Overcoming Resistance:

by

Francis Innocent Otobo
BST, GradDip (Biblical Studies)

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Divinity

2019
Abstract

This thesis argues that the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts functions to legitimate the mission to the nations for the Jewish followers of Jesus, whilst at the same time engaging with Greco-Roman pneumatic experiences to encourage Gentile (‘ethnic’) believers in their acceptance of the faith. This is a more unifying reading of the role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts than has been proffered by earlier scholars in that it also affirms previous insights into Lukan connections with the ‘Spirit of the Lord’ and prophecy in the OT, and with broader mission themes.

Using a narrative approach together with careful exegesis of selected texts, I show that the Spirit is used to address the challenges of ethnic diversity in the implied audience of the Lukan communities — for both the resisting Jewish Christian reader and those from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The thesis builds on the work of many scholars who have argued for the relationship of the Spirit in Luke-Acts to missiological themes (Conzelmann, Penney, Turner, Leeper, Hur, Gibbs, Zwiep); the connection between the Spirit and prophecy (Conzelmann, Menzies, Turner) and to the OT traditions in particular (Shepherd, Hur, Stronstad); the Spirit and the Jews and Gentiles (the ἐθνὲ) (Evans, Kuecker); and the legitimating role of the Spirit in more general terms (Shepherd, Turner, Bonnah). In so doing, I argue that the presence of the Spirit at key points of the narrative in both the Lukan Gospel and Acts legitimates the mission to the ἐθνὲ in contexts where there is ongoing resistance, both for those resisting and those who are being attracted by the signs of the Spirit.
Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this PhD thesis is my own original research. It has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any other University or institution. I certify that the intellectual content of this study is the product of my own research, and all sources which have aided this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Signed:

[Signature]

Date: 7th August 2019
Acknowledgment

My appreciation and gratitude first of all is to God, the source of my being and the author of all wisdom and knowledge. I also acknowledge and appreciate Archbishop Christopher Prowse, Bishop Michael Apochi and Bishop Patrick O’Regan who permitted, supported and encouraged me to undertake this level of study. Worthy of special recognition is Fr Hugh Brown O’Carm, who lit the initial fire for this study and supported me to the end. To you all, I remain grateful.

In a very unique way, I wish to acknowledge and appreciate my supervisors, Associate Professor Keith Dyer and Rev Dr Chris Monaghan, CP, for their availability at all times and for their patience in supervising my thesis. Their continuous support, the sharing of their knowledge and experience and their scholarly advice gave focus to this dissertation. To them I remain grateful. Many thanks also to Associate Prof Michael A. Kelly, CSsR, my College Research and Postgraduate Coordinator, for his unquantifiable and invaluable advice from the very beginning.

To all the students and staff of Yarra Theological Union, and the Research office of the University of Divinity, I say thank you for creating an academic environment that fosters and facilitates learning and research. Special thanks also to the HDR students for their great support especially at those times when we had the HDR students’ seminars. I received a lot of support, inspiration and wisdom from those meetings.

I must not fail to acknowledge the thoughtful contributions of all my friends, especially Sr Mercy Akor, Rev Dr Idoko B. Idoko, Fr Joseph Abutu and Fr George Ogah for their motivation. I wish to also express my profound gratitude to my family for their great support, especially, Mr Akor Otobo, Prof Mrs B. O. Ker and Prof I. A. O. Ujah. God bless you all.

There are, of course, many others who have been of great support in different ways and at different times in this journey. I remain grateful to you all.
# Abbreviations

## Journals, Periodicals and Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJPS</td>
<td>Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AshTJ...</td>
<td>Ashland Theological Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBR</td>
<td>Bulletin for Biblical Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTB</td>
<td>Biblical Theology Bulletin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CJT</td>
<td>Canadian Journal of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTM</td>
<td>Concordia Theological Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQ</td>
<td>Evangelical Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EstBib</td>
<td>Estudios Biblicos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExpTim</td>
<td>Expository Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBS</td>
<td>Irish Biblical Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAC</td>
<td>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JETS</td>
<td>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNTS</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPT</td>
<td>Journal of Pentecostal Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTS</td>
<td>Journal of Theological Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTQ</td>
<td>Lexington Theological Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJBC</td>
<td>The New Jerome Biblical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovT</td>
<td>Novum Testamentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTR</td>
<td>Reformed Theological Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RvExp</td>
<td>Review and Expositor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBL</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS</td>
<td>Theological Studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of contents

1. **Introduction and review of literature** ..............................................................10  
   1.1 Aims and objectives of the thesis.................................................................15  
   1.2 Outline of the thesis......................................................................................16  
   1.3 Review of literature......................................................................................18  
      1.3.1 The Spirit and Conversion (J. D. G. Dunn)..............................................18  
      1.3.2 The Spirit and Prophecy (H. Conzelmann, R. Menzies, M. Turner)....20  
      1.3.3 The Spirit and Mission (H. Conzelmann, J. M. Penney, M. Turner, G.  
               Leeper, J. Hur, E. Gibbs, A. W. Zwiep)........................................23  
      1.3.4 The Spirit and the OT (W. H. Shepherd, J. Hur, R. Stronstad).............27  
      1.3.5 The Spirit, Jews and Gentiles (C. A. Evans, A. Kuecker).....................29  
      1.3.6 The Spirit and Legitimation (W. H. Shepherd, M. Turner, G. Bonnah)....32  
      1.3.7 Questions that still need to be explored..............................................33  
   1.4 Statement of research methodology............................................................34  
   1.5 Summary and conclusion.............................................................................36  

2. **The challenge of ethnic diversity in the Lukan communities** ..................37  
   2.1 Luke’s implied audience: Jewish and Gentile .............................................40  
   2.2 Tensions over an inclusive missionary enterprise....................................46  
      2.2.1 Luke’s Gospel and ethnic tensions.......................................................48  
      2.2.2 The grumbling of the Hellenists (Acts 6:1)..........................................51  
      2.2.3 The circumcised believers criticise Peter (Acts 11:1-3).....................55  
      2.2.4 The resistance to Gentile inclusion at Antioch (Acts 13:42-52).........61  
      2.2.5 The crises leading up to the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1-5)..........65  
   2.3 Summary and conclusion.............................................................................70  

3. **Luke’s use of the Spirit to engage Gentile Christians** ............................74  
   3.1 The narrative of Luke-Acts and Gentile Christians..................................75  
   3.2 The religious environment of Greco-Roman society................................77  
      3.2.1 Greco-Roman mystery religions and Christianity.........................78  
      3.2.2 Mediums of communication from the gods......................................83

3.3.1 Being filled with the Holy Spirit and spirit-possession 

3.3.2 The Spirit of prophecy and the oracles

3.4 Summary and conclusion

4. Luke’s use of the Spirit to engage Jewish Christians

4.1 Luke and the Old Testament

4.2 The Spirit motif in the Old Testament

4.2.1 Spirit endowment and mission (Num 11:14-17, 24-30)

4.2.2 The Spirit, anointing and mission (Isa 61:1-3)

4.2.3 The future promise of the Spirit and mission (Joel 2:28-29)


4.4 Summary and conclusion

5. The Holy Spirit’s role in legitimating the mission of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke

5.1 Jesus’ conception: an action of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35)

5.2 Jesus’ baptism: public endorsement by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21-22)

5.3 Jesus’ temptation: leading of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1)

5.4 The Nazareth synagogue episode: anointing with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:16-30)

5.5 Summary and conclusion

6. The Holy Spirit’s role in legitimating the mission of the church in Acts

6.1 The opening preface (Acts 1:2-5)

6.2 The commissioning (Acts 1:6-8)

6.3 The Pentecost event (Acts 2:1-47)

6.4 The Holy Spirit as legitimating mission to the wider world

6.4.1 The call of Paul (Acts 9:1-19)

6.4.2 The Cornelius episode (Acts 10:1-11:18)

6.4.3 The Church in Antioch (Acts 13:1-4)

6.4.4 The Jerusalem Council (15:6-35)

6.4.5 The community in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7)

6.4.6 Paul’s speech in Rome (28:1ff)
6.5 Summary and conclusion..................................................................................................................220

7. **Conclusion** ..................................................................................................................................223

7.1 The Holy Spirit building harmony and unity in the community...................................................227
7.2 The Holy Spirit convincing believers that God is in charge.........................................................227
7.3 The Holy Spirit providing affirmation for ethnic believers............................................................228
7.4 The Holy Spirit establishing continuity with the Old Testament..................................................229

Appendix ...........................................................................................................................................233

Bibliography ......................................................................................................................................237
Chapter one

Introduction and review of literature

The reader of Luke-Acts may well be intrigued by the frequency of Luke’s references to the Holy Spirit in comparison with the other synoptic gospels. In his gospel Luke refers to the Holy Spirit seventeen times, and in Acts, fifty seven times. This relative abundance of references to the


2 As Holy Spirit – thirteen times (See 1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25, 26; 3:16, 22; 4:1; 10:21; 11:13; 12:10, 12); the/my Spirit – three times (2:27; 4:1, 14); Spirit of the Lord – one time (4:18).

3 As Holy Spirit – forty one times (See 1:2, 5, 8, 16; 2:4, 33, 38; 4:8, 25, 31; 5:3, 32; 6:5; 7:51, 55; 8:15, 17, 19; 9:17, 31; 10:38, 44, 45, 47; 11:15, 16, 24; 13:2, 4, 9, 52; 15:8, 28; 16:6; 19:2 (2x), 6; 20:23, 28; 21:11; 28:25); the/my Spirit – thirteen times (2:17, 18; 6:3, 10; 8:15b, 18, 29; 10:19; 11:12, 28; 19:21; 20:22; 21:4); Spirit of the Lord – two times (5:9; 8:39); Spirit of Jesus – one time (16:7)
Holy Spirit has attracted scholars’ attention from the early days of Lukan scholarship. As will be observed from the review of literature below, earlier scholars focused on the necessity of the Spirit for salvation/conversion, and on the Spirit as empowering, initiating, guiding and directing mission. These insights are valid as far as they go, but a closer reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts points to something deeper – a more coherent logic to these diverse emphases. The question is why the Holy Spirit became so dominant in Luke’s narrative. Why does Luke, for instance, emphasise the Spirit as *donum superadditum* as Menzies argues? Why does Luke present the Spirit as initiating, empowering, guiding and directing mission, and effecting transformation? The more the pneumatic texts in Luke-Acts are studied, the more they point to something deeper – with diverse responses – and so the more they call for an undergirding and unifying explanation.

Furthermore, there is a deep-seated parallelism between the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts and the Spirit of the Lord in the Old Testament (OT). The Spirit of the Lord in the OT is not only God’s presence among the people of God, but also serves to authenticate and legitimate the task and mission of characters upon whom the Spirit is bestowed. This is evident in the roles played by such figures as Joseph (Gen 41:38; cf. Dan 5:5-30); Moses (Num 11:17); the seventy/two elders (Num 11:25, 26, 29); Joshua (Num 27:18; Deut 34:9); Elijah and Elisha (1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:15); and the prophet (Isa 61:1-3). The question then may be asked: do the references to the Spirit in Luke-Acts also imply some kind of legitimation – of divine affirmation of key turning points in the narrative? For one technique of legitimation involves an appeal to an authority that gives credence leading to trust in what is claimed.

---

6 In Luke-Acts, the terms ‘Holy Spirit’ or ‘the Spirit’ refer to the same divine Spirit, the Spirit of God. In this thesis, ‘the Holy Spirit’ thus will sometimes be referred to simply as ‘the Spirit’ with a capital ‘S’.
8 The Spirit’s presence is God’s commission of a person; and the departure of the Spirit is God’s rejection of the individual. Cf. 1 Sam 16:14 (Saul); 1 Kgs 22:24; 2 Chr 18:23 (Zedekiah and Micaiah).
From the birth narrative in Luke 1-2 to Paul’s arrival in Rome in Acts 28, Luke consistently conveys a message: the inclusion of the Gentiles is part of the plan and purpose of God.\(^9\) While opposition to the Gentiles is more muted in the gospel narrative, there is resistance to this mission as the followers of Jesus proclaim the message of salvation to non-Jews in Acts. In texts where Luke argues for the legitimacy of the Gentile mission especially before Jewish believers, Luke particularly appeals to the Holy Spirit to buttress his point (Acts 10:47; 11:15, 17; 15:8). These preliminary observations suggest that it may be profitable to explore the possibility that Luke employs the Holy Spirit in the narrative to overcome resistance from some Jewish believers concerning the mission to the nations.

Thus, while acknowledging the contributions of other scholars towards the role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts, this thesis draws particular attention to the role played by the Holy Spirit as legitimator of mission. It is my contention that this role of the Holy Spirit has not been adequately explored, though Max Turner has previously suggested that the Holy Spirit is the legitimator of the whole endeavour of Luke-Acts.\(^10\) Equally, George Bonnah states that “through the Holy Spirit, the narrator intends to legitimate the missionary activities of the church...”\(^11\) I agree with these two statements and recognise that these scholars have noted something significant for understanding the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts, but no studies, including their own, have fully explored the Holy Spirit as legitimating the mission to \(\tau\acute{a}\,\varepsilon\theta\nu\eta\). This thesis aims to fill that lacuna. It is the first part of the argument of this thesis, therefore, that Luke employs the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts in order to convince the resisting Jewish followers of Jesus

---

9 The term “Gentile mission” as used in this thesis indicates mission to \(\tau\acute{a}\,\varepsilon\theta\nu\eta\) (the nations). \(\tau\acute{a}\,\varepsilon\theta\nu\eta\) literally means “the peoples” or “the nations.” Greek writers use it to describe “them,” the barbarians, in the same way the Jews use it to describe every other person who is not Jewish (see Luke 2:32; 24:47; Acts 10:35, 45; 11:1), and the Romans to describe everyone who is not Roman (including Jews). In other words, \(\tau\acute{a}\,\varepsilon\theta\nu\eta\) is used to refer to “those people” who are different from “us.” As Sanders noted, \(\tau\acute{a}\,\varepsilon\theta\nu\eta\) does not have the restricted sense in Greek that “Gentiles” has in English. With these qualifications in mind, I use “Gentile mission” or “mission to the nations” in this thesis to refer to mission to territories that are not Jewish, and everybody who is not Jewish. This is the mission to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). For a more detailed discussion, see Jack T. Sanders, "Who Is a Jew and Who Is a Gentile in the Book of Acts," \textit{NTS} 37, (1991): 435-455; Paul D. Meyer, "The Gentile Mission in Q," \textit{JBL}, (1970): 405-417; D. J. Verseput, "Paul's Gentile Mission and the Jewish Christian Community: A Study of the Narrative in Galatians 1 and 2," \textit{NTS} 39, (1993): 36-58.


about the legitimacy of the Gentile mission and to affirm Jewish Christians and Godfearers who are open to mission in the non-Jewish world.\textsuperscript{12}

The Lukan narrative openly asserts that salvation is for the glory of Israel but also brings a light for revelation to the Gentiles (Luke 2:30, 32). Luke shows that the message of salvation is first of all to the Jews through the Jerusalem church (Acts 10:36; 13:46; cf. 1:8), and that this message crossed the boundaries of the Jewish world to ethnic territories through the power and under the direction of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 10:44-45; 13:1-2; 28:28). Thus the other half of the argument of this thesis is to show how Luke’s pneumatology also functions to legitimate the ‘Gentile mission’ to the nations themselves. In this two-volume narrative, Luke addresses a network of communities made up of Jewish and ethnic Christians, within a context that is divided about whether the mission to the wider world and the ways that it was undertaken in the Lukan communities was faithful to God’s plan and intention. At the human level, this is shown in the parallel missions of Peter and Paul in Acts, but the ultimate authentication of their boundary-breaking mission is the evidence of God’s presence made manifest through the gift of the Spirit (see, for example, Acts 11:12, 15, 16, 17; 15:8 for Peter; 19:2, 6 for Paul).

Luke, therefore, sets out to inform and convince all hearing-readers that the Gentile mission is not an aberration but is in accordance with the ancient divine plan and purpose of God (Luke 2:32; 4:25-27; 24:47; Acts 1:8; 10:44-45; 11:17-17; 28:25b-28). Furthermore, Luke’s narrative suggests that the Christian mission is not something entirely new, but is in continuity with the Jewish prophetic traditions of old (Acts 2:14-21; 13:46-49), and is in accord with the diverse experiences of the ‘spirit’ amongst the Gentiles. The narrative thus shows Luke writes to a divided network of groups of believers in Jesus and seeks unity and acceptance for the shape of the communities and the mission to τὰ ἔθνη.

\textsuperscript{12} The word “Christian” occurs only three times in the New Testament: Acts 11:26 – where it was used for the first time in reference to the followers of Jesus; Acts 26:28 – where Agrippa’s usage obviously points to a belief in Jesus; and 1 Peter 4:16 – which refers to suffering as a follower of Jesus. Therefore, wherever the distinction “Jewish Christians,” or “Gentile Christians” is used, this thesis refers to those believers in Jesus who are of Jewish background or who originate from τὰ ἔθνη respectively, and who have become followers of the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; cf. John 14:6).
The Jewish Christian, familiar with the OT, would have been familiar with the role played by the Spirit of God among God’s people. Luke is determined to demonstrate to the resisting members of the communities how the mission to the nations is rooted in ancient traditions and hence divinely legitimated. Luke thus takes advantage of the knowledge of the Spirit’s role among God’s people and utilises it in his narrative. This is evident in the similarity of language and terms used for the Spirit in Luke-Acts and the OT, as can be seen in the ways that the action of the Spirit, the endowment and reception of the Spirit, and the consequences of this reception are described. For instance, only in Luke 4:18 does Jesus declare at the start of his mission that the Spirit of the Lord is upon him by explicitly citing Isaiah 61. The gift of the Holy Spirit that comes upon the disciples on Pentecost day in Acts 2:1-4 resonates with Numbers 11:25. Peter will make it clear that this outpouring of the Spirit fulfills Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:17-21 // Joel 2:28).

Equally, Luke makes references to the Holy Spirit in a way and manner that resonates with the Greco-Roman religious context. For instance, it is only in Luke 3:22 that the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus, not only like a dove, but also in bodily form (cf. Matt 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8 and John 1:19-28). Also, Luke shows, after the mission of the seventy (Luke 10:1-20) that Jesus rejoices in the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:21; cf. Matt 11:25). The thesis will argue that this usage of the Spirit reflects the ways in which spirit-possession was described in the Greco-Roman world. In Acts, the narrative about Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch and the role of the Holy Spirit in that story (Acts 8:26-40), alongside the story of the slave girl with a python spirit (Acts 16:10-18), amongst many others in Acts, reflects the Greco-Roman context. These examples support the suggestion that the author of Luke-Acts writes in such a way that reflected the language and practices of the Greco-Roman world with a view to making the narrative comprehensible for them.

My argument is that by these means Luke seeks to convince the implied resisting readers (Jewish and Gentile) about the legitimacy of mission to the wider world, and to affirm those Jewish Christians who are open to this mission, as well as supporting ethnic Christians facing opposition. Appealing to language that both Jews and τὰ ἔθνη can appropriate, Luke asserts that the God who was active through God’s Spirit in the OT – and in the revelation of God to the
nations, partially glimpsed in Greco-Roman religious experience – is also active through the same Spirit in the mission of Jesus and the mission of the followers of Jesus; and so, in the mission to τὰ ἔθνη.

In all, I wish to argue in this thesis that some Jewish Christians (and other Jews/Godfearers who might hear/read the narrative) needed to be convinced that the mission of Jesus continued in the mission of the church,\(^\text{13}\) and that its expansion to Gentile territories as Luke has presented it, is in accordance with the plan and purpose of God.\(^\text{14}\) Just as Luke has appealed to the Holy Spirit by drawing upon the legitimating role of the Spirit of the Lord/God in the OT, an authoritative document for the Jewish reader, so too does he appeal through the various accounts of the Spirit’s presence to the yearning for the authentic presence of God glimpsed in the spirit-experiences of diverse religious phenomena in the wider Gentile world. In each of these approaches, Luke uses the Holy Spirit as the legitimator of the wider scope of God’s mission as revealed in Jesus Christ and as enacted by (some) of the earliest followers of ‘the Way’.

### 1.1 Aims and objectives of the thesis

This thesis intends to demonstrate that one of the central issues that Luke addresses in the narrative of Luke-Acts is the opposition from some Jewish Christians towards Gentile inclusion in the Christian communities. This opposition can be interpreted as resistance to mission outside Jewish territory and Jewish social networks. In order to convince these resistant Jewish believers in Jesus, Luke needed to appeal to an authority that has credibility for them. The role played by the Spirit of the Lord in the OT readily provided this authority. This thesis will argue that the language used by the narrative of Luke-Acts relating to the Holy Spirit is consistent with, and builds upon, the language of the OT scriptures. This indicates that consistency and familiarity plays an important role in normalizing, defending and bringing the resisting reader to acceptance of cultural and ethnic diversity in the Lukan communities. The Jewish Christian, familiar with the OT, understands that the Spirit of the Lord has been God’s active presence in

---

\(^{13}\) By “church” (ἐκκλησία or its plural form, ἐκκλησίαι) this thesis refers to the assembly, the community or the congregation of the followers of Jesus (cf. Acts 2:41; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 14:21-23, 26-27; 15:3-4, 22, 41 and so on).

the midst of God’s people in the OT. Therefore, it will be argued that Luke’s use of the Holy Spirit plays a critical role in convincing the resisting Jewish Christian reader in particular.

Furthermore, it is the aim of this thesis to show that apart from seeking to convince resisting Jewish believers in Jesus about the legitimacy of the mission to non-Jews, Luke also seeks to affirm and support the faith of non-Jewish believers by appealing to ‘spirit’ categories and understandings from the wider Greco-Roman religious environment. Thus this thesis will also argue that Lukan pneumatic language and expression – in addition to its links with Hebrew traditions – is consistent with, and builds upon in several places, Greco-Roman pneumatic experiences.

Given that the narrative is replete with many techniques of legitimation, this thesis will explore the particular role that the Holy Spirit plays in the unfolding of the narrative. In doing this, I will therefore argue that the Holy Spirit also functions to show the continuity between the mission of Jesus and that of the early Christian communities – particularly for the Jewish Christians, but also for the Gentile church.

1.2 Outline of the thesis

The thesis has seven chapters, with each chapter focusing on a particular aspect of the study. The first chapter includes some introductory matters and a critical review of the work of some scholars particularly in the area of the Holy Spirit and mission in Luke-Acts. This section seeks to demonstrate how scholars in the past have not adequately explored the role of the Holy Spirit as legitimator of the Gentile mission in the Lukan corpus, and how they have not explicitly shown that Luke also employs the Holy Spirit in order to overcome resistance in diverse communities.

---

Chapter two stresses that Luke addresses a network of Christian communities, composed of Jews and Gentiles, within a context of significant Jewish Christian opposition to Gentile inclusion in the communities. To support this claim, some texts about the life of the early church in the narrative of Acts are examined. This shows that indeed, as the message of the church expanded beyond Hebrew/Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians and into ethnic territories, tensions sprang up on several occasions – a situation that Luke is determined to address.

Chapter three focuses on Luke’s use of the Spirit to engage the nations. The argument is that since Luke addresses both Jews and other ethnic believers in Jesus, the Spirit category in the narrative must also be understood from the perspective of Gentile Christians as well. I contend that as the spirit-motif is part of the world view of many Greco-Roman religions, the ethnic followers of Jesus would identify with aspects of the Holy Spirit described in the narrative of Luke-Acts, and also see the presence of such signs as divine legitimation. Chapter four addresses the Spirit motif in the OT. The chapter shows that Luke has a deep knowledge of the OT (particularly in its Septuagintal form), and argues that Luke utilises his knowledge of the Spirit motif in the OT in addressing the resisting Jewish members of the communities. The chapter specifically identifies aspects of the roles played by the Spirit of God in the OT; roles that Luke employs in the narrative of Luke-Acts. This shows that recurrences of OT Spirit language and imagery in the narrative of Luke-Acts serve a clear purpose – that of legitimation.

In chapters five and six, the focus shifts to the narrative of Luke-Acts. Examining several key texts in Luke’s work, chapters five and six demonstrate how Luke employs the Holy Spirit, in keeping with the OT narrative, to overcome the opposition of some Jewish Christians to the Gentile mission, and to affirm the reality of divine presence for believers from ethnic backgrounds. Chapter seven draws together the findings of the study, arguing that Luke, by appealing to the Holy Spirit in the narrative, seeks to legitimate the Gentile mission for members of the communities opposed to this mission, and to confirm the mission for Gentiles facing this opposition.
1.3 Review of literature

The role played by the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts has been well recognised among Lukan scholars. A range of opinions emerges as one reads from one scholar to the other. Rather than give a chronological account of these various scholarly understandings, in this review I shall examine the contributions of various scholars using the following categories: the Spirit’s role in the conversion experience of believers; the Spirit in Luke-Acts and the ‘Spirit of prophecy’; the Spirit as equipping the church for the missionary task; the Spirit in Luke-Acts and the Spirit of the Lord in the OT; the reconciliatory role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts; and lastly, the view closest to my own, the Holy Spirit and legitimation of mission in Luke-Acts. While it is not feasible here to attend to all the scholars in this area of Lukan study, this literature review will pick out leading figures in each category. Some scholars will be discussed in more than one section.

1.3.1 The Spirit and Conversion (J. D. G. Dunn)

The main proponent of this school of thought, James D. G. Dunn,\textsuperscript{16} championed the soteriological function of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. He argues that “the baptism in or gift of the Spirit was part of the event (or process) of becoming a Christian, together with the effective proclamation of the Gospel.”\textsuperscript{17} He establishes a connection between Jesus’ baptism at Jordan (Luke 3:21-22) and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Applying his soteriological theory, he argues that Jesus’ experience of the Spirit at his baptism was more than just an empowerment to accomplish his messianic task. Rather, it was more of a decisive moment in his experience of divine sonship,\textsuperscript{18} which thus initiates him into a new era in salvation history – the messianic age, the new covenant.\textsuperscript{19} Dunn parallels this with Pentecost, which he presents as the beginning of the new covenant for the disciples. He puts it thus: “What Jordan was to Jesus, Pentecost was to the disciples.”\textsuperscript{20} Thus Dunn is of the strong

\textsuperscript{17} Dunn, \textit{Baptism}, 4.
\textsuperscript{18} Dunn, \textit{Baptism}, 29.
\textsuperscript{19} Dunn, \textit{Baptism}, 24.
\textsuperscript{20} Dunn, \textit{Baptism}, 40.
opinion that as Jesus entered the new age and covenant by being baptised in the Spirit at Jordan, so the disciples followed him in like manner at Pentecost.21

Dunn applies the same interpretative lens (as with Acts 2) to four other Spirit texts in Acts. He insists for instance that the Samaritans in Acts 8:4-25 became Christians only after their reception of the Spirit by the laying of hands from Peter and John.22 He also argues that in the story of Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:1-19), the experience of being filled with the Spirit was as much an integral part of Paul’s conversion as Paul’s meeting with the risen Jesus. In essence, Paul became a Christian after calling on the name of the Lord and being filled with the Spirit.23 Reflecting on the Cornelius’ story in Acts 10–11, Dunn maintains that the experience of the reception of the Spirit by Cornelius and his household was for Luke what Pentecost was for the disciples gathered in the upper room (Acts 2:1-4) – the point of entry into the new age and covenant.24 Dunn also likens the experience of the Ephesians in Acts 19:1-7 to that of the Samaritans in Acts 8, and insists that the Ephesians were not Christians before their encounter with Paul, just as the Samaritans were not before their encounter with Peter and John. He concludes that the laying of hands by Paul and the reception of the Spirit by the Ephesians is the climax of the initiation ceremony. In this way, according to Dunn, the experience of Jesus at the Jordan (Luke 3:22) becomes the model and archetype for his followers in their conversion-initiation experience as shown in the Acts narrative.25

Though Dunn’s conversion-initiation rhetoric about the Spirit’s role in Luke-Acts does not account for many of the other Spirit texts in the narrative (cf. for instance Acts 1:2, 8; 4:8, 25, 31; 6:3; 7:55; 28:25), Dunn’s work is appreciated for its contribution to the soteriological function of the Spirit, though it may be seen as something of an overemphasis. Accordingly, while he rightly suggests that Jesus’ experience of the Spirit at his baptism was more than just

22 Dunn, *Baptism*, 55-68.
23 Dunn, *Baptism*, 73-78.
an empowerment to accomplish his messianic task, his assertion that Jesus’ reception of the Spirit in Luke 3:22 is the moment of Jesus’ experience of divine sonship undervalues the declaration of the divine sonship of Jesus by Gabriel at the annunciation (Luke 1:35). Furthermore, Dunn puts so much emphasis on the soteriological role of the Spirit and the new covenant and initiation, that he has little or nothing to say about the missiological dimension of the Spirit’s role in Luke-Acts. In a more recent work however, Dunn affirms, especially regarding Acts, that the coming of the Spirit into a life serves both a soteriological and an empowering function. Even given this, Dunn does not develop the Spirit motif and its contribution to Luke’s legitimation of mission other than to align the Spirit under the category of empowerment for mission.

1.3.2 The Spirit and Prophecy (H. Conzelmann, R. Menzies, M. Turner)


27 Dunn, "The Lord, the Giver of Life," 15.
30 Conzelmann, Theology, 16.
31 Von Baer presented the Spirit as essentially the ‘Spirit of prophecy’ in each of the epochs, though in different ways: as oracular speech in Luke 1-2; as the unique messianic endowment to proclaim eschatological liberation and God’s reign in the ministry of Jesus (Luke 3:22); and as the power of inspired witness to Jesus in the period of the church (Acts 2:1-4; 4:8; 7:55; and so on). See Max Turner, "The ‘Spirit of Prophecy’ as the Power of Israel’s
Conzelmann argues that the church has a prophetic mission and so associates the Spirit received at Pentecost with the ‘Spirit of prophecy’ which prepares the church for this prophetic mission. Equally, commenting on the references to Jesus’ anointing in Luke 4:18 and Acts 10:38, Conzelmann affirms that the Spirit is the essential presupposition for the special messianic ministry of Jesus. Conzelmann strongly asserts that the story of Pentecost, which links the Spirit and the mission of prophecy and which is also evident from Paul’s conclusion in Acts 13:46, points to the connection of the church with OT promises. In this way, Conzelmann understands the Spirit in Luke-Acts as the Spirit of prophecy (and of mission, as we shall see below), though he does not explain the connection between this and the mission to Jews and Gentiles in terms of Luke’s narrative strategy.

Robert Menzies attempts to reconstruct the development of the concept of the Spirit from Judaism to early Christianity with special reference to Luke-Acts. He examines references to the Spirit in Jewish Deuterocanonical literature and suggests that the Jewish concept of the Spirit is foreign to a soteriological function except in the wisdom tradition. In Menzies’ argument, the Spirit is exclusively associated with inspired speech including revelation and wisdom. Menzies thus characterises the typical Jewish understanding of the Spirit as the ‘Spirit of prophecy’, by pointing out that Luke retained the traditional Jewish understanding of the Spirit as the source of special insight and inspired speech. Thus Jesus and the disciples receive the Spirit not as the Spirit of sonship or covenant (against Dunn’s position), but as a prophetic gift which enables them to accomplish their appointed missions. In other words, the Spirit in Luke-Acts can be understood as the typical Jewish ‘Spirit of prophecy’.


32 Conzelmann, Theology, 180.
33 Conzelmann, Theology, 213.
34 Menzies, Empowered, 17.
35 Menzies, Empowered, 49-102, especially 44-45 and 102.
37 Menzies, Development, 97.
38 Menzies, Development, 279. Also Menzies, Empowered, 227.
39 Menzies attests to this when he writes that “Luke consistently portrays the Spirit as the source of prophetic inspiration which empowers God’s people for effective service.” Cf. Menzies, Empowered, 44.
Turner also argues that the Spirit in Acts is the ‘Spirit of prophecy’ promised by Joel (Joel 2:28). Turner, citing Peter’s promise of the Spirit in Acts 2:38-39, asserts that “Peter’s audience will hardly expect Peter to be speaking of any other gift of the Spirit when he has so carefully explained Pentecost in terms of the fulfillment of Joel (cf. Acts 2:15-21, 33).” In Turner’s opinion therefore, “when Peter states that all those who are baptised receive the ‘gift of the Holy Spirit’, what he says continues to refer back to the wording of Joel 2:28-32.” Turner further shows that in the rest of Acts, the Spirit is consistently portrayed as the source of the very gifts that the Jewish traditions regarded as proto-typical to the ‘Spirit of prophecy’.

These scholars, from Baer to Conzelmann right up to Turner, are appreciated for their argument that Luke has retained the traditional Jewish understanding of the Spirit in the narrative of Luke-Acts. However, they have failed to draw attention to the possibility that Luke may have retained this “Jewish understanding” for a specific purpose. Therefore, while I agree with their view that Luke portrays the Holy Spirit in a way that is consistent with traditional Jewish understanding of the Spirit of prophecy, it is my aim to take this claim further by showing that Luke has a purpose for retaining this understanding in his narrative. Moreso, I intend to show in this thesis that Luke’s portrayal of the Spirit as prophetic endowment which enables its recipient/s to participate effectively in the mission of God is part of Luke’s strategy in the bid to legitimate the Gentile mission.

---


Conzelmann’s contribution to Lukan pneumatology extends further in suggesting that the Spirit in Luke-Acts empowers believers to fulfill the prophetic mission of the church. As he argues, “if we wish to know how the church is equipped for the missionary task, then we must of course turn to the Spirit: he gives direct instruction, e. g. Acts 8:29; 10; 11:12.” While I agree with Conzelmann’s claim that in Luke-Acts the Spirit equips and directs the church for mission, Conzelmann does not address the question as to why Luke presents the Holy Spirit as equipping the church for mission in this way. Conzelmann is silent on this. This thesis not only postulates that Luke has a reason for emphasising the Holy Spirit’s role in equipping the church for mission, but also explores why that is important, and how it functions for the author of Luke-Acts on a number of complementary levels.

John M. Penney states that “fundamentally, the Spirit in Luke-Acts is the Spirit of prophetic empowerment,” though he acknowledges that “the interpretation of Luke’s pneumatology remains a vexed question with a wide proliferation of views.” Penney first acknowledges that Luke is not ignorant of the soteriological or ontological function of the Holy Spirit, but goes on to show “that Luke’s primary and pervasive interest is the work of the Holy Spirit in initiating, empowering and directing the church in its eschatological world-wide mission.” He strongly and rightly accentuates that Lukan pneumatology has a fundamentally missiological emphasis. In developing his work therefore, Penney shows that the Holy Spirit, for the Lukan author, is for missionary enablement and so concludes that the Holy Spirit inaugurates, directs and empowers mission.

---

43 Conzelmann, Theology, 213. Menzies also associates the Spirit with inspired/prophetic speech. In his submission, the Spirit empowers individuals for special insight and inspired speech. In other words, the Spirit empowers and enables individuals to accomplish their appointed missions. See Menzies, Development, 279.
45 Penney, Missionary Emphasis, 14.
46 Penney, Missionary Emphasis, 15.
47 Penney, Missionary Emphasis, 15
48 Penney, Missionary Emphasis, 112.
Penney’s work is to be commended for its contribution to Luke’s pneumatology and its connection of the Spirit primarily to the enablement of mission in the narrative. Nevertheless, as the title suggests, one would have expected to see a more detailed enquiry into the narrative role of the Spirit as far as mission to ἔθνη is concerned. This is a mission which is at the heart of the narrative of Luke-Acts and which as Luke portrays received divine approval (Acts 11:17-18). And so while Penney rightly argues that “The Holy Spirit is the power by which salvation is both announced and effected...in the ministry of Jesus and this is the same power by which universal mission in Acts is announced and effected,” his interpretative lens of Lukan pneumatology fails to account for such texts as Acts 1:16; 4:25; 10:47; 19:2, 6; 20:23 and 28:25, because these texts in Acts do not highlight mission per se. The motives of the Spirit inaugurating, directing and empowering mission do not fit so well here. I will argue that the legitimating role of the Holy Spirit in the universal (Gentile inclusive) mission provides an even more satisfactory explanation for the full range of the Spirit accounts in Luke-Acts. So Penney belongs in the category of authors who rightly assign to the Spirit the role of mission empowerment and enablement, but who fail to find a descriptor of the Spirit’s role that gives a coherent and comprehensive explanation of the full range of manifestations of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. Thus the basic question as to why Luke presented the Holy Spirit as empowering, initiating, or directing mission in Luke-Acts is not addressed in Penney’s work.

Max Turner has produced one of the most influential and comprehensive monographs on Lukan pneumatology. In this book, Turner rightly observes that Acts is dominated by the account of the expansion of the church, and that the majority of the references to the Spirit occur in the context of mission. Thus the Spirit in some way or other serves, directs or empowers mission. Turner is very clear in his argument that the Spirit functions as empowerment for mission. He states: “That the Spirit initiates, empowers and directs ‘witness’... and so is directly missiologically orientated, is then clear from a whole series of further texts, notably 4:8, 31;

---

49 Penney, Missionary Emphasis, 23.
50 Turner, Power from on High, 402-403.

This suggestion is also obvious from Turner’s argument that the Spirit confirms and affirms the people of God, their mission and witness (Acts 5:32; 15:8). He also argues for the relevance of the Spirit in those texts where signs and wonders attest to the apostolic witness (e.g. Acts 4:30-33; 5:12-16; 13:9-12; 19:11-20). In this way, Turner supports other scholars who emphasise the Spirit’s role in Luke-Acts as empowerment for mission. This is all true as far as it goes, but I will argue that it does not go far enough in accounting for all the Spirit references in Luke-Acts.

Gregory J. Leeper undertakes a study of the Holy Spirit especially in Acts against the backdrop of Numbers 11. Leeper observes that a careful reading of the text of Numbers 11 informs the reader of the purpose of the giving of the Spirit to the elders so that: “They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone” (Num 11:17). From this, Leeper concludes that “Yahweh gives his Spirit to the elders in order to empower them for their newly ordained vocation. By the power of the Spirit they will carry out their mission of assisting Moses in the leadership of Israel.” Leeper likened this to the use of the Spirit in Acts. In his argument, the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts, just like the Spirit in Numbers 11, is for prophetic empowering for mission. He believes, alongside Menzies and Stronstad that Luke continues in the line of the Hebrew concept of the Spirit as charismatically enabling individuals for mission. While appreciating Leeper’s nuanced intertextual connection of themes, I argue that Leeper should have gone further and identified a reason why the Spirit in Luke-Acts resembles the Hebrew OT usage so closely. While Leeper’s study affirms the Spirit as the

---

51 Turner, *Power from on High*, 402. See also Turner, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," 149. Here, Turner notes that “the gift of the Spirit is evidently exclusively an ‘empowering for mission’…it is in essence an empowerment for witness.”
53 See for instance, Stronstad, who shows that the Holy Spirit has an active role in the mission/witness of the disciples, which he says is the primary purpose of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. As far as Stronstad is concerned, the Holy Spirit is the empowerment for the mission of the church. Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 58, 84-87, 94-95.
55 Leeper, “Pentecostal Gift,” 27.
56 Leeper, “Pentecostal Gift,” 33-34.
57 Cf. Menzies, *Empowered*, 227
59 Cf. Leeper, "Pentecostal Gift," 30
enabling power for mission, this thesis intends to show that the identification of the Spirit in Acts with the Spirit in Numbers 11, and elsewhere in the OT, affords Luke the solid background on which to build his mission arguments in the narrative. It thus serves Luke’s legitimating purpose, particularly for Jewish readers not comfortable with the mission to the nations.

Hur, in terms of the primary narrative role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts, concludes with the generalization that “the major function of the Holy Spirit in terms of the causal aspect of the plot is empowering and guiding main characters to bear witness to God’s kingdom and the risen Jesus by inspiring them to speak and perform mighty deeds in accordance with the plan of God.”60 The question however may still be asked: Why does the Spirit empower and guide other main characters in the narrative and what significance does it hold for the Lukan network of communities? Hur’s work does not adequately address these questions.

Eddie Gibbs,61 like Turner, contends that the gift of the Spirit in Luke-Acts is not primarily concerned with salvation, and not even a “second work of grace”, but that it is concerned with the essential empowerment of the church for its witness throughout the world. He argues that the disciples were not waiting upon the Lord primarily for their personal renewal, but in order to receive corporate empowerment for their mission.62 Gibbs thus joins this large group of scholars who hold that the gift of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts has a distinctively missiological character as the disciples are empowered to witness for Christ whose Spirit they have received,63 but like those before him, he leaves out the essential question: Why does Luke show the disciples to be empowered by the Spirit?

For Arie W. Zwiep, the work of the Holy Spirit in the Lukan writings is also basically for mission, effective proclamation and empowerment of service. He makes a point when he introduces the adverb “predominantly” in place of “exclusively” used by some scholars in denoting the narrative role of the Holy Spirit. For instance, Turner, as noted above has said the “gift of the

60 Hur, Dynamic Reading, 278.
Spirit is evidently exclusively an empowerment for mission.” Zwiep cites two passages from the Acts of the Apostles to substantiate his point: first, Acts 11:17 where Peter refers to the Spirit in the context of Salvation (“the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ”); and second, Acts 19:6 where he argues that the missionary focus could only be implied, since it does not point to a specific purpose for the gift of the Spirit. Thus for Zwiep the work of the Holy Spirit is predominantly, and not exclusively, focused on power for mission.

This more careful nuancing suggests that empowerment for mission is not the only role of the Spirit in the narrative of Luke-Acts. However, I aim to show that the reference to the Holy Spirit in Acts 11:17, though not an empowerment for mission as Zwiep argues, is a text that validates mission, and that thus the understanding of legitimation of mission provides a more comprehensive explanation for the role of the Spirit.

1.3.4 The Spirit and the OT (W. H. Shepherd, J. Hur, R. Stronstad)

William H. Shepherd presents the Holy Spirit as a literary character in Luke-Acts. He applies literary-critical theories to arrive at an appreciative narrative function of the Holy Spirit which he presents as an alternative way of looking at the Holy Spirit. Compared to the historically and theologically driven concerns, this is a major contribution to scholarship: Shepherd introduces a whole new perspective. He characterises the Holy Spirit as the ‘onstage representative’ of God. Shepherd also recognises the continuity between Luke and the Septuagint especially with reference to the Spirit. On this he claims: “This is a major contribution of scholarship to date, and I will base much of my subsequent argument on this foundation.” As such, it might be expected that Shepherd would have given special attention to the Spirit in the OT, and demonstrated how the Lukan account of the Spirit draws largely from the OT. This would have answered the question as to why the Spirit, and not God whom

---

68 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 1.
69 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 101.
70 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 14-15, 89, 93.
71 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 23.


Hur’s work, though very insightful and commendable, still fails to answer the following questions: Why does Luke establish a connection with the way the Spirit is presented in the OT? What relevance does this connection hold for the Lukan communities? How do Luke’s hearing-readers respond to this connection? What is its function in the narrative? Thus, while agreeing broadly with Hur that the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts resonates largely with the OT background, I aim to show that Luke has utilised his knowledge of the Spirit in the OT to convince the resisting members of the Jewish Christian communities about the legitimacy of the Gentile mission. Similarly, no doubt the Spirit empowers and guides main characters to witness and to work

---

72 Hur, Dynamic Reading, 279.
73 Hur, Dynamic Reading, 37.
deeds of power as Hur concludes, but I will argue that these stories are best understood in terms of the overarching theme of authenticating and legitimating the movement of the mission of God beyond ethnic and cultural boundaries.

Roger Stronstad exposes the charismatic element of the Spirit in the Lukan corpus. He argues that “It is against the background of charismatic leadership in Israel, of the prophetic hope for the coming of the Lord’s anointed and for a community that will receive both the charismatic gift of the Spirit and the indwelling of the Spirit that the gift of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts is to be interpreted.” He rightly observes that the Holy Spirit has an active role in the mission/witness of the disciples which he says is the primary purpose of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. He further strongly emphasises Luke’s reliance on the Hebrew tradition, as opposed to conceptions of spirit in Greek thought (a point I shall differ with below), and holds that Luke transformed this Hebrew tradition in ways that testify to the charismatic experience of the new charismatic community. In this thesis, I agree with the position that Luke connects deliberately with OT pneumatology, however, while Stronstad holds that Luke uses the Hebrew tradition to testify to the charismatic experience of the new community, I wish to add that Luke uses the tradition also to convince the resisting Jewish members of his communities (who are familiar with this tradition) of the legitimacy of the mission to the nations as presented by Luke.

1.3.5 The Spirit, Jews and Gentiles (C. A. Evans, A. Kuecker)

Craig A. Evans acknowledges the prominence of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts. He makes two important assertions with regard to the Spirit in the gospel of Luke and in Acts. First, he states that the Holy Spirit is the figure behind the success of Jesus over Satan at the temptation. Secondly, Evans notes that the Holy Spirit in Acts plays an important role in verifying the authenticity of Gentile conversion. Just as for the Jews (Acts 2:1-11), and the Samaritans (Acts 8: 14-17), so also the reception of the Holy Spirit by the Gentiles (Acts 10:44) fulfills Jesus’

---

74 Stronstad, Charismatic Theology, 89-90.
75 Stronstad, Charismatic Theology, 58, 94-95.
76 Stronstad, Charismatic Theology, xi. 89-98.
78 Evans, “Jesus and the Spirit,” 42
promise in Luke 24: 49. Evans holds that the principal purpose of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts is “to show that the Gospel is truly of divine origin, meets divine approval and is advanced by divine agency.” So Evans’ work, though not fully developed along the path of legitimation of the Gentile mission to both Jews and Gentiles, does support the idea that Luke writes with a possible reason “to counter in his area Jewish or Jewish-Christian propaganda aimed at showing that Gentile Christianity was inauthentic.” Evans shows that Luke counters this propaganda through employing narratives of the presence of the Spirit, though he does not explore how this is achieved in the narrative, nor see how Luke achieves a parallel legitimation for Gentile believers. Thus, while agreeing with Evans on Luke’s intention to counter the Jewish propaganda concerning Gentile Christianity through the Spirit, I will go further by demonstrating that Luke achieves this by his use of OT language to deliberately resonate with the language used in a number of OT texts that refer to the authority of the Spirit. Because the Jewish Christian familiar with the OT will be familiar with the authority of the Spirit of the Lord among God’s people, Luke’s use of parallel language and motifs suggests that God is actively involved in the direction of the Gentile mission. It is the intention of this thesis to show that the Spirit, as in the OT, is used by Luke as the legitimating authority to persuade the Jewish audience resisting the Gentile mission.


---

79 Evans, “Jesus and the Spirit,” 42. Christopher Evans also supports this position when he writes that “through the Spirit and faith God had removed the impurity of Gentiles in order to add them to believing Israel as his people, with the requirement only of obedience to laws binding on sojourners in Israel (Acts 10:1-11:18; 15:6-21).” Christopher Francis Evans, Saint Luke (London: SCM, 1990), 89.
81 Evans, Saint Luke, 89.
particular, he cites Luke’s use of ἀδελφοί after Acts 15:23 to reflect a profound shift in the community’s identity as it relates to ethnicity. Before Acts 15:23, ἀδελφοί refers to the Jewish believers in Jesus. In Acts 15:23, the believers of Gentile origin are also referred to as ἀδελφοί. After Acts 15, ἀδελφοί expresses ongoing solidarity with fellow Jews and describes the Jesus group, irrespective of the ethnic identities of its members (cf. Acts 21:7, 17; 22:1, 5, 13, 22-23.) As Kuecker contends, the result of this transformed identity is interethnic reconciliation, expressed through new economic practices, new approaches to hospitality and a reoriented use of ethnic language. In Kuecker’s argument, therefore, Luke’s vision is of a community of believers, a social group composed of Spirit-empowered individuals, whose common identity transcends ethnicity and allows for the supreme goal of witness: multi-layered reconciliation that results in peace. And as Kuecker argues, the Spirit is the principal figure in the formation of this social identity.

Kuecker’s thesis brings a new focus into the discussion of Lukan pneumatology. Convincing and educative as this thesis may be, however, Kuecker could have identified why the Spirit holds such a reconciliatory effect in the formation of the new social identity – how does it persuade both Jewish and Gentile Christ-followers? Also, he does not draw attention to the fact that references to the Spirit at specific mission points (Luke 4:18; Acts 1:8; 10:44; 11:12, 15) help first of all the implied resisting Jews to see reason for such particular mission activity. Most of the time, these references explain why non-Jews are legitimately understood as part and parcel of the new social identity – the Christian community. Therefore, the references to the Spirit making an impact on the thinking of resisting Jewish believers must have a background, which Kuecker fails to explore in his study. Further, this reconciliation process, in my view, begins with persuading the resisting Jewish members of the communities that the direction of mission as presented by Luke is purposed and planned by God (cf. Acts 11:17-18; 15:22-29). While this thesis, therefore, agrees with Kuecker that the Spirit in Luke-Acts functions to effect reconciliation and shape a new community, it is my aim to show that Luke is able to appeal to

the Spirit in this reconciliation bid because the Spirit is an authoritative figure for the Jewish community.

