentage of the membership must always be Jewish; a certain percentage of the membership must not be gentile, etc; cf. John 10:14ff; Eph 2:1-3:12; 4:1-6ff; Jas 2:1-13)?

The caution of falling away from the grace of God

We are not only cautioned about going beyond the Word of God but also about falling away from the grace of God. The Holy Spirit speaks clearly and boldly on this issue: "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace" (Gal 5:4). Dr. James Boice rightly interpreted this verse when he said:

> What does "You have fallen away from grace" mean? Some have taken it as teaching that salvation can be lost. Thus, though this is the only place in Scripture where the phrase occurs, the statement has assumed an importance far beyond Paul's use of it and in a way entirely out of keeping with his context. The phrase does not mean that if a Christian sins, he falls from grace and thereby loses his salvation. There is a sense in which to sin is to fall into grace, if one is repentant. But to fall from grace, as seen by this context, is to fall into legalism. Or to put it another way, to choose legalism is to relinquish grace as the principle by which one desires to be related to God.[127]

This caution of falling away from the grace of God is most serious, for, like the caution of going beyond the Word of God, if not heeded, it will lead to arrogance, hypocrisy, and bondage (Gal 2:11-14ff; 4:8-11; 5:1ff, 19-21, 26; 6:3, 12-15). Not only this, but it can also actually destroy the gospel itself (cf. Gal 1:6-10ff; 3:15).

The caution of falling away from the grace of God also raises a number of critical questions in regard to gentile believers among Messianic believers. Consider the following. When does the voluntary exercise of certain cultural and religious practices cross over that fine line of God's grace and subtly become a form of "legalism" (i.e., performing a practice or ritual in order to become acceptable to God or to maintain one's relationship with God – such as circumcision, bar mitzvah, kashrut, Jewish holidays, wearing a kippah, tallit, or tefillin, titles such as rabbi, cantor, etc.)? When do congregational practices and activities cross that same line (e.g., Friday night services, reading from Torah scrolls, chanting the liturgy, use of the prayer book/siddur, use of Hebrew in the service, or other Jewish symbols, etc.)?

Two things must be remembered in considering this biblical caution. First, it is not the performing of any of these practices which causes one to fall away from grace into legalism. Legalism runs much deeper than the mere practice of certain cultural or religious customs; it involves the attitudes and motives underlying any given practice (cf. Rom 14:1-13ff). The real issue seems to be reflected in the words of the apostle Paul: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but *faith working through love*" (Gal 5:6). And second, since only God can look on the motives or heart, we must be extremely careful in weighing these matters (cf. 1 Sam 16:7; Matt 7:16; 1 Cor 4:15). In fact, it is the wise person who takes to heart the following words of the Holy Spirit, even if, and especially when, they tend to sting his own conscience: "Who

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127 "J.M. Boice, "Galatians", in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 10, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 488.

are you to judge someone else's servant?: (Rom 14:4).

In summary, if we are going to heal any of the stress fractures in the relationship between gentile believers and Messianic believers, we must sensitively feel out the many breaks and bruises in the body of the Messiah. Many of these stress fractures have occurred because we have not heeded the biblical cautions of going beyond the Word of God or falling away from the grace of God. This leads directly to the two biblical models which the relationship between gentile believers and Messianic believers must emulate.

Two Biblical Models

There are two biblical models which offer us some practical lessons on how gentile and Messianic believers can interface as they move ahead together in the worldwide cause of messianic missions. The first model is an evangelistic worldview, the individual and outward perspective. The second model is a congregational lifestyle, the corporate and inward perspective.

The model of an evangelistic worldview

If, as gentile and Messianic believers, we are to remedy the painful divisiveness of the past and move out into the work of the kingdom of God, we must know our domains, heed God's cautions, and possess a workable model which we can follow and which will please the Lord (i.e., the ultimate test of any endeavor). The first such model is an individual and outward pointing model. It is the evangelistic worldview of the apostle Paul, recorded in 1 Corinthians 9:15-23.

Paul's evangelistic worldview governed all of his convictions concerning Christian liberty. None of his rightful privileges could ever stand in the way of one individual coming to saving faith. This was the controlling principle in his commitment to the lordship of Christ. Everything and anything, within proper moral boundaries, must be made available for such a divine quest.