1.3.6 The Spirit and Legitimation (W. H. Shepherd, M. Turner, G. Bonnah)

As we have seen, Shepherd argues strongly that the crucial function of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts is to provide ‘narrative reliability’ for the reader.\(^8^6\) Though Shepherd does not address mission in the narrative as such, I agree with him that to provide narrative reliability for the reader is to seek to convince the reader that what is provided in the narrative is trustworthy and tried-and-true, and hence, legitimate – though he does not use that word.

Turner comes closest to the mark when he states that “The Spirit is the uniting motif and driving force within the Lucan salvation history, and provides the legitimation of the mission to which this leads.\(^8^7\) Elsewhere, citing a few texts (Acts 5:32; 8:17-18; 10:44-45, 47; 11:15-18 and 15:28), Turner also affirms the Spirit as the “legitimator of the whole endeavor” especially at its most delicate points.\(^8^8\) Thus, understanding Turner’s “whole endeavor” to mean mission to which he referred earlier,\(^8^9\) Turner’s observation that the Spirit is the legitimator of the whole endeavor adds a unique note to the whole discussion of the narrative role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts that I affirm wholeheartedly. Distinctive as this note may sound, nevertheless, Turner has failed to give a detailed explanation of how the Spirit is the legitimator of mission or why Luke wants or needs to legitimate mission. Who is it that Luke wants to convince? And why does Luke refer to the legitimating authority of the Spirit? Despite Turner’s insight, he fails to explore the matter further and address these questions, and this has provided a key motivation for this thesis.

George Bonnah also argues that the Holy Spirit has a legitimating role in the narrative of Luke-Acts.\(^9^0\) However, even though he states that Luke wants to legitimate the missionary activity of the church through the Holy Spirit, Bonnah does not venture any further into how Luke does

---

\(^8^6\) Shepherd, *Narrative Function*, 247, 255.
\(^9^0\) Bonnah, *Narrative Factor*, 266, 402.
this or why. Rather, he presents the Spirit’s work as legitimator more as the power and facilitator of the mission of the church. In other words, he sees the Spirit more as the director of mission, and does not explore why Luke’s narrative might give this impression.

1.3.7 Questions that still need to be explored

It is apparent that scholars from the time of von Baer right through to this contemporary period have recognised various roles of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts, but they have failed to identify or explore sufficiently the legitimating role of the Holy Spirit in the mission of Jesus and that of the early church in Luke-Acts. It is asserted that the Holy Spirit is the initiator of believers into the new age (Dunn). From a historical perspective, the Spirit is also presented as the typical Jewish Spirit of Prophecy (Conzelmann, Menzies). Furthermore, there is an appreciable depth of study that recognises a connection between the Spirit in Luke-Acts and the Spirit of the OT (Shepherd, Hur, Stronstad). Some recent studies have also established the role of the Spirit in the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (Evans, Kuecker). The majority of scholars (Conzelmann, Penney, Turner, Leeper, Hur, Gibbs, Zwiep) have identified the multiple roles played by the Spirit in initiating, empowering, equipping and guiding the church’s mission. While these scholars are appreciated for their pioneering works in Lukan pneumatology, they did not go so far as to see the role of the Spirit as legitimator of the mission to the wider Gentile world.

While Turner and Bonnah rightly suggest that the Holy Spirit plays a legitimating role in Luke-Acts, their observations have not been sufficiently fleshed out. Turner, for instance, citing texts such as Luke 1:15, 17, 32-35, 42-43, 67-79; 2:25-32; 24:49; Acts 5:3, 6; 6:5; 8:39; 10:38; 11:24; 13:52 and 20:28 asserts that the Holy Spirit is the legitimator of the whole endeavour. Turner’s brief article does, however, not give detailed discussions of any one of these texts. In like manner, Bonnah goes no further in explaining the suggestion that the Holy Spirit has a legitimating role in the narrative of Luke-Acts. This observation, therefore, needs to be more vigorously examined throughout Luke-Acts as it is my contention that this role of the Holy Spirit promises to explain more fully the distinctive Spirit texts in Luke-Acts, but has not been

---

adequately explored. I will argue that the role played by the Holy Spirit is a more important element in Luke’s arsenal of legitimating techniques than has hitherto been recognised.

So while agreeing with Turner and Bonnah that the Holy Spirit has a legitimating role in Luke-Acts, it is my intention to develop this thought further by focusing on three principal questions: Who does Luke really want to convince? Why does Luke appeal to the authority of the Holy Spirit? And how does the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts engage with both Jewish and Gentile members of the communities? As the mission expands to non-Jewish territories, Luke-Acts reveals that there is resistance from some Jewish members of the followers of Jesus. It is Luke’s intention to overcome this friction within the communities over the mission to the nations. In order to achieve this, Luke employs the authority of the Holy Spirit. And as will be shown, the Holy Spirit is used not only to legitimate the Gentile mission for Jewish Christians, but also to provide encouragement and confirmation to Gentile Christians in ways that they can appropriate (which is the subject matter of chapter three).

1.4 Statement of research methodology

The core focus of this thesis is the function of the Holy Spirit in the narrative of Luke-Acts interpreted within the framework of legitimation and mission; that is, how ‘Luke’ (the implied author) employed the Holy Spirit in the legitimation of mission in the narrative, and how what we can discern of the implied audience suggests reasons for this focus. So the basic method used is narrative criticism – the exploration of a recurring theme within two texts that claim a close relationship.

This treatment of the Holy Spirit does not appear in a vacuum, but within a carefully crafted narrative (Luke 1:1-4). Therefore in this study the narrative critical approach, which is concerned with the final form of the text, has been adopted. This will involve an examination of events as narrated, characters as presented, and the sequences of events in which the Holy Spirit is involved in Luke-Acts, drawing upon the legitimating role of the Spirit within the context and in the light of the whole of Luke-Acts, and how they relate to one another. This method “examines various narrative elements or devices and considers their role and effect in constructing a narrative whole (the story) and their effects upon how the story is told (the
The method thus is narrative analysis with a thematic focus. We can therefore say it is thematic-narrative analysis, though the more traditional historical critical methods will still play a role where appropriate. Because of this the thesis will involve an exegetical discussion of relevant texts related to the Spirit with the aim of arriving at a picture of the Holy Spirit as legitimating the mission of Jesus and that of the early Christian community.

In this study of Lukan pneumatology, this work departs from the traditional discussion of the effects of the reception of the Holy Spirit, which has been a subject matter of Lukan scholarship for a long time. The thesis focuses not only on the effects of the Spirit on human characters in the narrative, but on why Luke has employed the Spirit in this way, what Luke wants the intended readers to know, and how then they should respond. In this way, the task at hand is to research the role played by the Spirit within Luke-Acts.

In order to pursue this task, the literary accounts of the expansion of the mission of the church as it moves from Jerusalem to the nations shall be explored. This is to identify the challenges encountered within the wider Lukan context and thus to explore how Luke employed the influence of the Holy Spirit in resolving the missiological issues that arose as the church expanded. Chapter three therefore involves an exploration of themes and experiences within various Greco-Roman religions, and any connections we might find with Lukan vocabulary and descriptions of pneumatological phenomena.

Since Luke-Acts will be studied as a narrative unity, the legitimating role of the Spirit will be teased out across the two volumes of Luke-Acts. Prior to this, some delving into the OT will be necessary – tradition analysis – to examine texts that have to do with the Spirit of the Lord, and how they serve as “literary repertoire” for the theme of the Holy Spirit in the various texts of Luke-Acts. This is with a view to finding some answers to the question as to who it is that Luke really wants to convince with this approach.

---

92 Bonnah, *Narrative Factor*, 58.
93 The wider context addressed by the gospel and Acts is made explicit from the beginning of both narratives and at key stages throughout (Luke 1:5; 2:1-2; 3:1-2; Acts 1:8). No other gospel or NT text names the Caesars, Kings and Governors of the known world in the way that Luke-Acts does repeatedly.
94 Hur, *Dynamic Reading*, 33.
1.5 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed the work of various Lukan scholars with a focus on the area of Lukan pneumatology. From the review of literature it becomes obvious that there is still more work that needs to be done. Earlier scholars focused on the necessity of the Spirit for salvation/conversion, and on the Spirit as empowering, initiating, guiding and directing mission. Some recent studies have identified the role of the Spirit in the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles. A few others have also briefly mentioned the Holy Spirit as legitimating the whole endeavour in the narrative of Luke-Acts. It is my contention that the particular role of the Holy Spirit in legitimating the Gentile mission for the implied resisting readers and confirming the mission for Gentiles facing resistance needs to be more vigorously fleshed out. This is an area of Luke’s pneumatology that has not been sufficiently explored, and which past scholars have unfortunately overlooked. This thesis seeks to fill that space and so explores the suggestion that Luke also employs the Holy Spirit in the narrative of Luke-Acts to legitimate the Gentile mission for Jewish Christians opposed to this mission and also to confirm the mission for Jewish Christians open to the world-wide mission while at the same time encouraging Gentile Christians in their faith.

It is necessary to demonstrate at this point, therefore, that the Lukan community was in fact made up of Jewish and Gentile Christians within the context of some Jewish Christians’ opposition to Gentile mission. This is the focus of chapter two.
Chapter two

The challenge of ethnic diversity in the Lukan communities

Any attempt to explore the role played by the Holy Spirit in legitimating the mission to the nations in the narrative of Luke-Acts must address the question of the composition and context of Luke’s implied audience. The preface to the gospel clearly shows that Luke wants the intended readers to be convinced about the reliability (ἀσφαλεία) of that which is obtainable in the communities (Luke 1:4). The evidence from the text suggests that Luke is very much aware of other available literature (Luke 1:1), yet he sets out to carry out a thorough investigation into the past (Luke 1:3a), and produce an orderly account (Luke 1:3b) in order to ascertain the truth of what the implied reader is about to read (Luke 1:4). This draws attention to the fact that Luke wants to convince the intended readers about certain realities in the communities. It is, therefore, pertinent to ask: Who is Luke’s implied audience? What is the cultural composition of this audience? And under what circumstances did Luke address this audience? In this chapter, I argue that first, the Lukan implied audience is not a single mono-ethnic community, but multi-ethnic Christian groups of Jews and Gentiles; and second, that as the narrative evidence shows, some Jewish Christians were resistant to the admission of ἔθνη into the

95 Mikeal C. Parsons, Luke (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 16, speaks in terms of the authorial audience, that is, the audience that the author of Luke-Acts had in mind when he wrote his two-volume work.


Christian communities, thus revealing a situation of internal crises within some of the groups. The narrative itself suggests that as the message of the church extended to communities other than the Hebrew/Aramaic-speaking Jewish sector, resistance emerged from some Jewish members of the communities even when those communities were Greek-speaking Jews (cf. Acts 6:1), and even moreso when they were of non-Jewish ethnicity (Acts 11:1ff). The principal argument of this chapter therefore is that Luke writes within this context of Jewish resistance to non-Jewish mission in order to overcome that resistance and to convince the resisting party that mission to the nations is legitimate.

Legitimation as used in this thesis refers to an attempt at convincing someone or a group of people about something that is claimed to be true by the one who wants to convince them. This resonates with Esler’s argument that “Legitimation is the collection of ways in which an institution is explained and justified to its members.”99 In the OT, the Spirit of the Lord legitimates the mission of individuals upon which the Spirit rests (this is the subject matter of chapter four). It will be shown in chapters five and six that in Luke-Acts, Luke appeals to the authority of the Holy Spirit as he tries to explain and justify the Gentile mission to his implied audience. Even where Luke refers to other legitimating authorities,100 the Holy Spirit plays a major role in complementing such an authority.101

Using a different but not dissimilar definition, Peter L. Berger states that “by legitimation is meant socially objectivated ‘knowledge’ that serves to explain and justify the social order. Put differently, legitimations are answers to any questions about the ‘why’ of institutional arrangements.”102 It will be argued below, as the mission moves from the predominantly

99 Philip Francis Esler, Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology, vol. 57 (Oakleigh, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 16-17. We may question the use of the term ‘institution’ to refer to the diverse gatherings of Jesus’ followers at this early stage, but otherwise the definition (and Berger’s below) are appropriate for my purposes here.


101 For instance, the Holy Spirit inspires scripture (Acts 1:16; 28:25); the Holy Spirit is in agreement with a ‘voice’ that speaks to Peter (Acts 10: 1ff), see especially vv 17-20; and while the risen Jesus calls Saul (Paul) to mission (Acts 9:5), Paul must receive the Spirit before he commences the mission (Acts 9:19); and in fact, it is the Holy Spirit that calls Barnabas and Paul to mission (Acts 13:2).

Hebrew/Aramaic-speaking congregation (Acts 6:1) to other ethnic groups, tensions erupt.\textsuperscript{103} The cultural and ethnic composition of the Lukan communities is affected, prompting questions that need answers. Jerome H. Neyrey’s work where he discusses purity and order in the Jewish world offers some explanation for a situation as this\textsuperscript{104}. Neyrey shows that purity is “the orderly system whereby people perceive that certain things belong in certain places at certain times... it is the abstract way of indicating what fits, what is appropriate, and what is in place.”\textsuperscript{105} In this case, the admission of ‘the other’ in a predominantly Hebrew/Aramaic-speaking Jewish movement is out of place for the resisting Jewish Christian reader. As Neyrey further observes, “something out of place is inherently suspect.”\textsuperscript{106} The author of Luke-Acts therefore must use other means to overcome this labeling of non-Jewish believers by providing a counter narrative and labeling that appeals to texts and contexts familiar to the authorial audience.\textsuperscript{107} Thus, for instance, in Acts 10:47,\textsuperscript{108} appealing to objective knowledge and rhetorical strategy, the Lukan Peter asks a question: “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” Peter appeals to the objective knowledge of those present, who now know that the Gentiles have received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45). As Berger’s definition suggests, this objective knowledge that the Gentiles have also received the Holy Spirit provided answers to Peter’s question. It will be argued in chapter six that the Holy Spirit in this text (Acts 10:45) provides the explanation and justification for the direction of the mission and the changes in the ethnic composition of the communities as Luke has presented it.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part establishes that Luke’s implied audience is composed of Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus. The second part explores the contexts of


\textsuperscript{105} Neyrey, “Symbolic Universe,” 275.

\textsuperscript{106} Neyrey, “Symbolic Universe,” 281.

\textsuperscript{107} Parsons, \textit{Luke}, 17.

\textsuperscript{108} Acts 10 is an important chapter in Luke-Acts, especially as it is the narrative opening of mission to τὰ ἔθνη. This will be discussed in detail in chapter six below.
Jewish Christian opposition within those communities as the mission expanded beyond Jewish territory. The Lukan author gives a foretaste of this opposition when at the Nazareth episode in Luke 4:16-30, Luke writes about the negative reaction of the Jewish audience to Jesus’ references to mission outside the Jewish world. In this chapter, four texts shall be examined further below. Acts 6:1 is the first text that mentions the existence of tensions within the Christian communities as Luke portrays division on the basis of language and culture among Jewish Christians. Acts 11:1-3 specifically mentions the criticism Peter received because of his table fellowship with the nations and their reception into the Christian community (cf. Gal 2:11-14), a mission initiated by the Holy Spirit. Acts 13:42-52 highlights Jewish jealousy and opposition as the Christian message enters ethnic territories; and lastly in Acts 15:1-5, Luke describes the demands of the circumcision party that believers of ethnic background be circumcised as a condition for their admission into the Christian communities, a situation that eventually will lead to the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:6-21. These four texts provide compelling evidence that there was internal friction within the wider Christian communities. First there was division among the Jewish Christians themselves on the basis of language; and secondly, there is opposition to the inclusion of non-Jews. This signals the scope of the problems that Luke seeks to address by means of the Holy Spirit.

2.1 Luke’s audience: Jewish and Gentile

The common opinion among Lukan scholars is that the communities addressed by the author of Luke-Acts are composed of Jewish and Gentile Christians. In support of this, Andrew Clark

---

109 See further in section 2.2.1 below.
110 It may well be argued that all the protagonists in this text are ethnically Jewish, but clearly there are strong cultural and linguistic tensions between the Hellenists and the Hebrews.
writes that “the universalism of Luke’s gospel previews the missions to both the Jews and Gentiles in Acts.”

Different opinions however emerge when it comes to estimating the percentage composition of Jews and non-Jews. While some scholars suggest that the communities are predominantly Gentile with an insignificant Jewish minority, others hold that it is a Jewish-Gentile mix with each group significantly represented. Esler further identifies some scholars who argue that Luke wrote for a Jewish audience, even if Gentiles were the largest component in the communities. The concern of this thesis is not the percentage of composition, but the fact that the narrative addresses both Jews and Gentiles. Rather than repeat the argument over the composition of Luke’s implied audience, I will provide an assessment of texts from the perspective of the missiological themes in the narrative.

The beginning of Luke’s gospel identifies for the reader that salvation is a light for revelation to the nations and for the glory of Israel (Luke 2:32). This salvation (prepared in the presence of all people – πάντων τῶν λαῶν, Luke 2:31), which includes repentance and forgiveness of sins, is to be preached to all nations, starting from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). The second volume of Luke’s work develops this by indicating a geographical sequence that moves from Jews in the religious capital, to Judea then to heretical Jews in Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 10:42, 47b). Malina and Pilch, Book of Acts, 106.
Interestingly, in Acts 2:14ff, apostolic witnessing begins in Jerusalem and at the end of Acts, Paul states: “Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the nations; they will listen” (Acts 28:28). From the beginning to the end of Luke-Acts then, we see the juxtaposition of mission in Jewish and Gentile territories.\(^{118}\) Even in those narratives found in the double or triple tradition in the synoptic gospels, the Lukan redaction explicitly embraces both Jews and Gentiles. For instance, in Luke 3:5-6, the quotation of Isaiah 40:1-2 has been extended by the inclusion of Isaiah 40:3-5 which proclaims that all humanity will see the salvation of God (cf. Mark 1:1-3; Matt 3:1-3). In the synagogue of Nazareth Jesus highlights the mission of Elijah and Elisha among Gentiles (Luke 4:25-27; cf. Matt 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6), an element missing from the Matthean and Markan accounts of Jesus’ rejection there. Later in the narrative those who feast in the kingdom have been expanded to include those who will come from the north, south, east and west (Luke 13:29; cf. Matt 8:11). It is apparent then, that Luke has a particular interest in the salvation of both Jews and \(\text{τὰ ἐθνή}\), and in mission extending from Jewish territory to the non-Jewish world. A plausible explanation for this is that Luke’s intended audience includes a multiplicity of ethnic groups, and therefore the narrative affirms this diversity.

Luke’s message concerning the salvation of \(\text{τὰ ἐθνή}\) features prominently in the narrative such that Gentiles are shown as having always been part of God’s plan of salvation (see for example Luke 2:32; 3:6; 4:25-27; 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2:11; 9:15; 10:15, 34-35, 44; 11:18).\(^{119}\) This, however, does not diminish Luke’s concern for Jewish salvation. Acts 28 in fact concludes with Paul’s impassioned plea to the Jewish community of Rome. Jacob Jervell highlights Luke’s equal concerns for both Jewish and Gentile salvation when he rightly remarks that the promises that were fulfilled in Christ though belong to Israel, a share in these promises is given to Gentiles. Jervell asserts that from the beginning of the mission, it is certain that according to scripture

\(^{118}\) Cf. Israel and Gentiles (Luke 2:32); all nations and Jerusalem (Luke 24:47); Jerusalem and ends of the earth (Acts 1:8); and you (Israel) and Gentiles (Acts 28:28).

\(^{119}\) Marshall, referring to Acts 15:22-35, captures this beautifully when he asserts that in Luke’s narrative, “God himself had sanctioned the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles into the church and that any resulting difficulties for scrupulous Jews were removed by the decision of the church that the Gentiles were required not to do things which might offend Jewish susceptibilities.” See Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 39-40.
and in agreement with the missionary command (Acts 1:8), the Gentiles have a share in salvation because God planned it to be so.\(^{120}\)

For Luke to have stressed Gentile salvation so much thus suggests that “mission to non-Jews being a \textit{fait accompli} must have been a matter of great relevance to Luke’s intended readers.”\(^{121}\) Who then are Luke’s intended readers?

In the first instance, according to Luke 1:4, the author writes so that Theophilus may know the truth concerning the things about which he has been instructed (\textit{kατηχήθης}). This instruction concerns all that Jesus began to do (\textit{ὡν ἐρέατο...ποιεῖν}) and to teach (\textit{kαὶ διδάσκειν}) from the beginning (Acts 1:1). In other words, Luke addresses a web of communities that has been informed to some extent about Jesus and his teaching. Luke’s intended readers, therefore, are in all likelihood, believers in Jesus.\(^{122}\) The verb \textit{kατηχεῖσθαι} in the neutral sense has the meaning of ‘to be informed’, ‘to be instructed’.\(^{123}\) In the context of Luke 1:4 (cf. Acts 1:1), the instruction concerns the ministry of Jesus, carried on by Jesus’ followers, about which Luke wants to give assurance (\textit{ἀσφάλεια}) to the readers. Furthermore, the phrases: \textit{πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν} (“accomplished among us,” Luke 1:1) and \textit{καθὼς παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν} (as delivered to us,” Luke 1:2), suggest that Luke is addressing a network of communities of which he is a member. Theophilus, therefore, as Esler suggests, “may or may not have been typical of the reading public for whom the work was intended; its real readers may well have been different.”\(^{124}\) In similar terms,
Parsons argues that Luke’s authorial audience is not to be mistaken for a specific second-century community.\textsuperscript{125} This indicates that Luke-Acts may not necessarily be personal to Theophilus,\textsuperscript{126} but rather for a wider web of communities that have received some instruction on the teachings of and about Jesus (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1).

Luke’s employment of certain terms and expressions within the narrative also suggests believers in Jesus as the intended readers. Within the narrative, Luke uses such expressions and phrases, as ‘Son of Man’ (Luke 5:24; 6:5, 22; 7:34; 19:10 and so on) and ‘Kingdom of God’ (Luke 4:43; 6:20; Acts 1:3, for example), without explanation. This shows that Luke’s implied readers are familiar to some extent with Jesus’ proclamation of the gospel.\textsuperscript{127} Luke also does not provide any background information on some of the parables, especially those addressed to the disciples (Luke 11:5-8; 12:35-48; 16:1-9; 17:7-10; cf. 8:9-15; 12:1-12), the beatitudes (Luke 6:20-26), the apocalyptic discourses (Luke 17:20-37; 21:5-38) and the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:14-23).\textsuperscript{128} This again confirms it is a narrative for a wide range of people that have at least received some instruction (κατηχηθης) about Jesus’ ministry (Acts 2:42; cf. Luke 1:4). As Witherington puts it, “it is a reassurance or confirmation for someone who may have had doubts or was insufficiently socialised into ‘the Way’ at the time of Acts’ composition.”\textsuperscript{129} Though Witherington suggests that Luke writes to ‘someone’, I am more inclined to the opinion that Luke writes for assemblies of communities, reassuring the resisting members of the communities concerning their doubts on certain aspects of the community’s life. Luke employs every means at his disposal, and especially the OT, in order to overcome this resistance from some community members. Esler puts this forcefully when he asserts that:

\textsuperscript{125} Parsons, \textit{Luke}, 17.
Luke plunges his readers into the atmosphere of Judaism and the Old Testament at the very beginning of his Gospel and leaves them there until the end of Acts. He often alludes to the Greek Old Testament in a way which would have been opaque, even unintelligible, to someone unfamiliar with its language and contents. Nor could pagans easily have obtained such familiarity.\(^\text{130}\)

At first glance, this suggests a particular focus on Jewish readers. But the use of “us” in the phrase ἐν ἡμῖν (among us) and παρέδωσαν ἡμῖν (delivered to us) as in Luke 1:1-4 asserts a wider reference and includes all followers of the way, whether of Jewish or other ethnic origins.\(^\text{131}\)

We may therefore safely conclude that the Lukan communities comprising both Jewish and Gentile Christians are the targeted audience of the narrative of Luke-Acts.

Yet in the narrative itself Luke brings to the awareness of the readers situations whereby some Jewish followers of Jesus are very critical of the expansion of mission to τὰ ἔθνη (Acts 11:1-3; 15:1-5). This portrays the situation of an in-house struggle between some Jewish Christians in the communities who resist the inclusion of Christians of other ethnic backgrounds, and those (like Barnabas, Paul, and eventually Peter) who support a mission that crosses ethnic boundaries. Sanders brings this to focus when he asserts that Luke is addressing “an observant Jewish Christianity that was critical of Gentile Christianity due to the latter’s pretension to Jewish salvation but rejection of normal Jewish requirements for being saved.”\(^\text{132}\) Equally, Holmas rightly affirms that the social function of Luke-Acts concerns “a situation in which

\(^{130}\) Esler, Community, 25. So too Maddox, The Purpose of Luke-Acts, 14. A. D. Nock also points out that “there is no indication of substantial knowledge of the Septuagint except as heard by those who frequented the synagogues or were concerned to write polemical treatises against Christianity: as a book it was bulky, expensive, and inaccessible.” See A. D. Nock, Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo (Oxford: The Claredon Press, 1933), 79. See also Darrell L. Bock, Acts (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 28. Here Bock argues that “The saturation of this work with the sacred scriptures of Judaism suggests that this background had relevance for the reader.” See also Witherington, The Acts of the Apostles, 63, who argues that a pagan Gentile audience would neither have understood nor appreciated the many references to scriptures and their fulfillment in the narrative. There is truth in these claims, but I think they can be overstated, as they ignore the teaching role of those with knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures within the mixed communities.


various kinds of dangers to faith and loyalty are coming from both without and within.”¹³³ Bock’s observation also shows that the setting of Luke-Acts “is in a context where Gentile inclusion and Jewish persecution existed side by side.”¹³⁴ This is also what this thesis affirms, that Luke addresses a network of Christian communities whose membership includes both Jews and Gentiles, in a context where some Jewish Christians resist a Gentile mission. It is this situation of Jewish Christian resistance to mission in non-Jewish territories that Luke addresses and wishes to overcome.

The following section explores some of the evidence for friction within the wider Christian communities and Jewish Christian opposition to the universal mission within the narrative of Luke-Acts.

2.2 Tensions over an inclusive missionary enterprise

Luke shows that the expansion of the church from the Hebrew/Aramaic speaking Jewish community to include other ethnic groups brings with it some resistance and internal crises within the communities. The problems involving the Hellenistic widows, for instance, foreshadow the reluctance for change and for embracing the ‘other’ that becomes a theme throughout Acts (Acts 6:1ff). Also, Luke informs the reader of the criticism of Peter by some circumcised believers on account of an initiative that took the mission to Gentile soil (Acts 11:1-18; cf. 10:1ff). Additionally, Luke portrays the jealousy of some Jews because of a huge number of non-Jews at a meeting with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:44-52). Luke is quick to indicate that the result of this jealous attitude is violence against the mission (Acts 14:1-7; cf. 17:1-9). By the same token, Luke identifies some brethren from Judea who insist that Gentiles in the Christian communities must abide by the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1-5). All these instances indicate that the Christian communities faced problems not only with Jewish leaders (cf. Acts 4:1-22; 5:17-39; 6:8-15; 7:54-8:3), but also with Jewish followers within the Jesus community as non-Jews make

their way into the ἐκκλησίαι. This section of chapter two explores the internal crises in the earliest communities of the followers of Jesus in the Acts of the Apostles that were triggered by the inclusion of ‘others’, as a foundation for the argument in subsequent chapters that Luke employs the Holy Spirit in the narrative to resolve such crises. Bock presents it this way:

The need to resolve the issue became more intense as Gentiles began to come in and the community’s character became clearer. The new community was no longer going to be a purely Jewish institution, but it did not sense a calling to abandon its connection to Judaism.135

In what follows, it will be argued that in the gospel the narrator gives previews of ethnic tension which becomes the experience of the followers of Jesus later on in Acts. The Gentile mission and the subsequent inclusion of Gentiles into the ἐκκλησίαι aggravated this traumatic experience for some of the earliest followers of Jesus.136 It is in this context that Bock’s assertion is particularly relevant: “The Gospel message sought to bring reconciliation, not only between individuals and God, but also between ethnic groups that had experienced so much hostility.”137 External information is scarce and we are forced to rely on internal evidence from

135 Bock, Acts, 37.
136 Meyer, “The Gentile Mission in Q,” 405. Jervell, Luke and the People of God, 46, observes that in the period of the Jerusalem church, the problem was mainly external. Jervell points to the rejection of the message by some of the Jewish leaders and asserts that within the church, there was relative peace and calm (cf. Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37; 5:12-16). I shall argue below however that even within the Jerusalem church there was already tension of an ethnic, linguistic and socio-cultural nature between Jews (those who spoke Hebrew/Aramaic and those who spoke Greek) as Acts 6:1-7 indicates. Carver’s rendering of this period is overly idealistic if it is understood as the continuing nature of the Jerusalem community: “Sitting at the same table, the universal symbol of friendship, signified that indeed in Christ there was no east or west, no bond or free, no male or female, no Jew or Gentile. All were one in him.” Gary L. Carver, “Acts 2:42-47,” Review and Expositor 87, no. 3 (1990): 476. In my opinion it quickly becomes much more complex as the examples show throughout this chapter. Luke portrayed an initial community that reached out to the needy and the marginalized in holistic mission (see Yao, “Dismantling Social Barriers,” 30; also Bock, Acts 153). However this did not last as Acts 6 suggests. The turmoil sure gets greater later on with the inclusion of Gentiles, but Luke indicates that there are tensions emerging from the beginning. Sanders comments that Jesus’ explanation of the sending of salvation to Gentiles and not to Jews provokes the first hostility (Luke 4:25-28); the Gentile interest in the gospel, at the start of Paul’s ministry, provokes synagogue hostility (Acts 13:45); in Acts 21:28, it is the inclusion of a Gentile that is the major charge against Paul. Sanders thus concludes that: “Throughout Luke-Acts, therefore, the hostility of non-Christian Jews towards Christianity and Jewish Christians towards Gentile Christians is provoked by the inclusion of Gentiles.” See Jack T. Sanders, The Jews in Luke-Acts (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1987), 316. These scholars fail to see that from Luke’s perspective (in the gospel and in Acts) there are tensions about any aspect of inclusion from the infancy narrative onwards – and not just about ‘Gentiles as non-Jews’ but even about Jews that speak a different language (the Hellenistic widows for instance). Luke is very realistic about this: it is not easy to include ‘the other’.
137 Bock, Acts, 43.
the work itself. As indicated above, the following four texts in Acts will be examined to explore the crises within the communities of faith on account of the admittance of ‘other’ ethnic groups: the grumbling of the Hellenists (6:1); the criticism of Peter by the circumcised believers (11:1-3); the Jewish acts of jealousy (13:42-52); and the crises leading to the Jerusalem council (15:1-5). However, before delving into the Acts texts, it is important to establish that also in the gospel narrative, Luke gives the intended readers previews of the tensions that will be encountered later in Acts. Identifying these indicators and forewarnings of ethnic tensions in the gospel therefore will be a good starting point. In all these accounts, the emphasis is on the emergence of conflicts in the communities.

2.2.1 Luke’s Gospel and ethnic tensions

From the beginning of the gospel Luke prepares the implied readers, both Jewish and Gentile, to understand that salvation is offered to all but not all will accept the universal dimension of the mission and message. In the infancy narrative Luke describes Simeon as δίκαιος (righteous) and εὐλαβής (devout). Luke indicates that Simeon looks forward to the παράκλησις τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (consolation of Israel) and that the Holy Spirit was upon him (Luke 2:25). This immediately tells the reader that the testimony of this Spirit-filled character is valid. Thus the Holy Spirit reveals to Simeon that he would not die till he had seen τὸν χριστὸν κυρίου (the Lord’s anointed). The same Spirit leads Simeon to the temple where Simeon gives praise to God and makes a prophetic assertion: the child is φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἑθνῶν καὶ δόξαν λαοῦ σου Ἰσραήλ (light for revelation of the nations and glory of your people Israel – Luke 2:32). While Luke here implies that Jesus’ ministry will transcend ethnic boundaries and thereby include τὰ ἔθνη, Luke makes a further assertion that the child “is set for the fall and the rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against…” (Luke 2:34). Luke employs the term ἀντιλέγω (to speak against) of those who ‘oppose’ or ‘resist’ (see Luke 20:27; Acts 13:45; 28:19, 22). The expressions: εἰς πτώσιν καὶ ἀνάστασιν and εἰς σημεῖον ἀντιλεγόμενον thus denote both resistance and acceptance of Jesus and of what he offers – salvation proclaimed through mission. It is a pointer to Jesus who is a sign that will be opposed, and in response to him the people will be divided, some

---

falling and some rising. Luke here simply draws the attention and imagination of the implied reader to what will become the ‘norm’ at every stage of mission expansion: tension at the start of Jesus’ mission, at the beginning of the church’s mission in Acts and at the expansion of mission to the nations.

The narrator has thus set the tone for the rejection of Jesus in Nazareth; a rejection that ensues after Jesus’ references to Elijah’s and Elisha’s prophetic mission to non-Jews outside the Jewish boundaries (Luke 4:25-27). As the narrator emphasises, when the synagogue audience heard this, all in the synagogue were filled (ἐπλήσθησαν) with rage to the point that they planned to push Jesus down the cliff (Luke 4:28-29). While Jesus escapes unhurt, the subsequent mission and ministry in the gospel is basically in Galilee and its surrounds, though inclusive in nature. This is thus a preview of the greater impact of ethnic tension that will be felt in Acts when the followers of Jesus take the mission to τὰ ἔθνη.

There are many references in the body of the gospel narrative that witness to the inter-cultural tensions and implications of the Jesus story, both in the Lukan Sondergut (the Samaritans, 9:52-56; the seventy, 10:1-12; the Good Samaritan, 10:29-37; the Galileans and Pilate, 13:1-3; parables of the lost, 15; the Samaritan leper, 17:11-19), and in the Lukan redaction of the double and triple traditions (the centurion, 7:1-10; the Gerasene demoniac, ‘opposite Galilee’, 8:26; the sign of Jonah, 11:29-32; the points of compass, 13:29; and the time of the Gentiles/Nations, 21:25) – just to mention briefly some of the most obvious. There can be no doubt that ‘Luke’, the implied author of the gospel, is both committed to its inter-ethnic implications and acutely aware of the tensions that will eventuate from this.

As Luke concludes his gospel narrative (Luke 24:47), he makes it clear that the message of salvation which is to be proclaimed (κηρυχθῆναι) to all the nations (εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) beginning from Jerusalem is in accordance with scripture. For this reason the narrator draws attention to

---

140 This will be discussed in detail in chapter 5. It suffices to mention here that this account gives a foretaste of ethnic tension in the narrative of Luke-Acts.
Jesus opening the minds of his followers to understand the scriptures (συνιέναι τὰς γραφὰς, Luke 24:45) saying to them, “thus it is written...” (ὅτι σύντως γέγραπται). This suggests that whatever has happened is in accordance with that which had been written earlier (Luke 24:46-47). Having made it clear that the message extends to all nations (εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, Luke 24:47), Jesus calls his followers μάρτυρες τούτων (witnesses of these things, Luke 24:48). This ‘witness’ theme is echoed at the start of the Acts narrative (Acts 1:8) where the disciples are witnesses beginning from Jerusalem and the mission is to extend to the ends of the earth. The disciples are witnesses to Jesus’ ministry, death and resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). This includes Jesus’ teachings (Acts 1:1) about inclusive missionary endeavours (cf. Luke 4:25-27; 24:47; Acts 1:8), and by extension, Luke’s universal missionary call (cf. Luke 2:31-32; 3:6; 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2:21, 39; 10:34-35 and so on). The observant reader now realises that the narrator pairs ‘witnessing’ and ‘mission to τὰ ἔθνη’ as the narrative shifts from the story of Jesus in the gospel to the mission of the followers of Jesus in Acts (Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8). This alerts the hearing-reader to the possibility that the mission of the followers of Jesus, especially to the nations, could be problematic and that the followers of Jesus may need to defend it. This is yet another indicator in the gospel of prospective ethnic tension in Acts. Thus, by referring to Jesus’ followers as witnesses at the end of the gospel and at the start of Acts Luke offers the intended readers a glimpse into imminent tensions in the future (cf. Luke 2:34) when the believers in Jesus and in his Way are called to testify/witness on the basis of Jesus’ teachings (Acts 10:42; 11:16). Whenever and wherever problems come up on account of mission, and especially mission to τὰ ἔθνη, the followers of the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22; cf. John 14:6) are to bear witness that mission is meant to extend beyond the microcosm of the Jewish world (Luke 2:32; 4:25-27; Acts 2:39; 10:34-35, 43; 13:46; 28:28-30).

Thus, while Luke in the gospel is already attuned to ethnic tensions on account of the mission to τὰ ἔθνη, this tension is made explicit in the Acts narrative when the narrator records the account of mission expansion within and beyond the Jewish world.

142 This is a pointer to Luke’s prophecy-fulfillment schema which will be addressed briefly below in chapter four.
143 The Greek μάρτυς (witness), with its verb form μαρτύρω or μαρτύρομαι (I bear witness), has legal, social and religious meanings. It can mean to give evidence before a court, to testify that a thing is the case or to bear testimony. Bonnah, Narrative Factor, 121.
2.2.2 The grumbling of the Hellenists (Acts 6:1)\textsuperscript{144}

The Christian community continues to grow (cf. Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14). Acts 6:1 mentions the presence of ‘Hellenists’ in the Jerusalem community. The Hellenists are different from the Hebrews due to the fact that “Greek was their only or preferred language over against Aramaic, with all that this implies regarding cultural characteristics.”\textsuperscript{145} Though Acts 5:1-11 narrates the controversial behaviour of some members of the community (Ananias and Sapphira), 6:1ff opens up to the reader the emergence of problems that spell out some sort of division in the community. Martin Hengel rightly describes it as a tension between the Hebrew/Aramaic-speaking and Greek-speaking followers of Jesus in Jerusalem and has suggested that it indicates a new and decisive stage in the development of the early community.\textsuperscript{146}

The passage opens with the phrase, Ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις (now in those days), which indicates an event in the past. The plural form of day (ταῖς ἡμέραις) suggests that it is a reference to many days, a period (cf. Acts 1:15). This is different from the reference to a particular day as in Acts 2:1 (τὴν ἡμέραν). The timescale, however, is not indicated.\textsuperscript{147} Two things characterise this period. The first is an increase in the numbers of disciples (πλήθυνόντων τῶν μαθητῶν). Though Luke already indicates an increase in the number of Jesus’ followers in Acts 2:47b and 5:14; this particular indication seems to be a further increase that characterises this period. Second, the increase in the number of believers is followed by a social problem

\textsuperscript{144} The full pericope here is Acts 6:1-7. V 1 introduces the complaint of the Hellenists against the Hebrews; vv 2-6 specify the solution of the apostles to the problem by the appointment of the seven deacons; and in v 7, Luke offers a summary report of the church’s growth. The focus here is only to identify the emergence of an issue as a result of the introduction of a new group into the community of believers. V 1 introduces the problem. The focus, therefore, will be primarily on Acts 6:1. References may be made to other relevant verses that speak to our case.


\textsuperscript{146} Hengel, Acts and History, 71.

\textsuperscript{147} Dunn, The Acts of the Apostles, 81.
within the community composed of two distinct cultural groups (Acts 6:1-2). Luke calls them Hebrews and Hellenists. Dunn points out that:

> Since Greek was the international language of the day, and since we know that Greek was widely used in Israel..., the probable distinction is between those who used Aramaic as their daily language (but could understand at least some Greek) and those who could speak effectively only Greek.

The introduction of these two distinctively different language groups also introduces two distinctively different social practices and cultures; for “anyone who functions in a single or predominant language is almost certainly a product of the culture which that language embodies.” Thus Luke portrays these diaspora Jews as a language and culture sub-group within Jerusalem.

With the introduction of the Hellenists, Luke also introduces a problem – the widows of the Hellenists are neglected in the daily distribution of food. Luke uses the term παρεθεωρούντο (were overlooked). Though the NRSV and the RSV translate this term as ‘neglect’, Johnson has identified appropriately the presence of a note of discrimination. Mullins observes that “they are being slighted, even discriminated against as they are overlooked.” In Luke’s first summary of life within the community, “all who believed had all things in common” (εἶχον ἀπαντα κοινά, Acts 2:44); the believers sold their possessions and goods “and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:45); and they “ate their food with glad and generous hearts” (Acts 2:46). Similarly in the second summary passage, they “were of one heart and soul” and “everything they owned was held in common” (πάντα κοινά, Acts 4:32), and there was no needy person among them (Acts 4:34). The point Luke makes here is that there were no needy persons in the community (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδήξει τις ἤν ἐν αὐτοῖς, Acts 4:34) because they had all things in common. Since Luke’s introduction of the Hellenists is marked by conflict over

---

150 Bock, Acts, 258.
material distribution weighted against the Hellenistic widows, it then suggests some sort of reluctance by the Aramaic speakers to accept these Hellenists into the community. This indicates a problem of dealing with multi-ethnic communities even when they were all Jews.

Luke focuses on the “complaint” or “grumbling” (Acts 6:1) that threatens the church’s unity.\(^{155}\) This risk unfolds in the community precisely where unity had been most clearly demonstrated: the redistribution of community wealth.\(^{156}\) This points to exclusivist behavior (or ethnocentric assumptions) amongst the Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians towards Greek-speaking Jewish believers within the same Jewish community of the followers of Jesus, a situation that Luke wants to overcome.

Though some scholars suggest that the neglect of the Hellenists’ widows was created by a ‘growth problem’, this is not very clear in the passage.\(^{157}\) Luke does not state that the neglect is because the number of believers increased, but that while the number increased, there is a murmuring.\(^{158}\) Luke is clear on ‘what is’, not on ‘what caused it’. Luke had recorded the believers’ increase earlier, but never noted any accompanying crises (Acts 2:47b; 4:4; 5:14). In my opinion therefore the conflict between ‘Hellenists’ and ‘Hebrews’ in the community is due to a difference in language and culture, even if both groups are Jewish.\(^{159}\) There is most likely implied the recognition of “outsiders among us” in some way. The community described here is the Jerusalem community, the heart of the Judean culture and values. Thus the “Hebrews” would be right at home, while the “Hellenists” would be regarded as outsiders.\(^{160}\)

Luke employs the term γογγυσμός (grumbling) to describe the murmuring of the Hellenists.\(^{161}\) The LXX also use this term for Israel grumbling against the Lord in the wilderness (Exod 16:7-12;

---


\(^{161}\) Γογγυσμός appears four times in the NT (John 7:12; Acts 6:1; Phil 2:14-16 and 1 Pet 4:9-10).
Num 11:1; 17:5).\textsuperscript{162} In Acts 6:1, the imperfect tense παρεθεωροῦντο (were overlooked) indicates a persisting state of affairs.\textsuperscript{163} This suggests that the Hebrews must have been neglecting the Hellenistic widows over a period of time which leads to the ὑγγυςμὸς of the later. This may also be supported by the plural form of day in – ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις.

Bock insists that “The way the problem is eventually solved indicates that it may well have surfaced not because of ethnic malice but because of a lack of administrative organization caused by the new community’s growth across diverse ethnic lines.”\textsuperscript{164} However, as the text specifies, it is not the Hebrew widows who are neglected, but the Hellenistic widows. The question then arises: why should it be the Hellenistic widows alone who suffer from the inequity of the administration of the common fund? The narrative indicates that it was the presence of the Hellenists that created a challenge for the community. This thesis argues that the situation as Luke presents it suggests some form of resistance from the Hebrew/Aramaic-speaking Jews towards the Hellenists within the community of Jesus’ followers. In this regard, Bock does acknowledge that it is not surprising that the problem broke out along ethnic lines as most relationships would be affected by these distinctions.\textsuperscript{165} Bock further stresses that “The community is aware, however, that such a distinction cannot be maintained and supported in a community that confesses a Messiah who has come to give God’s grace to all types of people.”\textsuperscript{166} The level and depth of this awareness that Bock talks about is, however, uncertain. Some members of the communities may have been aware that God’s grace is for all people (Acts 2:39; 3:25b; 10:34-35; 13:39; cf. Luke 24:47), but the evidence in the narrative shows that some Jewish believers were not convinced of this and so maintained a constant distinction between themselves and the rest of the ethnic believers in the communities (cf. Acts 10:45; 11:1-3; 15:1, 5). This clearly shows that this initial crisis is the result of unwillingness from the Hebrew/Aramaic-speaking Jews to accept fully the Greek-speaking Jews into the Jerusalem community. Luke does not give any reason why only the Hellenistic widows were neglected, but

\textsuperscript{163} Dunn, The Acts of the Apostles, 82.
\textsuperscript{164} Bock, Acts, 258.
\textsuperscript{165} Bock, Acts, 258.
\textsuperscript{166} Bock, Acts, 258.
in vv 2-6 recounts how the apostles resolved the issue by appointing seven deacons with Greek names.\textsuperscript{167} The implied reader then is left to draw conclusions as to why there was a crisis in the community when the Hellenists were introduced into the narrative.

Luke’s narrative skill must be appreciated in this regard. Placing this pericope at this point of the narrative establishes a change in the social fabric of the community as the community increases in number; a change that introduces the problem of accepting the ‘other’ as observed above (cf. also Acts 11:19-20).\textsuperscript{168} As the community expands further and different cultures embrace the faith, Luke portrays further situations of division, internal conflict and opposition that need to be resolved.\textsuperscript{169}

\textbf{2.2.3 The circumcised believers criticise Peter (Acts 11:1-3)}

Peter goes to Caesarea accompanied by some believers from Joppa (Acts 10:23-24).\textsuperscript{170} This visit is a request from a Gentile centurion, Cornelius, initiated by God (Acts 10:1-8). In Caesarea, Peter testifies that God shows no partiality (προσωπολήμπτης), and that in every nation anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God (Acts 10:34-35; cf. Deut 10:17-19 LXX). Schaser rightly remarks that here “Luke emphasises the ethnic inclusivity of God by having Peter refer to Gentile inclusion in Deuteronomy.”\textsuperscript{171} Peter’s ministry that day results in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Dunn recalls that the history of the Maccabean period must have left a residue of suspicion among devout Torah Jews of such Greek speakers. It was the Hellenizers, those who wanted to abandon Jewish distinctiveness (circumcision, food laws and prescribed temple sacrifices) that had precipitated the crisis that led to the Maccabean revolt (cf. 1 Macc 1-2). See Dunn, The Acts of the Apostles, 82. This may well be so, but a rigorous evaluation of this suggestion is not within the scope of this thesis. For some detailed reading, see Dunn, The Acts of the Apostles, 80-85; Bock, Acts, 256; Mullins, The Acts of the Apostles, 91.
\item Luke shows that those who were scattered as a result of the persecution resulting from Stephen’s death went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. These spoke to no other group except the Jews, as the phrase εἰ μὴ μόνον Ἰουδαῖοις (except only to Jews, 11:19) emphasises the limit of their action. Only those mentioned as originating from Cyprus and Cyrene, on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists as well (11:20).
\item Note that with the introduction of Samaritans, there is a further crisis with Simon (Acts 8:18-24; cf. vv 9-13).
\item Schaser, “Unlawful for a Jew,” 194.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
baptism of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-48a), and consequently Peter spends several days there (Acts 10:48b). The church expands further with God giving to Gentiles the repentance that leads to life (Acts 11:1, 18). The homogeneity of the followers of Jesus has been affected further and deeply changed. Not only are there Hebrews and Hellenists (Acts 6:1), and not only have the Samaritans been welcomed (Acts 8:1-24), now the Gentiles too have come into the church (Acts 10:44-48). Luke then introduces another moment of tension.

Acts 11:1 links the preceding story of Cornelius in Acts 10:1ff and the following Petrine speech in Acts 11:4-18. The verse introduces the apostles (οἱ ἀπόστολοι) and the believers (οἱ ἀδελφοί—literally ‘the brothers’) who are in Judea, probably denoting church leadership and membership respectively. Earlier in Acts 8:14, the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans accepted the word of God and they sent Peter and John to them. Luke now introduces the οἱ ἀδελφοί who also hear the news alongside the οἱ ἀπόστολοι. This suggests the entire church community in Jerusalem is now aware of the events (cf. Acts 15:4).

The Jerusalem church hears that τὰ ἔθνη have also received the word of God (ἐδέξαντο τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ). This means, “a whole new ethnic group, involving the multitude of pagan nations, has come into the picture.” The concept of “receiving the word of God” describes a positive

---

172 Schaser’s suggestion that the Ethiopian Eunuch is the first Gentile convert in the Acts narrative is correct (Acts 8:26-40). Schaser however misses the point when he asserts that this is the beginning of the Gentile mission. Schaser, “Unlawful for a Jew,” 194-196. The narrative progression affirms that it is only after the account of Philip and the Eunuch that the narrator mentions the character (Saul/Paul) who is to be the chosen vessel (σκηνὸς ἐκλογῆς) for the mission to τὰ ἔθνη (Acts 9:15). Thereafter a group within the ethnic (non-Jewish) population receive the word (Acts 10:34-43), and the Holy Spirit falls upon them (Acts 10:44, this is absent in the narrative about the Eunuch, cf. Acts 8:39-40). They are then baptised into the body of the believers in Jesus (Acts 10:48). The Holy Spirit then sends Barnabas and Paul on mission (Acts 13:1-3), and the missionary journeys begin to fulfill the mission to the nations (Acts 13:4-28:31). This thesis thus follows the argument that the account of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch is only a foretaste of a much larger step. See Scott Shauf, “Locating the Eunuch: Characterisation and Narrative Context in Acts 8:26-40,” CBQ 71, no.4, (2009): 773. The beginning of this larger step is the Cornelius’ episode, see Johnson, The Acts of the Apostles, 159, which the Lukian narrative strategy has associated with Peter (first) rather than Paul.

173 The emphasis of this section is on the eruption of another crisis over ethnicity within the community that needed attention. Thus the Petrine speech in 11:4-18 will not be addressed at this stage. It will be discussed in chapter six.

174 Ludemann rightly notes that the two verses, 8:14 and 11:1 should be compared for the similarity of language. See, G. Ludemann, Early Christianity According to the Traditions in Acts (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 129.

175 Bock, Acts, 405.

response to the gospel from the Gentiles converts, just as their Jewish counterparts had responded earlier.\textsuperscript{177} It does not tell the reader about the reaction of the church in Judea. However, v 2 does tell the reader about the negative reaction of a section of the believers in Jerusalem – the ‘circumcision party’ criticise Peter. Mullins rightly describes this as a negative reaction from this circumcision party.\textsuperscript{178} Johnson still insists that “the leaders of the church in Jerusalem and the ordinary believers had no problem with the conversion and baptism of Cornelius,”\textsuperscript{179} but the text is not so clear about this. What is clear is that in Acts 8:14 the apostles send Peter and John to the Samaritans because they have received the word of God, which results in them receiving the Holy Spirit too. Here in Acts 11:1, Luke states that the circumcised believers (literally ‘those of the circumcision’) criticise Peter for going to the uncircumcised.\textsuperscript{180} Also, in Acts 8:15-17, Peter and John are instrumental in the Samaritans receiving the Spirit. In Acts 10:45, Luke expresses the amazement of the circumcision faithful (ἐξέστησαν οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς πιστοὶ) as they witness τὰ ἔθνη receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Why the amazement? Could it be they considered it out of place for the Gentiles to receive the Spirit? Certainly they never expected the outcome. The Judean community too would have received the news with surprise.

In vv 2 and 3, Luke provides a glimpse into the sentiments of some members of the Jerusalem community. Peter stays in Caesarea for several days (Acts 10:48b), and leaves for Jerusalem (Acts 11:2a). In Jerusalem, Luke introduces in contrasting terms, the οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς (literally, ‘those of/from circumcision’) as against the ἄνδρας ἀκροβυστίαν (uncircumcised men).\textsuperscript{181} This reveals the presence of two different groups in the growing network of communities. Earlier in

\textsuperscript{177} Bock, Acts, 405. So also Mullins, The Acts of the Apostles, 122. To receive the word of God is to welcome fully the gospel message (Luke 8:13 [an initial positive response that is later reversed]; Acts 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; 1 Thess 1:6-7).
\textsuperscript{180} If the Jerusalem community is a combination of the apostles and believers, then the ‘circumcised believers’ would be a section of the believers. Witherington, The Acts of the Apostles, 362, argues that they are a small vocal group within the Jerusalem church. Does this then imply that there are some uncircumcised believers among the group of believers in Jerusalem? Where could they be coming from? Or could “circumcised believers” be a Lukan reference to Jewish Christians generally? Bock, Acts, 406, may be right here, that “those of the circumcision” must refer to the more strict and conscientious of the Jewish-Christians, for most believers at this time were Jews and circumcised. This already portrays a fragmented community.
\textsuperscript{181} The circumcised state is very fundamental to Jewish identity. Dunn, The Acts of the Apostles, 149.
Acts 10:45, the distinction is between the οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς πιστοὶ (the circumcised faithful) as against τὰ ἔθνη. These new contrasting terms, circumcised and un-circumcised, suggest an increasing polarization and tension within the communities. Though οἱ ἀπόστολοι and οἱ ἀδελφοί receive the news of Gentile reception of the word of God, Luke shows that only the circumcised group within the Jerusalem community dispute with Peter (διεκρίνοντο πρὸς αὐτόν, v 2). This already demonstrates internal discordance in the community on account of the mission to the nations which Luke seeks to overcome.

The fact that Peter is criticised for eating with the Gentiles (v 3) also highlights a problem in the community. It is now an expanded community of the ἐκκλησία, but fellowship is forbidden with some members of the community. The suggestion here is that the mission to the Gentiles is being questioned. If as Dunn observes, Acts 11:1-18 is as much about the acceptance of Peter as it is about the acceptance of Cornelius and what he represents, then it follows that there is a question of growing rejection.¹⁸²

Many scholars argue that Peter’s vilification by the “circumcised believers” concerns Peter both going to the uncircumcised and eating with the uncircumcised.¹⁸³ Indeed, food laws (Peter’s vision), baptism and circumcision are inextricably linked in the Cornelius’ account, so denouncing Peter for going to the uncircumcised and eating with them amounts to questioning Peter’s presence among them altogether. The ‘uncircumcised’ are probably seen as ‘others’, for earlier on, the believers had all things in common and ate their food with glad and generous hearts (Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37). If Peter eats with the Gentiles as supposed by Acts 10:48b, then it is in the same spirit of the earlier community (cf. Acts 2:42-47). Criticizing Peter thus implies a split situation within the Jerusalem community because of mission to an ‘other’ whose status in the community is now open to increased questioning.

In Acts 10:47, Peter asks: “can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” Κωλύσαί is an infinitive verb (to forbid), denoting

putting a stop to an act or event that is not supposed to be. It would seem that the baptism of the “uncircumcised” had been put to question or forbidden before now (cf. Acts 15:1b, 5b). This seems to be the case if we follow the narrative sequence: the Holy Spirit has come upon the Gentiles (Acts 10:44); this amazes the circumcised believers (Acts 10:45); for the circumcised believers hear the Gentiles speaking in tongues and praising God (Acts 10:46). There is no discussion of baptism, and there is no objection from any one or group. But Peter in Acts 10:47 asks if anyone can forbid the baptism of the Gentiles. This question would have been necessitated by an earlier debate (cf. Acts 15:2). Since no one disputes what Peter is about to do, Peter literally commands (προσταξεν) the baptism of the Gentiles (Acts 48a).  

As Johnson shows, “The sting in the charge, of course, is found in the ancient symbolism of table-fellowship: to eat with someone is to share spiritually with them as well; by implication to eat with Gentiles is to collude in idolatry.” The argument here is that the Jewish Christians still looked at the Gentile believers as idolaters and unclean. This follows the general Jewish view that the nations were inherently likely to be unclean. Therefore, though the ethnic believers have been baptised, they are still labeled as “unclean Gentiles” (cf. Acts 10:9-16), and not as “believers.” They are still identified according to their ethnic background and not in relation to their profession of faith. Consequently, it seems that Peter’s mission and the baptism administered to τὰ ἔθνη are considered inappropriate by the circumcised believers. It is only with this mindset that some of the Jewish believers would view Christians of ethnic backgrounds still as idolaters. So when examined critically, the circumcised believers’ criticism

---

184 From the viewpoint of the circumcision group, the Gentiles need to observe the law, keep away from unclean food, and be circumcised to show their participation in the covenant. In other words, the Gentiles must become like Jews if they are to join the believing community (cf. Acts 15:1ff). See Bock, Acts, 406-407. That Peter commanded (προσταξεν) the baptism of the Gentiles then suggests that the circumcision group would have expected something else other than their baptism. That this baptism is followed by table fellowship in Caesarea Maritima (abhorred by Jews for its Caesar Temple – and from where idol meat might well originate), would add to the purity concerns of strict law-observant Jews.


of Peter goes beyond mere eating with the uncircumcised. The entire mission to the nations and the coming of salvation is also being questioned here.\textsuperscript{187}

Dunn argues that the underlying rationale is the logic of purity.\textsuperscript{188} This, he said, was raised by the assumption of Jewish piety and loyalty to God and God’s choice of Israel. Furthermore, the Jews were a people who understood their religious identity and duty to include separating themselves from Gentiles.\textsuperscript{189} This is no doubt true, for Luke shows that Peter was at that level of understanding in Acts 10:9-23. However, Luke further shows that Peter has left this point of discrimination in Acts 10:34, but these Jewish Christians were still on the level of Peter’s initial understanding. There is, therefore, a problem of a lack of understanding here. This means that at this point of the narrative some Jewish Christians have not yet understood the universal dimension of the salvation that God is offering (cf. Acts 10:35). Perhaps they view the Cornelius episode as an isolated exception since they immediately return to previous practices (11:19) – speaking the word ‘to no-one except to Jews’. Johnson captures the ongoing problem thus:

\begin{quote}
That the Gentiles have ‘received the word of God’ – which is explicitly acknowledged in 11:1 – does not yet decide the question of their status vis-à-vis Jewish believers… Are these Gentiles members of God’s people of equal status with those who first believed?\textsuperscript{190}
\end{quote}

It was this status and the legitimacy of Gentile Christians vis-à-vis that of Jewish Christians that was a pressing issue for Luke. So Luke has presented this outright questioning of Peter’s fellowship with Gentiles as opposition from some Jewish Christians to the mission of the church, an opposition that will be addressed further in the narrative. It is, therefore, not just about Peter eating with the uncircumcised, but about the mission of the church in the non-Jewish world. From this point the narrative goes on to explain and justify the Gentile mission even in the face of growing opposition.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{187} It is worth noting that in Acts 11:15-18, Peter speaks about the coming of salvation and the baptism of the Gentiles. Thus, as remarked by Bock, salvation appears to be the point as well. Bock, Acts, 406, f/n 1.  
\textsuperscript{188} Dunn, The Acts of the Apostles, 149.  
\end{flushleft}
2.2.4 The resistance to Gentile inclusion at Antioch (Acts 13:42-52)

After the outpouring of the Spirit in the Cornelius’ episode (Acts 10:1-48) and Peter’s accusation/explanation (Acts 11:4-18), the church in Jerusalem began to struggle with the realisation that God had given to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life (Acts 11:18b). The mission continued to spread in the ethnic territories. With Stephen’s death, the persecuted and scattered followers of Jesus travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (Acts 11:19). The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22), and Barnabas eventually brought Paul to Antioch (Acts 11:26a). At Antioch, Paul and Barnabas spent an entire year teaching the word of God among the people (Acts 11:26b).

In Acts 13:16-41, after the departure of Paul and Barnabas on a wider mission, Luke records an extensive speech of Paul in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch. This is Paul’s first recorded address in Acts, though not by any means the first instance of his preaching, which indicates the significant role played by this speech in the narrative. Paul begins by summarising Israel’s history and then speaks about what God is doing in the lives of the audience – πολλοί τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ τῶν σεβομένων προσηλύτων (v 43; cf. vv 16 and 26). The response following this address begins on a positive note but soon shifts to a negative reaction. Luke thus records another moment of opposition to Gentile inclusion.

Following Paul’s speech (Acts 13:16b-41), many Jews and devout proselytes urge (παρεκάλουν – they besought) Paul and Barnabas to repeat the message the following Sabbath (v 42). That Luke employs πολλοί (many, in v 43) suggests that a significant number from the audience may

---

191 This will be explored further in chapter 6 below.
192 For instance, in Acts 9:20, just after his conversion, Paul began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues which leads to a plot to kill him (9:23), as also after the preaching of Jesus in the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:18-30).
193 Σεβομένος was a term often used of God-fearers, those Gentiles who were involved in the religious and philanthropic activities of the Jews without becoming Jews. Προσήλυτος was a term used for persons preparing to become full members of Judaism. The combination of the terms here is probably a ‘catch all’ term for all those ‘on the fringe’ of the fully Jewish congregation. See Mullins, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 148, f/n 12. So also, Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 240.
194 The focus of this section is not on the Pauline speech per se, but on the crisis following the response of the people.
have responded positively to Paul’s words.\(^{196}\) Paul and Barnabas further advise them \(προσμένειν τῇ χάριτι τοῦ Θεοῦ\) (v 43b – to continue in the grace of God), suggesting a level of acceptance and identification with Paul’s message. \(Προσμένειν\), which is ‘to continue’, ‘to remain’, is indicative of someone who has accepted the word to a certain extent, and who is being advised to continue to hold on to what has been received (cf. Luke 1:4).\(^{197}\) The Jews and the devout converts to Judaism, having identified with the message to some extent, were no doubt instrumental in gathering the overwhelming crowd the following Sabbath (Acts 13:44). At this point of the narrative, the audience is simply made up of Jews and converts to Judaism who are welcome in the synagogues.

V 44 reports that the next Sabbath, “almost the whole city gathered to hear the ‘word of the Lord’” (τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ; cf. Acts 6:7). The expression, “almost the whole city gathered” (\(σχεδὸν πᾶσα ἡ πόλις συνήχθη\)) suggests an enormous number of people in and around the synagogue for this second meeting, which provokes jealousy from the Jews (v 45). It would seem that first, since the city encompasses Jews, devout converts to Judaism, and other Gentiles who have not converted, it is probable that people from these groups form part of the \(σχεδὸν πᾶσα ἡ πόλις\) that gathered in the synagogue. Second, the Jews who have partially accepted Paul’s message (v 43) may have accepted the devout converts “since God has given to Gentiles the repentance that lead to life” (Acts 11:18). Moreover, both Jews and devout converts follow Paul and Barnabas without any issues (Acts 13: 43). This therefore suggests that during this second synagogue meeting, it is the presence of many other Gentiles who have not converted to Judaism that provokes jealousy (\(ξηλος\)) from some Jews which leads to outright Jewish resistance (\(ἀντέλεγον – contradiction, speaking against, v 45\)) to Paul’s words (v 45). In his recent article, Aaron White also rightly remarks that in Acts 13, “the Jews react negatively (cf. 13:44-52), not to the gospel proclamation in 13:16-41, but to the reception of salvation by those Gentiles who are not associated with the law institution via the synagogue.”\(^{198}\)

\(^{196}\) Bock, Acts, 461.

\(^{197}\) Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 414. “Continuing in the grace of God” of v 43 implies that the audience may have had a certain degree of openness to the message of Paul.

\(^{198}\) Aaron White, “Reading Inclusion Backwards: Considering the Apostolic Decree Again in Fresh Context,” *BTB* 48, no. 4 (2018):211.
puts it more forcefully that, “the move beyond god-fearers to include all Gentiles in the claim that every person who believes in the Lord will be justified was what caused the opposition to the word.”

Luke notes the negative reaction from the Jews.

The question may be asked: why were the Jews filled with jealousy? In Acts 5:17, the same phrase (ἐπλήσθησαν ζήλου – they were filled with jealousy) is used of the Sanhedrin in its resistance to Peter and John. The Sanhedrin’s jealousy in Acts 5:17 is a reaction to missionary success (Acts 5:12-16; cf. v 28). Likewise, in Acts 13:45, missionary success among Gentiles provokes jealous opposition from some Jews. Initially, the Jews welcomed Paul’s message (v 43). Paul’s inclusive speech which indicates that proselytes and God fearers could also regard themselves as heirs of the promises to Israel (Acts 13:13-43) probably attracted the “whole city” (v 44), including non-proselytised Gentiles. Thus it is the subsequent arrival of, and unconditional opening of the door to non-proselytised Gentiles, that prompts the jealousy and resistance. This unguarded inclusion of Gentiles seems to undermine Jewish self-understanding of being the chosen of God, and as such, separate from other nations. Therefore, as with Acts 6:1 and 11:1-3, the jealousy prompted by this Gentile inclusion reflects the unwillingness to accept the ‘other’ by some Jewish members of the communities; a situation which pervades the Acts narrative, and which Luke seeks to overcome (cf. Acts 14:1-7, 19-20; 15:1-5).

Luke shows in this narrative that Paul and Barnabas respond to the Jewish opposition by “turning to the Gentiles” (v 51). Luke’s argument is that mission to non-Jews falls within the context of God’s agenda: “the Lord has commanded us saying, ‘I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth’” (Acts 13:47; cf. Isa 199

---


200 Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 414-415. This is based on the assumption that there was Jewish missionary activity during the era.

This Isaiah citation connects with Simeon’s prophecy in Luke 2:32 and Jesus’ programmatic prophecy in Acts 1:8. Paul cites this text as an instruction from the Lord (cf. Acts 1:2) which thus contradicts the Jewish resistance to this same Gentile mission. The “ends of the earth” become symbolic for the universal mission, which is mission “to the Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17-18) and to the entire world (Acts 22:15). The quotation also brings mission into direct continuity with “universal salvation” that was the theme of Paul’s sermon (Acts 13:26, vv 38-39). These series of connections to things said earlier in the narrative of Acts together with parallels to the gospel of Luke show how important Acts 13 is in Luke-Acts. Luke shows that while the mission to the nations is quite often met with resistance from some Jews, the Gentiles always welcome it with joy (Acts 13:48; 28:28). It appears true then, as Bock indicates, that “The reaction, given where it appears in the account, seems to be directed against the outreach to the Gentiles as much as, or more than, it is against the preached message of fulfilled promise.” Thus in Acts 13:42-52, Luke exposes Jewish objection to Gentile inclusion in salvation (Acts 13:46b-47), while portraying the Gentiles’ acceptance of it (v 48).

Luke reports too that these resisting Jews incite the devout women of high standing (σεβομένας γυναίκας) and the leading men of the city (v 50). If these σεβομένας γυναίκας have been part of the τῶν σεβομένων προσήλυτων who followed Paul and Barnabas earlier (v 42), then it suggests that some of the Gentiles too have become part of the Jewish resistance to the mission. This raises the issues surrounding the encouragement of Gentiles in their faith, and how Luke uses the Spirit in different ways to achieve this end.

49:6). This Isaiah citation connects with Simeon’s prophecy in Luke 2:32 and Jesus’ programmatic prophecy in Acts 1:8. Paul cites this text as an instruction from the Lord (cf. Acts 1:2) which thus contradicts the Jewish resistance to this same Gentile mission. The “ends of the earth” become symbolic for the universal mission, which is mission “to the Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17-18) and to the entire world (Acts 22:15). The quotation also brings mission into direct continuity with “universal salvation” that was the theme of Paul’s sermon (Acts 13:26, vv 38-39). These series of connections to things said earlier in the narrative of Acts together with parallels to the gospel of Luke show how important Acts 13 is in Luke-Acts. Luke shows that while the mission to the nations is quite often met with resistance from some Jews, the Gentiles always welcome it with joy (Acts 13:48; 28:28). It appears true then, as Bock indicates, that “The reaction, given where it appears in the account, seems to be directed against the outreach to the Gentiles as much as, or more than, it is against the preached message of fulfilled promise.” Thus in Acts 13:42-52, Luke exposes Jewish objection to Gentile inclusion in salvation (Acts 13:46b-47), while portraying the Gentiles’ acceptance of it (v 48).

Luke reports too that these resisting Jews incite the devout women of high standing (σεβομένας γυναίκας) and the leading men of the city (v 50). If these σεβομένας γυναίκας have been part of the τῶν σεβομένων προσήλυτων who followed Paul and Barnabas earlier (v 42), then it suggests that some of the Gentiles too have become part of the Jewish resistance to the mission. This raises the issues surrounding the encouragement of Gentiles in their faith, and how Luke uses the Spirit in different ways to achieve this end.

---
202 Luke’s view is made very clear from the start of the gospel that God intends to work salvation for all peoples (Luke 2:30-32; 24:47; Acts 1:8).
205 Bock, *Acts*, 464. After this chapter, the narrative focuses on the expansion of the church among the Gentiles and the reception of the word in the Gentile world to as far as Rome. Hence, this chapter acts as the bridge between the mission in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the mission to the ends of the earth. From now on, the mission to the ends of the earth begins.
208 See chapter 3 below.
To sum up, in Jerusalem some Jewish Christians criticised Peter’s mission (Acts 11:1-3). In Pisidian Antioch, some of the Jewish community in a Gentile territory are not only jealous (Acts 13:45; cf. 17:5) but have also stirred up persecution and strife on account of this mission to the nations. While the Gentiles welcome the faith (Acts 13:48), some Jews are filed with jealousy, reflecting the earlier accounts of the Sanhedrin and the apostles (Acts 5:17, 33). As a result of this strife and persecution, Paul and Barnabas “shook off the dust from their feet in protest against them” (Acts 13:51), which is in turn reflective of the words of Jesus to the disciples in the face of resistance to the gospel (Luke 9:5; 10:11). Luke has painted here a clear picture of opposition from some Jews regarding the mission to τὰ ἔθνη.

2.2.5 The crises leading up to the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1-5)209


---

209 The full pericope of the Jerusalem council is Acts 15:1-35. This subheading only addresses the challenges in vv 1-5 which gives the background to the Jerusalem council. The council deliberations (vv 5-35) and the appeal to the Holy Spirit in the resolution of the issues raised in vv 1-5 shall be addressed in chapter six below.


From the narrative itself, we see that many Jews are now believers (Acts 2:37-42, cf. v. 5; 6:1; 10:45; 11:2, 19; 14:1); and many Gentiles too (Acts 10:48; 11:1; 14:1, 27). Many Jews also acknowledge the redemptive mission extended to the nations (Acts 11:18). The issue at stake is no longer the admission of Gentiles, but the conditions for their entrance. Jewish believers strongly hold that “the promises made by God to the Hebrew patriarchs and to the chosen people could not fail, and the institution established by God in the Old Testament could not be reduced to nothing.” To quote Ricciotti,

The pagans could indeed become followers of the Messiah Jesus, provided they were incorporated into the chosen nation of God by accepting circumcision and the other prescriptions of the Mosaic Law. For them to refuse to do so would be tantamount to a declaration that God’s promises of old were of no avail and that the divine law was abrogated, all of which would be the equivalent of blasphemy.

This is the developing problem and situation projected by Luke in Acts 15:1-5. It is a situation that highlights strong resistance from some of the Jewish believers towards the conditions of admission for Gentile believers.

In v 1, Luke begins to narrate the problems that would eventually lead to the Jerusalem council. Luke indicates that some individuals from Judea have come to Antioch and are teaching τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς (the brothers) that “unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” These individuals have no authority from Jerusalem (v 24b); they probably assume it simple because they are ‘Jewish’ Christians from Jerusalem – members of the mother church. These Judeans emphasise ‘circumcision’ as a condition for salvation. They also teach that the circumcision must be τῷ ἐθεὶ τῷ Μωϋσέως, (according to the custom of

---

217 This strict view of the necessity of circumcision for salvation is also reflected in Gal 2:15-5:2 and 6:15-16. In Galatians, Paul also contends with those of this strict view. It may be noted that the situation under study concerns the church in Antioch (cf. v 23) though a similar insistence on circumcision as necessary for salvation may have taken place in Galatia too. These brothers may possibly be the messengers from James (Gal 2:12) or may be ‘false brothers’ secretly brought in to spy on Paul and company (Gal 2:4), a question that lies beyond the scope of our Lukan focus.
Moses, cf. also Acts 6:14), a phrase which would be a reference to Jewish tradition as it had been practiced over the centuries.\footnote{Dunn, The Acts of the Apostles, 199. This is the first time in Acts that the question arises whether Gentile Christians must be circumcised according to the Law of Moses. It reflects the command to be circumcised in connection with the patriarch Abraham (Gen. 17:10-14). See Bock, Acts, 494.} Judea here would mean Jerusalem (cf. v 24),\footnote{Conzelmann, Acts, 115, argues that Luke deliberately avoids the use of Jerusalem and instead uses the general term “Judea” to indicate that they were not agitating under orders from the Jerusalem church (cf. v. 24). So also Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles, 442.} and \(\tau\'\upsilon\varsigma\ \dot{\alpha}\delta\epsilon\lambda\phi\omega\upsilon\varsigma\) would refer to the Christian community in Antioch.

The Judean guests target the Gentile believers (v 23). It may be recalled that Cornelius his and household had been accepted into the faith and baptised though they were uncircumcised (cf. Acts 10:44-48).\footnote{See Mullins, The Acts of the Apostles, 156; Bock, Acts, 494; Contra Malina and Pilch, Book of Acts, 106, who assert that the Judean insistence on circumcision was addressed to Israelites living among and assimilated to non-Israelite majorities to such a degree as to be indistinguishable from them. This group, the authors insist, are the ones exhorted to be circumcised and obliged to observe the Law of Moses. However, if Acts 15:6-11 is taken into consideration, it becomes obvious that the Gentiles are meant here: through Peter, the Gentiles receive the message (v 7); God gave them (Gentiles) the Holy Spirit ... just as among ‘us’ (v 8); in cleansing their (Gentiles) hearts, God made no distinction between them (Gentiles) and ‘us’ (v 9); ‘we’ will be saved just as they (Gentiles) will (v 11).} This led to the criticism of Peter by the ‘circumcised party’ (Acts 11:1-3). In like manner, Gentile converts in the recently evangelized cities (Acts 14:21ff), such as those in Antioch itself, had been received into the Christian community without mention of the need for circumcision. This indicates that this condition had not been insisted on earlier.\footnote{Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles, 286.} This is the first time in Acts that the question arises whether Gentiles who become believers must be circumcised and keep the Jewish tradition.\footnote{Earlier in Acts 11:1-18, the ‘circumcised believers’ objected to Peter’s table-fellowship with the ‘uncircumcised believers’ in Cornelius’ house. The ‘circumcised believers’ were, however, eventually won over as they praised God for granting to the Gentiles a repentance that leads to life. Here, however, a group from the Jerusalem community raises the question of circumcision as a necessary precondition for the admission of the Gentiles into the church. This concerns the more extensive Gentile mission of Paul and Barnabas. While this group does not really reject or criticise the faith of the Gentile believers, their insistence that the Gentiles accept the traditional socio-ethnic mark of Jewish identity to maintain a ‘saved’ status among the people of God, seems to assert that the boundaries of the people of God are co-extensive with the nation of Israel. See F. Scott Spencer, Acts (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 154. For key texts on circumcision, see Gen 17:9-14; Exod 12:48-49; Lev 12:12:3; Deut 5:28-33; cf. Isa 56:6; and for early Christian discussion of the issue see Rom 2:25-29; Gal 5:2-12.} These thoughts, Ricciotti argues, “were the sentiments of the majority of the Palestinian Jewish Christians, nevertheless, the most ardent exponents of such views were those Jewish priests who had been received into the faith (6:7),
and the converted Pharisees referred to later (15:5).” These Judeans present circumcision as a necessary requirement in order for Gentiles to be saved. In this way, as Morgan has noted, “The religion of Jesus Christ to the mind of the Hebrew that believed in him, was not a religion that destroyed the religion of his fathers, but fulfilled it.” It is in this regard that their argument can be understood that, ἐὰν μὴ...οὐ δύνασθε σωφῆναι (“unless...you cannot be saved”). This suggests a strong opposition from some Jewish Christians to the developing practice of mission among τὰ ἔθνη; that Gentiles were being admitted without circumcision.

The claims of these Judeans do not go down well with Paul and Barnabas. Consequently, they (Paul and Barnabas) dispute with the Judean party (στάσεως καὶ ζητήσεως ὡς ὀλίγης, literally, not a little discord and questioning – Acts 15:2), because the understanding of the Antioch community to be genuine believers is being called to question. The phrase ὡς ὀλίγης (which is Luke’s figure for speech for “great” – cf. Acts 12:18; 14:28), “reflects good classical understatement meaning there was a lot of debate.” The use of στάσις (discord, dissension, conflict), suggests a strong opposition which requires resolution. And as Witherington observes,

The main way to resolve such conflict in antiquity was to call a meeting of the ἐκκλήσια, the assembly of the people (cf. vv. 12, 22), and listen to and consider speeches following the conventions of deliberative rhetoric, the aim... was to overcome στάσις and produce concord or unity.

Luke therefore has in mind to overcome the ensuing resistance from these Jewish Christians, especially as mission expands into Gentile environments. Consequently, since Paul and Barnabas cannot convince the Judeans otherwise, and the matter needs an urgent resolution, they refer it to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem; the issue is too important to be left to a

---

223 Ricciotti, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 229. While this is an interesting proposal, it may not be possible to identify the ‘circumcision party’ with such precision.
local decision (v 2). The delegates (which include Paul and Barnabas and others, cf. Gal 2:1-10) proceed to Jerusalem. Luke reports only the journey of the Pauline delegates which suggests that the two parties are not traveling together. This is supported by the fact that Luke notes two further boundary-crossing incidents: Paul and Barnabas report the conversion of Gentiles (15:3; cf. Acts 14:27) to the brethren in Phoenicia and Samaria, indicating the presence of the church in those regions (cf. Acts 8:5ff; 11:19); and the news of the Gentile mission brings great joy to believers everywhere (Acts 15:3). This implies that opposition to this mission comes from only a small minority; a group that Luke wishes to convince that this circumcision-free mission is legitimate.

Witherington rightly remarks that Luke’s description of the warm welcome accorded the delegates in Jerusalem (v 4) makes clear how Luke views the matter at hand. As the narrative makes clear, God had been at work in this Gentile mission (τε ὅσα ὁ θεὸς ἐποίησεν μετ' αὐτῶν, cf. Acts 14:27; 15:4, 12; 21:19). Strangely enough, as Conzelmann has noted, Luke does not specifically mention the problem about the Gentiles (as part of the delegates’ report) which actually brought about the journey. Nor does Luke immediately recount the reaction of the Jerusalem church concerning the delegates’ report. Rather, it would seem Luke is more interested in making it explicitly clear that there is a conflict emerging for the wider church communities. Therefore, in v 5, Luke states once again the problem mentioned earlier in v 1, but reports it as if the dispute now arises anew within the Jerusalem church. This time it is the converted Pharisees who emphatically project their view: ὅτι δὲ ἐσθι (“it is necessary”), they say, for Gentiles to be circumcised; and παραγγέλειν τε τηρεῖν τὸν νόμον Μωϋσέως (“and be

---


230 Luke gives no explanation why both the Judeans and the Antioch representatives did not travel together to Jerusalem to settle the controversy there. It may be assumed that the discord is responsible for this, or perhaps the route through border lands taken by the group from Antioch. At this point the Judeans vanish from the scene. Munck, The Acts of the Apostles, 137.


charged to keep the law of Moses,” v 5). This group compounds the problem and thus makes two demands: Gentiles are (1) to be circumcised, as also noted in v 1, and (2) to keep the law. From the narrative point of view therefore, Luke presents a situation whereby the Pharisaic converts argue that the demand (in v 1) is a divine necessity. These believers of Pharisaic background, in order to make their point, ἐξανέστησαν (rose up), and speak their mind. ἐξανέστησαν here while having the meaning of physically standing up, also hints at someone stamping authority. They stand their ground to make their point. Earlier in v 1, the Judean brethren give a condition, ἐὰν μὴ...οὐ δύνασθε σωθῆναι; this last disposition of the Pharisaic converts is stated even more strongly. Not only are they giving a condition of necessity, ὅτι δεῖ, they also suggest that the Gentiles be charged or ordered: παραγγέλειν τε τηρεῖν τὸν νόμον Μωϋσέως (to order [them] to keep the law of Moses). Luke here clearly exposes the emphatic resistance of these Jewish Christians on account of the Gentile mission.

2.3 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has shown that the implied audience of Luke-Acts is ethnically diverse, both within and beyond the Jewish communities, and includes the ‘ethnicities’ of language, culture, race and religion. Some of the texts will be explored further in later chapters in relation to the Holy Spirit, but here they have been read to highlight Luke’s acknowledgement of ethnic issues within the Jewish-Gentile Christian communities – Hebrew/Aramaic-speaking Jewish believers neglecting Greek-speaking Jewish widows in the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:1-6); a section of the Church in Jerusalem reprimanding Peter for going to the “uncircumcised” and eating with them (Acts 11:1-3). This requires Peter, in Jerusalem, to explain himself before his critics and the other apostles concerning mission among Gentiles (Acts 11:4-18). Also, some Jews exhibit open jealousy and resistance on account of missionary success among the nations. Paul and Barnabas explain to these Jews that since they reject the word of God, the mission is turning to

---

235 As Dunn notes, the fact that Pharisees were attracted to the new movement while still characteristically pharisaic in their emphasis in doing the law, indicates how conservative as regards the law the Jerusalem church was, an attitude to which Luke was by no means hostile (cf. Acts 7:38, 53; 18:18; 21:26; 23:6). See Dunn, The Acts of the Apostles, 200.
236 Bock, Acts, 496.
237 Bock, Acts, 496.
the Gentiles (Acts 13:44-52). The mission extends to ethnic territories and they welcome it with great enthusiasm (Acts 13:48; 14:27). The faith of the ethnic believers in Jesus is no longer questioned. Nevertheless, some Jewish followers of Jesus try to set conditions for the admission of the nations into the believing communities; conditions that will require Gentiles to lose their ethnic identity and become Jewish. Luke identifies these Jewish believers as from Judea and others of Pharisaic background (Acts 15:1, 5). Paul and Barnabas, the apostles to the nations (Acts 13:47; cf. 9:15) do not agree with these restrictions. This results in a great argument and debate between some of the Judeans on the one hand, and Paul and Barnabas on the other. It is a situation of disarray needing resolution. In the midst of this report, the Lukan narrator clearly identifies for the implied reader that God is in action in the mission to τὰ ἔθνη (Acts 15:3).

Luke has painted a portrait of a tense state of affairs within the Lukan network of communities on account of the Gentile mission; a situation of strong resistance from some Jewish believers as mission expands to non-Jewish world. The final point of opposition needing resolution is not whether the nations should be included in the communities or not, but the requirements for such inclusion.238 Must Gentiles who become believers in Jesus also observe the Jewish practices for salvation as argued by the Judeans and the Pharisaic converts? This is the bone of contention which leads to the Jerusalem council and results in the council’s message to the Gentile churches (Acts 15:6-35). Luke depicts a divided community: Paul and Barnabas and the Gentile church on the one hand and some in the Jerusalem church on the other hand, with the apostles and the elders in an arbitrating position. It is a situation that demands careful presentation and deliberation, particularly as it addresses both the question of historical tensions among the earliest followers of Jesus and the ongoing nature of these tensions among the implied audiences of Luke-Acts. It is significant in this context that the voices of reconciliation at the Jerusalem council are Peter’s (15:7-11) and James’ (15:13-21), not Paul (9:15) or Barnabas who, though present and reported as speaking, are silenced by the narrator. The reason for this is that it is going to be more persuasive for the resisting Jewish reader that the decision is made by leaders of the mother church. In doing so, it would seem that Luke has

238 Bock, Acts, 497.
not given up on winning over resistant Jews even in his own day, after the destruction of the mother church in Jerusalem.

Luke therefore has a double task: that of telling the story of attempts to bring about unity and acceptance between Jews and Gentiles in the earliest ‘Christian’ communities, and to do so in a way that provides a basis for ongoing unity amongst his own implied audiences. As Bock writes, “this pressure and the reality of trying to form a united community among a fresh ethnic mix of people are the key elements that drive Luke-Acts.”

Bock reiterates:

In the era before Jesus’ ministry, a distance had obtained between pious Jews and Gentiles. In this context, one can understand how bringing these people together would have been difficult, requiring careful explanation. Thus, Luke-Acts explains the roots, nature and needs of forging a new community made up of the people of the world who had turned to the hope represented in Jesus.

In the Lukan narrative, the mission to the Gentiles is a necessity that follows the divine plan as much as the mission in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Luke 2:32; Acts 1:8). With the developing crises and conflicts in the wider church and within the local communities, it becomes pertinent for both Jewish and Gentile believers to be made aware of this in a way and manner that appeals for transformation in both groups. To this end, as I will argue below, Luke makes references to the activities of the Spirit of God in the past (in the OT era), in the ministry of Jesus and in the era of the church with a view to convincing resisting Jewish Christians of the validity of the Gentile mission already happening in the communities (and to affirm those Jewish believers already open to this mission). Luke equally writes in a way and manner that appeals to understanding in the Gentile religious context with a view to affirming the Gentiles in their new faith. In this way, Luke is seeking not only to legitimate the Gentile mission for the implied resisting readers, but also to create unity between Jewish and Gentile believers in the communities. This can be seen in Luke’s creative appeal to the Spirit as leading character in the narrative, an appeal that transcends ethnic and religious backgrounds. It would seem that

---

241 This will be addressed in chapter three.
Luke understands that a reference to something so transcendent could be a sociological force to bring together these diverse people.

Since Luke’s narrative addresses both Jewish and Gentile believers in the communities, it must therefore be shown that the Spirit engages with both Jewish and Gentile Christians. To begin with, chapter three below teases out how the Spirit as a character could have functioned for Gentile Christians caught in the midst of the turmoil present within the wider Lukan communities.
Chapter three

Luke’s use of the Spirit to engage Gentile Christians

The previous chapter argued that the author of Luke-Acts addresses a network of diverse communities composed of Jewish and Gentile Christians within a context of Jewish Christian resistance to Gentile inclusion in the community of believers. It is a major argument of this thesis that Luke aims to convince resisting Jewish Christians about the legitimacy of the Gentile mission. But since the implied Lukan communities encompass both Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Jesus, this chapter argues that Luke also works to engage the non-Jewish members of the communities in their acceptance of the faith and therefore to create and support communities that are Jewish and Gentile. Central to this thesis is the assertion that Luke, in addressing resisting Jewish members of the communities, appeals to the roles of the Spirit of the Lord/God from the Hebrew Bible; roles that would be familiar to the Jewish Christians. In a similar way, this chapter explores how Luke’s use of the Spirit might resonate with Gentile readers in the context of the Greco-Roman world. The assumption here is that both Luke and the authorial audience of Luke-Acts were familiar not just with the basic themes of the Jewish scriptures, but also with the cultural scripts and rhetorical conventions of the wider Greco-Roman world.

---

242 Detail study of the role of the Spirit of the Lord/God in the Old Testament will be carried out in the chapter four.
243 The Greco-Roman world technically refers to the ancient Mediterranean world during the Hellenistic and Roman periods (that is, from the late 4th century BCE through the 5th century CE). Greco-Roman religions include those public and private cults which had developed out of the archaic and classical Greek and Roman religious practices, as well as the many native cults and mystery religions which had arisen on ancient Near Eastern soil and had spread to the urban areas of the Mediterranean world, including early Judaism and early Christianity. See D. E. Aune, “Religions, Greco-Roman,” in Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 786 and 791. See also D. E. Aune, "Religion, Greco-Roman," in Dictionary of New Testament Background, ed. Evan A. and Stanley E. Porter Craig (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 917-926. It is beyond the scope of this work to explore Greco-Roman religions in detail. It is my intention simply to deduce from some of the widespread religio-cultural practices of the time, how an aspect of the Christian movement (the Holy Spirit), might have meaning for the Gentile Christians who originated from these diverse cultures. For as Klauck shows, Luke presents his material having in mind as well the expectations of an educated Greco-Roman public. Hans-Josef Klauck, Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 4.
244 Parsons, Luke, 17.

Luke gives a foretaste of the expansion of the mission to the nations at the start of the gospel, where Jesus is “light for revelation to the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32). This is also highlighted at the end of the gospel where Jesus gives the disciples instructions to “preach repentance and forgiveness of sins... to all nations” (Luke 24:47). Equally, at the start of Acts, Luke makes it clear that witnessing begins from Jerusalem and continues to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). As mission moves on from Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria towards the Gentile world, Luke shows God’s interest in this mission to τὰ ἔθνη by choosing an instrument to “bring my name before Gentiles and kings...” (Acts 9:15). This foreshadows the later role of Paul, but as have seen, it is Peter and James who provide the mediating bridge between the early factions. Luke also implies that there should be no disparity between Jews and Gentiles in the church’s communities (Acts 10:15, 28, 34-35; 11:9, 17). With the admission of τὰ ἔθνη into the Christian communities, Luke tells the intended reader that the ethnic followers of Jesus embrace the faith joyfully (Acts 13:48).

In contrast to this joyful and exciting picture of Gentile acceptance of the faith, Luke also portrays disturbing events: it is public knowledge that some Jewish leaders reject the Christian faith (Acts 4:5-6, 13-22; 13:44-45; 14:2; 28:24); some Jews persecute followers of Jesus (Acts 4:1-22; 5:17-42; 8:1b; 9:1ff; 12:1-5), and stone Stephen to death (Acts 7:54-8:1a). The persecution is so severe that believers pray for boldness to face the threat (Acts 4:23-31). Despite the persecution, the mission expands to non-Jewish territories, and internal conflicts then set in alongside the external. Externally, some unbelieving Jews continue to oppose the mission of the followers of Jesus and incite other non-Jews also to oppose this mission (Acts 13:45; 14:2, 19; 17:5, 12; 18:6; 20:3b). Internally, some Jewish believers oppose the admission of Gentiles into the Christian communities and make Jewish religious demands of Gentiles who become believers (Acts 11:1-3; 15:1-5; cf. 21:28-30). Moreso, if Jesus is the Messiah first of all promised to the Jews but whose leaders rejected him and killed him (Acts 2:22-24; 3:14-15; 4:10-11; 10:39b; 13:27-29), what is the basis and hope for Gentile Christians in believing in this Messiah? Furthermore, while some Jewish believers disagree with the manner of Gentile
admission into the communities of the followers of Jesus, some non-believing Gentiles too, (both those incited by some Jews and those who want to protect their trade) persecute the believers in Jesus (Acts 14:2; 16:19-24; 17:5-9; 19:23-41). Luke shows that in this situation, some encouragement and support for the disciples is essential (Acts 14:21-22; 20:1). Maddox summarises the situation thus:

If once the charismatic testimony of the Spirit grew dim, the onset of persecution, or even of sustained psychological pressure from the Jews through dispute over the meaning of the scriptures and the credibility of a crucified Messiah, will have shaken many people’s confidence in their faith. How could non-Jews hope to find any value in something which has its roots in Judaism, yet seems to be repudiated by the leaders of the Jews?

Thus, while Luke seeks to convince Jewish Christians opposed to mission to τὰ ἔθνη (or the inclusion of Gentiles within the community), Luke also works to confirm and encourage Christians of ethnic origin in the face of this opposition (cf. Acts 14:22; 20:1-2). According to Maddox, Luke does this (addresses Gentiles) by appealing to historical argument that: “The leaders of Judaism have in repeated instances, and in spite of every opportunity to hear the gospel, excluded themselves from the Kingdom of God” and that despite the extensive mission among the Jews, they (Jews) “confirmed their decision, already shown in Luke’s first volume, to reject Jesus and thereby to reject the offer of God’s salvation.”

From my perspective, Maddox here simplifies and polarises the issues and the protagonists, both at the historical and the narrative level. Rather, we have seen that the narrative emphasises a new Jewish leadership in Peter and James who mediate common ground between believing Jews and Gentiles and open the door for the subsequent Pauline mission to Gentiles. Thereby Luke maintains the invitation to all parties: for the resisting Jewish audience to remain in fellowship

---


with the growing network of Christ-believers, and also for the ethnic believers by using categories from their religious experiences, as will be examined further in the following section.

3.2 The religious environment of Greco-Roman society

The implied Gentile Christian communities of the narrative of Luke-Acts existed in the context of the Greco-Roman world and would have been familiar with its many and varied religions, customs and practices. In this broad cultural context, religion played an important role in the affairs of both individuals and corporate society. Looking back at this society and its religiosity, Sean Freyne notes that when the Ephesians named Barnabas ‘Zeus’ and Paul ‘Hermes’, they were portraying the kind of lively religious imagination of Hellenistic society (Acts 14:11-12). Similarly, Paul’s reported comments on the proliferation of altars in Athens, alongside his reference to the one dedicated to “The unknown God” expresses something of the pervasive religiosity of the times. This confirms the assertion that “Christianity did not enter the Roman Empire as a solitary actor. The stage was already crowded with religion.”

---


249 Klauck, Magic and Paganism, 23, argues that “The religious practices they knew before conversion to Christianity are not forgotten and laid aside once and all.” Cf. Acts 19:18.

250 Jan N. Bremmer, Greek Religion (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2-4. Bremmer notes that in Greek culture, religion was totally embedded in society – no sphere of life lacked a religious aspect. Similarly, Croy highlights how deeply religious the society was and so holds that “pagans in the Hellenistic era were by no means irreligious persons; many of them sought divine guidance in their everyday lives.” See N. Clayton Croy, "Religion, Personal," in Dictionary of New Testament Background, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter Craig (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 926.


Croy, therefore, would be justified in asserting that, “It was the piety or religiosity of the Hellenistic world that made it fertile soil for the early Christian mission.”

Particularly worthy of mention are the mystery cults/religions which flourished during the beginning of the Christian era. The close affinity between some of the practices of these cults and those of the early church makes them all the more worthy of exploration. It must be acknowledged then, that the Christian mission’s entrance into the Greco-Roman (Gentile) world was a journey into a society already replete with numerous religious movements and activities. It comes as no surprise then that Luke utilised connections with this religious setting in order to most effectively communicate the message of Jesus in terms that Gentile Christians would understand.

3.2.1 Greco-Roman mystery religions and Christianity

During the period around the beginning of the Christian era, and especially in the second century, there were many cultic groups of various types known as mystery religions, often with a connection to the many local associations who often had a religious dimension. The political powerlessness of many during this time of Roman rule created an enthusiastic energy for these associations, most of which were cultic in nature. Many of the cult groups were

---

254 E. Ferguson, "Religions, Greco-Roman," in Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments, ed. Ralph Martin P. and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1009. During the first century CE, mystery religions were still relatively small localized cults in various parts of the empire; they started to become more popular in the NT era. Jeffers argues that at this time nearly every region of the Mediterranean world had its own mystery religion. See James S. Jeffers, The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 96. These local cults were often connected with trade or other associations. Some examples of associations include the professional corporations or guilds (fishermen, fruit growers, ship owners and so on), funeral societies, and religious or cult societies, which centered on the worship of a deity. Each of these associations had a religious character. See Aune, "Religions, Greco-Roman,” 792. See also Judge, “Did the Churches Compete with Cult Groups?” 509; and Hans-Josef Klauck, The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 47-53.
named after a god. A basic religious practice of the associations and the mystery religions, among other more mainstream temples, included a sacrificial meal among members.

The phrase, “mystery religions” is used as an umbrella term for “a variety of ancient public and private cults which shared a number of common features.” Individuals who were interested in membership of these religions became part of them through initiation by undergoing a secret ritual. The mysteries were only accessible to initiates and membership was limited. Generally, these cults had a myth of what happened to a god; in most cases the god took the path of suffering and wandering, but this eventually resulted in victory.

It is striking that the story of Jesus in the sermons in the narrative of Acts follows a similar pattern: Jesus suffers death unjustly, but God raised him to life (Acts 2:22-24; 3:14-18; 4:27-28; see also Luke 24:26, 44-48). There are other interesting parallels between the early church communities (as described in the narrative of Acts) and the mystery cults. For instance: believers are first called Christians in a Gentile city (Antioch – cf. Acts 11:26). In Judge’s opinion,

256 For instance, Διονυσιασταί (the ‘Dionysiasts’) after the god of wine, Dionysus; the ‘Sarapiasts’ after the Graeco-Egyptian god Serapis; the ‘Soteriasts’ in honour of a redeemer god. See Klauck, The Religious Context of Early Christianity, 44.


258 Aune, “Religions, Greco-Roman,” 792. For instance they involve a ritual of initiation; individuals choose to join the group, and those initiated are bound to secrecy concerning the details of the ritual. See Jennifer Larson, Understanding Greek Religion (London: Routledge, 2016), 254. The term mystery derives from the Greek mystes (initiant) from which is derived mysterion (ritual of initiation – that is the secret rites which formed the centre of such cults). Some examples of the mystery religions are the Eleusinian mysteries, the mysteries of Mithra, the mystery of Synthema, the cult and mysteries of Dionysus, Serapis, Cybele and so on. For details see Aune, “Religions, Greco-Roman,” 792-793; Klauck, The Religious Context of Early Christianity, 81-152; Larson, Understanding Greek Religion, 254-260; Ferguson, “Religion,” 1006-1011; Freyne, The World of the New Testament, 35-41; Jeffers, The Greco-Roman World, 92-98; Tidball, Sociology of the New Testament, 71-72; and Bremmer, Greek Religion, 84-97. See also Robert Parker, On Greek Religion (London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 275-277; N. J. Richardson, "Early Greek Views About Life and Death," in Greek Religion and Society, ed. P. E. Easterling and J. V. Muir (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), 57-58.

259 Aune, “Religion, Greco-Roman,” 924. Also Ferguson, “Religions,” 1009, who points out that the uninitiated could not participate in the activities of the mysteries. See also Jeffers, The Greco-Roman World, 96, who identifies secrecy of ceremonies as very central to the mystery religions; and Richardson, “Early Greek Views” who recalls that violation of secrecy was sometimes punishable by death. Similarly, Tidball, Sociology of the New Testament, 71, holds that members alone had the mysteries revealed to them. So also Walter Burkert, Ancient Mystery Cults (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1987), 8, 10 and 11.