Gunther Bornkamm clearly emphasized the correct meaning of this Pauline commitment when he said, "Paul could not modify the gospel itself according to the particular characteristics of his hearers. The whole of his concern is to make clear that the changeless gospel ... empowers him to be free to change his stance: [i.e., posture, approach]."[128]

What practical lessons can we learn from Paul's evangelistic worldview, especially in our relationship together as gentile and Messianic believers? The first lesson is that all of our Christian liberties must be laid aside, if necessary, for the sake of the gospel (1 Cor 9:15-18). The saving gospel of our crucified and resurrected Messiah takes precedence over everything, even cultural and religious practices. The gospel is absolute and essential; cultural and religious customs are relative and incidental. The line between these two different but related issues must never be blurred.

The second lesson is that all of our Christian liberties must be laid aside, if necessary, so that we can become slaves to all in order that we might "win as many as possible1) : Cor 9:19-23). All of us, gentile believers and Messianic believers alike, must become men and women for all seasons, uniquely adaptable in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Under the lordship of Christ we must learn how

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128 "G. Bornkamm, "The Missionary Stance of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 and in Acts", in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, eds. L.E. Keck and J.L. Martyn (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 196.

to become all things to all men so that by all possible means [we] might save some1) : Cor 9:22). Salvation of the lost is the igniting catalyst. Everything else must be brought under its all-consuming power, especially in the context of our own preferred cultural and religious practices.

If necessary, we must be willing to become *like* Jews to win Jews, to become *like* those under the law to win those under the law, to become l*ike* those without law to win those without law, and to become *like* the weak to win the weak.

Christian liberty is always limited by Christian love. Is this not what the apostle Paul said elsewhere when he declared: For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf2) : Cor 5:14-15). It is not surprising then that in this regard Martin Luther was right on target when he asserted, in his famous dictum: A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all:.

This model of an evangelistic worldview is all consuming. It is the kind of model which, if we follow hard after it, can forge gentile and Messianic believers into one unified strike force, going out into the world in faith and obedience to fulfill the great commission in our generation (cf. Matt 28:18-20).

The model of a congregational lifestyle

There is a second biblical model which, if followed, will further facilitate the healing process between gentile and Messianic believers; it will also fortify us for Godיs messianic missionary work in the world. Whereas the first biblical model was an individual and outward-pointing model, this second model is a corporate and inward-pointing one. It is the congregational lifestyle of the apostle Paul, recorded in Romans 14:1-15:13.

Paulיs congregational lifestyle rested securely on the biblical foundation of the triunity of God. It is our triune God who works in concert within his own nature as well as within all of us together, gentile believers and Messianic believers. For example, God the Father moves us to a spirit of unity so that we might glorify him in return (Rom 15:56). God the Son died and rose again that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. He also became a servant in order to confirm the messianic promises for Jewish believers and provide mercy for, and thus be glorified by, gentile believers also (Rom 14:9; 15:8ff). And God the Spirit empowers all of us, gentile and Messianic believers alike, to abound in hope, knowing the joy, peace, and righteousness of God himself and his kingdom (Rom 14:17; 15:13).

Again, what practical lessons can we learn from Paulיs vision of a congregational lifestyle, especially in our relationship as gentile and Messianic believers? The first lesson is that our congregational unity in the body of the Messiah is grounded in our own individual response to the lordship of Christ (Rom 14:1-2). Individual differences in cultural and religious customs are permissible (not commanded) only if and when each gentile believer and each Messianic believer expresses his or her own incidental practice (or lack of such practice) for the Lord (Rom 14:5-6). Each of us must determine to live and to die to the Lord alone, for we are each his and must ultimately answer to him (Rom 14:7-12). Therefore, we must be extremely careful not to judge anotherיs servant (Rom 14:1-4).

The second lesson is that our congregational unity in the body of the Messiah is nurtured by our Christ-like sacrificial service towards one another, believing gentiles and Jews alike (Rom 14:13-15:13). We are to walk in love towards one another, pursuing peace and the building up of one another (Rom 14:15, 19). We are actually serving Christ when we practice these congregational virtues, which makes our service acceptable to God and approved by men (Rom 14:18).