261 Klauck, The Religious Context of Early Christianity, 88. So also Jeffers, The Greco-Roman World, 96. This concept of suffering is also observable in Jesus’ ministry in Luke 9-19 (journey to Jerusalem) and also in the disciples’ ministry in Acts.
the believers accepted this new name because it identified them with Christ (as associations were named after their god). Furthermore Luke, like the mystery cults, indicates that early Christianity developed as a religion of salvation and personal choice (Acts 2:37-41; 5:4; 8:12-13, 36; 10:47; 11:14; 13:48; 14:1; 16:14-15, 30-34 and so on); converts participated in ceremonies of initiation and baptism (Acts 2:41; 8:12, 38; 9:19; 10:48; 16:15, 33; 19:5; 22:16); they lived in unity (Acts 1:14, 2:43-47; 4:32; 5:12-13; see Gal 3:28); and they shared in a sacred meal – the Eucharist (Acts 2:46; cf. 1 Cor 11:23-26). M. Meyer’s assertion thus may be valid that “Early Christianity developed as a Greco-Roman religion, with Jewish roots, in the same world as the mystery religions and it shows clear affinities with the mysteries.”

Relating to this, but concerning Hellenistic Diaspora Judaism, Klauck writes:

For reasons of apologetics and in the missionary hope of winning converts, with the intention of ensuring that its own tradition remained competitive and attractive, Diaspora Judaism adopted to a certain extent the language and ideas of the mysteries, without adopting the polytheistic mythology linked to these, and without substantially endangering its own faith. This tactic may have been successful, at least in regard to endangered members within its own ranks.

In the light of this, it is not unreasonable to suggest that like diaspora Judaism,

Christianity appropriated a goodly amount from other religions. Yet many of the similarities between the mysteries and early Christianity may be attributed to the fact that they were equally religions of the Greco-Roman world. As such, the mysteries and early Christianity often faced similar religious and social challenges, proposed similar ways of salvation and transformation and shared points of similarity in their visions of the way to light and life.

Freyne, by way of illustration, remarks that in the Serapis mystery, initiation was possible for laymen as well as priests. Freyne argues that this was due to Greek influence, since in the classical Greek cities the performance of religious duties was open to every citizen whereas in

---

262 Judge, “Did the Churches Compete with Cult Groups,” 517.
the east in general, they were the prerogative of a priestly caste. Freyne, therefore, sees in
the Serapis mystery, “a genuine trend towards democratization in which it is possible for all
initiates to share in the benefits of close contact with the gods – a process that Christianity was
to carry further.” It could be argued, therefore, that for a neutral observer, the Christian
communities of the Greco-Roman cities appeared to be no more than mystery associations of a
newly-imported oriental deity, whose members met in private houses (cf. Acts 4:23-31; 10:33,
44-48; 13:1-3; 16:40; 20:7-12) where they celebrated common meals. It is reasonable to
suppose that non-Jews would have perceived the early Christian communities in the light of the
mystery cults and this could have provided a springboard that facilitated their reception of the
Christian message.

That being said, it is important to note that while there are many compelling parallels between
the mysteries and the early church in the narrative of Luke-Acts, there are equally striking
differences. In the first instance, as Ferguson argues, the mystery religions’ concern for
salvation was from fate and the terrors of the afterlife, not from sin (cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 2:37-
40). The central figures of the mystery religions were all mythological, not historical
persons. Ideologically, the cult groups were generally accommodated within the ruling
culture which they did not seek to rebuild. The Christian community on the other hand was
driven to challenge the dominant polytheistic religious culture in various ways. For instance,
when the Ephesians hail Paul and Barnabas as gods (Hermes and Zeus respectively), Paul

---

Christianity’s openness to “all” was remarkably responsible for its success in the Gentile world.
268 Klauck, The Religious Context of Early Christianity, 54. As Judge has observed, whereas the cult groups are
associated with the sanctuaries created for them, the Christian communities do not associate with any sanctuary,
but meet in homes or other suitable places. See Judge, “Did the Churches Compete with Cult Groups,” 505. So also
102-110.
269 Ferguson, “Religions,” 1009. In the Greco-Roman world, individuals who longed for a sense of salvation and for
a more personal connection with a deity sought this out in the mystery religions. Jeffers, The Greco-Roman World,
96. See also Freyne, The World of the New Testament, 35, who asserts that the term “mystery,” though originally
meaning religious rites in general, eventually became associated with secret rites practiced by devotees who
celebrated the salvation myths that arose in response to the religious needs of the times.
and like every other child in the Jewish environment at the time, Jesus is presented in the temple as prescribed in
the Law (Luke 2:22-39), and other stories about Jesus that tell about his life in the gospel and in Acts.
challenges them to “...turn from these worthless things to the living God...” (Acts 14:11-16).²⁷¹

In Athens Paul commends the Athenians for their religiosity, nevertheless, he remarks: “While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now God commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30; cf. Rom 12:1).²⁷² Another example of early Christian challenge of the polytheistic religious context can be found in Acts 16:16-18, where Paul exorcises a slave girl of the spirit of divination. Similarly, Luke recounts that while Paul was still in Ephesus, those who responded to the gospel refrained from sorcery and burned their magic books (Acts 19:18-19). In the same city, Demetrius who was a silversmith, addressed his fellow workers accusing Paul in these words: “You also see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost the whole of Asia this Paul has persuaded and drawn away a considerable number of people by saying that gods made with hands are not gods...” (Acts 19:26). All these examples suggest that Luke portrays the early church as communicating with and challenging the reigning culture and religions.

Judge’s words on this are particularly apt:

The primary purpose of the synagogue assembly had been instruction in the law; to enable devout Jews to maintain their distinctive life-style. The Christians carried this over into Gentile territory. Far from lining up in competition with cults, they denounced them all as idolatrous.²⁷³

While not stating it overtly, Judge implies that, the churches were far too vocal, far too socially activist to be mistaken for one of the mystery religions; and that the churches’ call for repentance, changing the way of life, puts them at the other end of the social spectrum from the classical cults.²⁷⁴ By logical extension, it can be argued therefore, that though the early

²⁷¹ Greek tradition holds that the gods could visit humans, disguised as humans themselves. See Aune, “Religions, Greco-Roman,” 794. In fact, there is a parallel myth of how Zeus and Hermes, disguised as mortals, were barred from a thousand homes until welcomed by the aged farming couple of Baucis and Philemon. In Greek tradition, the appearance of a deity carries with it blessings and divine honour. See Aune, “Religions, Greco-Roman,” 795.

²⁷² It must be noted that altars to unknown gods are not unusual for important cult places like Athens. As Aune notes, “Athens, Olympia and Pergamon had dozens of altars to traditional Greek gods (Zeus, Athena, Hermes and so on), less to traditional deities (e.g. Helios, ‘sun,’ and Selene, ‘moon’), to abstractions (e.g. Pistis, ‘fidelity,’ and Arete, ‘virtue’) and... to ‘unknown gods’ and (safer still) to ‘all the gods’.” See Aune, “Religions, Greco-Roman,” 795.

²⁷³ Judge, “Did the Churches Compete with Cult Groups?” 511.

²⁷⁴ Judge, “Did the Churches Compete with Cult Groups?” 514. Klauck expresses a similar opinion that Christian missionaries could not simply remain inactive in the face of unchristian activities. He states that “It was necessary to draw boundaries and indicate the differences, even if this meant blackening the reputation of one’s opponents.” Klauck, Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity, 15.
church had some things in common with the mystery religions, “no claim was being made or feared that the church was in any form either a public or private association of the ordinary kind.” Rather, as Meyer noted, Clement of Alexandria was of the view that “Christianity was the only true mystery religion” and it was truly sacred in comparison to the “shameless and corrupt” Greco-Roman mysteries. These statements on the part of a prominent Christian of the second and third centuries indicate just how similar early Christianity and the mystery cults were seen to be by the uneducated observer.

In the narrative world of Luke-Acts, the presence of a variety of Greco-Roman religious traditions and cults become the backdrop for mission and missionary activity in the narrative (cf. Acts 16:16-18 and 19:18-19). It is within this pluralistic religious world that the Christian missionaries address an audience of diverse ethnicity. The call for the Gentiles to depart from a familiar way of life to embrace the Christian tradition, is a call to live as a foreigner in one’s own society, especially when persecution followed.

Since the main concern of this chapter is how the author of Luke-Acts employed the Spirit language and concepts in the narrative to legitimate the Gentile mission, I shall now focus on how spirit-related concepts and activities from the Greco-Roman religious traditions may have helped Luke to address Gentiles within their cultural traditions. Our starting point is examining how the gods communicate their will to humans and the human agents used in this communication by the gods.

### 3.2.2 Mediums of communication from the gods

In Luke-Acts, as in the OT, the Spirit is the earthly or on-stage representative of God; for this reason, the Spirit is the Spirit of the Lord/God. God is holy (Lev 20:26; cf. Luke 1:35), and so the

---

275 Judge, “Did the Churches Compete with Cult Groups?” 514. Jeffers, The Greco-Roman World, 98, also asserts that the mystery religions differ from Christianity.


Spirit is referred to as the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit speaks or acts, it is God who speaks and acts. Equally, when the Spirit gives direction or inspires mission, it is God who is giving direction and inspiration to mission. Indeed, the activity of the Spirit is equally the activity of God. Generally, Luke-Acts is replete with activities of the Spirit: the Spirit inspires characters at the birth narrative (Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 2:25-27), and directs Jesus’ mission (Luke 4:18); the Spirit directs mission from its cradle to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8; 28:25), and justifies its outcome (Acts 11:12, 17; 28:25); the Spirit also gives affirmation or prohibition to individuals (Acts 10:19; 16:6-10).

In the Greco-Roman world dominated by various traditional temples and mystery religions, generally individuals and communities employed oracles, dreams and divination among other means to discern the divine will and to justify certain religious outcomes. Behind these means of discerning the will of the gods are the spirits (and ecstatic experiences induced by the spirits) which inhabit and operate within individuals as agents of divination or as spokespersons of the oracular shrines or as interpreters of dreams. The task before us now is to explore briefly oracular and divinatory activities and spirit-possession in the Greco-Roman religious milieu and examine how such phenomena would have provided a backdrop within which, and against which, Luke’s use of the Spirit addresses Gentile readers.

1. Spirit-possession

Spirit-possession is described by Ringgren as “a condition in which a person is believed to be inhabited by the spirit of another person or a supernatural being.” In a similar way, Larson explains it as “the temporary loss of personal agency to a superhuman substitute.” In the state of spirit-possession, a person’s consciousness is altered. In Greek such abnormal phenomena are described by the term ἐνθεός, which literally means ‘within is a god’.

---

280 Larson, Understanding Greek Religion, 78.
typical Greco-Roman religious understanding is that the god (or the spirit of the god or supernatural or superhuman being) who inhabits or is within an agent speaks in a strange voice or in an unintelligible way. The same possessing-spirit may induce a person to perform odd and apparently senseless movements.\textsuperscript{283} The temporary loss of consciousness induced by the possessing-spirit enables the right conditions for inspiration during which the spirit of/the gods inspire the person or medium.\textsuperscript{284} Normally utterances made in this state are taken as divinely inspired and authentic. Larson references Plato as saying: “No one achieves inspired divination or truth when in his right mind, but only when the power of intentional thought is shackled in sleep, or when it is altered by...some divine inspiration (\textit{enthousiasmos})” (Plato, \textit{Ti}. 71e).\textsuperscript{285} Larson also notes that the agent of the gods has to be ‘not in his/her right mind’ for the participants to trust their words as divinely inspired.\textsuperscript{286}

Similar to the \textit{ἐνθοσιασμός} state in the Hellenistic society is the experience which is explained by the Latin term, \textit{possessio}.\textsuperscript{287} This is the belief that the gods have the ability to seize or carry a person and hold such a person in the god’s power. An example is given of \textit{Aristeas} who is seized by \textit{Phoibos} and miraculously transported to northern lands from which he returns with tales of Apollo’s remote and wondrous people, the Hyperboreans.\textsuperscript{288} In the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, it is said that a number of such supernatural human beings, referred to as wandering \textit{shamans}, seem to have travelled about.\textsuperscript{289}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{283} Burkert, \textit{Greek Religion}, 109.
\item \textsuperscript{284} Larson, \textit{Understanding Greek Religion}, 77. An example is given of Apollo’s priestess, \textit{pythia}, who prepared for the prophetic session by bathing, then burning laurel leaves and barley on an altar and drinking special water from a sacred spring. After the sacrifice of a goat by the petitioner, she was accompanied by the priests into the temple where she sat on a tripod. She then entered a state of inspiration from where she attended to petitioners’ questions. See Larson, \textit{Understanding Greek Religion}, 76-77.
\item \textsuperscript{285} As quoted by Larson, \textit{Understanding Greek Religion}, 77. Zeller holds similar view, stating that, “the idea of an \textit{ἐνθοσιασμός} (divine possession or inspiration) specific to poets and prophets continues in Hellenistic and imperial times and sometimes is expressed by the possession of a \textit{θεῖα φύσις}” (divine endowment). See Zeller, “The \textit{θεῖα φύσις} of Hippocrates,” 54.
\item \textsuperscript{286} Larson, \textit{Understanding Greek Religion}, 77.
\item \textsuperscript{287} Burkert, \textit{Greek Religion}, 109-110. Larson asserts that seizure by a god or goddess could be interpreted either positively as the beginning of mutual \textit{charis}, or negatively as a hostile attack. Larson, \textit{Understanding Greek Religion}, 239, f/n 168.
\item \textsuperscript{288} Burkert, \textit{Greek Religion}, 110-111.
\item \textsuperscript{289} Burkert, \textit{Greek Religion}, 111.
\end{itemize}
It is apparent that spirit-possession is an essential part of Greco-Roman religions as it is also shown in the Lukan narrative (see Luke 4:31-38; 6:18; 9:37-43; 11:14; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16-18; 19:11-20 for example). Spirit-possession provides an argument for religion generally. Burkert’s words then may be justified that, “Since the sacred, the divine, always appears as out of the ordinary and wholly other, the overwhelming experiences of a changed and extended consciousness are, if not the sole origin, at least one of the most essential supports of religion.” More often than not, a spirit-possessed individual sees, hears, and experiences things which are not present for others; such a person stands in direct contact with a higher being and communicates with gods and spirits. In the Greco-Roman world, most people believed in spiritual beings or forces that they described as gods, spirits or demons. As Everett Ferguson argues, the Greco-Roman world was very conscious of spirit-possession. It is in this regard that Simon Price argues that though prophets and poets of the classical period did indeed consume laurel leaves to induce inspiration, the eating of laurel was in itself insufficient to bring on an attack of possession leading to ecstatic prophetic utterances. In Price’s argument, the experience was more of a possession by a spirit; for instance Apollo possessing his pythia, who then becomes his mouthpiece.

Luke’s Hellenistic readers would have understood and interpreted the many references to being ‘filled with the Spirit’ (cf. Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 4:1, 14; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9, 52) within their religious context where being possessed by a spirit was a precursor to divinely inspired utterances.

---

290 Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 109. Klauck shows that in the Greco-Roman world, the relevance of the spiritual or the spiritual realm was expressed in daily life through religion. See Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 12.

291 Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 109. Burkert notes that for ancient high civilizations, including Greece, even though the established cult is to a large extent independent of such abnormal phenomena; it is not entirely excluded. That means that some individuals subscribed to such abnormal phenomena and the experience was part of the society. For several examples of spirit-possession and ecstatic behaviour, see John Gould, “On Making Sense of Greek Religion,” in *Greek Religion and Society*, ed. J. V. Easterling P. E and Muir (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 9-11.


Divination is “the art or science of interpreting symbolic messages from the gods.”

Valerie M. Warrior defines it as “the skill or art of interpreting signs thought to be sent by the gods.”

The task of giving a convincing and inspiring interpretation of signs was performed by a specialist – a seer or a prophet (mantis). The gods sent signs by means of “dreams, chance words or phrases, obstacles or signs met on the road, the flight of birds, the condition of a sacrificed animal’s entrails and the behaviour of flames.”

For instance, Xenophon asserted that “By means of sacrifices, birds, voices, dreams etc, the gods send signs to whomever they wish.” It is also Xenophon’s assertion that believers in the art of divination “do not think the birds or the humans they encounter know what is advantageous for the inquirer, but rather that they are the means by which the gods send signs.”

Warrior comments that,

Any occurrence which is not entirely a matter of course and which cannot be manipulated may become a sign: a sudden sneeze, a stumble, a chance encounter or the sound of a name caught in passing; celestial phenomena such as lightning, comets, shooting stars, eclipses of sun and moon, even a drop of rain... then of course, there are dreams...

In most cases not all dreams are thought to be significant. Nevertheless “the majority of people believe that the divine spirits inspire people when they are asleep.” Consequently, some dreams are regarded as revelatory whose meanings may be interpreted by oracles or diviners.

---

295 Aune, “Religions, Greco-Roman,” 788.
296 Valerie M. Warrior, Greek Religion: A Source Book (Indianapolis, IN: Focus Publishing, 2009), 75. See also Croy’s assertion that “in the broadest sense divination could include any means of discerning the deity’s will: prayers, dreams, prophecy.” See Croy, “Religion, Personal,” 927.
297 Warrior, Greek Religion, 75; Burkert, Greek Religion, 112. Greeks and Romans generally distinguished between technical divination and natural divination. While the former refers to the interpretation of signs, sacrifices, dreams, omens and prodigies; the latter refers to the direct inspiration of the mantis through trance, ecstasy or vision. The term is also used for a soothsayer. Aune, “Religions, Greco-Roman,” 789.
298 Larson, Understanding Greek Religion, 74.
299 Xenophon, The Cavalry Commander 9.9. For details see Warrior, Greek Religion, 75.
300 Xenophon, Memorabilia 1.1.3. See Warrior, Greek Religion, 75.
301 Burkert, Greek Religion, 112.
303 Croy, “Religion, Personal,” 927. So also Ferguson, “Religions,” 1010, who asserts that dreams were considered an important source of divine communication.
controlled – spirits which are continually in control of specific fields of activity, and especially providing signs and oracles.\textsuperscript{304} In the NT era, writers also shared the popular ancient perspective that dreams could be revelatory communications from God.\textsuperscript{305}

There were multiple sites of divination in the Greco-Roman world. Famous among them were the oracular sanctuaries of Delphi, Dodona and Didyma, yet divination however was not limited to specialists in these sanctuaries. Larson observes that “Every city and every army had its skilled seers, and non-seers divined using simpler methods.”\textsuperscript{306} This exemplifies the prevalence and relevance of divination in such societies that to doubt the arts of divination is to fall under the suspicion of godlessness.\textsuperscript{307} The practice of divination presumes the belief in the existence of the gods.\textsuperscript{308} This is because it is believed that the seer’s words presupposed a knowledge which was more than human; the seer, then, must stand in a special relationship to a divine being.\textsuperscript{309} In other words, there is a god within a person (ἐνθεός) or the spirit of a god who communicates meanings through a human agent. Larson for instance illustrates this by asserting that “underlying Greek divination from omens was the intuition that another mind had caused the bird to fly to the right, the lot to fall from the jar or the flame to leap high.”\textsuperscript{310} Divination, which is one of the most important channels of communication between gods and people, thus finds answers from the cause – the gods.\textsuperscript{311}

\textsuperscript{304} MacMullen, \textit{Paganism in the Roman Empire}, 82.
\textsuperscript{306} Larson, \textit{Understanding Greek Religion}, 73.
\textsuperscript{307} Burkert, \textit{Greek Religion}, 111. See also Larson, \textit{Understanding Greek Religion}, 194, who asserts that Greek Religion, at every level of civilization lacked the orthodoxies, authoritative leaders and scriptures to support doctrine in its ideal form. She argues that doctrines in the loose sense of widely known teachings and narratives about the gods were plentiful (e.g. in Pan-Hellenic poetry), but that these were not consistently and firmly tied to corresponding rituals, nor were specific interpretations of rituals enshrined as the only acceptable ones.
\textsuperscript{308} Parker, \textit{On Greek Religion}, 6, 12-13.
\textsuperscript{309} Cf. Larson’s assertion that “the medium’s ability to facilitate two-way verbal communication was compelling because it uniquely addressed the ‘epistemological uncertainty’ of relations between humans and gods.” Larson, \textit{Understanding Greek Religion}, 77.
\textsuperscript{310} Larson, \textit{Understanding Greek Religion}, 74.
\textsuperscript{311} Parker, \textit{On Greek Religion}, 57. For instance in Roman society, generally public disasters were interpreted as a sign of a breach of relationship between the gods and the people which must be diagnosed through divination. Aune, “Religion, Greco-Roman,” 789 and 790.
Signs and the interpretation of signs, such as casting of lots, were employed as aids to decision-making. Larson references a fourth-century BCE inscription from Athens which shows that a “lot” method was employed in order to decide whether to rent out some sacred land or leave it untilled. This in general terms reveals the religious sentiments of the Gentile world about the knowledge of the gods; the gods know a lot, the present and the future. Because of this knowledge of the gods, “all cities and peoples use divination to ask the gods what they should or should not do” (Xenophon, *Symposium* 4.47-49). By inference, therefore, it can be argued that through signs the gods give direction and guidance to the human person. Parker also cites a speaker from Xenophon’s *Symposium* 4:48, who affirms that the gods “send me signs, sending as messengers, sayings and dreams and omens [literally ‘birds’], about what I ought to do and what not.” The gods here communicate through signs which need to be divined.

There is a form of non-ritualized divination. This is the interpretation of spoken or written oracles, the skill practiced by a chresmologos. These chresmologues specialized in collecting and interpreting written oracle-books. This practice, most popular during the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, can be compared to the numerous Lukan references to the OT (especially Isaiah) as oracular references to the life and death of Jesus and the mission that follows.

---


313 The two alternatives were written on pieces of tin which were rolled up, wrapped in wool to make them indistinguishable and placed in two jugs stored on the Acropolis: the people are to choose three men, one from the council and two from all Athenians, to go to Delphi and ask the god according to which of the two written messages the Athenians should act with regard to the sacred land, whether that of the gold water jug or that from the silver water jug.” Larson, *Understanding Greek Religion*, 78.

314 Warrior, *Greek Religion*, 75. See also Larson, *Understanding Greek Religion*, 74, who presents Stoic arguments that the gods being the source of signs make the future known because of their care for humanity. She also argues that not all gods can read minds, and that few know absolutely everything. She shows that Greek mythology offers many examples of deities who can be deceived. For instance, Homer’s Zeus, the father of gods and men, was unable to read the mind of his wife Hera when she plotted to distract him from events on the battlefield at Troy. See Larson, *Understanding Greek Religion*, 95-96. Some gods’ inability to read minds nevertheless does not invalidate the fact that in the Greco-Roman world, signs come from the gods, and the gods unveil the meanings to humans.

315 Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 111.


In Hellenistic culture, while it was generally possible to introduce new deities and cults, this was considered a sensitive issue.\footnote{Aune, “Religions, Greco-Roman,” 788. Parker, On Greek Religion, 273, points out that gods were seen as sources of powers. So the introduction of a new god was seen as the introduction of new power.} One such possibility was by the direct revelation of the god in question desiring to be admitted.\footnote{Parker, On Greek Religion, 273, cites Pan, who appeared to Philippides and reproached the Athenians for “neglecting him although he was disposed to them and had often been helpful to them, and would be so again.”} In Acts 16:6-10, the Spirit would not allow Paul to speak in Asia; the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to go to Bithynia. But in a vision at night, a man of Macedonia was pleading with Paul: “Come over to Macedonia and help us,” (v 9). In Luke’s narrative, Paul regarded this as a direct call from God to proclaim the good news to the Macedonians (v 10). This is in accord with the view that “The gods could act spontaneously outside of rituals to cause miracles, unsolicited dream apparitions and possession.”\footnote{Parker, Understanding Greek Religion, 239, f/n 168.} Another possibility, which is more common, is a recommendation by an oracle in answer to an inquiry.\footnote{Parker, On Greek Religion, 274. For other forms of acceptance, see Parker, On Greek Religion, 273-277.} Ananias queries the Lord for sending him to Paul. The Lord makes an open declaration saying; “Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel...” (Acts 9:15). With this command Ananias argues no further but goes as the Lord directs. A third possibility was that sometimes a case may need to be made for the god on the grounds that the god was already being honoured privately in the city without harm or in neighboring cities with benefit.\footnote{Parker, On Greek Religion, 276.} Similar arguments can be seen in Acts 17:16-34 where Paul identifies the unmarked altar as belonging to the God he proclaims. This suggests that God is already among the Athenians though they do not know; and Paul, the chosen instrument for the Gentiles makes God known to the Athenians. It is reasonable to assume that the many references to dreams/visions and signs (for instance the
dove in bodily form, Luke 3:22, the sound of wind and tongues of fire, Acts 2:2-3 and the light and voice from heaven, Acts 9:3-4) within the narrative of Luke-Acts would have been read and interpreted by non-Jews from their understanding of signs and divinations in their Greco-Roman religious environment. This can be viewed as Luke’s deliberate style to also address Gentile believers from their religious background.

iii. Oracles

An oracle can “refer to either the shrine where the gods were consulted for advice or prophecy or to the response furnished by a deity.”324 Richard D. Weis describes it as information transmitted from a deity to human beings which usually are answers to important questions or revelations about future events.325 An example of an oracular shrine is Delphi (cf. Acts 16:16).326 By the sixth century BCE, the sanctuary of Delphi had become one of the unquestioned centres of the Greek world, consulted by Greeks from everywhere, including South Italy, North Africa, mainland Greece as well as by Croesus, king of Lydia, in today’s Western Turkey.327 The Delphic oracular agent is called the pythia, who was a woman dedicated to the service of the gods for life, dressed as a young girl.328

These oracles and the divination they provided played “an important role in the lives of the Greeks from the archaic period until the triumph of Christianity in the fourth century A.D.”329

---

327 Price, “Delphi and Divination,” 131. It is noteworthy that Instructions from the oracle of Delphi assumed a leading role in the founding of the Greek colonies in the West and on the Black sea from the middle of the eight century. See Burkert, Greek Religion, 116. So also Aune, “Religions, Greco-Roman,” 789.
328 Burkert, Greek Religion, 116. Warrior also gives a description of her and asserts that she was to remain this way throughout her tenure. See Warrior, Greek Religion, 78. For a more detailed discussion of Delphi and the pythia, see Price, “Delphi and Divination,” 128-154. Other examples of oracles are Daphne near Antiocheia, Mopsuestia in Cilicia, Sura and Patara in Lycia, and Telmessos in Caria. See also Bremmer, Greek Religion, 32-33, who references Oracles of Delphi and Dodona, Olympia (who gave birth to the Olympian Games), Amphiarao in Oropos, near Athens, Trophonios not far from Thebes and Didyma near Miletos.
329 Aune, “Religions, Greco-Roman,” 788.
Cicero’s remarks on the Greek custom of consulting an oracle before establishing a new city or starting a war particularly emphasise the ongoing place of oracles in the Greek-Roman world:

What colony did Greece ever send out to Aeolia, Ionia, Asia, Sicily, or Italy without consulting the Pythian or Dodonian oracle, or that of Jupiter Hammon? What war did the Greeks ever undertake without first seeking the advice of the gods” (Cicero, On Divination 1:3).\(^{330}\)

Herodotus, (a mid fifth century BCE Historian) also wrote concerning a Spartan,

Dorieus, who set out to found a colony in Libya. Dorieus failed because he did not first consult the Delphic oracle. When other oracles advised him to establish a colony in Sicily, Dorieus safeguarded his second enterprise by checking with the Delphic oracle (Herodotus, Histories, 5.42-43).\(^{331}\)

In the first century (CE) prophecy continued as an established phenomenon in the Hellenistic world, often practiced at oracular sites to provide guidance to enquirers.\(^{332}\) Although the relevance of oracles, especially in political circles during this time (the beginning of the Christian era) eventually began to dwindle, they continued to be consulted by cities about formal sacred affairs and by individuals concerning the affairs of personal life.\(^{333}\)

In Hellenistic society, oracular advice was especially sought when problems arose.\(^{334}\) Oracles also assisted in making choices between options and setting the seal on collective decisions.\(^{335}\) Worthy of note also, as Warrior avows, is the fact that oracles were consulted for advice on a variety of political, religious and personal problems. Warrior particularly indicates that concerns

---

\(^{330}\) Warrior, Greek Religion, 83.

\(^{331}\) Warrior, Greek Religion, 83-84.

\(^{332}\) Cousland holds that in the Hellenistic pagan world, prophecy was one of the means by which divine wills were communicated from the gods. He asserts that such prophets were associated with oracular shrines either as spokespersons of a god (such as the inspired priestess of Apollo at Delphi, the pythia) or as functionaries. Prophecy at oracular shrines, he says, continued till they were proscribed in the fourth century A.D. Cousland, “Prophets and Prophecy,” 830-831.

\(^{333}\) Ferguson, “Religions,” 1009.

\(^{334}\) Parker, On Greek religion, 265; Price, “Delphi and Divination,” 143.

\(^{335}\) Bremmer, Greek Religion, 33.
about the fertility of both humans and the earth were among the most common enquiries. Furthermore, people made enquiries about going to war, marriage, journeys, farming and so on (Plutarch, *Moralia* 386). In particular, problems created by changing circumstances were also dealt with by consultation of an oracle. As Parker observes, this was of fundamental importance for the whole Greco-Roman religious system. Inquirers sought revelation of the divine will in relation to specific questions presented before the gods. One of the texts discovered at the oracle of Zeus at Dodona in Epirus in northeast Greece reads: “Nicocrateia wants to know to which of the gods she should sacrifice in order that she may have a better life and be rid of her illness.” Another text reads: “Evandros and his wife enquire of Zeus Naios and Dione to which of the gods, heroes, or supernatural powers (daimones) they should pray and sacrifice in order that they and their household may have a better and more desirable life both now and for all time.” The Delphic oracle was also consulted for important state issues, because the Delphi oracle was believed to have access to the plans of the immortal gods.

There were various methods of imparting oracles, but the most popular ones were those where “the gods spoke directly from a medium who entered the state of enthousiasmos.” An example is the Apollo oracle at Didyma.

A sacred spring existed in the great Apollo oracle of Asia Minor at Didyma near Miletos. Here it was a priestess who entered a state of ecstasy while holding the laurel wand of the god in her hand, wetting her feet with the water, and breathing in its vapours. In Patara in Lycia the priestess was shut up in the temple at night: she was visited by the god and filled with prophecy.

---

336 Warrior, *Greek Religion*, 80. For more details on specific oracular consultations regarding cultic matters, see Parker, *On Greek Religion*, 265-272; on political matters, see Larson, *Understanding Greek Religion*, 78.
341 Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 116. The sacred law of Cyrene and the aparche decree of Athens were both ratified by the oracle at Delphi. See also Warrior, *Greek Religion*, 84, who references Herodotus’ work, (*Histories* 1.50, 53-54, 55) on how King Croesus was impressed by the Delphic oracle and how he consults the oracle for different reasons, including the length of his reign. See Price, “Delphi and Divination,” 144-148, for other instances of personal, religious and political enquiries in Delphi.
343 Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 114.
The medium thus speaking from the state of *enthousiasmos* gives the inquirer the spiritual satisfaction that the gods or the spirit of the gods spoke through the medium.

Our findings so far suggest that spiritual realities and concepts were part of the daily life of individuals in the Greco-Roman world, and were particularly associated with the gods and oracles of the great Temples. This included, but was not limited to the spirit-possession of individuals, during which the gods spoke through the possessed agents, and oracular and divinatory activities, whose seers were also spirit-possessed for their tasks. How might the Spirit’s activity in Luke-Acts be understood in this cultural and religious context?

### 3.3 Greco-Roman spirit concepts: resonances in the narrative of Luke-Acts

The foregoing exploration of the Greco-Roman religious context suggests that spirits and spirit activities were prevalent in the wider Greco-Roman world. The evidence from the examples of divinatory and oracular activities and the phenomena of spirit-possession within this wider society supports this, and suggests that as the gospel moves beyond Judea to the ends of the earth in Luke’s account, the activities of the Holy Spirit will inevitably be interpreted within this context. This follows from the supposition that divinatory and oracular activities practised there secured the confidence of the enquirers because of the belief that the seers, the agents of divination or the oracular voices were in close contact with some superhuman spirit or the spirits of a god or gods. The following section examines the spiritual phenomena of Luke-Acts viewed from the context of the Greco-Roman world and Luke’s Gentile readers.

#### 3.3.1 Being filled with the Holy Spirit and spirit-possession

The Lukan narrative has many instances where different individuals are filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:15, 35, 41, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9, 52 and so on). This expression “filled with the Holy Spirit,” alongside others such as “the Holy Spirit will come/came upon” (Luke 1:35; Acts 19:6); “the Holy Spirit rested on” (Luke 2:25); “the Holy Spirit descended

---

345 Larson and Burkert are likeminded in their opinion that it is understood to be the spirits of the gods who speak through divinatory and oracular agents. See Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 109, 114 and Larson, *Understanding Greek Religion*, 77.
upon” (Luke 3:22); “full of the Spirit” (Luke 4:1; Acts 11:24); “anointed with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 10:38); “the Holy Spirit fell upon” (Acts 10:44, 45; 11:15); “received the Holy Spirit” (10:47); and “baptise with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5; 11:16) for instance, express the phenomenon of spirit-possession which was already familiar in the Greco-Roman world.

It is important to note that while the Lukan narrative is very emphatic about the Holy Spirit coming upon believers, the author also expresses knowledge of other spirits that had previously possessed or inhabited people and which were expelled. For instance, after the sermon at Nazareth, the first public act of Jesus that Luke records is the expulsion of πνεύμα δαμαστόν τοῦ ἀκαθάρτου (the spirit of an unclean demon – Luke 4:31-37; see also 9:37-43; 11:14). Similarly, in Acts, Philip’s ministry expels πνεύματα ἀκαθαρτά (unclean spirits – 8:7) from the Samaritans, and in place of the unclean spirits, individuals are filled with the Holy Spirit (8:14-17). Simon, the magician, once proclaimed as “the power of God that is called the Great” (v 10), also becomes a believer (v 13), and so do others who practiced magic and sorcery give up their practices (see 19:11-20). Paul releases a slave-girl from the grip of the spirit of divination (πνεύμα πύθωνα – spirit of python, Acts 16:16-18). This girl, inspired by the possessed spirit, “offers prophetic answers to questions individuals asked about their future.” Luke records one of her utterances: “these men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation” (16:17). Reference to salvation here recalls the salvation which members of the mystery cults sought. Luke provides examples that a person of the Greco-Roman world could understand these events within their religious context and thereby legitimates the status

346 Luke emphasises the magical arts of Simon by telling the reader twice, at v 9 and v 11, that Simon practiced magic, and had “literally driven the populace to ecstasy with his magical tricks.” Klauck, Magic and Paganism, 14.
347 The narrative of Acts 19:11-20 reveals that there were also other professionals who issued orders to spirits, especially Jewish exorcists, whose existence is hinted at in the Gospel (Luke 9:49 and 11:19). Cf. also Acts 13:4-12 where Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit reacts violently to the obstruction from the magician, Elymas. This results in Elymas becoming blind. An effect of this is that the proconsul saw what happened and believed, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. For more detail on Elymas and magic, see Klauck, Magic and Paganism, 47-59, 99-102; also John J. Kilgallen, "Acts 13:4-12: The Role of the 'Magos'," EstBib 55, (1997): 223-237.
350 See Ferguson, “Religions,” 1009.
of Paul and his co-workers and the entire mission which they undertake. Whereas the slave girl in Philippi identifies Paul and Silas as servants of the Most High God, Paul and Barnabas are wrongfully identified in Lystra as gods (Barnabas they called Zeus and Paul they called Hermes, Acts 14:8-18). Luke’s work thus mirrors the wider narrative world of Luke-Acts – the Greco-Roman world.

Furthermore, the story of Pentecost could be read against the backdrop of spirit-possession from a Greco-Roman perspective, for “filled with the Holy Spirit,” the apostles speak in other tongues καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδοι ἀποφθέγματα αὐτοῖς (as the Spirit gave them utterance – Acts 2:4). It is the possessing Spirit who speaks through them. And so the mission initiated by that possessing Spirit is understood as inspired by God. This too can be compared with the concept of tongues and extolling God in the Cornelius event in Acts 10:44-46, and the Ephesians’ experience in Acts 19:6. These are strange occurrences and only the Spirit of God can initiate them. Likewise, when the church prayed in Acts 4:23-32, Luke tells the reader that the place in which the church gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and then spoke the word of God with boldness. The possession of the place by the Spirit resulted in the reaction to the divine presence, hence the shaking (v 32; cf. 16:25 where Paul and Silas prayed and there was an earthquake in the prison).

Especially significant is Luke’s narrative that Stephen, “filled with the Holy Spirit,” gazes into heaven and sees the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55). This is an experience out of the ordinary (though not completely unexpected, Luke 21:27-28; 22:69), and evidence that Stephen is filled with the Holy Spirit. The concept of being “filled with the Holy Spirit” and perceiving divine realities suggests some similarity with “spirit-possession” (ἐνθέος or possessio) in the Greco-Roman world. Speaking from this Spirit-filled state means that

351 Hermes was the messenger of the gods; and Zeus and Hermes were also the guarantors of emissaries and missions. See Witherington, The Acts of the Apostles, 424; Klauck, Magic and Paganism, 58. It is acknowledged that apparitions of gods in human form are stable elements of Hellenistic piety, and highly probable that Luke was familiar with the belief and consciously alludes to it. See Klauck, Magic and Paganism, 57, 59.
352 See also Acts 19:21-41 which references the shrines of Artemis.
353 Luke here shows familiarity with the concept of glossolalia, considering it an ecstatic phenomenon linked to the Spirit. This phenomenon is also mentioned in the Gentile communities of Caesarea (Acts 10:44-46) and Ephesus (Acts 19:2). Klauck, Magic and Paganism, 7.
the possessing Spirit (the Holy Spirit) speaks through the human agent (Stephen). Consequently, Stephen’s proclamation in v 56 bears the mark of an oracular proclamation from the gods: “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” The use of the Spirit in this context is both educative and catechetical for the Gentile readers of Luke-Acts: the Spirit reveals via the medium that Jesus is alive and is at the right hand of God.

The story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40) evokes the stories of the wandering shamans of the sixth century BCE Greek world. First, it was an angel who directed Philip to the Jerusalem-Gaza road (v 26). Then the Spirit said to Philip to go over to the eunuch’s chariot and join him (v 29). With the strength of the Spirit in him, Philip is able to run and catch up with a moving chariot (v 30). Having completed his task by explaining the text of Isaiah to the eunuch and having him baptised, “the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went away rejoicing” (v 39a; cf. also Ezek 11:24; Dan 14:36; 1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:16). Philip then finds himself in Azotus and continues the proclamation of the good news (Acts 8:40). As it is, the eunuch does not worry that Philip suddenly disappears. He simply goes away rejoicing (v 39b). All of these narrative tropes have a cultural and religious resonance and communicative potential for the Gentile readers of Luke-Acts.

3.3.2 The Spirit of prophecy and oracles

In Acts 1:15-26, Luke offers an oracular interpretation of OT scripture (v 20; cf. Pss 69:25 and 109:8). Peter asserts that the Holy Spirit had earlier spoken through David concerning the fate of Judas (v 16). On this ground Peter proposes the replacement of Judas (vv 20-21), which led the apostles to enquire from God whose Spirit has spoken. The “casting of lot” method which was prevalent in the Greco-Roman world was employed. The believers prayed: “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take up the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place” (vv 24b-25). Following the prayers, they cast lots (v 26), and the Lord reveals his choice of Matthias (v 23).

---

354 See also Klauck, Magic and Paganism, 24, who refers to Philip as a charismatic-prophetic wandering missionary, traveling above all in the strongly Hellenised, half-pagan coastal region.
The prayer also parallels citizens’ enquiry at the Delphic oracle (or of Apollo) for varying important issues.\(^{355}\)

Furthermore, the conversion story of Paul stands out (Acts 9:1-19). In the first instance, a light from heaven flashes around Paul (v 3). Consequently, Paul falls to the ground and hears a voice call his name and speak to him (v 4). In a state of confusion Paul enquires of the identity of the voice that identifies himself as Jesus whom Paul is persecuting (vv 5-6). Paul gets up and is temporarily blind (v 8). In Greco-Roman religion, the flashing of light and the temporary blindness would be interpreted as signs from the gods, for which divination is required. Therefore, a disciple called Ananias has a vision during which the Lord speaks to him and instructs him as to what to do (vv 10-16). The intended reader is informed that the same Jesus who appeared to Paul on the road now appears to Ananias too (v 17). A divinatory explanation of the signs is underway. Thus, Jesus sends Ananias to Paul for two reasons: that Paul might regain his sight and that he might be filled with the Holy Spirit (v 17). This is because Paul is “an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before the Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15). With the laying on of hands by Ananias, Paul regains his sight and is baptised (Paul is initiated into the fold of believers – v 18). By this story Paul is to be recognised as an agent of God who possesses the Spirit of God and preaches boldly in the name of Jesus (Acts 9:27-29). As the reader learns, the Holy Spirit subsequently asks for Paul and Barnabas to be set apart for mission (Acts 13:2). In contrast, the seven sons of Sceva in Ephesus do not have the calling or the direction of the Spirit, as they try to do what Paul does; they are overpowered and disgraced (Acts 19:11-16). Paul who is Spirit-led refutes the error of the magician, Elymas (Acts 13:8). By the inspiration of the Spirit Agabus offers an oracular interpretation of the sign of the binding of Paul’s feet with Paul’s belt (Acts 21:11). Luke indicates that this happened as Agabus had predicted (Acts 21:27-36; 22:17ff). Success in the interpretation of signs, more than anything else, carries the fame of a god and their sanctuary far and wide in the Greco-Roman world.\(^{356}\) Luke shows the implied readers that this is the case

\(^{355}\) See f/n 337 and 340 above.

\(^{356}\) Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 114. See also Warrior, *Greek Religion*, 75-76, who asserts that the seer’s reputation depended on the advice proving correct and beneficial.
in the narrative of Luke-Acts, with the notable exception that this God is not located in man-made Temples (Acts 7:47-50), but in the communities of the faithful followers of Jesus.

The Cornelius episode at the start of the Gentile mission provides another significant example. First, Cornelius is in a vision where a spiritual being (an angel of God) speaks to him (Acts 10:1-8). This means that even Gentiles hear from God who recognised the piety of this God-fearing individual. Second, Peter falls into a trance and encounters a voice (Acts 10:9-16). The voice addressing Peter states that Gentiles are clean, and are not to be discriminated against (v 15). Thereafter, as Luke indicates, the Spirit speaks to Peter ordering him to go with the emissaries from Cornelius (vv 19-23; 11:12). On ministering to the household of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles present and they received the gift of prophetic praise. Peter (who is filled with the Holy Spirit, cf. Acts 2:1-4; 4:8) interprets this (the Spirit falling on Gentiles) as a sign that Gentiles are welcome into the church.\(^{357}\) Luke has presented Peter as a divinatory agent who interprets signs from God concerning the mission to the nations (the vision, the trance, the sheet, the animals, the voice commanding to kill and eat, and the eventual outpouring of the Holy Spirit). From the signs presented before Peter, he offers some interpretations: that God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34); Gentiles are to be baptised (Acts 10:47-48a); it is God’s wish that Gentiles be saved (Acts 11:15-17). The consequences of this human versus Spirit encounter is the commencement of the Gentile mission, beginning in Cornelius’ house (Acts 10:44ff).

James’ presentation at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15: 6-35 is another example of Luke’s appeal to oracular interpretation of OT texts within the narrative. This is similar to the skill practiced by a chresmologos (an interpretation of spoken or written oracles). James cites scripture from Amos 9:11-12 with the sole intention of buttressing the legitimacy of the Gentile mission. In James’ interpretation, Peter’s explanation of the Gentile mission is in agreement with the words of Amos:

> After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, so that all other peoples may seek the Lord – even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus

\(^{357}\) This explains Peter’s particular references to the falling of the Holy Spirit in his explanations: Acts 10:47; 11:15, 16, 17. This text will be addressed in detail in chapter 6 below.
says the Lord, who has been making these things known from long ago (Acts 15:16-28).

Note that James does not only appeal to an oracular interpretation of the text from Amos 9:11-12; in order to set a seal on the decision of the council James appeals also to the Holy Spirit: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28).

The Jewish Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit is firmly embedded in Jewish tradition and the narrative of Luke-Acts draws upon this to advance the view of the church that Luke is proposing – overcoming their resistance to mission. Also, the Spirit as character within Luke-Acts has many resonances with Greco-Roman religious practices in terms of justifying decisions and determining the will of the gods. It has a resonance in this religious milieu in a way that is complementary. Hence it is God speaking through the believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit (See such texts as Acts 2:14; 4:8; 6:8, 10; 13:9, 46). When, therefore, the influence of pagan oracular/divinatory activities is factored into the equation, it becomes evident just how wide-ranging a conceptual framework the NT authors had to draw upon.358 Thus while Turner may be right that “any version of ‘the Spirit of prophecy’ available to Luke must ultimately be rooted in Judaism,”359 the suggestion here would be justified that the many references to being “filled with the Spirit” (and its nuances) in Luke-Acts must also resonate with the understanding of the Gentiles, in whose culture spirit-possession is a means by which human characters are divinely inspired, instructed and commissioned for oracular and divinatory purposes.

3.4 Summary and conclusion

Those Gentiles who became followers of Jesus, including those who became proselytes or Godfearers before becoming Christians, were fully immersed in the tenets of their culture and the many religions that were part and parcel of the Greco-Roman culture and society.360 Luke had dual purposes in mind when referring to the Holy Spirit in the narrative of Luke-Acts. The first was that of convincing Jewish Christians (and other Godfearers) who were opposed to the Gentile mission (more on this follows below). The second was that of evangelizing Gentiles and

---

358 Cousland, “Prophets and Prophecy,” 835.
encouraging and strengthening Gentile Christians by providing them a bridge from their religious context into the Christian community. There may have been some who would have lost confidence in their newly acquired faith on account of Jewish rejection of both Jesus and those who followed him. They also had to contend with Jewish Christian opposition to the wider non-Jewish mission. For Jewish Christians, the Spirit in the narrative of Luke-Acts was identified as the Spirit of the Lord/God, active in the Jewish Bible. For Gentile believers the Spirit speaking through various characters would have been consistent with the gods speaking in oracular form through human beings in their religious culture. Thus, the notion of spirit-possession, the concept of the gods communicating the divine will to humans through signs and divination, and the seeking of oracular advice for different reasons in the Greco-Roman culture all helped to inform understanding of the Holy Spirit at work in the Lukan narrative, and to relocate it away from human oracular shrines to the presence of the Spirit amongst the gathered communities. Hence, Luke writes in several places, for instance, of the Spirit speaking through human agents; the Spirit leading and directing; the Spirit seizing; humans being filled with the Spirit; the Spirit taking mission initiatives; and the Spirit initiating tongues. This chapter has argued that these concepts were familiar to the Gentile believers which would have facilitated and encouraged the interpretation of the activity of the Spirit as divine. This was a way of connecting to, encouraging and supporting the faith of the followers of Jesus who were of non-Jewish background (Acts 18:23).

Just as the miracle stories of the Greco-Roman religions helped the Gentiles to read meaning into the miracle stories attributed to Jesus, so also similarity between the spirit-concepts in the Greco-Roman religious world and the Spirit activities in the Christian mission as narrated in Luke-Acts would have helped Christians of non-Jewish background and varied ethnicities to affirm their new faith. Thus, the narrative of Luke-Acts functions powerfully for both Jewish and Gentile readers. In both, God’s activity through the Spirit in individuals and communities of the faithful is affirmed, confirmed and communicated.

---

Chapter four

Luke’s use of the Spirit to engage Jewish Christians

In chapter three, I explored how the activities of the Spirit in Luke-Acts echoed aspects of the religious setting in the Greco-Roman world. A study of Luke-Acts also suggests that Luke’s usage of the Spirit shares several similarities with the portrayal of the Spirit of the Lord in the OT, the Jewish scripture. How are the similarities between the Spirit in the Jewish scripture and Lukan pneumatology to be explained? This is the focus of this chapter where it will be argued that the Spirit in the Jewish scripture provides the framework for Luke’s pneumatology, and how Luke describes the Spirit’s activity in a way that is consistent with Jewish language and expectations so as to affirm the Gentile mission for resisting Jewish Christians readers. In attending to this question, after a general survey of the Spirit motif in the OT, I shall examine three OT texts that refer to the Spirit (Num 11: 14-17, 24-30; Isa 61:1-3 and Joel 2:28-29) that are foundational for Luke’s pneumatology. As I observed in chapter one, scholars such as Hur have established that the Spirit in the OT provides the literary repertoire for the Spirit in Luke-Acts.362 Menzies argues that the Spirit in Jewish thought is the source of prophetic inspiration, and that Luke’s usage of the Spirit is consistent with this thought pattern.363 In like manner, Stronstad acknowledges the fundamental influence of the Jewish scripture on Luke’s theology of the Holy Spirit.364 What these scholars have not addressed explicitly is how the Spirit in the OT might have provided Luke with the relevant language and expression to help overcome the resistance of some Jewish Christians who were opposed to the Gentile mission. Shepherd rightly argued that the Spirit in Luke-Acts functions to assure that Luke’s narrative of God’s action is reliable and trustworthy.365 This chapter takes Shepherd’s work further by exploring the basis for Luke’s appeal to the Holy Spirit. As Stronstad indicates, a study of the Spirit of the Lord in the Hebrew scripture is necessary for a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts.366

362 Hur, Dynamic Reading, 37.
363 Menzies, Empowered for Witness, 44-45, 62.
364 Stronstad, Charismatic Theology, 15.
365 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 2, 220.
366 Stronstad, Charismatic Theology, 15.
Before engaging the Spirit in the OT, it is necessary to undertake a general survey of Luke’s knowledge of the OT, for as Kenneth Duncan Litwak states, “The scripture of Israel pervades Luke-Acts from its beginning until its end... and they play a critical hermeneutical role in shaping the entirety of Luke’s narrative.” The following section shows that many OT concepts are present within Luke-Acts, which also supports the case for Luke’s appeal to the Spirit motifs in the OT.

4.1 Luke and the Old Testament

Many scholars have drawn attention to the way the NT authors make use of the OT. As Lukans generally agree, Luke not only knew the OT, particularly in its Greek translation, but draws on it richly within the narrative. Luke uses the OT to provide a framework to understand the mission and ministry of Jesus and the developing Christian communities of Acts.

In order for Luke to convince his resisting Jewish Christian readers, there has to be evidence of God’s affirmation of the inclusion of Gentiles – particularly that which is consistent with what they already know and can affirm from their religious context. This possibly explains why the implied author begins the two-volume narrative by references to an institution that is very important in the OT and for the Jews in general – the temple (cf. 1 Kgs 6:7; 8:64; 2 Chr 3:1; 7:2; Ezra 1:2-3; 3:12; Hag 2:9 and so on). As Luke presents his narrative, he situates Zechariah at the start of the gospel within the context of an institutional duty in the temple (Luke 1:8-23); the first public appearance of Jesus is in the temple (Luke 2:22-38); Jesus will later be found in the temple among the teachers listening and asking questions (Luke 2:43-47); this is where Jesus will also make his first uttered in the narrative (Luke 2:49). Likewise, Luke will depict the followers of Jesus going to the temple in the Acts narrative (Acts 3:1-11). The implication here is that Luke begins his narrative in a terrain familiar to and appreciated by the implied Jewish audience; this will help to attract the attention and acceptance of the implied Jewish readers concerning the reliability of the unfolding narrative and so that they can locate themselves within the narrative – the story is their story, even if it surprises or disconcerts them.


In Rabbinic Judaism, William Scott Green argues, scripture took the place of the lost temple; and scripture was sanctified as a religious object more than as a text. James W. Watts also

---


demonstrates that in antiquity, old texts were used to validate the forms of important rituals. Such texts “have the unique property of appearing to ‘speak’ from the distant past,” and so provide a public means of validating the accuracy of local traditions. This reflects Luke’s desire to provide certainty for Theophilus from his careful research (Luke 1:3-4), and also offers some explanation for the rich deposit of OT references in Luke-Acts. It further explains Luke’s suggestions that scripture ultimately is a revelation from God (Acts 2:16; 3:18, 21, 25; 4:25; 15:7; 28:25). Therefore, in keeping with contemporary literary style, it is plausible to argue that Luke cites Jewish scripture as an authoritative document to overcome, first of all, the resisting Jewish audience, but also to affirm those Jewish Christians who were open to the Gentile mission and to encourage Gentile members of the communities.

In the birth narrative Luke tells the dual story of the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-7), and John (1:5-25, 57-66), whom he presents as the forerunner of Jesus in a way similar to Elijah, an OT figure (Luke 1:17; Mal 4:5-6). This unique Lukan material recalls OT times, especially the patriarchal narratives (cf. the story of Abraham and Sarah in Gen 16:1-2; 18:9-15) and the birth stories of Samson (Judg 13:2) and Samuel (1 Sam 1:2, 5-6, 11) that feature the motif of the barren wife. Luke also presents John as “a voice in the wilderness” (Luke 3:4-6 cf. Isa 40:3-5), thus taking up “the image of the evangelist in Second Isaiah, a motif common not only to the Baptist and Christian movements, but to Jewish sectarianism as well, and thus (he) has grounded his ministry in the plan of God.” Luke introduces the text from Isaiah with the standard Jewish formula for citing venerated texts, ὡς γέγραπται (as it is written; Luke 3:4; cf. Acts 13:33), and thus presents John’s ministry as a fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3-5 (cf. Matt 3:1-4; 1:1-2).

---

374 Watts, “Ritual Legitimacy,” 408, 410. For instance, Ezra 9-10 appeals to the authority of scripture to validate a mass divorce and the expulsion of foreign wives from Jerusalem (cf. Ezra 9:10-12). Also Josiah’s reform received its authority from the discovered book of the law (cf. 2 Kgs 23).
375 Saldarini, “Interpretation,” 31-42.
377 This is absent in Matthew’s birth narrative (cf. Matt 1:18-25).
378 Helyer, “Luke and the Restoration of Israel,” 318. Coleridge also suggests that the style of introduction (cf. Ezra 1:1; Esth 1:1; Jer 1:2; Dan 1:1; Hos 1:1; Amos 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1; Hag 1:1 and Zech 1:1) and the language point to the more distant past of the OT. See Mark Coleridge, The Birth of the Lukan Narrative: Narrative as Christology in Luke 1-2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 1993), 29-31.
Mark 1:2-3). John is therefore not only Elijah *redivivus*, but also an evangelist after the pattern of Deutero-Isaiah. As Kazmierski rightly asserts, “The purpose of such labeling is to legitimize what is otherwise seen as illegitimate, in this case, the (deviant) behaviour of John…” Luke thus situates the infancy narrative (Luke 1:5-2:52) within God’s purpose as articulated in the OT.

Just as Luke validates John’s ministry through references to the OT, so too does Luke authenticate the claims he makes for Jesus “through citations and allusions to Scripture and to the story of Israel which it contains.” Luke’s citation of Isaiah in Luke 4:16-30, especially in referencing the ministry of Elijah (cf. 1 Kgs 17:1-16) and Elisha (cf. 2 Kgs 5:1-14) to non-Jews, foreshadows for the implied readers the missionary expansion beyond Jewish boundaries. As Luke insists in the subsequent narrative, the mission started by Jesus is to continue to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). This shows that Luke consciously appeals to the Jewish scripture to authorise an interpretation of Jesus’ mission, continued in the mission of the church.

Also, Luke through the motif of prophecy and fulfillment shows that OT prophecies are fulfilled in his carefully written narrative (Luke 1:3). Luke portrays Jesus’ life/mission continued in the

---


385 A detailed study of Luke 4:16-30 will be carried out in chapter five.


mission of the church as the fulfillment of salvation as announced through OT prophets. In the OT, prophetic activity amongst other things included the ability to predict the future, fulfillment of prophecies then serves to legitimize the prophetic utterances (cf. for instance, Deut 28:15-68 fulfilled in 2 Kgs 17:5ff; 2 Kgs 25:1ff). In Luke-Acts, the narrator makes it clear to the implied readers that events in the unfolding narrative fulfill OT promises. The assumption here, as Coleridge shows, is that the readers know the OT well enough to recognize the echoes that the narrator now builds into the narrative.


---


widespread belief in Mediterranean antiquity that a divine necessity controls human history, shaping the course of its events.\footnote{394} And it can be seen that Luke takes particular care to show that mission – especially to the nations – follows divine necessity (Acts 13:46; 15:28; 19:21; 23:11).

There is no gainsaying the fact then that Luke knows the Jewish scripture and that he cites/references it in Luke-Acts to establish that the message of the followers of Jesus is the realisation of a promise that God made long ago.\footnote{395} For Luke to overcome the resisting members of the communities, he has carefully chosen language and verbs from the Jewish scripture that keeps resonating for the implied hearing-readers of Luke-Acts. Of particular interest in this thesis is Luke’s knowledge of the role of the Spirit of the Lord in the OT; how the Spirit legitimates, commissions and empowers characters for mission, and how Luke has carefully chosen texts from the OT that will support his agenda and claims in Luke-Acts.

In the following section, we shall focus on the Spirit motifs and language of the OT in order to explore how these factors have influenced Luke’s pneumatology – and how Luke has shaped his pneumatology to evoke these connections.

4.2 The Spirit motif in the Old Testament

The numerous references to the Spirit in the OT are evidence for Israel’s familiarity with the Spirit-motif.\footnote{396} As Leeper indicates, the Spirit of God is ‘God in action’, working and moving in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item There are 98 references to God’s Spirit in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Gen 1:2; 6:3; Exod 28:3; 31:3; Num 11:17, 25a; Deut 34:10; Judg 3:10; 6:34; 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 2 Sam 23:2; 1 Kgs 18:12; 22:24; 2 Kgs 2:9; Isa 11:2, 28:6; Ezek 1:12; 2:2; Hos 9:7; Joel 3:1; Mic 2:7; Hag 1:5; Zech 4:6; Mal 2:15; Ps 51:13; Job 33:4; Prov 1:23; Dan 4:5; Neh 9:20 and so on). In the Septuagint, there are 95 occurrences with three additions to the Hebrew references and six omissions (additions: Num 23:7; Isa 11:3 and Zech 1:6; omissions: Prov 1:23; Isa 31:3, 40:13; Ezek 39:29; Hos 9:7 and Zech 6:8). See Hur, Dynamic Reading, 41, f/n 13 and 56, f/n 46.
  \item Bock, “Scripture and the Realisation of God’s Promises,” 62.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the midst of God’s people. The Spirit of God is also an expression for God’s power and presence by which God accomplishes God’s divine and mighty purposes. One becomes more aware of this when one reads in the OT of various characters fulfilling God’s purpose through the divine empowerment and inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord upon such characters.


The Spirit of God was present at creation (Gen 1:2; Ps 33:6). Pharaoh recognised Joseph as “one in whom is the spirit of God” (Gen 41:38; cf. Dan 4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 14). During the sojourn in the wilderness, the Spirit enabled some individuals to perform special tasks ranging from preparing Aaron’s priestly garments to the construction of the tabernacle (Exod 28:3; 31:3;

---

397 Leeper, "The Nature of the Pentecostal Gift,” 23.
398 Hur, Dynamic Reading, 41. Horn describes the Spirit as “the manifestation of divine presence and power perceptible especially in prophetic inspiration.” Horn, “Holy Spirit,” 260.
The Spirit of God which is upon Moses is distributed to seventy others so that they can share in the burden of leadership with Moses (Num 11:17-25). The prophet Balaam prophesied when the Spirit of God came upon him (Num 23:5; 24:2). Joshua, though he received the Spirit earlier along with the seventy elders (Num 11:25), is still filled with the Spirit of wisdom (Num 27:18; Deut 34:9). Thus, the Spirit was very active in a variety of roles in the wilderness, imparting skills, empowering leaders (individually and collectively), and inspiring prophecy.

At the time of the Judges, the activity of the Spirit (within the narrative) was restricted to the Judges. These Judges were empowered by the Spirit to liberate their people from foreign invaders. Four of the twelve Judges mentioned were endowed with the Spirit: Othniel (Judg 3:10); Gideon (6:34); Jephthah (11:29) and Samson (13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14). Each one of the four major Judges accomplished a divinely planned mission having received military prowess through the gift of the Spirit.

During the monarchic period, the Spirit was active in the life of Saul, the first king of Israel (1 Sam 10:20-24). Samuel’s announcement that “the Spirit of the Lord will possess Saul” (1 Sam 10:6), was fulfilled when “the Spirit of God possessed him, and he fell into a prophetic frenzy…” (vv 10-11; also 19:23). In the battle against the Ammonites, like the Judges, “the Spirit of God” came upon Saul (1 Sam 11:6). The Spirit also came upon Saul’s messengers (1 Sam 19:20). When Saul was rejected as king (1 Sam 16:1) “the Spirit of the Lord” departed from him (1 Sam 16:14). With Saul’s rejection, Samuel anointed David as king and “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward” (1 Sam 16:13). Here in David’s case, there is a correlation between anointing and the endowment with “the Spirit of the Lord” which appears to be a

---

403 This will be discussed in detail below.
404 Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 18.
more permanent gift of the Spirit. In 2 Samuel 23:2, David announces that “the Spirit of the Lord speaks through me [David]; his word is upon my tongue.” In this way, David too speaks prophetically. The narrative implication is that Saul and David governed Israel with God’s authorised permission evident in their endowment with God’s Spirit, which was recognised by others as well as themselves.

Elijah and Elisha were people of the Spirit. Though no text mentions that Elijah was filled with the Spirit or that the Spirit came upon him, the activity of the Spirit was obvious in him (cf. 1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:16). Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit (2 Kgs 2:9). As Hur points out, “your [Elijah’s] spirit”, namely, the “spirit of Elijah” (2 Kgs 2:9, 15) can be regarded as ‘the Spirit of the Lord’ that has been working in Elijah; in the same way that the Lord God of Elijah (2 Kgs2:14) refers to the Lord who had inspired Elijah. Elisha inherited Elijah’s spirit, recognised by the “sons of the prophets” (2 Kgs 2:15).

In First and Second Chronicles, there were a few other individuals who uttered speeches when the Spirit came upon them. This explains Zedekiah’s question to Micaiah: “which way did the Spirit of the Lord pass from me to speak to you?” The implication here is that the Spirit is the authenticating authority of prophetic utterances (1 Kgs 22:24; 2 Chr 18:23), and thus leaves no doubt about the role of the Spirit in explaining prophetic activity.

The Spirit motif was also very strong during the exilic period. Sklba captured it thus:

---

408 Sklba, “Spirit from on High,” 9; in the case of Saul cf. 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 19:23. The phrase “from that day forward” also suggest a more permanent endowment (1 Sam 16:13).
409 Hur, Dynamic Reading, 44.
410 Hur, Dynamic Reading, 45.
411 For instance Amasai (1 Chr 12:18), Azariah (2 chr 15:1), Jahaziel (2 Chr 20:14), Zechariah (2 Chr 24:20).
Over a period of a hundred and fifty years, and in the painful experience of at least six (or seven) deportations, significant segments of the leadership from the northern and southern kingdoms were forcibly transported into exile in Mesopotamia. Each respective group brought a distinctive theological understanding of the Spirit of God and together they utilised that same category in the reshaping of Israel’s traditions.\(^{414}\)

During this period, prophets invoked the Spirit as a means of personal legitimation.\(^{415}\) Thus Deutero-Isaiah refers to God’s Spirit as the source of his mission to the nations (Isa 42:1).\(^{416}\) The activity of the Spirit is in fact frequent in Isaiah.\(^ {417}\) For instance, in Isaiah 11:1ff, the Spirit rests on a descendant of David conferring wisdom and understanding to enable him to render righteous judgment on behalf of the poor. In Isaiah 42:1, the Spirit is given to God’s Servant to empower him to establish God’s sovereign will in the earth. The Spirit is also very active in Ezekiel (cf. Ezek 3:12; 8:3; 11:5; 36:26; 37:14; 39:29).\(^ {418}\) Prophets like Haggai and Zechariah who were born during the exile, later returned to Jerusalem and invoke d the Spirit in a new way to achieve harmony and new vitality (cf. Hag 2:5; Zech 4:6; 6:8). As Sklba puts it, the Spirit “seems to be one of the theological treasures brought back from exile.”\(^ {419}\) The understanding is that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Lord. If the Spirit of the Lord moved them from the land, the same Spirit would bring them back in due time and would prepare them to be worthy of that gift.\(^ {420}\)

Hence the presence of the Spirit of God with them signifies God’s presence from which one

\(^{414}\) Sklba, “Spirit from on High,” 2-3. For a detailed reading on the theologies of the Spirit within exilic communities, see pages 9-17.

\(^{415}\) Ezekiel’s repeated references to his fellow exiles as ‘rebellious’ and ‘contradictory’ (2:3-8), seemingly indicates the polemics within the exilic communities. Sklba, “Spirit from on High,” 13-14.


\(^{418}\) K. W. Carley, Ezekiel among the Prophets (Naperville: Allenson, 1974), 13-37. See also Stronstad, Charismatic Theology, 19, who holds that of all the classical prophets, Ezekiel is most conscious of the power of the Spirit of the Lord in his life (Ezek 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5, 24; 36:27; 37:1; 39:29; 43:5).


\(^{420}\) Sklba, “Spirit from on High,” 16-17. The Spirit thus becomes the reference point for past, present and the future.
cannot escape (Ps 139:7). Post-exilic texts give legitimation to these prophetic warnings by reference to the Spirit (see Neh 9:30; Zech 7:12; cf. Isa 63:10, 11, 14).

This general survey clearly shows that the Spirit motif was prevalent in OT times. A couple of roles played by the Spirit here are replayed in the Lukan narrative. Before embarking on some of the resonances in Luke-Acts, let us now explore in detail three texts that have been chosen because of their relevance to the narrative of Luke-Acts.

4.2.1 Spirit endowment and mission (Num 11:14-17, 24-30)

Numbers 11 intertwines a story of the Israelites’ desire for meat and how God addressed this desire, with a story of Moses’ frustration about his task as leader and how God addressed this too. The chapter addresses Israel’s “disaffection and complaints concerning the miseries of the sojourn in the wilderness.” This provides the necessary occasion for Moses’ complaint. The Septuagint uses the verb ἦν...γογγύζων (imperfect of the verb ‘to be’ plus present participle); this is a progressive past tense and means “were murmuring.” The immediate reaction from God was anger, καὶ ἐθύμωθη ὀργῇ (and he was provoked to anger, Num 11:1), resulting in a catastrophic fire that burnt a section of the camp. Consequently, the people cried to the Lord, Moses interceded and the fire ceased (v 2). Shortly after this, the people grumbled again about food (vv 4-9).

At this second grumbling Moses also complains to the Lord. As Leeper puts it, “In his utter despair Moses cries out to God and attempts to dissociate himself from the people.” Moses’ prayer (complaint) in verses 11-15 gives vent to his frustration and outrage at the situation in

---

425 The theme of divine fire as an expression of God’s judgment and as an image for the wrath of God appears elsewhere in the OT. Cf. for instance Num 26:10; 2 Kgs 1:12.
426 For details on Moses’ complaints, see Noth, *Numbers*, 86-87; Sakenfeld, *Journeying with God*, 72-74; Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Numbers*, 165-168.
which he finds himself. Apart from the initial complaint (vv 11 and 12), two aspects of Moses’ prayer set the stage for the response from God and the rest of the chapter: first, Moses’ inability to provide meat for the people (v 13), and second, the need for more hands in leadership (v 14). Verse 14 specifically indicates that Moses alone cannot bear the burden of the people. Moses suggests that God must change the situation or put him to death so he can escape his misery (v 15).

In response to Moses’ complaint (vv 14-15), the Lord gives instructions for the preparation of the seventy elders (vv 16-17). These instructions (vv 16-17) prepare the ground for the event of Spirit endowment in verses 24-30. In the Exodus narrative it is not stated anywhere that Moses possesses God’s Spirit, though it is implied in Numbers 11:17a with God speaking thus: “I [God] will come down and talk with you [Moses] there; and I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them.” This is the first expanded reference to the Spirit of God in the OT. The Spirit ‘on/upon Moses’, is God’s Spirit, not the spirit of Moses. Leeper observes that, “The Spirit is here linked directly to Moses most likely in order to maintain his primacy of authority as leader over Israel in the eyes of the community. Though the others too receive, Moses is still in charge.” In similar terms, Noth states that “according to the present passage, the ‘spirit’ was the divine gift to Moses to enable him fulfill his duties.” The seventy elders become bearers of the Spirit so that they can share the duties by bearing the burden of the people alongside Moses (v 17b). The role of the seventy elders here correlates with the role of the elders in Exod 24:1-11, where the elders participate in the enactment of the Sinaitic

---

428 Sakenfeld, Journeying with God, 72.
429 In Noth’s opinion, by the expression ‘elders of Israel’ one must envisage the heads of the families who, originally and properly bore the title ‘elder’. He notes however that in the old days of the tribal organization, such elders were simply the officials. See Noth, Numbers, 87.
433 Noth, Numbers, 87.
434 Leeper asserts that “Yahweh gives his Spirit to the elders in order to empower them for their newly ordained vocation.” Leeper, “The Nature of the Pentecostal Gift,” 27. Similarly, Hildebrandt writes that “[T]he ruach served to enable them with the necessary resources for their task.” Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 111.
covenant. The “Spirit” in this narrative is thus presented as divine empowerment which enables the recipient to exercise their duties. It will be shown in chapters five and six below that the author of Luke-Acts applied this particular role of the Spirit in his narrative.

The venue for the endowment of the seventy elders with God’s Spirit is the tent of meeting, in God’s presence (v. 16b; cf. v. 24b). The tent of meeting was located outside the camp (see v 26; cf. Exod 33:7-11). Num 11:25a indicates the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise in v 17: “Then, the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him [Moses] and took some of the Spirit that was on him [Moses] and put it on the seventy elders.” This is the first of a series of Spirit transfers in the OT. Verse 25 makes three assertions: first, the Lord came down and spoke to Moses, but no particular words are recorded. Second, God took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the seventy elders. This implies that before now only Moses had the Spirit. And third, those endowed with God’s Spirit prophesied (cf. 1 Sam 10:5ff ad 19:20ff). Here, there is a connection between the Spirit and prophetic utterance. This is proleptic of later Spirit ‘coming upon’ or ‘filling’ a person for prophetic commissioning (cf. Ezek 2:2; 3:24) or for a particular prophecy (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 19:23; Mic 3:8). Moses is portrayed as the fountainhead of prophecy – the elders prophesy only after receiving a portion of God’s Spirit that was upon Moses (v 25a) but never again after that (v 25b).

---

436 The “Tent of meeting” is the tent structure where the Ark of the Covenant was housed, and which was the focal point of sacrifice. In some sources, the ‘tent, tabernacle’ is used and functionally, the two designations refer to the same institution. It is a sanctuary complex surrounded by an enclosed courtyard, open to the sky (Exod 25-27; 35-40). For more details on the description of the Tent, see Levine, *Numbers*, 129-130.
437 The transfer of Spirit in these cases usually connotes a transfer of leadership. For instance: from Moses to Joshua (Num 27: 18, 20. Cf. Deut 34:9); from Saul to David (1 Sam 16:13-14); from Elijah to Elisha (2 Kgs 2:9, 15).
438 Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit*, 111. This is also expressed in such texts as 1 Sam 10:10; Hos 9:7.
439 Köstenberger, "What Does It Mean to Be Filled with the Spirit?,” 229. The Greek terms equivalent to “coming upon” in the LXX range from γίνομαι (Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam 19:23; 2 Chr 15:1; 20:14) and ἐφέσματι (both meaning “come upon”; Ezek 2:2; 3:24) to ἐνδύναμαι (“empower”; Judg 6:34) and πιπτω (“fall upon”; Ezek 11:5). Terms for “filling” comprises the following: θελήσαμεν/ἐμπίπτει (Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; 40:35; Deut 34:9; 1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chr 7:1-2; Isa 11:3; Mic 3:8; Hag 2:7), πληροῦμαι (Ps 72:19; Zeph 1:9; Isa 40:4; Jer 31:12-13) and πλήρης (Isa 6:1, 3; Ezek 43:5; 44:4). See Köstenberger, "What Does It Mean to Be Filled with the Spirit?” 229-230. Cf also Moses as prophet in Deut 18:18.
440 Prophecy here refers to an ecstatic experience. Wevers argues that “When the Spirit fell on one, an individual would be stricken with ecstasy, and speak with a prophetic voice (cf. 1 Sam 10:10-13). See, Wevers, *Notes on the
The prophetic activity of the elders is meant to substantiate and authenticate their Spirit empowered responsibility before the entire community, Moses and themselves. It can be argued therefore that apart from being a divine empowerment for the fulfillment of tasks, the Spirit endowment and its visible manifestation in prophecy help to legitimate the mission of the elders among the people. This is proleptic of Saul’s endowment with the Spirit in 1 Samuel 10. Samuel announced three signs that will confirm Saul’s appointment as king of Israel: (1) at Rachel’s tomb Saul will learn that the lost asses have been found; (2) at Bethel Saul will be given two loaves of bread; and (3) at Gibeah the Spirit of God will come upon Saul and Saul will prophesy (1 Sam 10:2-6). Placing emphasis on the third sign, the text reports:

All those signs came about on that day. When they came to the hill there, behold, a group of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him mightily, so that he prophesied among them. And it came about, when all who knew him previously saw that he prophesied now with the prophets, that the people said to one another, “What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?” (1 Sam 10:9-11).

The prophetic activity of the elders thus echoes the ecstatic character of Saul’s prophecy in 1 Samuel 10:9-11. Two other elders outside the camp (Medad and Eldad) received the bestowal of the Spirit at the same time and with the same prophetic effect as the seventy (v 26). In response to Joshua’s complaint against Medad’s and Eldad’s prophetic activity, Moses wished that the entire congregation of Israel were prophets and that “the Lord would put his

---

Greek Text of the Numbers, 176. That the seventy elders never prophesied again means that the Spirit was not a call to the prophetic office, but to leadership, in assisting Moses to bear the burden of the people. Thus, Sakenfeld would be right in asserting that the note (of not prophesying again) “distinguishes the role of other persons from the special role of Moses during the wilderness period. God speaks through Moses in a unique way, as will be made clear in the story recorded in Num 12.” See Sakenfeld, Journeying with God, 76.


443 From the narrative perspective the gift of the Spirit of prophecy gives Saul the experiential confirmation that God is with him (1 Sam 10:7), and also publicly shows to the nation that Saul is the Lord’s anointed. See also David (2 Sam 23:2) and Elisha (2 Kgs 2:14-15). The sign is meant to indicate authentication and confirmation of God’s call to service. This is legitimation. Stronstad, Charismatic Theology, 25, 26.

Spirit on them” (v 29). This again indicates that the Spirit’s presence gives legitimation to prophetic activities.\textsuperscript{445}

Though it is not indicated at what stage the Spirit came upon Moses, the Spirit is presented as God’s empowerment which enables Moses to accomplish God’s purpose (cf. Exod 3:9-14). In the same way, the seventy elders are only able to fulfill their mission by the empowerment of the Spirit (Num 11:17b). In Luke 10:1, the narrator informs the reader of a separate “mission of the seventy” other than the mission of the twelve recorded by the three synoptic evangelists (Matt 10:1-42; Mark 6:7-13; and Luke 9:1-6). The number ‘seventy’ in Luke 10:1 and 17 varies in manuscripts between seventy-two and seventy.\textsuperscript{446} Either way, the number ‘seventy’ must be significant for Luke just as ‘twelve’ is meaningful in the ‘mission of the twelve’.\textsuperscript{447} Most scholars agree that the number ‘seventy’ in Luke may reflect the seventy nations mentioned in Genesis 10 (seventy-two in the Septuagint); or the seventy elders chosen by Moses from the twelve tribes of Israel as narrated in Exodus 24:1, 9; and Numbers 11:16, 24.\textsuperscript{448} Nevertheless, understanding Luke’s ‘seventy’ as having a background in the ‘seventy’ of Numbers 11:16 makes sense, for in both contexts, mission is at the centre. It is in this sense that Green’s suggestion also makes sense, in that Luke’s narration of the mission of the seventy can be seen as a prefiguring of the universal mission in Acts.\textsuperscript{449} Tannehill echoes the same view that:

Seventy or seventy-two may also be significant and foreshadow the mission which moves beyond Israel. To be sure, a reference to the seventy elders who were appointed to share the burden of Moses’ work and receive some of his spirit (Num 11:10-17) makes good sense in Luke’s context, since Jesus is sharing his own mission with his disciples.\textsuperscript{450}

\textsuperscript{445} Sakenfeld, Journeying with God, 76.
\textsuperscript{446} For the sake of consistency, I will stick with ‘seventy’ in this thesis.
\textsuperscript{447} Twelve apostles, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel (see Luke 22:30).
\textsuperscript{450} Tannehill, Narrative Unity, Vol 1, 233.
For the Jewish Christian reader, therefore, the narrative about Moses picking seventy (or seventy-two) elders to share in his ministry already provides a background frame of reference for the Lukan narrative of the mission of the seventy in Luke 10:1ff.

Thus, being endowed with the Spirit, the seventy elders chosen by Moses prophesied openly, including the two in the camp (vv 25b, 26). This presents a correlation between Spirit endowment and mission which Luke will take up later in his narrative. It also has parallels in Acts 2:1-4 and 10:44 where the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples, and upon Cornelius and his household respectively, and they speak in strange tongues and prophesy (see also Acts 19:6-7). The fact that Moses rebuked Joshua (and not the ‘two’ outside the camp) suggests that Moses understands that God’s Spirit is not restricted by human rituals and institutions (cf. Mark 9:38-40). This will resonate much later in Acts 10:44 when the Spirit comes upon Cornelius’ and household while Peter is still talking. Joshua’s later description as someone who already has the Spirit (Num 27:18) derives from Numbers 11:25 where the Spirit came upon the seventy elders. This partly qualifies Joshua to take up the new responsibility of leadership. In a similar fashion, the Spirit appoints leaders for the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:28). This empowerment and legitimation is confirmed by Moses by laying hands on Joshua, who takes over leadership from Moses (Num 27:18; Deut 34:9; cf. Acts 19:1-7 where Paul lays hands on the disciples in Ephesus). While the laying on of hands confers authority on Joshua, for Moses, the elders and Joshua, the reference to the Spirit (and public manifestation of the Spirit in prophecy) confers authentication and legitimation of mission. This becomes the case each time the Spirit is poured out on characters in Luke-Acts: Luke wants resisting Jewish readers to see the hand of God at work in the mission of the church.

---

451 Sakenfeld, Journeying with God, 77.
452 Scholars differ in opinion regarding the precise meaning of this spirit in Joshua. For Sakenfeld, Journeying with God, 152, it indicates that Joshua already has the quality of being the leader of Israel. Noth, Numbers, 214-215, argues for some kind of ability given by God, here certainly the ability generally to carry out his new task. And for Wevers, Notes on the Greek Text of Numbers, 467, it is best understood as “the spirit of leadership” which was in him.
4.2.2 The Spirit, anointing and mission (Isa 61:1-3)

Isa 61:1-3 belongs in a context replete with extraordinary promises of salvation. In Isa 60, the light of the sun and moon is replaced with the Lord’s everlasting light (60:19). All Israel will be righteous (60:21). No one will mourn again (60:20). The children of Israel’s old oppressors will travel to Zion to do obeisance and to rename the people of Israel the ‘City of the Lord’ (60:14). The time when these events take place is left intentionally unspecific and, therefore, resonates well with an open-ended promise by the person in 61:1-3.\footnote{Gerald T. Sheppard, "Isaiah," in HarperCollins Bible Commentary, ed. James L. Mays (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 533.}

As Sheppard argues above, Walter Brueggemann suggests that Isaiah 61:1-3 continues “the primary accents of chapter 60 concerning the coming reversal of the fortunes of Jerusalem, the coming abundance and prosperity of Jerusalem, and the corresponding subservience of the nations.”\footnote{Walter Brueggemann, Isaiah 40-66 (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 212.} But unlike Isaiah 60, this pericope points to a human agent who will carry out the Lord’s intention.\footnote{Brueggemann, Isaiah 40-66, 212.} The text comes from the context of post exilic Judah, and proclaims an unconditional announcement of salvation.\footnote{Elizabeth Achtemeier, The Community and Message of Isaiah 56-66 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 88.} The fuller text which envisions a universal salvation, in which all nations will share, is 61:1-11, divided into four strophes: vv. 1-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-11.\footnote{Achtemeier, Community, 88.} Though there are four strophes, the focus of this thesis is the first verse of the first strophe, v 1.

The passage begins:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners (61:1).

This text leaves the reader with a question: who is the speaker? The voice conveys a strong sense of individuality, with the speaker referring to a first-person singular, ‘me’, three times at the start of the sentence.\footnote{Joseph Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 56-66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 220.} The three-fold repetition of ‘me’ here is consistent with three-fold actions: the speaker possesses God’s Spirit, the speaker has been anointed and the speaker has...
been sent. The identity of the speaker, however, remains obscure.\textsuperscript{459} What is clear is that the text provides a first-person report of someone who claims to have been given a commission by God.\textsuperscript{460}

Most interpreters identify the speaker “as an individual prophet, for the simple reason that the language indicates prophetic commissioning.”\textsuperscript{461} John C. Poirier for instance points to the concept of an ‘anointed’ figure whose activities suggest that he is in some way a prophet.\textsuperscript{462} Scholars such as Achtemeier similarly suggest the text to be an individual’s account of his prophetic call. In this case trito-Isaiah is identified as an individual prophet.\textsuperscript{463} The description of the speaker’s endowment echoes the investiture of Cyrus as the Lord’s servant (Isa 42:1-4), reinforced by Cyrus’ appointment as the Lord’s ‘anointed one’ (45:1).\textsuperscript{464} Nevertheless, the mission laid on Cyrus passed to the ‘servant’ and his disciples; consequently, what was said about Cyrus in 42:1-4 was reinterpreted to apply to the servant.\textsuperscript{465} The servant song (42:1-9) has a lot of similarities with 11:1-9, which describes the Messiah.\textsuperscript{466} The servant functions not in

\textsuperscript{459} Brueggemann, Isaiah 40-66, 213.
\textsuperscript{460} Sheppard, Isaiah, 533. Also Paul V. Niskanen, Isaiah 56-66, ed. Chris Franke, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 43. Niskanen suggests that the autobiographical nature of Isa 61:1-3 is such that the first-person “me” of v 1 may be identified as the second-person “you” addressed by the voice of the Lord in Isa 59:21, and perhaps the ‘me’ of 48:16b. Both 48:16b and 61:1 use the verb “to send” in describing the prophetic commission of the ‘me’. It could therefore be said that the singular prophet who speaks in the first person in Isa 48:16b and Isa 61:1 is spoken about more obliquely in Isa 59:21 as the Lord addresses the prophet in the second person. Isa 61:1 can therefore be identified as a statement of prophetic commissioning. See Niskanen, Isaiah 56-66, 44.
\textsuperscript{461} Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 56-66, 221. Blenkinsopp also argues that “The language of Spirit possession combined with that of mission, both in Isaiah (cf. 6:8; 9:7; 42:19; 48:16) and elsewhere (Exod 3:13-15; 1 Sam 15:1; 2 Kgs 2:4; Jer 25:17; 26:12-15), points to a prophetic profile.” Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 220.
\textsuperscript{463} Achtemeier, Community, 88; also Sanders, “From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4,” 47, asserts that the pericope is an “example of a prophet freely and surely expressing the certainty that God had sent him or her with a message to the people.” Emmerson, Isaiah 56-66, 75, also suggests a prophet “affirming his consciousness of divine commissioning and describing the role to which he is committed.” Niskanen identifies the voice as an “individual prophetic voice speaking of itself as anointed and commissioned by Yahweh to proclaim a message to the mourners in Zion.” Niskanen, Isaiah 56-66, 43.
\textsuperscript{464} Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 56-66, 220.
\textsuperscript{465} Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 56-66, 220.
his own strength, but has the Spirit of God (42:2). The language here is an action of the past; for the Lord has already put the Lord’s Spirit on the servant. In Isaiah 61:1, the speaker references “the Spirit of the Lord [which] is [already] upon me.” And for both texts, mission follows after the Spirit reference. The servant also expresses the consciousness of a call in the claim, “And now the Lord God has sent me and his Spirit...” (48:16). This Spirit thus equips the anointed servant with the skills appropriate for the call.\(^{467}\)

In Isaiah 61, the speaker makes reference to two sources of authorisation: the ‘Spirit of the Lord’ and ‘the Lord’s anointing’. ‘The Spirit’ of the Lord is the Lord’s authorising force. Earlier, the Spirit blew back the power of chaos (Gen 1:2), came mightily upon the Judges for their task (Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14) and also upon David at his anointing (1 Sam 16:13); now the Spirit blows upon this human agent for mission (cf. 42:1b). The ‘Lord’s anointing’ becomes for the speaker a public gesture of authorisation.\(^{468}\) This juxtaposition of “Spirit” and “anointing” reflects David’s authorisation with the same two features: “Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him [David] in the presence of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward’ (1 Sam 16:13; see 2 Sam 23:1-2).” The text thus shows that it is the Lord, through the Spirit, that moves, summons and authorises the individuals.\(^{469}\)

The text also announces the speaker’s mission given by the Lord. The anointed speaker, endowed with the Spirit, is sent to announce the good news to the oppressed, heal the brokenhearted, release captives and announce the time of salvation (vv 1b-4).\(^{470}\) All these

---

\(^{467}\) Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 28.

\(^{468}\) Anointing is a term usually applied to kings: 1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 16:3, 13; 1 Kgs 1:34, 39 or Priests: Exod 40:15; Num 3:3; 29:29; Lev 4:3; 16:32. For this reason, Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 222-223, thinks the anointing here could be metaphorical. It is, however, not unparalleled (cf. 1 Kgs 19:16) for texts where prophets are called messiah – anointed one – 1 Chr 16:22; Ps 105:15. Emmerson, *Isaiah 56-66*, 75.


actions are meant to restore the poor, the weak and the marginalised to full function in a community of well-being and joy.\textsuperscript{471} The idea that God sent this person to be a herald of good news echoes the language of Isaiah 40:9; 41:27; 48:16b; 52:7 and 59:21.\textsuperscript{472} Thus at the heart of trito-Isaiah there is a powerful claim to divine authority and inspiration. The justification for the mission comes from the anointing with the Spirit, which conveys the idea of full and permanent authorisation to carry out the prophet’s God-given assignment.\textsuperscript{473} This echoes the authorisation of individuals by the Spirit’s presence in the past (Gen 41:38; Exod 31:3; Num 11:17, 29 for example). Here in Isaiah the Spirit empowers the servant to bring justice and righteousness on the earth, often through the spoken word (Isa 11:2; 32:15-16; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 59:21).\textsuperscript{474} And as the speaker indicates, the justification and authorisation for the mission comes from the presence of the Spirit of the Lord and the anointing. Luke will later apply this text to Jesus at Jesus’ inaugural presentation of his mission (Luke 4:18-19; cf. Acts 10:38).

4.2.3 The future promise of the Spirit and mission (Joel 2:28-29)

The OT prophets, especially Isaiah and Joel, speak of a future bestowal of the Spirit. While in Isaiah 11:1-2, the Spirit of the Lord is promised in the future tense to come on the future king, the ‘shoot from the stump of Jesse’; Joel 2:28-29 promises an outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord on the people of God.\textsuperscript{475} The recipient of the Spirit in Isaiah would be endowed with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. The recipients in Joel would prophesy, see visions, and dream dreams. While the Isaiah text shows that the recipient-future king is in the covenantal line of David (cf. 2

\textsuperscript{471} Brueggemann, Isaiah 40-66, 213; Emmerson, Isaiah 56-66, 76.
\textsuperscript{472} Sheppard, Isaiah, 533. Oswalt also identifies a connection and continuity between the speaker and the servant of Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12 and also with the Messiah of Isa 11. Oswalt, Book of Isaiah, 562-563. So also Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 56-66, 221.
\textsuperscript{473} Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 56-66, 222-223.
\textsuperscript{474} Oswalt, Book of Isaiah, 564. Cf. also Mic 3:8 where the prophet speaks of being empowered by the Spirit of the Lord. See also Num 24:2; 2 Sam 23:2; Zech 7:12
\textsuperscript{475} Isa 42:1 also speaks of a servant whose endowment with the Spirit is in the past tense, but the mission is in the future. For several other texts on the future outpouring of the Spirit, see Isa 32:14-15; 44:3b; 59:21; Ezek 36:25-32; 37:14a; 39:29; Zech 12:10.
Sam 23:2); Joel shows that the recipients will be people from all walks of life (young and old, male and female, free and slave). The focus of this section is primarily on the Joel text especially because of its importance in the Acts narrative interpreting the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Joel’s prophecy occurred at a time of turmoil for Israel, though the dates of his life cannot be fixed with any certainty. 476 His message centered on a severe locust invasion, which had wreaked havoc on the nation’s crops and livelihood (1:4). 477 As Joel addressed the nation in its distress he drew a comparison between the locust invasion and the ultimate day of the Lord that was yet to come (1:15; 2:1-17). 478 The locusts’ invasion is God’s judgment upon the people for infidelity. The prophet thus calls for repentance and prayer (1:13-2:17), which Joel 2:18 suggests did happen. 479 As a result of the repentance, God grants them a two-fold blessing: physical (2:18-27) and spiritual (2:28-32). The physical blessings are meant to ameliorate the effects of the locust plague that led to the repentance (Joel 2:25). It is within this context that Joel delivers the promise of God of an overwhelming future outpouring of the Lord’s Spirit upon all flesh. 480

The Verses 28-29 form an inclusio that speaks of the outpouring of the Spirit at both ends. The introductory clause, “then afterwards” of v 28a, links this divine promise of extraordinary manifestation of the Spirit to what precedes (vv 18-27). 481 As Hubbard suggests, the clause does not point to eschatological times, but serves rather to establish the chronological sequence

---

480 L. R. McQueen, Joel and the Spirit: The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 21-43. See also Hur, Dynamic Reading, 52.
between the two blessings (cf. 2:19-27).\footnote{David Allan Hubbard, \textit{Joel and Amos: An Introduction and Commentary}, ed. D. J. Wiseman, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989), 68. Similarly, VanGemen proposes rather that the expression communicates a transition between related material, and not a chronological sequence. W. A. VanGemenen, "The Spirit of Restoration," \textit{WTJ} 50, (1988): 84-87.} It establishes a transition to the oracles in chapters 3 and 4 which bring prophetic promises for a more distant time; and also presupposes that the preceding assurance oracles have been fulfilled, thereby confirming the expectation of the much greater response in the future (2:27).\footnote{Hans Walter Wolff, \textit{Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos} (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 65. Limburg also suggests that the phrase points to the Lord’s action in the future. See James Limburg, \textit{Hosea-Micah}, 70; also James L. Mays, \textit{Interpretation: A Commentary for Teaching and Preaching} (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1988), 69. Similarly, Finley argues that God’s actions in 2:28-32 are not immediately subsequent to those in 2:18-27. See T. J. Finley, \textit{Joel, Amos, Obadiah} (Chicago: Moody, 1990), 71. The later expression in v 29, ‘at that time’ literally ‘in those days’ is one of the standard ways of describing the indefinite future timing of the restoration era (Jere 31:29, 33; 33:15, 16; Joel 4:1; Zech 8:23). Most common is the singular ‘at that time’, literally, ‘in that day’ (cf. Isa 11:10). ‘At that time’ corresponds to the time indicated by the initial ‘then afterwards’. See Crenshaw, \textit{Joel}, 167; Stuart, \textit{Hosea-Jonah}, 261.} The speaker is presumed to be the Lord who began speaking in v 19. Thus, after the physical blessings of food and security (vv 19-27), God will bless the people with a renewal of his favour by the pouring out of the divine Spirit upon “all flesh” (vv 28-29).\footnote{Kathleen M. O’Connor, "Joel," in \textit{HarperCollins Bible Commentary}, ed. James L. Mays (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 646.} While the first stage is the restoration of old damage, the second is the inauguration of a new era in God’s dealings with his people.\footnote{Hubbard, \textit{Joel and Amos}, 68.}

The Lord will pour out ‘my [the Lord’s]’ Spirit on all flesh. This promise in Joel contains two special emphases: first, the pouring out of the fullness of the Spirit, which is addressed by the verbs to prophesy, have dreams, and see visions (v 28). These verbs describe revelatory functions associated with the fullness of God’s Spirit (cf. Deut 34:9). Second, is the generous and non-exclusive nature of this outpouring, such that all flesh will receive this pouring out of the Spirit. This is addressed by the noun subjects (sons and daughters, old men and young men male and female slaves).\footnote{Stuart, \textit{Hosea-Jonah}, 260.} Therefore, this promise points to an age when all of God’s people will have the fullness of God’s Spirit. The old era was characterised by the Spirit’s selective, limited influence on some individuals: certain prophets, kings and priests. But through Joel the
people are hearing of a new way of living, in which everybody can have the Spirit. This promise concerns the entire community. O’Connor’s remark is particularly significant:

But the text specifies the recipients as the least likely bearers of divine gifts – the young and the old, the females and the slaves. God’s Spirit will so abundantly manifest, so generously poured out, so present and alive in the community that revelation will overflow institutional channels. Not only priests and prophets but everyone ‘shall know’ God and be potential revealers of God (2:27).

In Kaiser’s argument ‘all flesh’ includes all people without exception, including Gentiles. There are other scholars, however, who take the phrase to refer to Judah or Israel. Stronstad suggests that the gift of the Spirit is for all humankind, which in context means all Israel. Crenshaw argues that ‘all flesh’ can also mean ‘everyone’ without ethnic or gender restrictions (cf. Isa 49:26 and Sir 8:19); but that the context indicates that Joel uses it in a more restrictive sense, all Judahites. It is worth noting however that from Joel’s announcement, “when God visits his people to restore their fortunes, the Spirit of prophecy will no longer be restricted to Israel’s leaders, nor given in conformity to the norms of Israelite society. Instead, it will be universal both in extent and status.” Luke later takes up this concept and applies it in Acts, such that the ‘promise’ is not just for adult male Jews, but also for their children (male and female) and for all who are far away, and everyone whom the Lord God calls to him (Acts 2:39).

---

488 O’Connor, *Joel*, 646.
490 See R. B. Dillard, *Joel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 295; W. S. Prinsloo, *The Theology of the Book of Joel* (New York, NY: DeGruyter, 1985), 84, 89. See also Allen, *Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 98. Finley, also argues that the “sphere of application is restricted by the context... there is no reason to think Joel is not still addressing the community of Judah and Jerusalem.” The argument is that Joel 3 addresses God’s judgment upon the nations, which thus suggests a focus of blessing upon ethnic Israel. Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 71-72. So also Hubbard, *Joel and Amos*, 69; Treier, “The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32,” 16; and Crenshaw, *Joel*, 166. Nevertheless, while Joel addresses an immediate community of Israelites, “all flesh” denotes all people regardless of age, sex or social status – this includes even slaves which included Gentiles within the framework of Israel. Cf. Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 73.
491 Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 29.
492 Crenshaw, *Joel*, 165.
The basic theme of this Joel text is God’s generous gift of the Spirit.\(^{494}\) Generally, in the OT, reception of the Spirit is reception of divine authority, which may manifest itself in extraordinary acts (Judg 14: 6, 19; 15:14), inspired leadership (Judg 6:34), life giving (Ezek 37:1-14), or prophecy (1 Sam 10:10).\(^ {495}\) For Joel, the gift of the Spirit is neither for the purpose of new obedience (cf. Ezek 36:26-27) nor for the new creation of the people of God (cf. Isa 32:15; 44:3); but that the people newly called to life shall be a nation of prophets (cf. Ezek 39:29).\(^ {496}\) Whether it is ecstatic prophecy, dreams or visions, everyone has the same direct access to the Lord. This concept of the Spirit in Joel manifests in Luke-Acts, where there is also a correlation between Spirit endowment and prophetic activity (Luke 1:41, 67; Acts 2:4; 10:46; 11:28; 19: 6-7; 21:4, 11).


There are a number of parallels between the Spirit motif in the OT and Luke’s pneumatology.

\(i. \quad \text{The consequences of Spirit reception/bestowal}\)

The Spirit motif no doubt is diverse in the OT. But one thing stands out: that each occasion of Spirit endowment is followed by some form of activity that has divine approval or authorisation (cf. Exod 31:3; 35:31; Num 11:25; 27:18; Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 9:11; Deut 34:9 for example). The Spirit is presented consistently as God’s Spirit fulfilling God’s will/purpose through human agents.\(^ {497}\) The presence of the Spirit therefore signals divine approval for the community, but also for the human character and the purpose accomplished by the character. Similarly, from the first chapter of Luke’s gospel to the last of Acts the Holy Spirit is a constant character. Whenever the Spirit is given or received, characters are commissioned or empowered for different tasks (see Luke 1:15-17, 26-35, 41-43, 67-80; 2:25-32; 4:18-19; cf. 24:48; Acts 1:8; 2:4; 4:8; 6:1-7; 7:55; 8:39; 9:15, 17; 22:14-15; 28:25; cf. 1:8). Luke focuses a lot on the mission to the wider world, though not neglecting the role of the church in Jerusalem and the earlier mission of the church. The mission to the nations opens

\(^{494}\) Limburg, Hosea-Micah, 70.  
\(^{495}\) Limburg, Hosea-Micah, 70.  
\(^{496}\) Wolff, Joel and Amos, 66.  
\(^{497}\) Hur, Dynamic Reading, 53.
with Cornelius from Caesarea (cf. Acts 10:44-47). A great figure in this missionary endeavour of the church from this point to the end of Acts is Paul; the other is Barnabas (cf. Acts 13:1-3). Consistent with his style, Luke shows that these disciples are Spirit-led for their mission (Acts 9:17; 11:24; 13:9; 16:6; 19:21). Just like the OT pneumatics, these Lukan characters are all empowered by the presence of the Spirit upon each of them, thus also giving credence and divine approval to their assigned mission before the implied audience.