Even further, we are called by God, in this sacrificial service, to please not ourselves but our weaker brothers and sisters so that they might be built up in our most holy faith (Rom 15:12). This is the kind of Christ-like service that truly glorifies God, especially when it reflects God's unity in us as believing Jews and gentiles (Rom 15:3-7ff). In another place, dealing with a similar problem, the apostle Paul penned these words (1 Cor 10:31-33):

> So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do [including any cultural or religious customs, etc.], do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the Church of God even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

In summary, it is this kind of congregational lifestyle which becomes, in the words of the late Francis Schaeffer, "the final apologetic", i.e., a corporate "fidelity to the love of God before a watching world ... the practice of an observable love and oneness among all true Christians ... (that) would arrest the attention of the world".[129]

In a sense, then, the two biblical models really overlap. For when our congregational lifestyle truly reflects the sacrificial love of Christ our evangelistic worldview will overflow into a lost and dying world. This is certainly what the Lord had in mind when he expressed the following world-shattering words (John 13:34-35; 17:20-23):

> A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another ... My prayer is not for [the apostles] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one: I in them and You in Me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.

Church planter Gene Getz rightly stressed the relationship between this kind of unity and love, especially in the Lord's high priestly prayer and in the fruit of the Spirit:

> Unity is the hallmark of Christian love! It was a great concern of Christ before he went back to heaven. Thus he prayed for all of his disciples, and all of us, that we might be "one: just as he (Christ) was one with the Father: "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they maybe one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity ...: (John 17:22-23). Where there is love, true biblical love, there will always be unity. This is why Paul reminded the Galatians that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control: (Gal 5:22). Here again, Paul was talking about the functioning body, not just individual Christians. Thus he says, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become

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129 "F.A. Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the 20th Century* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1970), 138, 149-50.

conceited, provoking and envying each other: (Gal 5:25, 26).[130]

Conclusion

It should now be obvious that I have not really offered any guaranteed answers or simplified solutions to the problems and challenges of gentile believers among Messianic believers. In reality, none are possible or even permissible. For each one of us, as a believing Jew or a believing gentile, knows that centuries of misunderstanding, antagonism, and suffering cannot be easily remedied in one article or essay.

I have tried to raise some of the key issues in the ongoing relationship between gentile believers and Messianic believers. Only when each of us goes back to the Book in all sincerity and true repentance will we begin to discover God's unique and lasting solutions for our dilemma. Only when each of us, in humble dependence, reflects on the biblical domains, cautions, and models which confront believing Jews and gentiles, will the Holy Spirit open the way for the future, if the Lord should tarry. Only when each of us lays aside his or her crown and takes up the towel will God begin to break in. Only when each of us steps off his or her throne and begins to wash the other's feet will true harmony begin.

The ultimate solution to the ongoing relationship between gentile believers and Messianic believers is, of course, what God's solution has always been: the cross of our Lord and Savior himself. Is this not what the apostle meant when he declared (Gal 6:14-16):

> But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

When the cross does its needed surgery, we will find other-serving replacing self-serving. Humble service will dethrone tyrannical lordship. We will be utterly and delightfully surprised at how much work can be accomplished for God and his kingdom when we do not care who gets the credit, except the Lord himself, of course.

Perhaps that is what moved Philipp Melanchthon, one of the lesser-known sixteenth century reformers, to forge out the following superb statement which seems to sum it all up: In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.

By the grace of God and the power of the Spirit, may it be said of us as well: In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.

130 G.A. Getz, *The Measure of A Church* (Glendale: G/L Publications, 1975), 38.

The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting

Series Editor: Bruce W. Winter

Consulting Editors: I. Howard Marshall & David W.J. Gill
Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, & The Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1993ff.

Reviewed by Kai Kjær-Hansen

The series

With Bruce W. Winter, the Warden of Tyndale House, Cambridge, as Series Editor, the first four of six planned volumes in the series *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* have been published. And let it be said at once: the first four volumes fully live up to what the two publishers promise: "A stimulating new study that replaces older studies on Acts, including aspects of *The Beginnings of Christianity*". This last title covers the five volumes published by K. Lake and H.J. Cadbury in the period 1920-1933, a work which has had an enormous influence on many students of the Book of Acts. I would not be surprised if the new series could likewise become a classic and inspire future generations well into the third millennium.

The contributors to this series complement each other, coming as they do from different areas of research. In the words of the publishers: "This new six-volume series presents the results of interdisciplinary research between New Testament, Jewish, and classical scholarship. Working to place the Book of Acts within its first-century setting, well-known historians and biblical scholars from Australia, the United States, Canada, Russia, Germany, France, Israel, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom have collaborated here to provide a stimulating new study that elucidates the Book of Acts in its literary, regional, cultural, ideological and theological contexts."

It is only to be expected that a work written by various, independent contributors contains both overlaps and divergent conclusions concerning different ideas. More importantly, however, the contributors present a great number of historical data which they subject to thorough analysis and discussion before they draw their conclusions. A work of this nature does not require complete agreement regarding all the issues raised. Compared to many other theological works, it makes fairly easy reading; Greek words appear in the text now and then, and occasionally a Hebrew word, but not to the extent of barring the way for readers who are not skilled in Hebrew and Greek. The subject matter is relevantly treated all the way through.