To experience the Spirit of God is to experience God as Spirit.\textsuperscript{498} The Spirit of God is usually given to particular individuals chosen by God. Joel promised an eventual outpouring of God’s Spirit upon ‘all flesh’; which Luke takes up and applies to ‘everyone’ in the narrative of Acts (2:39). Thus, the concept of the Spirit’s ‘coming on/upon’ or ‘filling’ particular individuals in Israel’s story to authenticate them as God’s representatives and to accomplish certain tasks constitutes an important antecedent, and informs Luke’s teaching on the filling of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{499} Luke draws on this largely from the OT usage of the Spirit with a particular focus on legitimation of mission and empowerment of characters.

\textit{ii. The Spirit of prophecy}


\textsuperscript{499} Köstenberger, “What Does It Mean to Be Filled with the Spirit?” 231.
Paul who is chosen to lead the Gentile mission is filled with the Spirit (Acts 9:17); and the Holy Spirit appoints leaders for the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:28). Furthermore, on many occasions the narrator of Luke-Acts, as in the OT, presents the Spirit as the subject acting directly on characters; on other occasions, the Spirit is presented as the object being acted upon.

iii. Terms for the Spirit of God


502 See the appendix and its tables: Table 1: Terms for the Spirit in Luke-Acts and their equivalents in the OT (LXX); Table 2: Expressions for Spirit endowment/bestowal in Luke-Acts and their parallels in the OT (LXX); Table 3: Consequences of Spirit reception in the OT; Table 4: Consequences of Spirit reception in Luke-Acts; Table 5: Other similar expressions and images.

503 This suggests that the Holy Spirit does not have a separate or independent identity apart from God. A. A. Anderson, The Book of Psalms: 1-72 (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 1, 399; M. E. Tate, Psalms 51-100 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 23-24. God is holy (Exod 22:32; 29:43; Lev 10:3; 19:2; Num 39:27; 1 Sam 6:20; Isa 5:16; 6:3; 11:9; Ezek 20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:23; 38:16; 39:27; Dan 4:8, 9, 15; 5:11, 14; Hos 11:9); God's name is holy (Lev 20:3; 22:2; 1 Chr 16:10, 35; Pss 33:21; 103:1; Ezek 36:20, 21, 22); and so God’s Spirit is holy (Ps 51:11; Isa 63:10, 11) and God’s word is holy (Isa 5:24). Hur, Dynamic Reading, 49-50.
iv. **Expressions for Spirit endowment/bestowal**


v. **Other similar expressions and images**


The evidence here thus clearly shows that Luke has chosen language and expressions from the Septuagint with which the Greek-speaking Jewish reader is familiar, and language that is consistent with the OT. I argue that Luke does this quite intentionally with persuasive intent, in order to overcome the possible resistance from readers of Jewish origin.
4.4 Summary and conclusion

The numerous references to and citations from the Jewish scripture within the Lukan narrative point to the fact that Luke has extensive knowledge of the OT (LXX) and that he uses it persuasively in his narrative. The assertion that OT prophecies are fulfilled within the Lukan works also supports this argument. Equally, Luke constantly points out that certain events necessarily happen within the narrative because they have been divinely programmed by God in the OT. Luke makes such references to the OT because it is an authoritative document for the Jews; and Luke is seeking to overcome resistance from Jewish members of the Christian communities as well as encouraging Gentiles in their faith. Luke therefore needs to appeal to a scheme that appeals to the Jewish audience. The Jewish scripture readily provides this schema. All these features show that Luke is true to his careful investigation of everything from the very first (Luke 1:3a).

Therefore, the resonances of the OT pneumatic language and expressions within Luke-Acts are not simply accidental; they are meant to address the resistance of the implied readers who are in opposition to mission as Luke has presented it in the communities. Luke shows that what is occurring in the communities is the result of the activities of the Spirit of God which was active in similar ways in the OT. This tells the resisting reader that what Luke presents is not entirely a novelty. Luke makes references to familiar sources of legitimation from the Jewish authoritative scriptures in order to make the intended readers understand that what is seen in the communities is in accordance with God’s will and purpose. The Jewish reader, presumably, knows that the Spirit in the OT is a sign of divine approval for the various characters endowed with the Spirit, and hence legitimates their mission and task. As Hur puts it, “The Old Testament named and unnamed figures (possibly including Saul and his messengers in 1 Sam 19) who are endowed with God’s Spirit are delineated as the human agents of God and are represented as reliable characters, fulfilling his purpose/will.”504 The presence of the Spirit signals the presence of God. The characters inspired or tasks initiated by the Spirit follow God’s plans.

---

504 Hur, Dynamic Reading, 68.
In the same way, as argued here, Luke employs the legitimating authority of the Spirit of the Lord in his narrative. Luke particularly appeals to Isaiah 61:1-3 at the start of Jesus’ mission in the gospel, and Joel 2:28-29 at the start of church’s mission in Acts, while the public outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; 10:44; 19:6-7) echoes Numbers 11:25-27. Luke does this with a view to persuading resisting community members about the legitimacy of the mission to the nations, and also to support the Gentile believers. Exploring how the Spirit in Luke-Acts functions to provide this legitimation for both Jewish and Gentile members of the communities is the focus of chapters five and six.
Chapter five

The Holy Spirit’s role in legitimating the mission of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke

Chapter four of this thesis established that the Spirit motif in the OT served as Luke’s background frame of reference in addressing resisting Jewish Christians in the communities about the legitimacy of mission to τὰ Εὕβη, just as the Greco-Roman religious context provided the conceptual framework for Gentile believers to understand the role played by the Spirit in the narrative of Luke-Acts (chapter three). Luke’s use of S/spirit resonates meaningfully with these two contexts and features strongly in the gospel and in Acts. This chapter concentrates on the gospel.

As this thesis argues, one of Luke’s major uses of the Holy Spirit in the narrative of Luke-Acts is to overcome resistance to mission, especially the Gentile mission in Acts. The mission of the church in Acts flows from the mission of Jesus (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8), which Luke narrates in the first book, the gospel (cf. Acts 1:1). The legitimacy of the church’s mission in Acts hinges on the legitimacy of the mission of Jesus. This chapter argues that the Holy Spirit legitimates the mission and ministry of Jesus, and that the Spirit legitimating the mission of Jesus serves as a critical point of reference and foundation for legitimating the church’s mission. For if the church carries out its mission in obedience to Jesus’ Spirit-inspired instruction (Acts 1:2) then the mission is undertaken in response to a divine initiative and therefore to be accepted. Gamaliel’s warning in Acts 5:38-39 is most appropriate since opposition leads to the inevitable conclusion that “you may even be found fighting against God!”

In this chapter, I have chosen four particular texts which emphasise the role of the Holy Spirit at key moments in the life and mission of Jesus: at his conception (Luke 1:35); at his baptism (Luke 3:21-22); at his temptation and preparation for mission (Luke 4:1, 14); and at the inauguration of his mission (Luke 4:16-30). My goal is to determine how Luke employs the Holy Spirit in these texts with a view to upholding the thesis that the Holy Spirit is legitimator of mission in

---

505 For other texts, see for instance, Luke 10:21; 11:13; 24:49. The texts above (Luke 1:35; 3:21-22; 4:1, 14; and 4:16-30) have been chosen because they appear at key moments when the Spirit acted or is said to act in relation to Jesus.
Luke-Acts for both Jesus and the church. The overall thesis argued thus far more from a narrative perspective, will be tested and developed here in the detailed exegesis of key texts in Luke, and in the next chapter, in texts drawn from the Acts of the Apostles.

5.1 Jesus’ conception: an action of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35)

Among the Synoptic evangelists, both Matthew and Luke preface the account of the public ministry of Jesus with infancy narratives of considerable length. However, in their presentation of the narrative, they are quite different in style and content, though they are in agreement on a number of issues. While both accounts employ the Spirit motif in the birth narrative, Luke’s account in comparison to Matthew’s gives much greater prominence to the Holy Spirit. Matthew’s account makes reference to the Holy Spirit once (Matt 1:18), whereas Luke refers to the Holy Spirit seven times (cf. 1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25, 26, 27). This signals from the outset the relevance of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. As contended by Oliver, and supported by Tatum, the Holy Spirit is as prominent here in the infancy narrative as it is later in the life of the church in Acts.

Of particular importance for this thesis is Luke’s emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38; cf. Matt 1:18-25). As Luke stresses, through the ‘coming upon’ and the ‘overshadowing’ of the Holy Spirit, Mary conceives a son. Luke presents the account in such a way that the reader first of all perceives a seeming impossibility: a virgin is about to become pregnant (cf. Luke 1:37). While the reader is contemplating the feasibility of

---


a virgin becoming pregnant without any human agent, Luke subsequently answers the riddle by attributing the pregnancy to the action of the Holy Spirit.

\[i.\] The setting

The context within which the Holy Spirit is mentioned in this narrative is the annunciation of the angel Gabriel to Mary about the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38). This is uniquely Lukan material. In this pericope, Luke temporarily draws the curtain on Zechariah and Elizabeth and introduces Mary onto the stage. It is a scene that highlights the conversation between Mary and the angel Gabriel, six months after Gabriel had spoken with Zechariah (Luke 1:26, cf. v 36). Before introducing the dialogue, Luke provides the reader with essential information about the character – Mary. Two things stand out: first, Mary is a virgin; and second, Mary is engaged to Joseph (see also Matt 1:18; Luke 2:5), of the house of David.\(^{510}\) This then foreshadows Jesus’ adoptive royal lineage and ancestry through Joseph to David (Luke 3:23-31), thereby alluding especially to God’s promise of an eternal Davidic dynasty (cf. Luke 2:4; 2 Sam 7:12-16; 1 Chr 17:11).\(^{511}\) While Mary’s depiction as a virgin emphasises her youthfulness, it also underlines the divine origin of the child to be born.

\[ii.\] The Holy Spirit in the conversation

The stage is now set for the conversation between Mary and the angel Gabriel. The angel greets Mary as a favoured one (χαίρε, κεχαριτωμένη – Luke 1:28), which as Creed holds, refers to “grace of character.”\(^{512}\) The Greek, κεχαριτωμένη, refers to one who has been graced. This is further substantiated with the affirmative expression: ὃ χύριος μετὰ σοῦ (Luke 1:28).\(^{513}\) This means that Mary “has found favour with God and has been chosen for this very special task

---

\(^{510}\) For discussions on betrothal, see Brown, The Birth of the Messiah, 123-124; also Mullins, The Gospel of Luke, 121.


\(^{513}\) In the OT, for God to be with someone is a common expression for divine assistance – cf. Gen 21:20; 26:3; 38; and as a greeting in the OT only in Judg 6:12; Ruth 2:4; see also, John 3:2; Acts 7:9; 10:38.
The angel conveys to Mary the part that she is to play in the realization of the divine purpose. Mary is to become the mother of the one whom the angel said ὁ ὲτὸς ἔσται μέγας καὶ ὦιδ ὑψίστου κληθήσεται (Luke 1:32) and who will also be called ὦιδ ὦς Θεοῦ (Luke 1:35). Not only that, God will give this holy child (Luke 1:35b), whose name is Jesus (Luke 1:31), the throne of his ancestor David (Luke 1:32); he will reign over the house of Jacob, and his kingdom will have no end (Luke 1:33). From the very beginning Luke is addressing the question of the identity Jesus. Luke affirms that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises made to David (2 Sam 7:16; 1 Chr 17:14; Isa 9:7; see also Dan 7:14).

The fact that Mary is a virgin “who knows not a man” presents a problem: how could a virgin become pregnant without human intervention? Matthew addresses this from two perspectives. First, Matthew makes reference to the Holy Spirit: “She was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit” (Matt 1:18). Second, Matthew presents it as a fulfillment of an OT prophetic text: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel...,” (Matt 1:23; cf. Isa 7:14).

In Luke’s presentation, Mary raises an objection, just like those OT characters who received a divine assignment: “how can this be, since I am a virgin?” (Luke 1:34). This becomes the narrative device to prepare for the announcement of the Spirit’s action in v 35. In response to Mary’s question the angel asserts: πνεῦμα ἄγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ and the δύναμις υψίστου will cover you with its shadow (v 35a). From the narrative, while Luke announces the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Mary, Luke’s emphasis seems to be also on the consequences of the action of the Holy Spirit on the child: “therefore, the child will be holy and will be called son of

---

518 Mikeal C. Parsons, Luke (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 39. For those who received divine assignments earlier, see Abraham (Gen 15:1-6), Moses (Exod 3:11), Gideon (Judg 6:13), Jeremiah (Jer 1:6).
God’ (v 35b).\(^{521}\) Δἰὸν προέβλεψιν (therefore also) in v 35b is a double emphasis which shows that what follows is the consequence of an earlier action. It is as a result of the Spirit’s action that the child is holy and is called son of God.\(^{522}\) The response to Mary’s question, πῶς (how), then, tells the reader how the child will be conceived, and so sheds light on “the extraordinary character of the child who is to be born ... and about divine involvement in his origin.”\(^{523}\) In Isaiah 11:2, the future Davidic king is endowed with the Spirit of the Lord. Thus, Luke’s presentation of Jesus as son of God and son of the Most High, whose conception is made possible through the Holy Spirit, the δύναμις υψίστου (cf. Isa 32:15),\(^{524}\) confirms for a Jewish reader especially, that Jesus is ‘the Davidic king’ (2 Sam 7:8-17; Ps 2:7). Only Luke appeals to this motif, and he does this in keeping with his desire to provide ἀσφαλεία (Luke 1:4) for the implied readers which includes the reliability of the mission as Luke has presented it. The divine involvement is defined by the role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ conception.\(^{525}\) This necessitates the angel’s announcement about the function of the Holy Spirit in the whole process: “ ‘the Holy Spirit will come upon you’ (ἐπελεύσεται ἐπί σέ, Luke 1:35).\(^{526}\) Mary’s question, thus, provides the

---

\(^{521}\) Greatness (cf. v 32a) and holiness (cf. v 35b) are two terms that are specially used of God in the OT (greatness: Exod 15:7, 16; Num 14:19; Deut 3:24; 5:24; 9:26; 11:2; 32:3; 1 Chr 17:19, 21; 29:11; Neh 13:22; Pss 66:3; 79:11; 145:3, 6; 150:2; Isa 40:26; 63:1; holiness: Exod 15:11; 28:36; 1 Chr 16:29; Pss 60:6; 108:7; Isa 62:9; 63:15; Jer 23:9; Amos 4:2). Cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke* I-IX, 347.

\(^{522}\) This is an important aspect of Luke’s Christology. Evans, “Jesus and the Spirit,” 28.


\(^{524}\) “Most High” (ὑψίστος) is a Lukan designation for God (cf. Luke 1:32, 35, 76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:8; 16:17). Of the nine instances in which it is used in the NT five are in Luke, and two in Acts (cf. Mark 5:7). It was also a common designation for God in Hellenistic Judaism; in this context, it expresses the preeminence of the divine father of Jesus (cf. Bovon, *Luke* 1, 52).


\(^{526}\) In Acts 1:8, Luke employs the same term ἐπελεύσεται – a participle for ἐπέρχομαι, prefixed by ἐπί – to come upon) when speaking about the coming of the Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost, reminiscent of Isaiah 32:15 – “until a spirit from high is poured out... and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field...” Luke uses a similar
narrative opportunity for Luke to offer the reader more information regarding Jesus’ identity and mission as the Davidic messiah in v 35. Raymond Brown writes:

And so, the rephrasing of the ‘how’ question in v 34 and the angelic response in v 35 is determined by Luke’s intention: he wished in these verses to explain the identity of the Davidic Messiah whose birth the angel had proclaimed in vv 31-33, namely, that he is the Son of God, begotten through the creative power of the Holy Spirit.527

While Matthew uses a passive voice, εὑρέθη, to speak about the relationship between the pregnancy and the Holy Spirit and Mary, Luke employs the active voice, ἐπελεύσεται to speak about the action of the Holy Spirit. Matthew refers to a pregnancy already under way; in Luke the verbs are in the future tense: she will conceive. Luke here actively shows that Jesus’ conception follows after the angel’s announcement and after Mary’s ‘yes’ in v 38. Shepherd captures it vividly arguing that

The active construction, with the Spirit as the subject of a future-tense verb, is rhetorically significant: it indicates to the reader the importance of this event. The Spirit is again at work, but not merely as the agent in a passive construction, as in Matt 1:18 (“...she was found...” – εὑρέθη), or with John (“he will be filled with the Holy Spirit...” Luke 1:15c). Now, the Spirit will be a direct actor in the story, a character, and a protagonist.528

Oliver also rightly remarks that “though it is true that the report of the birth of Jesus in Matthew 1:18-20 brings in the idea of the activity of the Holy Spirit, there is no development of the idea to anything like the degree of development in Luke.”529 This shows that Luke wants the implied readers to be absolutely certain (Luke 1:4) that what is about to take place is not the work of any human effort, but is purely the result of divine action. Luke, by appealing to the action of the Holy Spirit, therefore assures the reader that Jesus’ conception is part of God’s


527 Brown, The Birth of the Messiah, 308.
528 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 120.
saving plan, as is also Jesus’ mission in Luke and as continued by the followers in Acts. In other words, Luke informs the communities that the conception and birth of Jesus for the fulfillment of his divine mission are entirely the work of God. The reference to the active role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ conception thus particularly identifies the divine nature of Jesus and what he is called to accomplish. This strongly supports the call for the Lukan network of communities to accept not just Jesus and his ministry in the gospel, but also the mission carried on by Jesus’ followers as laid out in the narrative of Acts.

The indication that this child will be great, will be son of the most High, and will have the throne of David (his ancestor) and reign over the house of Jacob forever (vv 32-33) points to the divine programme that this child will accomplish. Luke, thus, first points out Jesus’ mission and then shows that the Holy Spirit will bring it to pass. Luke here has established a pattern that will continue to develop and resound in the rest of the narrative – that Jesus and his mission, which includes the mission of the church in Acts, fulfill the divine program. As the narrative drives towards the baptism, temptation and inauguration of the mission of Jesus, where again the Spirit is prominent, the reader is already well disposed to what is proposed.

Luke clearly avows that the origin and mission of Jesus are from the same source – the Holy Spirit. While Creed may be right in pointing out that Luke is very much concerned with the origin of Jesus, it is worth noting also that Luke is not merely interested in Jesus’ origin for the sake of simply defining his divinity. Luke, in showing the divine origin of Jesus, points to his Spirit-inspired mission which he is soon to define programmatically in Luke 4:18ff. Thus, here Luke tells the hearing-reader that since Jesus’ origin is divine, his mission must be divine since he is from God, conceived of the Holy Spirit. And consequently, the same mission carried out in his name by the church to the nations follows the divine plan and fulfills the divine purpose.

5.2 Jesus’ baptism: public endorsement by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21-22)

The account of Jesus’ baptism is not unique to Luke (cf. Matt 3:13-17 and Mark 1:9-11). However, the Lukan narrative, in comparison with Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts, has several

---

530 Evans, Saint Luke, 163.
unique features. Luke’s account does not seem to focus on Jesus’ baptism per se, but on the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus and the voice from heaven to him. These are two elements which mark the divine endorsement of Jesus, that present Jesus as the agent through whom God will work. The account presents one of two divine testimonies given during the ministry of Jesus (the other is found in Luke 9:28-36 – the transfiguration). The two elements become visible and audible with the opening of heaven. Thus, Luke 3:21-22 centres on three infinitive clauses set in parallel: ‘the heaven was opened’ (ἀνεωχθῆναι), ‘the Holy Spirit descended’ (καταβῆναι) and ‘a voice came’ (γενέσθαι).

Dunn’s argument that the Spirit event at the baptism of Jesus describes Jesus’ entry into a new covenantal relationship with God, does not take into account Luke’s narrative of the divine origin and relationship of Jesus with God at the conception account. Turner is partly right that the Jordan experience is an “empowering for the messianic task of one who is already eschatological Son (by the Spirit).” In like manner, Goulder’s assertion is partly valid that “It is the gift of the Spirit, empowering him to act out what he already is, which enables Jesus to ‘begin’ his ministry.” This thesis takes these insights further by arguing that the public nature of the manifestation of the Spirit and the voice from heaven in Luke’s account provides a frame of reference for affirming Jesus and his mission; an affirmation which provides support for the mission in Acts, since the mission in Acts is in obedience to the Spirit-inspired instructions of

---

532 For instance, Luke does not mention that Jesus came from Galilee or from Nazareth of Galilee (cf. Matt 13:13; Mark 1:9); Jordan is not mentioned in Luke’s account; Luke does not explicitly mention John as the baptiser (cf. Matt 3:13; Mark 1:9); in Luke, Jesus was praying when the Spirit descended and the voice spoke. Nolland observes that “Luke has almost entirely reformulated his Markan source,” (Nolland, Luke vol. 1, 160). While Conzelmann thinks that Luke’s omission of Jesus as coming from Nazareth in Galilee is a conscious modification intended to separate Jesus from John’s locale, Wink challenges this position arguing that John and Jesus are already connected to the desert (e.g. 3:2ff; 4:1ff). I agree with Fitzmyer that Luke is simply content to let the reader know that Jesus was among the crowds that came out to be baptised by John the Baptist (cf. Luke 3:7). See Conzelmann, Theology, 20; Walter Wink, John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 49. Also, Fitzmyer, The Gospel according to Luke I-IX, 479-480.


536 Dunn, Baptism, 41.

537 Jesus is son of the most High (1:32) and son of God (1:35b).

538 Turner, Power from on High, 199.

Jesus (Acts 1:2). The baptism of Jesus is thus a paradigmatic moment in Luke’s gospel, and the divine affirmation reverberates into the narrative of Acts and functions as a Christological legitimation to those who resist the ongoing mission of the church.

i. The setting (v 21)

Luke introduces and sets Jesus’ baptism in the context of ἄπαντα τὸν λαόν who were also baptised, thus making it public (v 21). The explicitly public nature of the event is not emphasised in the other three gospels (Mark 1:9-11; Matt 3:13-17; John 1:29-34). Whereas Matthew, Mark and Luke mention other people who also were baptised by John (Matt 3:5; Mark 1:5 and Luke 3:7), only Luke presents the actual baptismal account of Jesus in the context of ‘all the people’. As Jervell rightly indicates, the presence of “all the people” is theologically motivated; it is not merely a stylistic preference. Through Luke’s employment of ἄπαντα τὸν λαόν in the narrative the reader realises the public nature of the event that is about to usher in the mission of Jesus, which is continued in the mission of the church in Acts (cf. Acts 1:21-22). Luke separates the baptism of Jesus from that of “all the people” but connects the separate rites by the first καί in v 21.

In Matthew 3:13 and Mark 1:9 John is the one who baptises Jesus. Luke omits John’s name completely. In Luke’s narrative, John is already in prison (3:20). The actual baptismal rite is also omitted, which indicates that for Luke, the important event follows the actual baptism: the opening of heaven and the subsequent testimony. Luke sets this opening of heaven in the context of prayer (Luke 3:21; cf. Matt 3:16 and Mark 1:10), by informing the reader that Jesus was praying (προσευχομένου) when the heaven opened (ἀνεωχθῆναι τὸν οὐρανόν), an emphasis

541 Kuecker, The Spirit and the ‘Other’, 77.
542 Jervell asserts that the λαός is Israel in its character as the people of God. Jacob Jervell, Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 41-75. In this way, Turner argues, “the whole of Israel is confronted by the redemptive-historical events out of which the church will grow.” Turner, Power from on High, 196, f/n 27.
543 Bock suggests that Luke leaves out John’s name so that attention is placed on Jesus’ prayer and the divine voice; thus indicating that the event is entirely God’s work. Bock, Luke 1:1-9:50, 335.
unique to Luke. Luke portrays it as an objective event presumably observed by ἅπαντα τὸν λαὸν. This finds support from the fact that the clauses of this verse are subordinate to the public endorsement in 3:22.

Now, the whole setting is ready: the people have been baptised, Jesus too has been baptised and is praying. The heaven is now open to Jesus and ‘all the people’. What next?

\[ \text{ii. The Holy Spirit and the voice: Jesus’ affirmation (v 22)} \]

Luke, in comparison to Matthew and Mark, strongly emphasises the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus (Luke 3:22; cf. Matt 3:13-17 and Mark 1:9-11). Luke begins his entire narrative by introducing characters who are filled with the Holy Spirit for their mission: John the Baptist (1:15); Elizabeth (1:41); Zechariah (1:67); and Simeon (2:25-26). This is consistent with a number of OT figures who carried out their mission filled with the Spirit of the Lord. The Spirit’s descent upon Jesus, therefore, can be said to have a missionary character; it is the confirmation of his mission. The significance of the Spirit’s descent as legitimating mission becomes clearer when one recognises that both the servant and Davidic messiah in Isaiah are endowed with the Spirit of the Lord (cf. Isa 11:1-2; 42:1). In Luke’s context, one may note the earlier references to David in Luke 1:32 and 69, and understand that this is a...

---


Lukan way of asserting (cf. 1:4, the ἀσφάλειαν) Jesus’ authority and legitimating the mission he is to accomplish; the mission which continues in the mission of the church to the nations.\(^{551}\) Thus, following and amplifying the Synoptic tradition, Luke states clearly that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism.

In Luke, the Holy Spirit does not just descend; the Spirit descends in bodily form (σωματικῶς εἰδει), a phrase unique to Luke (v 22).\(^{552}\) The unique reference to σωματικῶς εἰδει shows that the coming of the Spirit was a visible experience.\(^{553}\) The Johannine evangelist makes it clear that John the Baptist saw the Spirit descend as a dove upon Jesus (cf. John 1:32-33).\(^{554}\) Luke’s addition of σωματικῶς εἰδει uniquely accommodates the descent of the Spirit to the Hellenistic understandings, where power is presented in terms of substance.\(^{555}\) In this way, Luke adjusts the narrative to address both the Jewish and Gentile members of the community.

While it is Jesus who sees (εἶδεν – he saw) the Spirit descending upon him in Matthew 3:16 and Mark 1:10, in Luke 3:22 the verb ἐδει is absent. Luke replaces ἐδει with an expression which denotes the Holy Spirit publicly coming down upon Jesus in bodily form.\(^{556}\) Thus Luke writes: καὶ καταβῆναι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγίον σωματικῶς εἰδεί ως περιστεράν ἐπ’ αὐτόν (and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove). This unique public presentation of the Spirit’s

---


\(^{554}\) Though the symbolic meaning of the dove cannot be determined, possible OT allusions are Gen 1:2; 8:8; Deut 32:11.


descent upon Jesus differentiates Luke’s baptism narrative from that of Matthew and Mark.\(^{557}\) And just as Berger’s definition of legitimation suggests,\(^{558}\) appealing to this objectivated knowledge of \(\dot{α}παντα \tauον \lambdaαον\) strengthens Luke’s legitimation agenda. This also highlights the importance of the people in v 21 where Luke situates Jesus’ baptism within the context of \(\dot{α}παντα \tauον \lambdaαον\). It is not only Jesus who sees the Spirit come upon him; the implied reader also can visualise the Holy Spirit come upon Jesus. It is suggested then that \(\dot{α}παντα \tauον \lambdaαον\) is situated in v 21 so that the intended reader can also see that Jesus is the anointed one.\(^{559}\) By emphasising the visible descent of the Spirit upon Jesus, and by insisting on its “bodily form”, Luke appeals to an observable knowledge of an event that ushers in the mission of Jesus. This singular Spirit descent upon Jesus thus lends credibility and authentication to Jesus’ mission, and by inference, the mission to the nations in Acts.

In Luke, as in Mark, the voice (\(\phiωνη\)) addresses Jesus directly with the use of second person singular: \(συ \ ε\iota \ ουιος \ μου \ ο \ \dot{α}γαθοτος, \ εν \ σοι \ ευ\iota\delta\iota\kappa\e\iota\sigmaα\) (you are my son the beloved; with you I am well pleased).\(^{560}\) This recalls earlier texts in the OT where God speaks (Exod 19:3; 20:22; Deut 4:12, 36; Ezek 1:25, 28 – 2:1-8), and Rev 4:1; 10:4 where a ‘voice’ speaks. It is proleptic of the voice at the transfiguration account (Luke 9:35-36) and the Cornelius episode (Acts 10:13-15). From the narrative sequence, Luke’s readers are already aware of Jesus’ identity as son of God (Luke 1:35; 2:49), and Jesus is also already aware of his divine sonship (Luke 2:49). As Kuecker argues, the proclamation is thus not for Jesus’ benefit.\(^{561}\) It is, however, important because “it is a statement in which God directly addresses Jesus, which makes it an especially strong affirmation of their unique relationship.”\(^{562}\)


\(^{558}\) Cf. f/n 102 above.

\(^{559}\) The testimony of “all the people” has weight (cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15; John 8:17; 2 Cor 13:1).

\(^{560}\) Fitzmyer, The Gospel according to Luke, vol 1, 480, suggests that the second person ‘you’ implies only Jesus heard the voice but that all saw the visible manifestations. Matt 3:17 however, has \(ου\iotaτος \ έστιν \ ο \ υιος... \ εν \ σοι \ ευ\iota\delta\iota\kappa\e\iota\sigmaα\) (this is my son... in whom I am well pleased). This indicates that in Matthew’s account, the audience is addressed, whereas in Luke’s and Mark’s account Jesus is addressed.

\(^{561}\) Kuecker, The Spirit and the ‘Other’, 76.

\(^{562}\) Tanehill, Narrative Unity, Vol. 1, 57. Green, The Gospel of Luke, 186, also shows that Jesus’ identity in relation to God and God’s redemptive project is proclaimed by God here. The voice from heaven, most scholars recognise is an allusion to Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1. Cf. Penney, Missionary Emphasis, 39; Dunn, Baptism, 27. Also Marshall, The
Earlier in Luke’s narrative, the Holy Spirit effects Jesus’ conception, and so Jesus is son of God (Luke 1:35). Here the Spirit’s bodily manifestation at Jesus’ baptism highlights the Spirit’s endorsement of Jesus’ identity as ‘son of God’. The reader now sees that the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus and the voice from heaven is not just an empowerment for mission, but also a public endorsement of that mission (Num 11:25). As Green holds, the voice “provides an unimpeachable sanction of Jesus with regard to his identity and mission.” The Spirit and the voice thus convey the divine origin and mission of Jesus; and also provide a frame of reference for overcoming resistance to this mission in Acts. Therefore the presence of the Spirit at the baptismal account, while principally lending credibility to Jesus and his mission, also functions as a reference point for the legitimation of the Gentile mission in Acts.

Earlier in the narrative, Luke makes it clear that Jesus is the promised Davidic messiah (Luke 1:31-35). Here, Luke offers a first public testimony to Jesus from heaven as he prepares to embark on his mission. The baptismal scene thus sparks off the mission. When one understands the ‘voice’ in this light, then it becomes easier to see “the Spirit’s anointing not just in terms of wisdom, power and enablement, but also in terms of endorsement and confirmation.” This is the anointing with the Spirit to which Luke 4:18 points (cf. Acts 10:38). While both Jewish and Gentile readers connect with the “Spirit” and “voice” concepts of this scene, the Gentile believer is assisted by the observable phenomena. From the Hellenistic perspective, “The omen (opening of heaven, voice from heaven, descent of the Spirit) provides divine confirmation of

---


Kuecker, The Spirit and the 'Other', 76.

Tannehill, Narrative Unity, Vol. 1, 57.

Green, The Gospel of Luke, 187. See also Shepherd, Narrative Reliability, 129-130, who holds that the voice indicates divine approval and further serves to confirm the reliability of Jesus, not just as a prophet but as son of God.


Jesus’ identity (cf. Cicero, *Top. 20.76-77*).  

Thus the public nature of the Spirit manifestation at Jesus’ baptism highlights the Spirit’s endorsement not just of Jesus’ identity as ‘son of God’, but of his divine mission, which is also the mission of the church in Acts (cf. 1:8).  

Luke’s emphasis on the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus is, therefore, a preparation for the mission ahead as is described in the subsequent contexts of the temptation and the Nazareth speech.  

**5.3 Jesus’ temptation: leading of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1)**  

Luke’s account of the temptation of Jesus is another significant moment in Luke’s narrative as it serves to prepare Jesus for the inauguration of his mission. In keeping with his style, Luke introduces the Holy Spirit into the scene in a significant way. Just as the Holy Spirit was responsible for Jesus’ conception (1:35), and publicly descended upon Jesus at his baptism (3:22), so the Holy Spirit prepares Jesus for his mission. At the introduction to the temptation narrative (4:1) it is noted that Jesus is “full of the Holy Spirit” (πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου) and is also “led by the Spirit” (ἦγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι). The construction is different from Mark’s narrative, where “the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness” (Mark 1:12). Luke does not only indicate that Jesus is “full of the Holy Spirit” but changes the Markan verb “to drive out” (ἐκβάλλει) to the verb “to lead” (ἦγετο – was led), as does also Matthew in a different form of

---

569 Kuecker, *The Spirit and the ‘Other’*, 76. Jesus’ mission, continued in the mission of the church, is also highlighted in Acts 1:1, ὃν ἦρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάσκειν (what Jesus began to do and teach), where Luke indicates that what Jesus began in the gospel continues in the church in Acts, it is his mission. This will be discussed in detail in chapter six below.  
the verb (cf. Matt 4:1). The sense that Luke portrays is that Jesus is not “driven out” into the wilderness; the Spirit rather leads and accompanies Jesus into the wilderness as he prepares for the mission ahead. This sequence recalls traditions about Moses, who possessed the Spirit of the Lord (Num 11:17-30), received the mission from God to deliver Israel (Exod 3:1ff), and was also on the mountain for forty day and forty nights in the wilderness (Exod 34:28). Luke probably implies here that Jesus is the fulfillment of a prophet like Moses. By the mention of the Spirit in this account, Luke informs the reader that it is the Spirit who directs and empowers Jesus’ entire ministry from this moment.

Menzies rightly suggests that “a single reference to the Spirit would have been sufficient to link the account of Jesus’ baptism with that of his temptation” as is the case in Matthew 4:1 and Mark 1:12. Luke’s double reference to the Spirit, as Menzies argues, points to two facts: one, that “Luke has consciously edited his source in order to emphasise the fact that Jesus’ experience at the Jordan was the moment at which he ‘was filled with the Spirit’,” and two, that this experience points to Jesus’ empowerment by the Spirit at the Jordan “to carry out his divinely appointed task.” These helpful suggestions can be developed further by recognising that Luke’s use of Ἰησοῦς ἐκβάλλειν “to drive out” is used mostly in Luke to describe the casting out of demons, cf. Luke 9:40, 49; 11:14, 15, 18, 19, 20; 13:31. The word ἀγέσθαι (to lead) is used of God leading Israel in the wilderness (cf. Deut 8:2, 15). Luke portrays the Spirit leading Jesus through the wilderness in his temptation, in preparation for the mission ahead. Cf. Evans, Saint Luke, 257; Mullins, The Gospel of Luke, 162. It is noteworthy that only Luke mentions that Jesus is full of the Spirit as he enters into the wilderness in the temptation episode (cf. Matt 4:1 and Mark 1:12).

Cf. Acts 3:22-23 where Luke writes: “Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you from your own people a prophet like me. You must listen to whatever he tells you. And it will be that everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be utterly rooted out of the people.” Peter’s interpretation of this Mosaic prophecy, and especially his application of ‘these days’ in v 24, supports Jesus’ fulfillment of the role of this Deuteronomic prophet like Moses. Moessner, “Prophet like Moses,” 575-605. Thomas Marsh, ”Holy Spirit in Early Christian Teaching,” in Witness to the Spirit: Essays on Revelation, Spirit, Redemption ed. W. Harrington (Proceedings of Irish Biblical Association No 3; Manchester: Koinonia Press, 1979), 63. So also Penney, Missionary Emphasis, 41.

574 The word ἀγέσθαι (to lead) is used of God leading Israel in the wilderness (cf. Deut 8:2, 15). Luke portrays the Spirit leading Jesus through the wilderness in his temptation, in preparation for the mission ahead. Cf. Evans, Saint Luke, 257; Mullins, The Gospel of Luke, 162. It is noteworthy that only Luke mentions that Jesus is full of the Spirit as he enters into the wilderness in the temptation episode (cf. Matt 4:1 and Mark 1:12).
575 Cf. Acts 3:22-23 where Luke writes: “Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you from your own people a prophet like me. You must listen to whatever he tells you. And it will be that everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be utterly rooted out of the people.” Peter’s interpretation of this Mosaic prophecy, and especially his application of ‘these days’ in v 24, supports Jesus’ fulfillment of the role of this Deuteronomic prophet like Moses. Moessner, “Prophet like Moses,” 575-605.
577 Menzies, Empowered for Witness, 141.
578 Menzies, Empowered for Witness, 141.
579 Menzies, Empowered for Witness, 142.
action of the Holy Spirit, and the same Spirit tangibly and publicly endorses him at his baptism by descending upon him, so also the same Spirit leads him through this temptation moment towards the inauguration of his mission. This is why Jesus is not “sent out into” (ἐκβάλλει εἰς) the wilderness by the Spirit as in Mark 1:12, nor “led up into” (ἀνῇχθῇ εἰς) the wilderness by the Spirit as in Matthew 4:1, but “led in” (ἡγετο ἐν) the wilderness, in Luke 4:1. Though Matthew and Luke use different terms for “to lead”, there is also a difference between being “led up into” (aorist tense) and being “led in” (imperfect tense) the wilderness. Luke’s phrase suggests the Spirit accompanying and being with Jesus. This presence also echoes the conception moment (Luke 1:35) and the descent of the Spirit at his baptism (3:22) as well as John’s statement that Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit and fire. Only Jesus who is full of the Holy Spirit will also “baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire” (3:16). It is in this sense that Jesus, who is “full of the Holy Spirit”, as Schweizer argues, is Lord of the Spirit. The reader now knows that Jesus “full of the Holy Spirit” is led by the Spirit in the wilderness into victory, and that Jesus’ experience in the desert is under the guidance of God’s Spirit who already descended upon him in 3:22. At the end of the temptation in the wilderness, Luke indicates that Jesus returned to Galilee ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος. This suggests that Jesus’ whole activity and ministry henceforth (which includes teaching – 4:15) is in the power of the Spirit. This is an affirmation that will resonate with both Jewish and Gentile readers. The reference to the Spirit here serves not only to confirm faith in Jesus’ mission soon to be defined, but also to overcome resistance to Jesus’ mission continued as it is in the communities.

Matthew begins his temptation account indicating that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness (Matt 4:1), and concludes by referencing the ministry of angels to Jesus (Matt 4:11). Likewise, Mark begins by showing that the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness (Mark 1:12) and concludes by referencing the ministry of angels to Jesus (Mark 1:13). Luke, instead, begins by a

---

580 ἀνῇχθῇ εἰς “led up into” here does not clearly express that the Spirit remained with Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus could have been led up into the wilderness and left to fend for himself. However, being ἡγετο ἐν “led in” the wilderness suggests the meaning of the Spirit leading Jesus, while Jesus and the Spirit (with him) remain in the wilderness. In order to buttress this, Luke begins by emphasizing that Jesus is full of the Spirit; and this same Spirit led him, attended to him and was a companion for him in the wilderness.


double reference to the Spirit, indicating that the Spirit led Jesus and remained with Jesus in the
cwilderness (4:1). In Luke’s conclusion, the devil leaves Jesus but waits for an opportune time
(4:13), while Jesus returns to Galilee ἐν τῇ δύναμει τοῦ πνεύματος (4:14). Luke leaves Jesus in
the care of the Spirit. And with the Spirit leading in the wilderness, and Jesus finishing victorious
and filled with the power of the Spirit, the narrative is now set up for the inauguration of Jesus’
mission. Luke informs the reader that the Spirit’s presence at the temptation scene helps to
prepare Jesus for his mission which is about to be launched. This singular notion of a Spirit-led
mission will help to clear any doubts in the minds of both Jewish and Gentile believers and so
also helps to legitimate the mission in Acts. As observed in chapter four above, the Jewish
Christian who is aware of the role of the Spirit of the Lord/God in scripture already knows that
this mission that is about to begin carries divine approval. So also, as shown in chapter three,
the Gentile believer who is conversant with multiple spirit activities in the Greco-Roman
context can easily understand that this mission is extraordinary and has spiritual backing. This is
part of Luke’s agenda to overcome every resistance to mission and to confirm faith in mission
as it stands in the communities.

Thus, before the Nazareth synagogue episode, Luke has already informed the reader that the
Holy Spirit is at work in the life, ministry and of Jesus.

5.4 The Nazareth synagogue episode: anointing with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:16-30)

In the Nazareth episode, Luke presents an account of the beginning of Jesus’ mission in his
hometown. The essential details of the account are not unique to Luke (cf. Matt 13:54-58; Mark
6:1-6), but the Lukan version is much longer and has some distinctive features. In Luke, Jesus
goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath day (Luke 4:16), reads a passage from Isaiah (Luke 4:18-
19), proclaims words of grace (Luke 4:22), but eventually meets with a violent rejection by his
own people. Luke makes the event very dramatic, with the entire episode captured between

584 Neither Mark nor Matthew explicitly refers to Jesus’ pre-temptation fullness of the Spirit, post-temptation Spirit
empowerment or the role of the Spirit during the temptation. As Fitzmyer, The Gospel according to Luke I-IX, 514
suggests, the present participle of πειράζω in Luke 4:2 indicates the simultaneity of the temptation and the Spirit’s
leading.
two movements: Jesus enters into (εἰσήλθεν) the synagogue (v 16); and at the end, Jesus passes through (διελθών) the crowd and goes on his way (ἐπορεύετο, v 30).

The Nazareth episode in Luke is very important in that it launches the beginning of the entire mission narrative in Luke-Acts; the mission which begins with Jesus’ proclamation, but continues in Acts with the church’s mission to the nations. It would seem that every mention of the Spirit earlier in the narrative in relation to Jesus is pushing gradually towards this particular episode where Jesus will speak for the first time in Luke-Acts, claiming the fulfillment in himself of an important text from Isaiah. My concern here is to focus on the role of the Spirit in this narrative. Therefore, our examination of the text will not be an exegesis of the entire account, but to explore chiefly Jesus’ quotation of the Isaian pneumatic text and the application of the text to himself; and how the references to Elijah and Elisha in vv 24-27, presuppose mission outside the Jewish nation.

The location of this event is unique in the Lukan narrative. In contrast to Matthew 13:53-58 and Mark 6:1-6, Luke positions it such that it inaugurates and foreshadows Jesus’ Spirit-filled mission. It provides the occasion for Luke to have Jesus give a biblical warrant for his own mission. Because of its prominent location in the gospel, Luke 4:16-30 has received much attention in comparison to Mark’s and Matthew’s accounts. Within the entire narrative of Luke-Acts, the Nazareth account is foreshadowed by Simeon’s oracle (2:34), but it also foreshadows the account of the entire mission that is to follow. Luke utilises the pneumatic focus of the text from Isaiah to establish the content of Jesus’ mission in continuity with Jewish

---

586 In Matthew and Mark, (Matt 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-6) the event is recounted shortly before the end of the Galilean ministry. Luke, however, has brought it forward to the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus.
traditions. That Luke introduces Jesus’ mission in this way suggests that Luke intends the event in Nazareth to be programmatic.590

In this episode, which reveals the first words of Jesus in ministry (Jesus, to whom the reader is to listen, αὐτῶν ἀκούστε, cf. Luke 9:35), Luke defines Jesus and his mission. Luke has also placed the episode at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. Though the Lukan form of the story owes its inspiration to Mark 1:1-6a, Luke has adapted the Markan material to suit his own purpose.591

Though Brawley rightly argues that the identity of Jesus elucidates the programmatic significance of the episode,592 Jesus’ identity goes hand in hand with his mission. Luke, in asserting the identity of Jesus, points to his Spirit-filled mission. If Luke has so repositioned this event contrary to the other Synoptists, and in addition has more detail, then he must have a purpose: that the reader may know the truth concerning the things about which they already have received instructions (Luke 1:4).

There is widespread recognition of the episode as prefiguring the Gentile mission.593 What has not been emphasised as much as it should be is the role of the Spirit as legitimating mission in this narrative. This is what I aim to demonstrate in this section: to show that Luke wishes to inform the reader that Jesus and his mission fulfill the divine purpose, and that the Gentile mission is part of this divine purpose. While this would have helped to clear the doubts of some readers concerning the expansion of the Christian mission, it would also serve as encouragement to Gentile readers knowing that the mission to τὰ ἔθνη has always been part of the divine program. This section shows that Luke, in this narrative, appropriates the text from


Isaiah to identify Jesus as well as to prefigure Jesus’ mission as continued in the mission of the church.\textsuperscript{594}

\textit{i.} \textit{The setting: Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth (v 16-17)}

Luke has already given a summary of the Galilean ministry in vv 14-15. This Lukan summary reflects the opening summary of Mark’s gospel (Mark 1:14-15) though with distinctive Lukan additions.\textsuperscript{595} Luke, in this summary, shows that: (1) Jesus is filled with the Spirit; (2) Jesus is in Galilee; (3) Jesus has a good reputation and (4) Jesus teaches in their synagogues.\textsuperscript{596} With this template, Luke has prepared the ground for the next scene.

Luke introduces the Nazareth account with Jesus’ entry into Nazareth, καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς Ναζαρά.\textsuperscript{597} Jesus is not mentioned by name throughout the pericope. Only the personal pronoun αὐτός and its cognates are used. It is presumed that the narrative flow from vv 14-15 is followed, where Jesus has already been identified and recognised as one filled with the Spirit. The reader now knows that Jesus (the one filled with the Spirit) is in Nazareth. So from the start of the narrative, Luke already offers a hint about the relevance of the Spirit in the narrative.

The use of καὶ at the start of v 16 is the narrative connection between the new scene (vv 16-30) and the previous summary (vv 14-15), thereby connecting the episode to the entire Lukan narrative. Hence, Jesus is in Galilee (v 14) and teaches ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν (v 15; cf. v 31). Luke informs the reader that this event takes place within a Jewish gathering: in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus’ hometown and on the Sabbath day. This indicates that the immediate context of a synagogue service is in view. The synagogue was very central to Jewish religious


\textsuperscript{596} The Greek imperfect indicative verb ἔδιδασκεν suggests a repeated activity which stretches over a period of time. See Tannehill, \textit{Narrative Unity}, vol. 1, 60.

It was the place for the reading and exposition of scripture especially on the Sabbath (v 16ff; Acts 13:13ff). Those who attended the synagogue were mainly Jews though the presence of potential proselytes should not be excluded. The setting, context and people thus are very Jewish in character. Only Luke explicitly mentions the name of the town as Nazareth (καὶ ἔλθεν εἰς Ναζαρά; c. f. Mark 6:1; Matt 13:54).

While Matthew 13:54 and Mark 6:1 in their introduction reference Jesus’ πατρίδα (native place/town), Luke insists that this was where Jesus had been brought up (τεθραμμένος). This suggests that Jesus is a familiar persona, and Jesus’ parents (Mary and Joseph) known figures too (v 22; cf. Mark 6:3; Matt 13:55-57). Jesus then is in familiar territory and among acquaintances. This suggests the possibility that ‘familiarity breeds contempt’, but Luke is out to show that though Jesus is in a familiar environment, his mission is of divine origin and has divine endorsement (Luke 3:22).

While in Nazareth, Jesus goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. This movement is not by chance, but by choice and is purposeful since Luke mentions that it is Jesus’ custom (Luke 4:16). Only Luke among the Synoptic evangelists stresses that Jesus, like his parents (Luke 2:41-42), has the habit (εἰσώθος) of going to the synagogue regularly (Luke 4:15, 16, 31; cf. Acts 17:2); and so on this Sabbath, Jesus is in the synagogue. This point is especially important because, as


600. Although Luke also later employs ἐν τῇ πατρίδι σου (in ‘your/his native place’ - v 23, 24), he puts the phrase on the lips of Jesus.

601. This movement is absent in both Matthew and Mark. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus only comes to his hometown and begins teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath (Matt 13:54; Mark 6:1-2).

Bock noted, “Jesus’ controversy with the Jewish religious leadership may have left him with a reputation of being a religiously insensitive rebel.”\(^{603}\) Luke wants to refute that charge. So from the very beginning of the narrative, Luke has presented Jesus before his readers as a pious Jew, who regularly worships in the synagogue.\(^{604}\) Presumably, Luke’s aim is to have an impact on the Jewish reader who is aware of these charges made against Jesus and those who were aligned with him. From the narrative perspective, however, even if it was Jesus’ custom to go the synagogue (see for instance Luke 4:15, 44; 4:31-37; 6:6; 13:10-17) and teach (ἐδίδασκεν) in the synagogues (vv 15, 44), this is the first and only recorded synagogue teaching of Jesus in Luke’s gospel narrative, which indicates the value and importance Luke attaches to this very episode.\(^{605}\)

Jesus stands up to read. Only Luke mentions the act of reading. There is no indication that Jesus had been invited to read or to speak as was the case with Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:15.\(^ {606}\) Green may be right then that “the synagogue practice allows anyone to speak who had something of significance to say.”\(^ {607}\) Bock also suggests that, “Jesus stood up apparently to indicate that he could speak about a passage.”\(^ {608}\) Jesus did not decide which scroll to read from; the scroll of the prophet Isaiah is given to him (ἐπεδόθη αὐτῷ) by the attendant (v. 20).\(^ {609}\) The Greek καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ βιβλίον εὗρεν τὸν τόπον οὗ ἦν γεγραμμένον (and having opened the scroll he found the place where it has been written), which emphasises Jesus’ knowledge and clear

other Jews as law abiding citizens. This suggests that Luke intends to present Jesus and his mission and the subsequent mission of the church in a positive light before law-abiding Jews.

\(^{603}\) Bock, Luke 1:1-9:50, 402-403. Cf. the following Sabbath passages in Luke which ended up in controversy of some kind: Luke 4:16-30, 31-37; 6:1-5, 6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6. Although there is no mention of controversy in 4:31-41 (Bock, Luke 1:1-9:50, 403), the fact that in the next synagogue there was a Sabbath healing (6:6-11) where the scribes and Pharisees watched to see whether Jesus would cure on the Sabbath suggests that at the narrative level, the report about Jesus that reached “every place in the region” (4:37) was not all pleasing to the scribes and Pharisees.

\(^{604}\) Bovon, Luke 1, 152.


\(^{607}\) Green, The Gospel of Luke, 209. There is no certainty as to what exactly the practice was then.


\(^{609}\) Fitzmyer points out that the “scroll” being handed to Jesus has been taken by some to mean that a passage from Isaiah was assigned for reading. This thesis however adopts Fitzmyer’s argument that there is no substantial evidence for a cycle of prophetic readings in first-century Palestine. See Fitzmyer, The Gospel according to Luke I- IX, 531.
choice: he searched and found (ἐὗρεν) the text he wanted to use. Ἐὗρεν here suggests that the finding of the Isaiah citation was not coincidental, but that Jesus searched for the place and found it. In other words, Jesus deliberately sought out the passage and chose this text.\(^{610}\) The searching and finding of the Isaiah citation is an addition to the Markan text, and thus must be very important for Luke and for the reader. The phrase τόπον ὑπαρχον suggests the location of the text, while the perfect γεγραμμένον suggests a text which has been written and concluded with ongoing significance.\(^{611}\) Jesus has found the text. The stage is now set for the proclamation from Isaiah.

It is apparent from this introduction/setting that Luke, in altering the Synoptic tradition, wants the reader to know that Jesus operates in the Spirit; that Jesus is a pious Jew; that Jesus has the custom of attending the synagogue, the gathering place of the Jews; that Jesus also teaches in the synagogues of the Jews; and this particular day, Jesus is in the synagogue to teach on the text of Isaiah. The Jew (and Godfearer) who reads this profile of Jesus at the time of Luke will thus find more meaning for themselves about the person and mission of Jesus and the mission of the church which continues Jesus’ mission. This is legitimating what follows for the implied readers. On Luke’s part, the strategy is setting up a positive and desired response.

\textit{ii. Jesus proclaims the scripture: the Spirit of the Lord is upon me (vv 18-19)}

Luke 4:18-19 basically comprise a quotation from Isaiah 61:1-2 and Isaiah 58:6, which is central to the interpretation of the entire pericope.\(^{612}\) Only Luke identifies the scroll and the text that

---

\(^{610}\) Bock, \textit{Luke 1:1-9:50}, 404. Also Fitzmyer, \textit{The Gospel according to Luke I-IX}, 532. Contra Bovon, \textit{Luke 1}, 153, who argues for a possibility of the citation being prescribed for the day or that it was apportioned to Jesus by lot. However, the Lukan text does not say nor imply this.

\(^{611}\) Cf. Pilate’s reply to the chief priests and scribes in John 19:22, ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Πιλάτος, ὁ γέγραφα, γέγραφα.

\(^{612}\) This quotation from second Isaiah is a composite of Isaiah 61:1a, 1b, 1d; 58:6d; and then 61:2a. When the full text of Isaiah is read (61:1-11), one realizes that two phrases are omitted from the Lukan version. Isaiah 61:1c (“to heal the broken-hearted”) is omitted before the proclamation of release to the captives, and Isaiah 61:2b (“the day of vengeance of our God”) is also omitted at the end of Luke 4:19. As Fitzmyer argues, omitting 61:2b is a deliberate suppression by Luke of a negative aspect of the Deutero-Isaiah message, suggesting that Jesus implies grace for the nations/Gentiles, not judgment. This is also alluded to in what Jesus says further in Luke 4:25-27 when he references Elijah and Elisha’s ministry to the nations. For details, Cf. Fitzmyer, \textit{The Gospel according to Luke I-IX}, 532; so also Green, \textit{The Gospel of Luke}, 210. See also Bock, \textit{Luke 1:1-9:50}, 400-405, who asserts that, the omission of Isa 61:2b is theologically significant in that Jesus characterises the current time as one primarily of release, and not of judgment, though Jesus does have a warning later in Luke 4:24-27. While I agree with Bock that
Jesus used. Luke does not, however, indicate when Jesus reads out the text. In the narrative, Jesus only finds τὸν τόπον (the place) of a particular text from the scroll of Isaiah (v 17b), and Luke then writes out what the content of the text of Isaiah is (vv 18-19). It can only be implied from καὶ ἀνέστη ἀναγνώσαι (v 16) that Jesus having stood up reads from the text of Isaiah. This suggests that Luke’s interest is not in the actual act of reading, but more in the content of the text, and Jesus’ exposition of the text as will be shown later on. This implies, therefore, that having positioned this story at the start of Jesus’ mission, Luke simply employs the text from Isaiah to serve his purpose of letting the immediate audience and the remote readers know that Jesus’ mission, like that of the prophet, is from God. From a narrative perspective, this invites the resisting reader to a deeper understanding of the following story of Jesus’ ministry and as it also continues in the church’s mission.

The citation from Isaiah begins with a reference to the speaker’s anointing with the Spirit of the Lord: πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμέ. The term for the Spirit endowment is in the present, ἐπ’ ἐμέ (is upon me). The concept indicates an action which, though it has taken place, is still effective in the present. The Spirit has not just descended upon the speaker. Rather, the Spirit came upon the speaker in the past, but is still upon the speaker at the time of speaking. In this context, ἐπ’ ἐμέ, is a concept that does not refer exclusively to the past, or to the present, or to the future. Rather, in the context of the narrative, it is past, present and future. Past in the sense that the Spirit came upon Jesus at his Baptism; present in the sense that the Spirit is with him in this present moment as he speaks, and future in the sense that the Spirit will continue to be upon him till it is poured out on the followers in Acts of the Apostles. This also explains why, unlike Matthew’s and Mark’s temptation accounts, in Luke the Spirit is with Jesus in the wilderness at his temptation.

Jesus does have a warning in Luke 4:24-27, it is for the predominantly Jewish audience, and the verses reveal God’s grace for the nations.

614 Tannehill, Narrative Unity, Vol. one, 62.
615 The language is also reminiscent of OT endowment concepts where the Spirit of the Lord “is in” or “is on” or “is upon” an individual. Cf. Gen 41:38; Num 27:18; Isa 59:21; 61:1; Dan 5:14.
The reference to “me” suggests that the speaker is the subject upon which the Spirit rests. Also the repeated “me” relates the mission emphatically and specifically to the speaker.616 The Spirit (πνεῦμα) which is upon ‘me’ (ἐπ’ ἐμέ) is interpreted as “anointing.” Hence, the speaker says, οὖ εἶνεκεν ἔχρισεν με (“because he has anointed me”).617 Luke’s context strongly suggests that this anointing is Jesus’ baptism (3:22).618 The purpose of the anointing is introduced by the expression οὗ εἴνεκεν (because). Thus, the speaker announces the purpose of the anointing, which is the mission entrusted to the speaker by the Lord by virtue of the anointing with the Spirit. This mission is spelt out by the four infinitival phrases: to bring good news to the poor; to proclaim release to the captives and sight to the blind; to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.619 At the centre of this Isaiah text, we thus find a powerful claim to divine authority and inspiration by reason of the Spirit’s anointing.620 The speaker here has been personally chosen and empowered by God for a purpose.621 In the OT, as Oswalt points out, “the Spirit of the Lord resting or being on someone connotes supernatural wisdom and capacity (Gen 41:38; Exod 31:3; Num 11:17, 29). In Isaiah the Spirit is especially associated with the power to bring justice and righteousness on the earth, often through the

---

616 Tannehill, Narrative Unity, vol. one, 62.
619 The details of Jesus’ mission as itemised here are beyond the scope of this work. For some detailed study, see Bock, Luke 1:1-9:50, 407-411; and Green, The Gospel of Luke, 210-213.
620 Niskanen, Isaiah 56-66, 43.
621 Oswalt, Book of Isaiah, 563.
spoken word (Isa 11:2; 32:15-16; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 59:21).”

Also, though the Isaiah text addresses post-exilic Israel, the language is in universal terms: good news to the poor; release to the captives and sight to the blind; freedom for the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour to all. It may be asked why the Gentiles are not included explicitly in the scope of Jesus’ mission here if it is so important to Luke, but that is the very issue that Jesus provokes by cutting short the Isaiah text and angering his hearers, as the ongoing discussion in the synagogue reveals.

At this stage, the reader knows that Jesus’ mission is to be interpreted in the light of this text; a text that speaks of those who are suffering who are now favoured. As the reader reads further, Luke unveils the universal dimension of the mission. The Spirit initiating and directing a universal mission is an important part of Luke’s agenda. As O’Toole suggests, Luke’s main idea in citing the Isaiah text is the declaration of the Spirit of the Lord’s presence with Jesus. Hence ‘he (the Lord) anointed me (cf. Acts 10:38); and ‘he has sent me’, on mission explained by the four commissions. In a sense, the rest of the pericope flows from the Lord’s anointing and sending of Jesus. The resisting reader later realises that Jesus also sends the church on mission (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8). It can then be said that the entire narrative underscores in the clearest possible way the relation of the Spirit’s anointing and the statement of primary mission which follows. This explains why Luke chose this particular text at the start of Jesus’ mission: to show its fulfillment in Jesus, which is very essential for legitimating the mission to the nations. This is because the mission to the nations also fulfills Jesus’ Spirit-inspired projections of the mission of the church (Acts 1:8).

---

622 Osvalt, *Book of Isaiah*, 564. Cf. also Mic 3:8 where the prophet speaks of being empowered by the Spirit of the Lord.

623 O’Toole, “Does Luke also Portray Jesus as the Christ,” 508. See also Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, vol. one, 62 who asserts that “The overlapping phrases emphasise a mission of preaching or proclaiming which has ‘release’ as its goal.”

iii. **Jesus – fulfillment of the Isaiah text (vv 20-21)**

The reading of the scripture is normally followed by a teaching on the text (cf. Acts 13:15-16). Having read the text, the movement is inverted. So, Jesus rolls up the scroll (καὶ πτύξας τὸ βιβλίον), and gives it back to the attendant who has the responsibility of getting and returning the scroll to the ark where it is kept. Jesus sits down to teach (v 20a). Teaching from a sitting position before an audience is common (see Luke 5:3; Matt 5:1; 23:2; 26:55; Mark 4:1; cf. Luke 2:46). Luke’s indication that καὶ πάντων οἱ ὄφθαλμοι ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ ἦσαν ἀτενιζόντες αὐτῷ, suggests that Jesus has the crowds’ attention, and this sets the stage for the exposition of the text. The Lukan term ἀτενιζόντες (gazing) depicts intense, focused emotion by describing the crowd’s gaze of attention (see also Luke 22:56; Acts 1:10; 3:4, 12; 6:15; 7:55; 10:4; 11:6; 13:9; 14:9; 23:1). With this term, Luke has also sharpened the imagination of the implied reader as to what Jesus would say. Luke quickly leads the reader away from the text of Isaiah to the person of Jesus who proclaimed the text. The audience within the narrative (the people of Nazareth) have heard the scripture read—a scripture that will have incorporated for them certain hopes of God’s deliverance. What then will the exposition of this text be? How is the scripture related to the new context of the hearers? Should they expect that somebody someday would fulfill the scripture? Who would that be? These and similar questions create a certain tension in the narrative and require an answer. Thus, while the audience is attentive, the reader is inquisitive.

Luke has a purpose for incorporating the Isaiah citation into the synagogue account. While Matthew and Mark remained at the level of Jesus’ general teaching (Matt 13:54; Mark 6:2),

---

Luke creates the opportunity for a particular teaching. Luke moves from a general reference to Jesus’ teachings among Jews (v 15), and offers the reader an insight into Jesus’ particular message: a message that is reflective of Luke’s agenda. The sequence is straightforward: Jesus comes to Nazareth; while in Nazareth on the Sabbath, he goes to the synagogue. In the synagogue, he stands up to read, and was given the scroll of Isaiah. He opens and finds a particular text he chose, proclaims the text and sits down. At this stage, everyone in the synagogue waits patiently for him to speak. Having created this conducive atmosphere for teaching, Luke then has Jesus say: σήμερον πεπλήρωται ἡ γραφή Αὕτη ἐν τοῖς ὤσιν ύμῶν (“today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” – v 21).

Luke’s assertion that the text is fulfilled “today” is important for the Lukan author and the message that Luke wants to put across to the reader. Σήμερον (today) is a key word in the Lukan narrative and it stresses that the opportunity for salvation is now, this very moment. The term appears on a number of occasions in the gospel (2:11; 5:26; 12:28; 13:32-33; 19:5, 9; 22:34, 61; 23:43) and in Acts (1:6; 3:18 for example). Given its emphatic position at the beginning of this sentence (Luke 4:21b), Luke stresses that “with the onset of Jesus’ ministry the long-awaited epoch of salvation had been inaugurated.” But Luke makes it clear that this salvation is not restricted to the Jews. Gentiles are also recipients of this salvation (Luke 2:32). The universal language of the Isaiah citation supports this claim. In Luke, then, “today” does not restrict or limit salvation to the earthly ministry of Jesus as argued by Conzelman; rather, its

635 Green, The Gospel of Luke, 214. Jeremias agrees that Jesus applies the text to himself. Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology vol. 1 (London: SCM Press, 1971), 96. Hull, however thinks that Jesus is most unlikely to have applied the prophecy of Isa 61 to himself. Cf. John Howarth Eric Hull, The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles (Cleveland World Publishing, 1968), 19. However, if one follows the general trend of Luke’s work, it is not out of place to contend that the Lukan Jesus applied the passage to himself as a way of legitimating his mission which he was to define afterwards. Moreso, as observed by Penny, Missionary emphasis, 42, “although the reference in Isa 61:1ff is to a messianic servant figure, the role is defined prophetically, and this dimension is paramount in Luke 4:16-30.”
636 Conzelman, Theology, 36-37. Conzelman for instance, comparing 2 Cor 6:2 and Luke 4:21 argues that “Luke sees salvation already as a thing of the past. The time of salvation has come about in history, as a period of time which, although it determines the present, is now over and finished.” Conzelman, Theology 36. Contra Fitzmyer, The Gospel according to Luke I-IX, 534, who asserts that the “today” referring immediately to fulfillment (here of the
appearances in Acts (4:9; 13:33; 20:26; 22:3; 23:1; 24:21), suggests that the period of the church is also part of this “today”. It is therefore significant to note that the term in Luke “is not so much of a ‘now and only now’ affair, as much as it is a timeless ‘now’.” In this way, Luke informs the resisting reader that the mission of the church and the Gentile incorporation into the church through this mission is valid and legitimate.

Luke indicates that Jesus began to speak to them: ἤρξατο δὲ λέγειν αὐτοὺς. But of all that Jesus says, Luke is particularly interested in focusing the reader on the phrase: “today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” The theme of fulfillment is also very strong in Luke. Here, the indicative perfect passive verb πεπλήρωται (has been fulfilled – from πληρώ – I fulfill) refers to an existing state of fulfillment, and so basically refers to fulfillment in the present; hence, “today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (ἐν τοῖς ὃσιν ὑμῖν). That is to say the results of past action are still valid and effective present. That which is being fulfilled today is tied to the promise of a particular scripture which has just been read (ἡ γραφὴ αὐτη). It indicates the actualization of the text of Isaiah read in vv 18-19. This scripture is the object of the verb ‘to fulfill’ and it is transparent that Luke, through Jesus, has in mind at least the realisation of the hopes contained in the Isaiah citation. Jesus’ mission is thus launched with the declaration that the OT scriptures were being fulfilled that day in Jesus.

Two things are contained in the fulfillment: the anointing with the Spirit of the Lord and the inauguration of the universal mission (contained in Luke 2:32; cf. Isa 46:13). Luke here interprets an OT citation through Jesus’ scriptural exposition. As Fitzmyer rightly points out, Luke is more interested in the fulfillment of the Isaiah text and the Christological use of the

Deutero-Isaiah citation) is not restricted to the period of Jesus alone; but that this fulfillment also takes place in the period of the church, even though it begins at the time of Jesus.

639 Baawobr, “Opening a Narrative Programme,” 34.
OT. Luke’s interest is borne out of a deep desire to convince resisting Jewish Christians of the legitimacy of the mission of Jesus continued in the mission of the church; and to encourage non-Jewish believers that they have made the right decision by coming to faith in Jesus. By reason of the repeated first person singular references in Luke 4:18 (“me” – 3x), the fulfillment of the Isaiah text of which Jesus speaks points to three key ideas rooted in the person of Jesus: first, that Jesus is the bearer of the Spirit (3:22; 4:14); second, consequently, Jesus is the anointed one with the mission of proclaiming the good news to the poor, sight to the blind, and release to captives; and, third, to proclaim the year of the Lord. 643 For the Jewish Christian who reads and understands the OT, and for Gentile believers for whom spiritual activities or the spiritual realm is a daily experience, 644 the presence of the Spirit on/with Jesus (vv 14 and 18) and the fulfillment of the OT text indicate that the mission of Jesus is attested by God. 645 And by inference, the mission of the church in obedience to Jesus’ instruction (Acts 1:2, 8) as Luke has presented it in Acts is legitimate.

While the citation from Isaiah is very important in that it gives the ‘Spirit, anointing and mission’ undertones to the present account, this summary of Jesus’ exposition of the Isaiah text is particularly significant. This probably is the principal reason Luke employs the Isaiah text in order to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of the scripture. In Isaiah, the prophet-speaker is anointed with the Spirit and declares his messianic mission. This is a familiar and key passage of scripture for the Jews. 646 The assertion in Luke that this scripture is fulfilled in Jesus affirms Luke’s portrayal of Jesus and Jesus’ mission before the Jews as divinely appointed and approved. As in the OT, the “Spirit of the Lord” which is upon Jesus (v 18; cf. 3:22; 4:1 [2x], 14), and which is interpreted as anointing (cf. Acts 10:38) gives credence and legitimation to Jesus’ mission. The scripture being fulfilled in Jesus suggests that the one anointed to carry out the mission as set out in the prophetic message of Isaiah stands before the audience as the word is proclaimed right there in the synagogue. This, therefore, means that Jesus’ announcement of

his mission “to preach good news...” and “to proclaim the acceptable year...” begins “today.”

Luke’s argument here is clear: to declare that Jesus’ mission is legitimate because it is divinely initiated and so has divine approval. Luke at this stage has succeeded in establishing that Jesus’ mission has its roots in the prophetic tradition. Therefore for the Jew in the historical time of Luke, this narrative fulfillment gives legitimation to Jesus and Jesus’ mission. By extension, the church’s Gentile mission receives its legitimation from Jesus’ inclusive mission. Luke has employed the legitimating authority of the Spirit to convince resisting Jewish members of the communities; which also serves to affirm Gentile believers in their faith who would interpret the “Spirit of the Lord” upon Jesus and the fulfillment of an ancient text in Jesus as divine approval.

Luke shows the initial response of the people as very positive, for they describe Jesus’ words as gracious (τοῖς λόγοις τῆς χάριτος; v 22; cf. Deut 8:3). Luke, however, quickly adds a note of skepticism from the same πάντες who marveled at Jesus. They remember Jesus’ ancestry (cf. v 16) and said, “is this not Joseph’s son?” In other words, how legitimate could it be for Jesus to make such a claim to be the fulfillment of the text of Isaiah? Sanders puts it quite succinctly:

The people were both pleased and astonished by Jesus’ acclamation that this very familiar and key passage of scripture was being fulfilled on that very day, which meant a proclamation of the acceptable year of the Lord. This ordinarily should have aroused great joy in the heart of the people... The people would have been exceedingly pleased to hear that the great day had arrived but would

---

647 Tannehill, Narrative Unity vol. one, 63.
have been puzzled that Jesus, a familiar local personage, would have arrogated to himself the role of mebasser, the herald of the great day....


iv. Elijah and Elisha: prefiguring mission to non-Jewish nations (vv 24-27)

Luke introduces and develops the theme of the prophetic ministration of Elijah and Elisha outside Israel by asserting that no prophet is accepted (οὐδεὶς προφήτης δεκτός ἐστιν) in the prophet’s own hometown (v 24; cf. Matt 13:57; Mark 6:4; John 4:44). This proverb “reveals the incipient tension between God’s plan and the will of the people.” Luke introduces this statement by the use of ἀμὴν a term that Luke uses in solemn statements; that which is considered to be of special importance or conveying definitive clarification. The Jewish reader (and Godfearer), therefore, who is conversant with the reading of the prophets in the synagogues knows that in the OT, the prophets of God were often rejected by the people (cf. 1 Kgs 19:1ff; Jer 20:1ff; Amos 7:10-17 for example). As Kuecker notes, Luke has a characteristic view of the unwillingness of a prophet’s own people to hear the prophetic word, regularly referring to the overwhelming negative response to prophets throughout Israelite history.  

---

651 Jesus here is consistent with the Deuteronomistic view of rejected prophets. The phrase οὐδεὶς προφήτης δεκτός ἐστιν is proleptic of the rejection of Jesus by his people (see vv 22b and 29; also Matt 13:57; Mark 6:4 and John 4:44).
652 Bovon, Luke 1, 156. Luke points out that though the declaration that the text has been fulfilled is true, the results will not be what the people might expect. Ringe, Luke, 70.
Jesus does not elaborate on the theme of the prophet being without honour in his hometown; he rather expands on what the prophet might do in the face of rejection. Using two examples from Israel’s history, Jesus references two OT texts: the missions of Elijah (1 Kgs 17-18) and Elisha (2 Kgs 5:1-14) outside Israel’s territory to press home the message. There were many widows in Israel at the time of the draught; Elijah was sent to none of them except (εἰ μὴ) to a woman, who is a non-Jew and a widow at Zarephath (vv 25-26). Crockett’s suggestion that this is an anticipation of Jewish-Gentile table fellowship sounds very plausible. In the same manner, Na’aman the Syrian (Gentile) was healed by Elisha in the river Jordan though there were many lepers in Israel (v 27). This anticipates the Gentile baptism which leaves them cleansed and prepared for fellowship with Jews in the communities.

Generally, Elijah and Elisha were prophets called and commissioned to prophetic ministry in Israel (1 Kgs 17:1-19:21; 21:17-29; 2 Kgs 1:1-2:25; 4:1-5:19). Luke shows that the fact that they were able to carry out this ministry outside Israel implies that the mission is not restricted to Israel’s territories. Nolland’s suggestion that it is not the case that the rejection of Elijah and Elisha leads to prophetic mission among Gentiles is valid. He asserts that “rejection is hardly prominent in these [Lukan] verses nor in their OT sources (1 Kgs 17; 2 Kgs 5).” Elijah and Elisha did not encounter the widow and Naaman because they were rejected by Israel; they encountered these people because of divine sending. The Jews who are familiar with this story would recall that Na’aman remained a Gentile, even though he acknowledged “no God in all the earth except Yahweh” (2 Kgs, 5:15). With these examples, therefore, the Lukan “Jesus underscores that ‘good news to the poor’ embraces the widow, the unclean, the Gentile, those

656 The OT text from 1 Kgs 17-18 refers specifically to famine and judgment for covenant unfaithfulness. Such unfaithfulness brought Israel under judgment at this time, so God’s provisions and prophetic signs were absent from the land. The text from 2 Kgs 5:1-14 refers to the Gentile, Na’aman, recognising the powers in the prophet of God whereas those with whom he resides cannot see God’s presence in him. This is the only time Elisha is mentioned in the NT. See Bock, Luke 1:1-9:50, 417 and 418.
659 Kuecker, The Spirit and the ‘Other’, 93.
660 Esler, Community, 35.
of lowest status, characterised by the beneficiaries of the Elijah and Elisha’s ministries. It is not as though Jesus now goes to Gentiles and rejects the Jews due to their hardness of heart. Jesus takes the initiative and passes on the message, but what is spoken of here will not take place fully until the mission of the church begins in Acts. The implied readers are being challenged to broaden their horizons.

Luke in this response gives the Jewish audience a hint that the good news is not restricted to the Jewish world. Rather, in appealing to this historical comparison, Luke stresses that God’s blessing is extended to those who are far away (cf. Acts 2:39). Luke thus invites the implied readers to overcome every resistance and listen to the Spirit endowed messenger, Jesus, so that they too can receive God’s blessings. In other words, Luke shows that: (1) the Jewish Christians do not have exclusive claim to Jesus; (2) as such, the mission is open to the outside world; and (3) those who respond positively to Jesus will experience God’s work. The Elijah/Elisha references thus are an allusion to the potential inclusion of non-Jews in the communities of Jesus’ followers and a call to resisting Jewish believers in Jesus (and other members of the communities) to welcome the situation as part of the divine purpose. The justification for this is the Lukan desire to convince the resisting members of the Lukan communities (and especially Jews opposed to Gentile mission) of the legitimation of the mission begun in the gospel but continued in the mission of the church in Acts. Luke then from the outset of the narrative, in this programmatic speech, lets the Jewish followers of the Way and

662 The text does not mention Gentiles but the examples of Elijah and Elisha make it clear that the inclusive ministry spoken of early in the scene is to be extended.
664 Baawobr misses the point here when he thinks that the invitation is for listeners to continue what Jesus will do in his ministry just like Elisha continued the ministry of Elijah. See Baawobr, “Opening a Narrative Programme,” 39.
666 Bock, Luke 1:1-9:50, 418, f/n 44. Also Tannehill who see it as foreshadowing the development of the Gentile mission in Acts. Tannehill, Narrative Unity vol. one, 71. See also Esler, Community, 35. Esler sees in these verses, “a prediction and authorisation of a mission to the Gentiles which was not to occur until after the time of Jesus.” So also Bovon, Luke 1, 156, especially f/n 40. Fitzmyer suggests that the reference to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha provide justification from the OT for the Gentile mission. Fitzmyer, The Gospel according to Luke I-IX, 537.
667 Conzelmann correctly asserts that the salvation for the Gentiles mentioned here is in anticipation of the ministry of the church and does not refer to the historical ministry of Jesus in his lifetime. Conzelmann, Theology, 34, f/n 2.
the wider readers know that the mission to τὰ ἔθνη in Acts is a legitimate mission, which also serves as an affirmation for the Gentile believers.

The audience knows their biblical history and understands the point that Jesus is making. And so “hearing these things” (ἀκούοντες ταῦτα), Luke writes ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες θυμοῦ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ (all in the synagogue were filled with anger – v 28). The reader now sees that the warning from Jesus results in a more violent reaction. Just as all eyes in the synagogue (πάντων οἱ ὄφθαλμοι ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ) gazed at Jesus in v 20, so also Luke gives an absolute estimation, πάντες...ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ (all in the synagogue – v 28) are now filled with anger.

One thing that stands out here is that it is not so much that Jesus goes elsewhere because he is rejected; rather he is rejected because he announces universal salvation which includes people other than Jews; and that it is God’s will and his mission to go elsewhere. The reader already knows from Simeon’s prophecy (Luke 2:32) and the citation of Isaiah in Luke 3:6 that salvation extends to ‘all nations’. But this is the first time that any of the Jewish characters in the narrative hear of this universal salvation. The emphasis on mission is expressed by: καὶ πρὸς οὐδεὶς αὐτῶν...ἐκ μὴ εἰς... (“and to not one of them...except to...” [v 26]); and καὶ οὐδεὶς αὐτῶν ἐκαθαρίσθη εἰ μὴ Ναμίαν ὁ Σύρος (“and no one of them was cleansed except Na’amán the Syrian” [v 27]). This double usage stresses that no Israelite received positive benefit from the prophet’s presence in this period. They paid a heavy price in the past, they risk paying again (13:32-35; 19:41-44; Acts 13:40-41). Luke in this way appeals to the implied readers to welcome God’s Spirit anointed messenger and the mission he initiates during his ministry and that of the church which continues his mission.

At the heart of the Nazareth episode is the declaration of Jesus: “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me” and the claim that he is the fulfillment of that text (v 18-21). Jesus’ announcement of his

---

670 Kuecker, The Spirit and the ‘Other’, 80, f/n 34.
mission subsequently informs the intended readers that the fulfillment of Isaiah’s message of salvation already hinted at in Luke 3:4-6 is now made explicit through the only passage in Isaiah where the prophet speaks in person of the character and purpose of his mission; and of his appointment to it by an endowment with the Spirit of God. Luke wants the reader to see that Jesus is the prophet whose mission is governed by God’s Spirit. Jesus walking away, passing through the crowd, untouched and unhurt shows Jesus who is indeed in-charge; and the reader looks forward to the fulfillment of the mission which cannot be stopped by human resistance.

All these events portray Luke’s views that Jesus is the Christ in Luke 4:18-19. This also shows Luke’s determination to convince the resisting reader that Jesus indeed has a legitimate mission from God, which includes the mission to τὰ ἔθνη as presented in the Lukan communities. Luke particularly appeals to the example of Elijah and Elisha bestowing the benefits of God to the nations to point in this direction. While the entire Nazareth episode foreshadows the mission to the nations, and especially the turning to τὰ ἔθνη at Pisidian Antioch and at Rome (Acts 13:46-47; 28:28), the mission to the wider world also particularly finds legitimation from the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. While the text does not mention τὰ ἔθνη, the examples of Elijah and Elisha make it clear that the inclusive ministry spoken of in the scene is to be extended. All these matters are particularly and deliberately confronting and disquieting for the Jewish followers of Jesus who want the message of Jesus to stay within Judaism; but encouraging for ethnic believers who welcome the message of salvation as proclaimed by Jesus’ followers (cf. Acts 13:48).

5.5 Summary and conclusion

The evidence at our disposal suggests that Luke has a good knowledge of the OT usage of the Spirit of the Lord. Luke utilises this knowledge as he builds up the narrative of Luke-Acts, especially the narrative that highlights the mission to the nations. Appealing to the authority of

---

674 Evans, Saint Luke, 269.
675 Tannehill, Narrative Unity, vol. 1, 73.
676 O’Toole, “Does Luke also Portray Jesus as the Christ,” 499.
677 Bovon, Luke 1, 156, f/n 40.
the Spirit Luke seeks to overcome some Jewish Christians’ resistance to mission, and especially the mission to non-Jews. As will be discussed in chapter six below, Luke shows that mission to the nations has always been part of God’s plan (cf. Luke 2:32) and that these non-Jews welcome the faith with joy and gladness of heart (Acts 13:48) amid currents of exclusive tendencies from some of their Jewish counterparts in the wider Christian communities. Thus, even in the gospel, appealing to the Spirit of the Lord in the universal missionary mandate of Jesus also helps to affirm the Gentile believers in their faith; they now know they have always been part of the divine plan and purpose.

The mission of the church in Acts continues the mission of Jesus (cf. Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). It follows thus that the legitimation of the church’s mission to τὰ ἔθνη (cf. Acts 9:15; 10:44-48; 11:3; 13:1-3, 46-47) rests on the legitimation of Jesus’ mission. To appeal to the implied resisting readers Luke begins the entire narrative by showing that Jesus (and his mission) is from God, and that the Holy/Spirit of the Lord which was active in the Jewish scripture, is also active in the ministry of Jesus. Luke takes the reader to the beginning of Jesus’ conception (cf. Luke 1:3) and shows that Jesus, who is the expected Davidic messiah (Luke 1:32-33), is conceived by the action of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). The same Holy Spirit, in bodily form, descends upon Jesus at his baptism, and all those present witness the sight and sound from heaven (Luke 3:22). This tells the resisting readers that Jesus (and his mission) has received, not a private endorsement, but a public acknowledgement from God. Consequently, Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit, and the same Holy Spirit leads him in the wilderness in preparation for his mission (Luke 4:1). At the end of the preparation session in the wilderness, Jesus comes out in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). All these references provide “the warrant for Jesus to quote Isaiah 61 and claim its fulfillment in his ministry.” Jesus thus declares: “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me...” (Luke 4:18), and thereafter announces his mission. This is the climax of the Spirit references in the ministry of Jesus, which Luke sets in the context of a Jewish synagogue audience. Luke takes what was announced in a prophetic way to the exiles returning to Jerusalem by Isaiah and turns it into a prediction, which finds its fulfillment in the person, words and deeds of Jesus. Luke means to convince the resisting reader, but as Luke indicates,

Jesus’ own people (the Jews) still fail to realise it and reject him. It would seem this rejection is the starting point of the whole story, and thus the main reason why Luke cites the Isaiah text to support Jesus’ mission.

In the passage of Isaiah quoted (Isa 61:1-2), the allusion to the Spirit of the Lord explains and legitimates the prophet’s mission in the consolation of Zion. Thus, in Luke, the application of the Isaiah text to Jesus is the climactic Lukan pneumatic explanation which serves to legitimate the inclusive mission of Jesus in the narrative: this includes consolation of Israel (in the good news to the poor, the blind, and the afflicted) and the opening up of mission to the nations. Luke consciously suggests who Jesus is: the anointed son of God. This recalls the baptismal Spirit endowment and anointing in Luke 3:22. Thus anointed, Jesus is given a commission very much in keeping with the traditional role of the prophet in regard to the poor, the suffering and the marginalized. Luke here declares Jesus as the legitimate servant of God; as one who has the Spirit of God as in the prophecy of Isaiah, and who is thus charged with mission to God’s people. The resisting Jew who understands the mission of the Spirit anointed prophet of the Isaiah text is called upon to accept Jesus and his mission (both now and later on in Acts) as the fulfillment of that text.

It suffices therefore to state here that Luke appeals to the legitimating role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ mission. Since the mission of the church in Acts continues the mission of Jesus, the Holy Spirit must also be seen to legitimate the mission of the church. This is the focus of the next chapter.

---

681 Cf. the baptismal episode where Jesus is declared Son of God after the descent of the Spirit (Luke 3:22). Thus, when Jesus describes himself as the one anointed with God’s Spirit, the reader recognises the allusion to the baptism account.
Chapter six

The Holy Spirit’s role in legitimating the mission of the church in Acts

In the narrative of Acts Luke presents the church as continuing the mission of Jesus which began in the gospel (Acts 1:1; cf. Luke 4:18ff). It is in this light that Luke shows the church’s mission as that of “witnessing” to Jesus (Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 5:32; 13:31; cf. Luke 1:2; 24:46-48). The church’s mission in Acts, like Jesus’ mission in the gospel (Luke 4:29-30; 6:1-5, 6-7; 9:21-22; 20:1-8), meets with considerable opposition and misunderstanding (both internally and externally). Despite the conflicts with the Jewish community in particular the church continues to grow and expand. This can be understood as a Lukan technique to explain and justify, to ‘legitimate’, the church’s mission to resisting readers especially within the communities as the mission expands to Gentile territories. Acts is the story of the geographical and racial advancement of the gospel and Luke draws the attention of the implied readers to how the Holy Spirit helps to legitimate this advancement to non-Jewish territories.

This chapter explores this particular role of the Holy Spirit in legitimating the mission of the church in the narrative of Acts.

---

683 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 156. Marshall identifies three categories of witnesses in Acts. The first are the apostles (or the Twelve) whose witness included testimony to the earthly career and teaching of Jesus and Jesus’ resurrection. The second are specific individuals, for instance Stephen and Paul who though they were not with Jesus during his earthly ministry, could bear witness to the resurrected Lord and proclaim its significance (cf. Acts 7:56; 22:15, 20). The third is God (and the Spirit) who bears witness to Jesus by the gift of the Spirit (Acts 14:3; 15:8; cf. 5:32). See Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles, 65-66.


685 Esler, Community, 16.

686 Stronstad, Charismatic Theology, 71.
In the course of this chapter, though references to the Spirit in Acts are numerous, particular attention will be paid to the following texts: Acts 1:2-5, which draws attention to ‘the promise of the Father’ (Luke 24:49) and opens up the fulfillment of John’s ‘baptism with the Spirit’ for the followers of Jesus (cf. Luke 3:16); Acts 1:8, which draws the program for the mission which Jesus entrusts to his followers; Acts 2:1-41, which narrates the story of the first Spirit bestowal upon believers in Jesus and the consequences of this Spirit reception – the start of mission. Acts 9:15 and 10:1-11:18 will also be examined where Luke strongly indicates how non-Jews became part of the Christian communities; Acts 13:1-4, where the Holy Spirit specifically sets Paul and Barnabas aside for the mission to τὰ ἔθνη; Acts 15:6-28, where the leaders of the church appeal to the authority of the Spirit at the Jerusalem council; and Acts 19:1-7 which reports the last outpouring of the Holy Spirit on several followers of Jesus. Lastly this chapter shall briefly examine Luke’s final assertion concerning the turning to Gentiles (Acts 28:25-28) which also appeals to the Holy Spirit.

Many Lukan scholars have argued for the Holy Spirit in Acts as director of mission. This chapter aims to show that if Luke portrays the Holy Spirit as directing mission in the narrative it is because Luke wants the reader to understand that the church’s mission, especially as it expands to non-Jewish territories has the approval of God whose Spirit directs the mission. Luke’s appeal to the Spirit in this way has two aims: the first is to overcome resistance from some Jewish members of the Christian communities who are opposed to mission to τὰ ἔθνη as presented by Luke; the second is to encourage and support Gentile believers, especially those who had to struggle with the rejection of Jesus by Jews, and those who experienced exclusive behaviour from Jewish Christians. For this reason, Luke brings to the awareness of the resisting readers the active involvement of the Spirit of God in the church’s mission in Jerusalem, as well as in the mission to the nations. The Spirit of God is same Spirit that was active in the OT and in

---

the mission of Jesus in the gospel. Luke wants the reader to see God at work in the church’s mission as Luke has presented it.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part addresses the role of the Holy Spirit from the start of Acts to the Pentecost narrative. The second part addresses the Spirit’s role in the mission to the wider world.

6.1 The opening preface (Acts 1:2-5)

At the beginning of Acts 1, Luke refers to the Holy Spirit three times: Jesus operates through the Holy Spirit (v 2), the disciples are to wait for the ‘promise of the Father’ (v 4), and the disciples will be baptised with the Holy Spirit (v 5). These references connect with the theme of the Spirit already mentioned in the gospel. The reader already knows that Jesus in his earthly ministry was ‘full of the Holy Spirit’ (Luke 4:1), went about ‘in the power of the Spirit’ (Luke 4:14), and was ‘anointed’ with the Spirit (Luke 4:18). Luke’s statement in Acts 1:2 that Jesus instructs the apostles διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου thus strengthens what the reader already knows about Jesus. The apostles at this stage are the important transitional group in Luke’s mind binding the...

---

688 Shepherd, Narrative Reliability, 12.

historical Jesus to the early church. Though Luke does not mention the content of Jesus’ instructions to the apostles in this period before he was taken up, the intended reader is made aware that the instruction is Spirit-inspired. This indicates that from the start of Acts Luke begins to confirm in the mind of the reader, that the church is inspired by the same Spirit which was at work from the beginning of the gospel. In this way, Luke informs the resisting Jewish reader that the mission to the nations follows divinely inspired instructions and must not be obstructed. In the same vein believers from the wider ethnic backgrounds are encouraged knowing that the Gentile mission follows divine instruction. As the narrative moves towards the inauguration of the church’s mission at Pentecost, the Lukan Jesus makes two explicit assertions: first, the apostles are to wait for the ‘promise of the father’ (τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πατρός, Acts 1:4; cf. Luke 24:49); and second, they will be baptised with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5).

The term ἐπαγγελία connects this text with OT prophecy (Ezek 36:27; Joel 2:28-29; cf. Acts 2:16-21), and with the words of Jesus in Luke 24:49. The phrase ἡν ἥκούσατέ μου (which you heard from me – Acts 1:4), alerts the reader that ἐπαγγελία here is a reference to an earlier promise, and thus looks forward to its fulfillment. This prepares the reader for the following event in Acts 2:1-4, 16-22. Luke’s intention is to build trust in the mind of the reader so that Acts 2 which begins the mission of the church is seen to be the fulfillment of this promise.


691 Menzies, Empowered, 170.
the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In a short while the disciples will be immersed and drenched in the Spirit. This echoes Jesus’ statement in Luke 24:49 that the disciples will be clothed with “power from on high.” The hearing-reader will later understand that these promises come to fulfillment at key points in the narrative – for the Jerusalem church (Acts 2) as well as the church in non-Jewish territories (Acts 8:14-16; 10:44ff; 19:1-7). Luke wants the resisting reader to know and “appreciate the fact that the expansion he goes on to narrate has been made possible only in the power of the Spirit, which as such marks out the new phase of God’s purpose.”

The resisting Jewish Christian believer and the disillusioned Gentile Christian are thus informed from this beginning that the expansion of the church’s mission has divine approval.

In these first five verses of Acts 1, Luke has thus shown that first the believers in Jesus follow Spirit-inspired instruction; second, that the Spirit they receive in Acts 2 (and elsewhere in the narrative) is the promise of the Father, and third, the experience of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and in subsequent chapters is interpreted as the baptism with the Holy Spirit which John predicted earlier in the gospel (Luke 3:16). In this way, as Luke indicates in the rest of Acts, the followers of the Way carry out their mission under the direction of the Holy Spirit. This is what Luke wants the intended readers to know, that the church’s mission is possible because the followers of Jesus having been instructed by Jesus διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου, waited and were baptised with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), the promise of the Father (τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πατρός). Thus, even before the church begins its mission in Acts 2, Luke has drawn the attention of the implied readers to a church which draws its inspiration for mission from the Holy/Spirit of God. This is, in no small measure, a Lukan call for accepting the unfolding mission of the church since it follows divine instruction.

---

694 Though the Father will send the Holy Spirit on the apostles, Jesus is the means by which this happens. Hence, Peter in Acts 2:33 states that being exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he (Jesus) has poured out (ἐξέχεεν) this that you both see and hear. Bonnab, Narrative Factor, 114; Fitzmyer, The Acts of the Apostles, 204.
6.2 The Commissioning (Acts 1:6-8)

Acts 1:8 is the programmatic text for the narrative of Acts. In this final saying of Jesus before his ascension, Luke quotes Jesus thus: ἀλλὰ λήμψεσθε δύναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος έφ' ύμας, καὶ ἐσεσθέ μου μάρτυρες ἐν τε Ἰερουσαλήμ καὶ ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Ιουδαίᾳ καὶ Σαμαρείᾳ καὶ ἐως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς (Acts 1:8). The statement reflects the transition of prophetic power from Moses to Joshua (Deut 34:9) and from Elijah to Elisha (2 Kgs 2:9-12). The future tense ἐσεσθέ μου μάρτυρες (you will be my witnesses) corroborated by λήμψεσθε (you will receive) suggests that the disciples do not yet have the capacity to ‘witnesses’. They will become ‘witnesses’ after the Spirit has come upon them. The expression ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος έφ’ ύμας, becomes clearer when read against the earlier references to the Spirit in ‘the promise of the Father’ (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4) and the ‘baptism with the Holy Spirit’ (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5). Luke here asserts that the fulfillment of the ‘promise of the Father’ and the ‘baptism with the Holy Spirit’ conveys upon the disciples the power for witnessing. This witnessing implies a mission


698 In the narrative of Acts a witness is someone “who experienced Jesus and saw him in a resurrected appearance.” Bock, Acts, 64. It is for this reason that the direct replacement for Judas in the list of the apostles must have had a direct experience of Jesus’ ministry and resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). The term appears frequently in Acts and is applied to the Apostles (1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39, 41; 13:31); to Paul (22:15; 26:16); and to Stephen (22:20).

beginning from Jerusalem that is inspired and propelled by the Spirit (see Luke 24:47). Luke in this way indicates that those who resist mission, especially as it extends beyond Jewish territories, resist the Spirit who is the driver.

At times Luke places a question within the narrative, which becomes the narrative device for Luke to draw the reader’s attention to significant matters (see Luke 1:34; 4:22; Acts 2:12, 37). In the OT, the outpouring of the Spirit is associated with the eschatological restoration of Israel (see for instance, Isa 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29). Luke thus employed this knowledge and put a question on the lips of the inquisitive disciples: “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). While the apostles ask a question of eschatological nature (Acts 1:6), Luke uses the opportunity to announce that salvation is not only for the Jews but for all people on the earth. It is in this sense that the Spirit becomes legitimator of the mission which the Spirit empowers beginning from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

Jesus’ response to the question of the disciples addresses the concerns of resisting Jewish Christian readers. Luke here employs language that is familiar in order to convince them about God’s wider mission agenda. Luke’s language of empowerment by the Spirit resulting in witness ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς echoes the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 45:22; 48:20; 49:6; 62:10-11; cf. Jer 10:13). The concept of ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς in these Isaiah texts connotes boundaries that extend beyond the territory of Israel. Luke, in this phrase, strongly indicates to the reader, that

---


701 Keener, “Power of Pentecost,” 49, especially the extensive bibliography in fn 5.


the unfolding mission of the church extends beyond the territory of Israel. For Jews of the diaspora this was not a new concept but Luke had to convince his readers (especially the conservative enclaves) that this mission would also include Gentiles. To this end Luke also echoes the language of Isaiah where Israel is witness (cf. Isa 43:10, 12; 44:8). Moreso, the disciples receiving “power” when the Spirit comes upon them reflects occasions in the OT where the Spirit is associated with prophetic and leadership empowerment.⁷⁰⁵ God also empowers God’s people through God’s Spirit (Isa 32:15; 44:3) and they speak for God (Isa 42:1; 48:16; 59:21; 61:1). Using language familiar with the Jewish readers, Luke shows that though the disciples’ direct and real experience of Jesus and his resurrection qualifies them as witnesses (cf. Acts 1:21-22), it is the Spirit who gives them the capability to articulate their experience with boldness (Acts 1:8; cf. 4:23-31).⁷⁰⁶ Luke here wants the resisting reader to know that the disciples’ mission ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς is legitimate, not just because they had direct experience of Jesus’ ministry and resurrection, but that they also have been clothed with the same prophetic credential – the Spirit of the Lord upon them. Luke makes the implied reader understand therefore that Jesus’ words to and commissioning of the apostles is grounded in the Jewish scriptures (cf. Luke 24:44-46).

Luke affirms that while the disciples are called to witness, the power for effective witnessing comes to them only after the Holy Spirit has come upon them. This indicates, as Hur notes, that their witnessing is sanctioned by God. In other words, the church’s witness to the ends of the earth advances in accordance with the plan of God (e.g. Acts 8:29; 11:17-18; 13:4; 15:8; 16:6-7; 19:21; cf. 27:223-24).⁷⁰⁷ Luke gradually builds up an expectation in the reader for the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2.

As the narrative unfolds after this point, everything that the apostles do through the empowerment of the Spirit bears, in teaching, preaching and healing witness to Jesus. Beginning from Jerusalem and Judea in the early chapters of Acts to Samaria in Acts 8; and through Peter’s role in Acts 10-11 the mission expands further into the wider mission travels of

⁷⁰⁶ Bock, Acts, 64.
⁷⁰⁷ Hur, Dynamic Reading, 222.
Paul (Acts 13-28). Through all these, the reader comes to realise that as the story progresses, the Holy Spirit is guiding the church’s mission across these geographical and social lines. Dunn argues that:

The prominence of the Spirit in Luke’s narrative from Pentecost onwards makes clear beyond doubt that for Luke the mission of the church could not hope to be effective without the empowering from God (the Spirit of God) which transcends human ability and transforms human inability.

Dunn and others are correct in suggesting that Luke has presented the Spirit to the intended readers as the authority responsible for empowering the disciples and other characters for mission. What they have failed to identify is that in order for this to be convincing the Spirit must possess a justifying and authoritative position for the readers. The ‘Spirit of the Lord’ does not just have a utilitarian role (empowering) but holds a legitimating role for the Jewish reader. Furthermore, for the Gentile reader, the spirit realm is a revered space. The Spirit thus functions not only to empower the disciples but also to legitimate the mission which the disciples carry out, especially as it advances to the nations.