Readers of *Mishkan* who are accustomed to recognizing the importance of the Jewish background material for a proper understanding of the New Testament message may be challenged by the treatment of the Graeco-Roman background. In the first centuries AD, Palestine was not an isolated island, unaffected by the hellenistic trends in the surrounding world. Without knowledge of the Graeco-Roman world, one's understanding of the New Testament is inadequate. This is also — and especially — true of the Book of Acts, whether we are talking about events which took place inside or outside Palestine.

Volume 1: The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting (eds.: Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke), 1993, xii + 479 pages

It is to the editors' — and publishers' — credit that they begin the new series by placing the Book of Acts in its ancient literary setting, even if this topic is of least appeal to many readers. This fact may well reflect more on the readers than on the importance of the subjects treated, however!

In Volume 1, fourteen contributors deal with the questions of what kind of "history" Luke writes in the Book of Acts; how biblical history has influenced him; and the nature of the relationship between the Gospel of Luke and Luke II (Acts). Since large parts of the Book of Acts consist of speeches, chapters are included on "Public Speaking and Published Accounts", "Official Proceedings and the Forensic Speeches in Acts 24-26", and "Acts against the Background of Classical Rhetoric" — all subjects which are treated in a stimulating way and throw light on the issues in question.

David Wenham has undertaken to compare the Paul in Acts with the Paul of the epistles in a chapter entitled "Acts and the Pauline Corpus: II. The Evidence of Parallels". It is only natural that he should thoroughly discuss the difficult historical question of Paul's visit to Jerusalem, i.e., the relationship between Luke's information in Acts 11 and 15 and Paul's own information in Galatians 2. By way of summing up, Wenham says that "scholars have detected various specific contradictions between Acts and Paul's letter, but in very few cases is the evidence weighty. If Galatians 2:1-10 is identified with Acts 15, then there is a significant question-mark over the Acts account at that point; but the identification is insecure. Those scholars who consider the picture of Paul in Acts to be historically misleading must appeal to general impressions rather than to proven discrepancies with the epistles. Other scholars will judge that the cumulative evidence suggests that Acts is a well-informed historical narrative" (p. 258).

Finally, F. Scott Spencer provides a fine introduction to "Acts and Modern Literary Approaches". He says in his conclusion: "This is an exciting era in which, as Tannehil puts it, 'Methodological pluralism is to be encouraged, for each method will have blind spots that can only be overcome through another approach'" (p. 414). This is a refreshing viewpoint which gives incentive to collaborative efforts between scholars with different approaches to these subjects.

Volume 2: The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting (eds.: David W.J. Gill and Conrad Gempf), 1994, xii + 627 pages

In the preface to this volume, David W.J. Gill reminds the reader of Oswyn Murray's words: "Historians are supposed to write books full of facts". But he adds, with Murray: "... the discovery of facts ... is only a preliminary to a higher activity, that of understanding the facts" (p. xi).

In the first part of this volume, 14 contributors — historians and theologians — present a number of facts, and interpretations of these, regarding aspects of provincial life within the eastern Mediterranean, Italy, and Rome. Since great portions of Acts are about journeys, it is relevant to raise the question: How did people travel by land and by sea in the first century AD? What do we know about shipwrecks and Roman roads, of food shortages, of religion and imperial cults in the various regions, of urban sites and buildings? The last point is relevant to the question of where the first Jesus-believers met for worship.

The second part of this volume offers a relevant survey of the most important Roman provinces

and their forms of government, concluding with Rome and Italy and appendices on the Asiarchs and the Politarchs, mentioned in Acts 19:31, 19:29, and 20:4 respectively. A chapter is included on "Luke's Geographical Horizon" as well as an appendix on "The 'We' Passages". The much-debated question of whether the author hides behind the "we", which crops up in 16:10-17, 20:5-15, 21:1-18, and 27:1-28:16, is treated by James M. Porter. Porter argues that the usage does not reflect an eyewitness or first-hand account. "More likely is the conclusion that the author of Acts has utilized a continuous, independent source probably discovered in the course of his investigation" (p. 573). Not all the contributors to this new work on the Book of Acts share Porter's conclusion, not surprisingly given the complex nature of the problem.

Volume 3: The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody (Brian Rapske), 1994, viii + 512 pp

Volume 3 is authored by a single contributor in contrast to most of the other volumes (see also Volume 5). Brian Rapske's work is a revised edition of his Ph.D. dissertation.

Under the heading "Custody, the Legal System and Status in the Roman World", Rapske provides a description of Paul's citizenship and status: as a citizen of Tarsus, as a Roman citizen, and as a Jew. This chapter is followed by "Paul on Trial in Acts" and "Paul in Prison in Acts". With great confidence and reference to a wealth of sources on prisons and imprisonment in the ancient world, Rapske takes his readers around the towns and prisons where Paul stayed or was confined for a shorter or longer periods of time: Philippi, Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome. He portrays the conditions of life in prison, prison culture, the shame of bonds, Paul's helpers, etc. in order to give an impression of how prison life under different conditions influenced Paul's work.

Rapske rejects the theory that Luke's description of Paul in Acts as an imprisoned, suffering witness takes precedence over Paul the missionary. Rapske regards the dichotomy "either missionary, or prisoner" as false. His main thesis is that "Paul is indeed the missionary-prisoner for Luke; effective, appreciated and divinely approved in his free doings with all the struggles that attended in the earlier phase of his ministry as described in Acts and effective, appreciated and divinely approved in the tribulations of his bond in the latter phase of Acts" (p. 436).

Of special interest for the readers of *Mishkan* is the question of Paul's identity both as a Roman citizen and a Jew. For Rapske, Paul remains a Pharisee after his conversion and never becomes an ex-Pharisee. "All that Christianity affirmed of his Pharisaism, Paul continued to embrace; all that in Pharisaism threatened the exclusiveness of Christ's salvific provision, he emphatically rejected. In this sense only can Paul be said to remain a Pharisee according to Philippians. He elsewhere does not deny his Jewish birth or circumcision (Rom 3:1f.) and he apparently does not resist synagogal discipline despite its wrongful application (2 Cor 11:24). Hence, phrases such as 'Paul's renunciation of Judaism' hardly deserves what is taking place at Phil. 3:2-16" (p. 99).

Rapske makes some interesting observations regarding Paul's imprisonment in Philippi (Acts 16) and his apprehension in Jerusalem (Acts 21-22); he even speaks of Paul's "un-Roman" behavior. In Philippi, Paul does not reveal his Roman citizenship until *after* his punishment; in Jerusalem he does so *before*. Why?

In Philippi, an early disclosure of Roman citizenship might have meant a time-consuming and prolonged process, which would have delayed the Jewish missionaries' work. But an early "We are Roman citizens" in the mouths of the missionaries might have been construed, by Gentiles and

Jews, as a denial of their Jewishness, an impression which they are unwilling to create. An early disclosure might also have been misunderstood by the Jesus-believers in Philippi as encouraging them to rely on their Roman citizenship. The missionaries were wary of running that risk as well. They preferred to accept an unjust punishment in order to demonstrate solidarity with those lacking Roman credentials.

In Jerusalem, Paul discloses his Roman citizenship before the intended punishment (22:25). But Rapske has a keen eye for how, where, and to whom Paul presents himself in Jerusalem: "... whereas Paul presents himself *in Greek* to the Tribune as a *Jew* who is a *citizen of Tarsus* [Acts 21:37-40], to the Jews Paul presents himself *in Aramaic* as a *zealous Jew* who, though born in Tarsus, was raised in Jerusalem [Acts 22:1-3]" (p. 142). Not until he is in the Antonia Fortress and before the Romans does Paul disclose his Roman citizenship; not with a loud "I am a Roman" but in the form of a question: "Is it legal for you to scourge a Roman, an uncondemned man?" (Acts 22:25). Paul's insinuation of, rather than insistence upon, his rights leads Rapske to conclude that "Paul will not so stridently insist upon his Roman rights as to undercut his religious commitment to Judaism before Roman eyes. In other words, the fact that he is a Christian Jew affects the way he claims his Roman rights" (p. 143).

Volume 4: The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting (ed.: R. Bauckham), 1995, xii + 526 pp

The 15 contributors to this volume cover subjects related to the Palestinian setting of the Book of Acts and the cross-cultural situation in 1st-century Roman Palestine. Most of the contributions are new, although a few earlier published studies are also included, e.g., Martin Hengel's "The Geography of Palestine in Acts". Treatment of the speeches of Peter and Stephen has been deferred to the forthcoming Volume 6 of the series.

Among the questions discussed in volume 4 are: Jew versus Greek, Roman policy in Judaea, geography, personal names, and politico-religious groupings. Subjects of a more theological character include: "Jewish Prayer Literature and the Jerusalem Church in Acts" and "The Palestinian Cultural Context of Earliest Christian Community of Goods".

Rainer Riesner writes about "Synagogues in Jerusalem" and reaches the conclusion that there "is nothing anachronistic in Luke's and the other evangelists' picture that there were many synagogues in Galilee and Jerusalem" (p. 214). In an article entitled "The Composition of the Jerusalem Church", David A. Fiensy argues that "Jerusalem in the 1st century AD was a moderate-sized urban centre with a socially and culturally pluralistic population ... The church seems to have been a microcosm of the city" (p. 213). The question of Jerusalem's size is subject to detailed examination in the chapter "The Population Size of Jerusalem and the Numerical Growth of the Jerusalem Church", written by Wolfgang Reinhardt. In contrast to Joachim Jeremias' low estimate of the population of Jerusalem (25,000-30,000), Reinhardt suggests that "A figure of 60,000 to 120,000 seems realistic, and even the higher end of this scale not impossible for the 30s of the 1st century" (p. 237). This background forms the proper context regarding the question of whether Luke's information in Acts 2:41 and 4:4 about the size of the Jesus movement can be regarded as historically reliable. Reinhardt's answer is affirmative, since "the dominant argument against the historical plausibility of Luke's figures — the alleged small population of Jerusalem at the time — can no longer be considered valid" (p. 238).

Several of the other articles in this volume also deserve mention but I shall restrict myself to drawing attention to Richard Bauckham's article on "James and the Jerusalem Church". All chapters are prefaced by a summary. As an example of this, and as an appetizer to the last and important chapter of volume 4, Bauckham's summary (pp. 415-416) is quoted in full below.

> This chapter focuses on the Jerusalem church especially in the period after the persecution by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1-17), which was the point at which the Twelve ceased to be the leadership of the Jerusalem church and James the Lord's brother began to reach a position of pre-eminence in the Jerusalem church. The historicity of the portrayal of the Jerusalem church is assessed by relating it to that church's context in 1st-century Judaism and by checking it against other available evidence, so that an account which critically integrates the evidence of Acts with other evidence emerges. It is argued that the centrality of Jerusalem for the 1st-century Jewish worldview and experience provides the essential background for understanding both the way in which the leadership of the Jerusalem church was constituted and the role of the Jerusalem church in the early Christian movement. The Jerusalem church's authoritative oversight of the whole Christian mission, which was widely acknowledged, is seen most importantly in the decisions of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15).
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> Careful study of the speech Luke attributes to James (Acts 15:13-21), in the light of Jewish exegetical practice, shows that Luke has here preserved, in summary form, the exegetical basis on which James and the Jerusalem leaders argued that Gentile believers belonged to the eschatological people of God as Gentiles, without having to become Jews and observe the Law, but also that the Law of Moses itself makes provision for them in the form of four commandments to which alone they are obligated (the prohibition in the apostolic decree). This authoritative ruling on the relationship of Gentile Christians to the Law of Moses was promulgated by the Jerusalem church leaders for the whole Christian movement, and evidence down to the 3rd century shows that it was very widely accepted as such. It was accepted not least by the majority of Jewish Christians.
>
> The common assumptions that the Jerusalem church under James, or at least an influential faction in it, continued to maintain that Gentile Christians must be circumcised, and that this view was held by much of later Jewish Christianity also, have no basis in the evidence. It appears that Luke's presentation of the Jerusalem council as an event which decisively affected the whole development of early Christianity by authoritatively discrediting the view that Gentile Christians must be circumcised is historically accurate. The Jerusalem church under James was not, as is often supposed, progressively marginalised as the Gentile mission developed in opposition to its allegedly conservative Jewish stance. On the contrary, the Jerusalem church remained central.

The two forthcoming volumes

There is every reason to look forward to the publication of the last two volumes in this series, namely *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting*, by Irena Levinskaya, and *The Book of Acts and Its Theology*, edited by I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson.

Those who want to keep abreast of the issues preoccupying modern scholars and students of Acts would do well to acquire this series. Although certain conclusions can be disputed the series is full of data and discussions which challenge the reader and, not least, inspire him.

All volumes are in hard-cover and beautifully printed — apart from an dreadfully small map of Palestine in volume 4, so small that it serves no purpose whatsoever. The price is very reasonable: $ 37.50 per volume.