6.3 The Pentecost event (Acts 2:1-47)

The Pentecost narrative recorded only in Acts 2 is very important in any discussion of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts. This is because, for Luke, it marks the beginning of the Church’s mission. The position of the account at the start of Acts demonstrates its centrality and

---

710 For instance, Conzelmann, The Theology of St Luke, 213; Penney, Missionary Emphasis, 111-116; Turner, Power from on High, 402-403; and Hur, Dynamic Reading, 278.
712 The ‘disciples’ in this narrative are representative of the church. The Spirit’s bestowal upon the disciples also stands for the Spirit’s bestowal upon the church for mission. The terms ‘disciples’ and ‘church’ may sometimes be used interchangeably.
importance in Luke’s theological plan.\textsuperscript{713} As the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus in the gospel ushers in Jesus’ mission (Luke 3:22; cf. 4:18), so also the bestowal of the Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost launches the mission of the church in Acts.\textsuperscript{714} Witherington rightly argues that “without the coming of the Spirit there would be no prophecy, no preaching, no mission, no conversion, and no world-wide Christian movement.”\textsuperscript{715} In other words, the church’s mission is inaugurated and inspired by the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit at the start of the church’s mission presupposes divine approval of this mission and its expansion as Luke has presented it, and thereby legitimates the wider mission of the church as the continuation of the mission of Jesus, and the fulfillment of the OT (particularly Isaianic) prophecies. This justifies the many references to the Spirit in this account.\textsuperscript{716} As Jesus’ mission is Spirit-filled (Luke 4:18-19; cf. vv 1 and 14), the church’s mission must also be shown to be Spirit-filled. Luke indicates that without the Spirit’s bestowal, the church could not share in Jesus’ Spirit-filled mission (cf. Acts 1:8).

The Pentecost event recalls the Spirit endowment of the seventy elders in Numbers 11:16-30 as argued in chapter four above, echoed in the mission of the seventy in Luke 10:1-20. The elders in Numbers 11 received the Spirit and so were able to share in Moses’ mission, so also the disciples at Pentecost receive the Holy Spirit and are able to share in Jesus’ mission (cf. Luke 24:44-49). It is my aim to show that Luke employs the Spirit in this account to establish the legitimacy of the church’s mission (for the resisting Jewish believers but also for Gentile Christians), especially the mission to the nations. With the election of Matthias (Acts 1:26) and the restoration of the apostolic number to the original twelve, Luke has prepared the stage for the inauguration of the church’s mission. The disciples will however have to wait for the divine approval and empowerment which, as Luke indicates, happens with the reception of the Holy Spirit.

\textsuperscript{713} Menzies, \textit{Empowered}, 173.
\textsuperscript{716} See Acts 2:4 (2x), 17, 18, 33 and 38.
The Disciples wait in obedience to Jesus’ instructions (Acts 2:1)

Luke begins the narrative in Acts 2:1 thus: Καὶ ἐν τῷν συμπληρώσθαι τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς πεντηκοστῆς... (and when the day of Pentecost was completed).\(^\text{717}\) This phrase recalls Luke 9:51 which begins the account of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem in fulfillment of his passion prophecies.\(^\text{718}\) As the fulfillment in Luke 9:51 is predicated on earlier prophecies in Luke 9:22, 31, 44; so also the fulfillment in Acts 2:1 is predicated on earlier promises in Luke 24:49, and Acts 1:4-5, 8. The term συμπληρώσθαι, used in both cases (Luke 9:51 and Acts 2:1), suggests a coming to completion (or fulfillment) of an interval, where πληρῶσθαι signifies the actual coming of the appointed day.\(^\text{719}\) Luke has thus crafted the Pentecost story such that συμπληρώσθαι τὴν ἡμέραν denotes a day in the future that the disciples had been looking forward to. This is supported by the use of καὶ which connects the Pentecost account to the preceding narrative and the rest of the story of Acts. This day came to fulfillment on the day of Pentecost. The Pentecost narrative then is a proleptic event.\(^\text{720}\)

While for the Jews the use of συμπληρώσθαι τὴν ἡμέραν suggests that the Pentecost festival period is now complete, in Luke-Acts the period of waiting for the fulfillment of the Father’s promise is also complete.\(^\text{721}\) Luke has already pointed to this day in the narratives: the disciples would receive the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4), be clothed with power from on high (ἔως ὦ ἐνδύσησθε ἐξ ὕψους δύναμιν, Luke 24:49), be baptised with the Holy Spirit (οὐ μετὰ πολλάς ταύτας ἡμέρας, not many days from now, Acts 1:5; cf. Luke 3:16), and in Acts 1:8, 10:


\(^{719}\) Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles, 167, f/n 2; see also Witherington, The Acts of the Apostles, 131, f/n 7; and Pervo, Acts, 60. The disciples were waiting for a significant moment in the future. They do not know the day, all they can do is wait. The Lukan Jesus did not say that all these things would take place on Pentecost day. There is no indication that this is the particular day the disciples were waiting for. But, as Gibbs asserts, the announcement that “…the day of Pentecost had come” suggests that a significant moment had arrived. See Gibbs, “The Launching of Mission,” 19. The reader who is reading this story of an event which has already taken place, can easily in hindsight place the “awaited day in the future” as the day of Pentecost.

\(^{720}\) Reeves, “The Ethiopian Eunuch,” 119.

ἐπελθόντος (coming upon, when he comes) suggests the meaning of “when” in the future that the Spirit would come.\(^{722}\) Luke indicates from the beginning of the narrative that the disciples obey Jesus’ instructions to wait, given both in the gospel (Luke 24:49) and in Acts 1:4. Therefore, on this day they are all together (Acts 2:1). The “all” (πάντες) could refer to the 120 mentioned earlier in Acts 1:15.\(^{723}\)

So in this introduction, Luke informs the implied reader that this event takes place in Jerusalem on a day that Jews (and proselytes) from across the nations would come to Jerusalem for the Pentecost festival.\(^{724}\) The church’s mission begins on this day just as Jesus’ Spirit-filled mission began on a Sabbath day in the synagogue. As in the Nazareth synagogue episode, here too, a Jewish audience has been positioned to witness and testify to an event that is crucial in Luke-Acts. This supports the thesis that Luke seeks to convince those Jewish believers who resist the mission to the nations which also serves as encouragement and support for the non-Jewish followers of Jesus.

\(\text{ii.} \quad \text{The Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples (Acts 2:2-4)}\)

At Jesus’ baptism the Holy Spirit came upon him ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (Luke 3:21-22); here also, a sound came from heaven (καὶ ἐγένετο ἀφω ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, Acts 2:2). The Spirit came upon Jesus in perceptible form, like a dove; the disciples’ reception of the Spirit is also perceptible, as something heard (ἠχος...πνοή βιας, a sound of a violent wind, v 2), and as something seen (καὶ ὠφθησαν αὐτοῖς...γλώσσαι ὥσει πυρός, and there appearing to them tongues as of fire, v 3).\(^{725}\) This symbolism is reminiscent of OT theophanies (sound/wind – 2 Sam 5:24; 22:16; 1 Kgs 19:11-12; Job 37:13; fire – Exod 3:2; 14:20, 24; 19:18; Deut 4:11, 24; Ps 104:4),\(^{726}\) but also resonates with Greco-Roman religious omens and signs from the gods ensuring that non-Jewish readers would comprehend its significance.

---

\(^{722}\) Bonnah, *Narrative Factor*, 147.


\(^{724}\) Bonnah, *Narrative Factor*, 147.


Though the disciples had been waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5); the sudden (ἀφνω) nature of the event suggests that the expected day was unpredictable. Luke’s allusion to the sudden wind from heaven and the tongues of fire (vv 2 and 3) gives the event a transcendent connotation,\(^{727}\) and suggests the presence of the “divine” for the reader. The cosmic elements serve as characteristics of the Spirit of God.\(^{728}\) In this way, the resisting Jewish and Godfearing reader who knows about the activities of the Spirit of God from the OT begins to form an opinion about the whole episode. The cosmic elements also suggest to Gentile readers a spiritual interpretation of the entire episode.

In Acts 2:4a the narrator clearly associates the phenomenon with the arrival of the Holy Spirit – “...καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες πνεῦματος ἁγίου.”\(^{729}\) Within Luke-Acts this recalls the words of John the Baptist about baptism “with Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16), taken up by Jesus in Acts 1:5. It also fulfills Jesus’ promise in Luke 24:49, repeated in Acts 1:4. With these previous texts within the narrative being fulfilled, the reader begins to anticipate the fulfillment of Acts 1:8, that highlights a mission from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth, but only when the Holy Spirit has come upon the disciples. Luke is laying the foundations for an argument aimed at convincing the resisting reader about the church’s mission as Luke will present it in the later narratives, especially the mission to the nations which was problematic for some Jewish members of the communities (cf. Acts 10-15 discussed below). The disciples being “filled with the Holy Spirit” draws the attention of the Jewish reader to characters being filled with the Spirit the Lord in the OT and to earlier promises of Jesus in the gospel and in Acts. The phrase also draws the Gentile reader’s attention to the phenomenon of spirit-possession in


\(^{728}\) Bonnah, *Narrative Factor*, 148.

\(^{729}\) The description of the disciples being “filled with” the Holy Spirit is typically Lukan (for instance, Luke 1:15, 35, 41, 67; Acts 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9). Luke uses the word ‘fill’ (πλήρης) to describe the experience here. This word is used when people are given an initial endowment of the Spirit to fit them for God’s service (cf. Acts 9:17; Luke 1:15, 41, 67) and also when they are inspired to make utterances (cf. Acts 4:8, 31; 13:9); related words are used to describe the continuous process of being filled with the Spirit (cf. Acts 13:52) or the corresponding state of being full (Acts 6:3, 5; 7:55; 11:24; Luke 4:1). These references indicate that a person already filled with the Spirit can receive a fresh filling for a specific task or a continuous filling (cf. Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31). See Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 69; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 133; Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 25; and Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 60.
the Greco-Roman world. Putting the entire Lukan corpus into perspective, this indicates that Luke wants the intended reader to realise that the presence of the Spirit of God from this very beginning of the church’s mission anticipates and legitimates the mission of the followers of Jesus as laid down in the subsequent narratives and that this mission follows God’s plan and purpose.

As Luke indicates, with the reception of the Holy Spirit comes the inevitable consequence – prophetic proclamation. Luke writes: καὶ ἠρέματο λαλεῖν ἐτέραις γλώσσαις καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδου ἀποφθέγγεσθαι αὐτοῖς (Acts 2:4b). The disciples began to do what they had never done before. Luke attributes this ability to the gift of the Spirit: καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδου ἀποφθέγγεσθαι αὐτοῖς. Here, Luke relates to the theme of Acts articulated in 1:8 – what is happening is Spirit-inspired, and already the Spirit is enabling cross-cultural witness. Luke makes it clear that not only are the disciples filled with the Holy Spirit; their current behaviour can only be understood in the light of the Spirit’s reception. Hence Luke is quick to add that the disciples speak in other tongues “as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). This is reminiscent of Numbers 11:25 where the seventy elders prophesied after their endowment with the Spirit of the Lord. This also echoes Greco-Roman contexts where spirit-possessed agents in the state of enthousiasmos speak as the gods gave them utterances. The resisting reader who is encouraged to interpret the current event in the light of OT events begins to see events in a different light: that the Spirit of God is also active here, strongly suggesting divine approval. Arguably, Luke has crafted this episode so as to reflect both an OT event and the spiritual worldview of the Greco-Roman context. It is critical that the event that ushered in the continuation of Jesus’ mission in the church be understood in both contexts. Appealing to familiar concepts in this way, Luke means to overcome the doubts of any resisting Jewish and Godfearing members of the communities concerning the mission of the church as Luke has presented it, and to motivate Gentile believers.

---

This is the beginning of the church’s mission and Luke stresses that the mission is under the influence and direction of the Spirit. Luke shows that the speaking in other tongues (ἐτέρας γλώσσας, ἐτέρας meaning ‘other’, of a different kind), is inspired by the Spirit. This means that the speakers now speak in tongues other than what they would normally speak, languages different from Aramaic/Hebrew or Greek. This is important as in the subsequent verses Luke shows the list of nations present at the event and how the Spirit inspires the disciples to speak to everyone in their own language, which suggests that the same Spirit is encouraging mission to non-Aramaic speaking people. The reader is informed that the Spirit of the Lord is at work in these multi-ethnic utterances. Luke however is driving the implied reader to accept something else – the recognition of the universality of salvation to which testimony is being made.\(^{733}\)

While scholars such as Marshall present the Spirit as equipping the disciples for the task of witnessing,\(^{734}\) and others like Shepherd argue for the Spirit as the source of inspired speech,\(^{735}\) I maintain that the reference to the Spirit’s bestowal and the ἐτέρας γλώσσας is also meant to overcome the prejudice of some Jews and proselytes concerning the mission of the church to τὰ ἔθνη, while also strengthening and supporting Gentile believers. Even though those present in this account do not explicitly include Gentiles (but rather Jews from the diaspora), the later ethnic hearing-readers are overwhelmed with the realisation that ‘this (Jewish) God speaks our language’.

iii. The reaction of the public (Acts 2:5-13)

With the use of ἤσαν δέ (now there were) Luke begins a new section of the narrative. Having acknowledged the disciples’ reception of the Spirit Luke turns to the start of the mission beginning in Jerusalem, with Jews and proselytes as the first audience (v 10). The narrator describes the audience as ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς ἀπο παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν (v 5), suggesting that the whole world is represented in Jerusalem at this first outburst of the church’s mission under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Tannehill rightly points out that “The list of people and lands is not meant to be exhaustive since they were from every nation under

\(^{735}\) Shepherd, Narrative Function, 161.
The point of emphasis for Luke is the scope of the audience – from every nation under heaven. On hearing the sound (τῆς φωνῆς) from heaven (v 6) these ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς gathered together (συνήλθεν – literally came together). This recalls Luke’s narrative of the baptism of Jesus where Luke’s expression (καὶ καταβῆναι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγιὸν σωματικῶς εἴδει) appeals to public perception of the phenomenon of the Spirit descending like a dove (Luke 3:22).

Luke notes that the crowd on hearing the sound comes together to enquire about the event. At this stage, the reader already knows and can attribute the phenomenon to the Holy Spirit based on verse 4. Furthermore, Luke opens up another means in the narrative to further strengthen the thesis that the Gentile mission is in accordance with the plan and purpose of God. These devout Jews do not only gather together, they are also bewildered (συνεχύθη) to hear the disciples speaking in their own language. As Luke notes, they are Jews, but they do not all identify with the Aramaic language. Rather they identify with their “own native language” and their “own tongues” (vv 6, 8, 11). Included also in these ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς were proselytes who had come for the festival (v 10). They are all devout because they are observant of the Jewish tradition, hence the reason for coming to Jerusalem for this feast of Pentecost. They are confused and they marvel (ἐθαύμαζον, v 7; cf. Luke 4:22) because they hear the disciples speak in their native languages. Gibbs observes that citizens of the Mediterranean world and products of the Diaspora could speak either Aramaic or Greek or other languages, and that many of them were bilingual. As such, speaking in other tongues was not necessary for the crowd to

---

738 Luke appeals to the evidence and testimony, not just of the recipients, but also of the gathered crowd in each case. The testimony of the crowd helps strengthen Luke’s assertion.  
739 The phrase ἵδια διαλέκτῳ (in his own native language) appears only three times in the NT and all in Acts (1:19; 2:6, 8). The added phrase ἐν ᾐ ἐγεννηθήμεν (in which we were born) in this context suggests that the native, local dialect is meant. See Bock, Acts, 102.  
740 Scholars are divided as to whether these Jews had retired to Jerusalem to live or had come on pilgrimage. Some like Bruce argue that these Jews had come on pilgrimage, while others like Witherington assert that they were Diaspora Jews who had come to live in Jerusalem. See Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles, 53; and Witherington, The Acts of the Apostles, 135. It seems plausible that while some would have come to Jerusalem on pilgrimage, there are others who would have settled in Jerusalem.
understand what the disciples were saying. It is reasonable to suggest then that Luke has crafted the narrative this way to show that from the start of the church’s mission, the Holy Spirit already identifies with various cultures other than Jewish.

On another level, the sudden and mysterious sound, the tongues of fire, and the disciples speaking in “all the languages” of the nations under heaven had no discernible cause. In the Greco-Roman context, this calls for divination of the signs sent from heaven. Luke thus creates an avenue for some explanation to be provided to interpret these events. At first the multitude heard the sound from heaven, and then they came together and heard the disciples speaking in their own languages about the mighty works of God (v 11). This leaves them amazed and troubled (ἐξίσταντο δὲ πάντες καὶ διηποροῦντο, v 12). As we see frequently in the Lukan narrative, the audience asks: What does this mean? This question expresses and reinforces the dilemma and invites an explanation. Meanwhile, others mockingly accuse the disciples of drunkenness (v 13). The question coupled with the allegation of being filled with new wine creates another narrative opportunity – Peter’s explanation, or in the context of the Greco-Roman world, a divination of the signs.

The reader who has come thus far knows that the Spirit’s descent upon the disciples is responsible for the proclamation in other tongues (v 2-4). Yet Luke offers further explanation for the root of the phenomenon and the implications for the church’s mission. Verses 9-11 mention the nations from which the Jews and proselytes had gathered. Luke’s representation of a diversity of language and people forming the audience “are indications of an effort to

---

742 Keener, “Power of Pentecost,” 59, rightly argues that since the Spirit in this narrative identifies with cultures other than Jewish, and has given utterances to the followers of Jesus to speak in the languages of those cultures (Acts 2:5-8), it follows that God has approved and empowered the believers in Jesus to cross all cultural and linguistic barriers with the message of salvation. See also Craig S. Keener, “Why Does Luke Use Tongues as a Sign of the Spirit’s Empowerment?,” JPT 15, no. 2 (2007): 177-184; Francis Watson, Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2007), 68-69; and John V. York, Missions in the Age of the Spirit (Springfield, MO: Logion, 2000), 80, 185-186.
emphasise the intended scope of the mission.”

This audience, made up of both Jews and proselytes would be the first to take the Christian message to territories outside Jerusalem. As Keener remarks, “although they are Jewish, the breadth of their geographic exposure foreshadows the mission to the nations laid out in 1:8, just like the African ‘ends of the earth’ in 8:26-40 or evangelizing in the heart of the empire in 28:16-31.” These “devout men” already acknowledge the disciples talking about the mighty works of God in their own native languages. This testimony is being borne to all the house of Israel and it will spread to every nation represented. The phrase “Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5) introduces this symbolic dimension into the narrative – that the good news must be addressed to all Israel scattered throughout the world, and (at least potentially) that this good news must also be taken to all Gentile inhabitants of the lands from which these Jews have come. The universal mission is thus foreshadowed. The resisting reader now sees that the church’s mission to the wider ethnic territories originated from the first day of the church’s mission in Jerusalem under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is encouraging and hopeful for the Gentile believer too who sees their inclusion to be divinely mandated.

Luke’s narration of events justifies the proposition that the Spirit coming upon the disciples at Pentecost not only empowers them for mission; it also functions to legitimate this mission begun in Jerusalem and expanding to the Gentile territories, and gathers more momentum. Luke informs the resisting reader that as this mission expands to other geographical territories including the ethnic region (Acts 1:8), the Spirit’s presence guarantees the authenticity of the mission. For this reason, apart from the Spirit coming upon the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2:4a), Luke emphasises that the Spirit gives the disciples utterance (τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδον ἀποφθεγγεσθαι αὐτοῖς – Acts 2:4b). This is a clear indication that Luke wants to state unequivocally that the proclamation of the disciples to the ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς from “every nation” under heaven is from the Holy Spirit who is the driving force of the mission to the nations.

748 Tannehill, Narrative Unity, vol. 2, 27.
Peter’s explanation and the people’s response (Acts 2:14-42)

Peter begins this paradigmatic speech with an assertion that the pouring forth of the Spirit is the fulfillment of prophecy (vv 16-21), and concludes with a further reference to the Spirit as “the promise of the Father” (vv 33, 38-39). This is the first detailed speech in Acts, and it fits into the pattern of other speeches in Acts (3:12-26; 4:8-12; 7:2ff; 10:34-43; 13:16-41 and so on). As Marshall indicates the wording of the speech may largely be that of the author. That Luke has crafted his argument beginning with the Holy Spirit and ending with the Holy Spirit confirms the centrality of the Holy Spirit in the speech and in Luke’s agenda.

The speech is meant to be a persuasive appeal to the audience described in the narrative. Peter takes his stand like a Greek orator (v 14; cf. 5:20; 11:13; 17:22; 25:18 and 27:21) and addresses the crowd. The audience, as representatives of their respective homelands including ethnic inhabitants, provides the context for Luke’s missionary vision: the expansion of the gospel across ethnic and religious boundaries. As the narrative suggests, Peter’s speech addresses every Jew: all those dwelling in Jerusalem (v 14); the “men of Israel” (ἄνδρες Ἰσραήλ, v 22) and “all the house of Israel” (πᾶς ὁ ὀίκος Ἰσραήλ, v 36),

---

753 Tannehill, Narrative Unity, vol. 2, 41.
754 The audience addressed would be the same Jews from every nation under heaven referred to earlier (v 5) and probably other Jews living in Jerusalem too. The term ἀπεφέδεγγομαι means to speak out in inspired or solemn fashion. See Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles, 178, f/n 4; Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles, 72; and Pervo, Acts, 63, f/n 33. Luke uses the same word when he writes of the Spirit giving the disciples utterance in Acts 2:4. It is logical to say the same Spiritual gift is effective here.
755 Tannehill, Narrative Unity, vol. 2, 27. Cf. Acts 2:39 – “For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” (emphasis mine).
including the Diaspora, indicating the scope and significance of the phrase “from every nation under heaven.”

Peter refutes the allegation of drunkenness (v 15) and with the contrast ἄλλα interprets the event as the manifestation of the promised Spirit (v 16-21, 33; cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). To substantiate this claim, Peter, like Jesus in Luke 4:18-19 (citing Isa 61), references the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32, and affirms that the phenomenon fulfills the prophecy of Joel. This shows that the beginning of the church’s mission parallels the beginning of Jesus’ mission; both are a fulfillment of prophecy. Peter affirms the eschatological and fulfillment frame of the Pentecost event at the start by changing Joel’s introductory “afterwards” to “in the last days.” In this way Luke shows that this manifestation of the Spirit which inaugurates the church’s mission has some eschatological explanation. Peter’s explanation illuminating and interpreting the past thus offers the implied reader some grounds on which to accept what is happening and welcome the effects as Luke has presented them – the commencement of a new mission. While Luke’s citation of Joel offers some explanation for the disciples’ behaviour, it also provides some clues concerning Luke’s vision of the mission that is beginning. The hearing-reader realises that the speech points out that the fulfillment of the prophecy includes all flesh receiving the Spirit of God (v 17). This universality of the gift of the Spirit is one of the most striking features in this passage – the Spirit will be given to both male and female (v 17; cf. Luke 1:41-45, 67-79; 2:26-38; Acts 21:9-11); young and old (v 17; cf. Luke 2:36-37; Acts 21:9); and also male and female servants (v 18). The speech also calls attention to the fact that the consequences of the Spirit reception include prophetic proclamation, vision, and dreams (v 17-18), and affirms that “...whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (v 21). This recalls Simeon’s words

757 Bock, Acts, 112.
758 The Spirit effects prophetic proclamation.
759 Before this period, the Spirit had been distributed to a few people on special occasions for special enablement. But now the outpouring will be on “all flesh” (both Jew and Gentile) who call on the Lord. See, Keener, “Power of Pentecost,” 66-68; Witherington, The Acts of the Apostles, 140-142; Bock, Acts 113; Johnson, The Acts of the Apostles, 49.
760 Luke applies this affirmation so as to reinforce his argument that God’s ancient plan has been to transcend all cultural barriers to reach all peoples (cf. Acts 22:21). God’s Spirit is available to everyone who calls on God’s name. In other words, the mission to ἀθέτησις is not initiated by the church but has always been part of the plan and purpose of God. See Keener, “Power of Pentecost,” 68.
in Luke 2:30-32 and John the Baptist’s prophetic words in Luke 3:6, where “all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” In other words, this subsequent narrative provides reminders to the resisting reader that the mission is consistent with the gospel accounts of Jesus as well as fulfilling the prophecies of the Joel text.\footnote{761}

In this speech Peter offers an authoritative interpretation of what has happened. Peter refers to the source of their inspiration, behaviour, and miraculous speech, which he immediately confirms as the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father (Acts 2:33). The reader familiar with the OT immediately remembers the promise of the Spirit in Joel 2:28-29 (cited by Peter); a promise reiterated by Jesus in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4. Luke emphasises that the promise is for the audience (and by implication the intended reader) and their children and for all those far off, every one whom the Lord calls to himself (v 39). This explains further Joel’s statement about the Spirit being poured out “on all flesh.”\footnote{762} It is obvious that Luke’s explanation of the event centers on the Holy Spirit. Luke wants the implied readers to know that the Holy Spirit is responsible for the mission of the church; a mission that begins in, but is not restricted to Jerusalem, but extends to “all flesh” and “all those far off.” Already in Jerusalem, language boundaries are being crossed. “All flesh” and “all those far off” immediately suggests that the mission as God (whose Spirit is at work) intends it, is to extend beyond the Jewish world and of course beyond Jerusalem. This could perhaps be understood as a reference to diaspora Jews only at this stage, but as the narrative in Acts progresses, we see that it is already laying the foundation for the resisting readers to understand that the wider Gentile mission has the approval of God whose Spirit is active from the beginning of the mission.

Luke also attests that the mission of the church continues the mission of Jesus, whose identity and mission is also defined in this speech. In verses 22-36, Luke designs his arguments to convince the Jews about their promised Messiah and how this promise is fulfilled in Jesus.\footnote{763} Among several allusions,\footnote{764} Luke appeals to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as evidence for
Jesus’ divine identity and mission continued in the church’s mission. This explains why, as the narrator insists, it was Jesus who “having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, has poured out this which you see and hear” (v 33). In the OT, it is God/the Lord who pours out the Spirit of God (Exod 31:3; 35:31; Num 11:17, 25; cf. Luke 11:13). Also in the prophetic promise of Joel, it is the Lord who promises to pour out the Spirit of the Lord upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-29). As Matthew Godshall argues, “For Luke, in pouring out the Holy Spirit Jesus’ divine identity is revealed.” Luke has been building up this identity for Jesus from the start of the gospel narrative in John the Baptist’s announcement that Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16; cf. Acts 1:5); and here, Luke announces that Jesus has fulfilled that prophetic proclamation. In addition, Peter’s assertion that Jesus is at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33) suggests that Jesus occupies a position of authority. It is from this exalted position, as Luke wants the hearing-reader to know, that Jesus receives from the Father the promised gift of the Spirit which he has poured out upon the church. Luke aims to show that Jesus is the promised Messiah and Lord (v 36). Luke thus emphasises Jesus’ divine identity not only by Jesus’ endowment with the Spirit at his baptism but also by Jesus’ pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. The exalted Jesus pours out the Spirit upon the church, which the narrative will make clear is responsible for the church’s mission. This connection of the church to the exalted Jesus (via the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father) confirms Luke’s agenda to affirm, for the resisting reader, the divine purpose in the mission of the followers of Jesus.

In line with Luke’s strategy, the audience asks a question: having realised Jesus’ divine identity and his pouring out of the Spirit upon the church which is responsible for the church’s mission – What shall we do? This ought to become the question for the implied reader. Peter’s response

---

767 Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles, 78; cf. Pervo, Acts, 83 who argues that the fundamental assumption is that Jesus had to be exalted as the ground for the bestowal of the Spirit.
768 Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles, 79. See also Munk, The Acts of the Apostles, 19, who states that “by the pouring out of the Spirit, it was made known to the whole house of Israel that Jesus, whom they had crucified, had by God been made both Lord and Messiah.”
is consonant with Jesus’ instruction to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus (v 38; cf. Luke 24:47), namely that those who repent and are baptised will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Verse 39 points out that, “For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” The phrase ὑμῖν γὰρ...καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν speaks to “all the house of Israel” and their children (cf. v 36). The phrase καὶ πᾶσιν εἰς μακράν, ὅσους ἐν προσκαλέσῃ τι κύριος ὥσπερ ἡμῶν, opens up salvation and “the promise” to an uncountable number of persons, ultimately from all the nations under heaven. This is a clarion call inspired by the Holy Spirit for the legitimation of the mission to τὰ ἔθνη.

Luke’s argument is that salvation is universal and has no boundary. It is the Lord who calls and the presence of the Spirit signals the approval. The reader now looks out for the activity of the Holy Spirit as the mission expands to other territories. Luke wants the reader to know that the Spirit’s presence always legitimates and authenticates mission (see Acts 6:3, 5; 8:14-17; 9:17; 10:44-45; 11:16-17, and so on). The reader (Jewish and Gentile) who repents and believes the message, accepts the mission of the church and therefore is baptized will receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). In this way, Luke makes clear, especially to resisting readers that the Spirit is a clear sign of God’s approval of the church’s mission, especially its expansion to the nations. Peter’s explanatory reference to Joel captures the attention of the resisting Jewish reader and is also intelligible as non-ritualised divination for the Gentile reader. The significance of Peter’s pesher here, therefore, cannot be overestimated for both Jewish and Gentile reader in understanding Luke’s employment of the Spirit for the legitimation of the Gentile mission.770

6.4 The Holy Spirit as legitimating mission to the wider world

The first three phases of mission in Acts are in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Acts 2:1-8:40). The fourth phase which constitutes the second half of Acts (13-28) focuses on the mission to τὰ ἔθνη.

770 Menzies describes this process helpfully. “In pesher interpretation, the author brings out the contemporary relevance of a particular text by pointing to its fulfillment in current events. As a method of biblical exegesis common in certain sectors of first-century Judaism – most notably in the Qumran community – pesher took the form of ‘this is that’ (or ‘that is this’, where the OT quotation is followed by its interpretation). Note the ‘this is that’ form in Acts 2:16: τοῦτο ἢστιν τὸ εἰρημένον διὰ τοῦ προφήτου Ἰωσήλ.” Menzies, Empowered, 179, f/n 3; also Hur, Dynamic Reading, 227. For further discussion, see Richard N. Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1975), 38-45; and E. Earl Ellis, The Gospel of Luke (London: Oliphants/Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1974), 7-8.
Given that a considerable amount of the narrative is dedicated to this mission to the nations, it would seem that its legitimation is the primary objective of Luke. As Haenchen has argued, Luke’s one real problem was the mission to the nations. Luke wants the reader to know that the Gentile mission is not the result of any human idea or influence, but an act of God. From Luke’s narrative, the reader understands that God had in the past spoken about mission to the nations, and now substantially gives credence to it by the action and presence of God’s Spirit. Luke brings this to focus especially in the narrative about the conversion of Paul (Acts 9), who becomes the principal character in this last phase of mission. Also relevant is the story about the conversion of the Gentile Centurion, Cornelius, and his household (Acts 10). The Cornelius’ episode opened the door to the Gentile mission until certain brethren from Judea challenged the conditions of admission for ethnic believers seeking entry into the church. A consequence of this was the Jerusalem council which made a definitive statement about the mission to τὰ ἔθνη (Acts 15). At the end of Acts, Paul takes “this salvation of God... to the Gentiles; they will listen” (Acts 28). This thesis will show that references to the Holy Spirit in this section also function to overcome resistance to the church’s mission especially in Gentile territories. While Luke seeks to overcome every opposition to this mission, he also seeks to encourage and motivate believers in these regions.

6.4.1 The call of Paul (Acts 9:1-19)

Saul’s conversion, described differently from that of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39) and of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:1ff), is primarily a call. The Lord chose Saul, who was the chief persecutor of the church in Luke’s story (Acts 9:1-2; cf. 8:1, 3), as an instrument of mission to the Gentiles and kings and Israel (Acts 9:15).

---


774 In this narrative, Paul is still referred to as Saul. So in this section, the thesis shall use the name Saul until Acts 13:9 when the name Paul is used.

775 Shepherd, *Narrative Function*, 189.
The narrative sequence is that on his way to Damascus to persecute the church, Saul encounters a bright light from heaven (ἐξαίφνης τε αὐτὸν περίστραψεν φῶς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him, v 3); and a voice calls his name and addresses him: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Earlier in Luke’s gospel, it was the Father’s voice who addressed Jesus as son (Luke 3:22; 9:35). This time, the voice from heaven identifies himself as Jesus whom Saul is persecuting (v 5; cf. v 17). The risen Jesus here identifies himself with the church. Since Luke has thus presented persecuting the church as persecuting Jesus, then the reader now knows that resisting the mission of the church is resisting Jesus’ mission as well. This also assists in overcoming resistance from the opposing Jewish audience and calling on all to comply with the church’s mission especially in its expansion to non-Jewish territories. Equally the light from heaven, the voice and Saul’s immediate loss of vision resonates with “signs” sent from the gods in the Greco-Roman religious context; signs needing divination.\(^\text{776}\) The Gentile believer therefore will very well identify with these phenomena as being divinely inspired. This also serves to encourage and motivate the Gentile believers as they recognise that the chief protagonist of mission to the nations is called and chosen by the risen Jesus even before the blossoming of the mission in Acts 10.

The encounter with the light results in the loss of vision for Saul (v 8). The Lord instructs him to go into the city and there he will be told what to do (v 6). Saul remains without sight, food and drink for three days (v 9). Luke presents Saul as praying (ἰδοὺ γὰρ προσεύχεται, v 11) and seeing a vision (εἰδεν...ἐν ὄραματι, v 12). Ananias (a disciple in Damascus) is sent by the risen Jesus so that Saul may regain his sight and “be filled with the Holy Spirit” (ὁπως ἀναβλέψῃ καὶ πλησθῇς πνεύματος ἁγίου, v 17). Ananias initially resists his mission of healing because Saul had a mission to persecute the followers of the Way (vv 2, 13-14; cf. v 21). Subsequently, Ananias obliges the Lord’s command to go (πορεύου) so that Saul might be healed and receive the Holy Spirit. Why? This is because Saul is a chosen instrument to the Gentiles and kings and Israel (ὅτι σχεῦς ἐκλογῆς ἐστίν μοι οὗτος, v 15). With Ananias’ visit, prayer and laying of hands, Saul regains his sight, is filled with the Spirit and then begins his new mission (vv 18-20). Viewed from the

\(^\text{776}\) Cf. Larson, *Understanding Greek Religion*, 74, who shows that the gods send ‘signs’ by means of “dreams, chance words or phrases, obstacles or signs met on the road, the flight of birds...and the behaviour of flames.”
Greco-Roman religious perspective, Ananias here functions as the diviner who unravels the will of the gods; and also the oracle who now announces Jesus’ (divine) intention: that Saul might regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit (v 17). Luke clearly speaks to the implied reader here that the risen Jesus chose Saul, and through the ministry of another disciple, Ananias, bestows the Holy Spirit upon Saul; the Spirit who not only equips and inspires Saul for mission to the nations, but also (like the OT figures and earlier characters in Luke-Acts) confirms Saul’s divine mandate for the mission. Once again, Luke refers to the Holy Spirit to legitimate what he aims at: the mission to τὰ ἔθνη. This assurance that mission to τὰ ἔθνη unfolds according to divine purpose and plan serves both to overcome opposition to this mission from Jewish followers of Jesus and also as encouragement for the Gentile Christians who now identify with the Christian faith.

The words of the risen Jesus to Ananias is a programmatic prophecy of Saul’s career as Saul will preach before “Gentiles, kings and the people of Israel” (cf. Acts 13:15-52; 25:12; 25:1-23; 27:24; 28:23-28). Luke presents Saul not as a disciple of Jesus or a missionary by his own choice but as co-opted into the group of disciples by Jesus, who is exalted at God’s right hand (ὑψωθεὶς, Acts 2:33), to champion the cause of mission to the nations. Luke thus “constantly drives home the idea that Christ himself brought about the change of front” which leads to the Gentile mission, thus legitimating mission to the nations for the resistant reader. Haenchen captures it thus:

After this further reminder of the menace embodied by Saul, the reader cannot fail to appreciate the unprecedented transformation which Christ is bringing about and in which the errand of Ananias, now commanded forth, will also be instrumental. Has Saul come to persecute those who call on the Name of the Lord? Quite the reverse! He is a chosen instrument, destined to bear the Lord’s name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

Saul now has the title of ‘brother’ (Σαοῦλ ἀδελφός, v 17), suggesting that Ananias acknowledges that he is now ‘one of us’. Luke’s presentation of this conversion and call story of the main protagonist of the second half of Acts prepares the reader for the work of the Holy Spirit in

777 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 189.
opening the Gentile mission. Luke will not give Saul a mission without reference to the Spirit. Hence, consistent with his strategy, Ananias lays hands on Saul so that Saul might receive the Holy Spirit (see Acts 8:14-17). This recalls Moses’ laying of hands on Joshua as Joshua takes up the leadership of Israel (Deut 34:9). By Moses’ laying on of hands, Joshua received the Spirit of wisdom; and the Israelites obeyed him in the execution of his duties (Deut 34:9b). Mission in Luke-Acts is about to go to the Gentile territories; therefore Luke presents Saul, the chief protagonist of this mission, as one filled with the Holy Spirit who thereby follows divine inspiration and direction. In this way, Luke is calling on the resisting reader to accept respectfully and obediently this divinely inspired mission. Though there is no actual description of the coming of the Spirit upon Saul, the narrative depicts through Ananias’ speech that Saul, baptised and with sight restored, is filled with the Spirit and thus equipped as an inspired witness to Jesus. But much more than equipping Saul, the Spirit is presented as validating Saul to become Jesus’ witness (cf. Acts 1:8) and thus legitimating the path of the unfolding mission which Saul undertakes, while also empowering Saul to bear witness to Jesus. Hence, the reference to the Holy Spirit in this pericope, together with the other elements in the narrative, is a sign of assurance to the resisting reader that all is happening according to God’s plan. In Luke’s presentation, the same Spirit which operated in the OT, which anointed Jesus at the start of his mission (Luke 4:18); and which came upon the earlier disciples at the start of the mission in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4), has come upon Saul, the chief missionary to the nations, at the start of the mission to τὰ ἔθνη (Acts 9:15).

With the call and introduction of Saul as an instrument to the Gentiles, a new period in the mission narrative has begun – mission and ministry to the wider world. It will however, first start with Peter, who is head of the apostles – and a strategic figure in Luke’s narrative for maintaining the unity of the expanding network of churches.

---

780 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 189-190.
781 Hur, Dynamic Reading, 243, 244. See also Tannehill, Narrative Unity vol 2, 122, who asserts that ‘Saul has become not only a Christian but also a missionary through the preceding events.’ I note that Paul never actually uses the word ‘Christian’ of himself or other in his letters, but repeatedly refers to his call to be an apostle to the nations.
782 The encounter with the light, the voice, the blindness and healing and the vision.
6.4.2 The Cornelius episode (Acts 10:1-11:18)

This chapter of Acts narrates the story of how God takes the initiative in bestowing the Holy Spirit upon a Gentile centurion, Cornelius, and his household even while Peter was still addressing the whole household. In this way the mission to the Gentiles is formally inaugurated. What follows is an examination of the development of the story and how the Holy Spirit functions in the unfolding of the narrative plot.

i. A narrative of two visions (10:1-16).

Within the Cornelius’ episode Luke presents two distinct visions from two characters who are important for the Gentile mission. The first is Cornelius’ vision. Cornelius becomes representative of the fact that God accepts Gentiles as they are. The other vision is that of Peter. Peter, as the head of the apostolic college, becomes representative of repentant Jewish Christians who should not see Gentiles as unclean. Having presented the visions of these two characters, Luke draws the attention of the implied reader to the motivator of the mission – the Holy Spirit. Luke lets the reader know that the Holy Spirit is behind the entire vision and mission.


So important is Cornelius’ experience to Luke’s narrative that he reports about Cornelius’ spiritual condition three times (Acts 10: 2-3, 22, 37-38). In addition, like Cornelius, the others in his household are God-fearers (Acts 10:2).  

Luke begins the narrative by setting Cornelius’ vision within the context of prayer (ἐν ὀράματι...περὶ ὁραν ἐνάτην τῆς ἡμέρας, Acts 10:3) which is especially important in Luke for the reception of the Spirit (Luke 3:22; Acts 2:1-4; cf. 1:14; 9:11). For the observant reader this would be a point that the Gentiles are being prepared for the filling with the Holy Spirit.

At about three o’clock in the afternoon, Cornelius receives the vision of an angel of the Lord, who calls him by his name, Cornelius (Acts 10:3). In the Greco-Roman context, the sound of a name in passing is a sign from the gods. Also in Jewish tradition as in Isaiah 43:1, the Lord says “I have called you by your name, you are mine.” So from the start of the story Luke reminds the implied readers that God also knows the Gentiles by name; they are part of God’s agenda. This is the first step to overcoming resistance in this narrative – the resisting Jewish Christian readers – and the Gentile believers are also informed that the Gentiles are not aliens to God. Having made positive comments about Cornelius’ good works, the angel tells Cornelius to send people to Joppa for a certain Simon…Peter (Acts 10:4-5; see also v 22, 30b-32; 11:13-14). The angel acknowledges that Cornelius’ piety has been accepted and recognised by God as a memorial (μνημόσυνον Acts 10:4). This echoes OT language especially in Exodus 17:14 and Leviticus 2:2, 9, 16; 5:12, where such memorials are seen as “an offering made in

---


788 For Piety as a combination of prayer and almsgiving, see Tobith 12:8; Matt 6:2-6; 1 Pet 4:7-8.


791 Burkert, Greek Religion, 112.

792 Cornelius does not know Peter, and up till this time, the Christian community has not admitted any Gentile member to its community. Hence, the expression: “…for a certain Simon who is called Peter.” This might also be to differentiate Peter from Simon the tanner, his host.

793 This is the only occurrence of this term in the NT (conceptually, Mark 14:8). Bock, Acts, 387.
A commemoration to God that God accepts as pleasing (Rom 12:1-2; Phil 4:18; Heb 13:15-16). By this Luke indicates (especially for the resisting reader), that God is responding to Cornelius’ efforts to know God, and God is granting Cornelius ‘more light’. If God is open and welcoming to the Gentiles as they are, why would some Jewish Christians become resistant to the mission to τὰ ἔθνη as Luke has presented it? This becomes clearer towards the end of the narrative.

Cornelius obliges the angel’s demand without even knowing the reason he was to send for Peter (Acts 10:7-8). This shows that Cornelius acted in blind obedience to God, reminiscent of Abraham’s blind obedience to God in Genesis 12. Luke’s characterisation of Cornelius and this singular act of obedience prepares the reader’s mind to see that everything in the narrative conspires against maintaining a barrier between Jews and non-Jews.

The next scene shows Peter in prayer (v 9). At the time that Cornelius’ emissaries draw near, Peter goes to the rooftop to pray at the sixth hour. Peter’s vision, like that of Cornelius, takes place during the time of prayer. At the end of the prayer Peter is hungry and needs to eat (v 10a), preparing Peter in the narrative, and the hearing-reader, for the ensuing vision.

Peter falls into a trance (ἐκστασις, v 10b), a familiar experience to the Hellenistic reader. Peter sees the heaven open and an object from heaven like a sheet of linen (ὄθόνη) with “all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air” (vv 10-12; cf. Gen 1:24; Rom 1:23). The description of heaven opening points to a disclosure, recalling Jesus’ baptism (Luke 3:21; Acts 7:56). A voice from heaven commands Peter to rise (ἀναστάς), kill or sacrifice (θῦσον) and eat (φάγε). Peter objects to the command of the voice (which Peter acknowledges as coming from

---

796 Wilson, “Jew-Gentile Relations,” 91. Luke, however, later tells us that the angel gave Cornelius the reason why he was to send for Peter: that Peter will speak words by which he and his household will be saved (cf. 11:14).
798 Tannehill, Narrative Unity, vol. 2, 133.
800 Bock, Acts, 388.
the ‘Lord’), confessing that he had never eaten anything unclean. Luke employs two negatives, μηδαμῶς and οὐδέποτε which indicate an emphatic rejection of the suggestion. The reader, like Peter, initially may see this rejection as being obedient to God. However, the reply from the ‘voice’ contradicts that view: Peter is not to call unclean what God has made clean (vv 13-16). This comes out quite emphatically with Luke’s use of a pronoun plus a negative (σὺ μὴ) that matches Peter’s earlier refusal. Additionally, the present imperative, κοίνον (regard as common), means Peter is not to go on doing what he has been doing, that is, calling common such things that God has cleansed. This would probably be an eye-opener for those opposing Jewish Christians who regard the believers of ethnic origin as still unclean and unfit to be admitted into the Christian communities (cf. Acts 15:1-5). It also gives joy and gladness of heart to non-Jewish believers who know that God does not regard non-Jews as unclean. Haenchen sees this as a declaration of purity. Fitzmyer suggests that it symbolises “the abolition of Jewish dietary regulation for those of Gentile background, and also the abolition of the deeper distinction between Jews and non-Jews.” While acknowledging the positions of Haenchen and Fitzmyer, I argue that Luke uses this scene to convince Jewish believers in Jesus who are opposed to the Gentile mission and to affirm non-Jewish believers in their faith. The voice addressing Peter not to call κοίνον or ἀκαθαρτον what God has ἐκαθάρισεν (cleansed) indicates that the resisting reader is not to regard the Gentile Christian/mission as unfit in any way whatsoever (v 28). It is therefore not just about purity as suggested by Haenchen or simply about dietary requirements as Fitzmyer argues. It concerns the entire mission to ἡ ἔθνη as the voice of the Holy Spirit will indicate in verse 20.

While Peter is trying to fathom the meaning of the entire vision, the messengers from Cornelius arrive at the gate of the house where Peter is lodged. As Bock argues, the vision shows the

---

arrival of a new era. Luke wants the resisting reader to see that what separates Jews from Gentiles is now removed, as Peter will explain in verse 28. Peter is portrayed as a faithful Jewish believer who protests the initiative until he is convinced that God is speaking and God means what God says. God directs and confirms this effort to expand the message of salvation. This frees Peter (and the reader) from any scruples about going to a Gentile home and eating whatever might be set before him. This freedom of association and fellowship is what Luke wants to establish in the communities between Jewish and ethnic believers. Peter is still dumbfounded and confused about what is before him – God has declared ‘clean’ what Peter thought to be ‘unclean’; and now Gentiles are calling on him. What is he to do?

ii. The Holy Spirit addresses Peter (10:19-20)

Peter is bewildered as well as the reader (v 17). What next? Luke at this point introduces the Spirit who comes in to clear away the doubts. As the reader learns, initially, the voice was that of an angel (v 3), then a heavenly voice (vv 13-15), and now the Spirit speaks. It is God’s work and so the Spirit of God must be at work. Luke desires that there be no distinction between Jews and non-Jews, hence the Spirit speaks to the pondering Peter: “Rise and go down, accompany them without hesitation; for I have sent them” (εἰπεν αὐτῷ τὸ πνεῦμα, v 20). The Spirit tells Peter not to hesitate, doubt or discriminate (μηδὲν διακρινόμενος) about what’s going on (v 20). Earlier, the reader knows that Cornelius sent three men to Peter (vv 7b-8). Verse 20b however stresses that the Spirit sent these emissaries from Cornelius (ὅτι ἐγὼ ἀπέσταλκα αὐτούς; cf. 11:12). This is an important element in confirming the connections within the story – the Spirit sending the emissaries to fetch Peter for Cornelius. The reader now knows that (1), the Spirit has been behind both visions (2), has sent the emissaries from Cornelius to get Peter and (3), has exhorted Peter to go to Cornelius without hesitation or discrimination. The hesitant

806 Bock, Acts, 389. Barrett, The Acts of the Apostles, 509, rejects the view that the vision suggests a change to a new era, and instead asserts that the lack of distinction has always been in the mind of God. The evidence from the narrative however points to some Jewish Christians in the community discriminating against Gentile believers (Acts 11:1-3; 15:1-5) which Luke seeks to overcome and thereby create communities that work for both Jews and non-Jews equally. It is thus a new era, humanly speaking.


808 Bock, Acts, 390.


810 Bock, Acts, 391.
reader is thus invited to see the hand of God at work in the extension of mission to the wider world. Fitzmyer refers to it as heaven’s guidance moving the story a step further.\(^{811}\) At this point of the narrative, Luke lets the reader know that the Spirit is an authority with whom one should not argue, even though Peter (as the credible representative of Jewish believers in the narrative) has three times doubted and resisted the commands of the divine voice in the vision.\(^{812}\)

Peter as a devout Jew (with the rest of the apostles) would not have on his own thought of missionary activity among the Gentiles.\(^{813}\) In total obedience, however, Peter now ventures into new territory, just as Cornelius had in verses 7-8. As Wilson puts it, “were it not for the Spirit’s guidance for Peter to go with the men ‘doubting nothing,’ one doubts whether the visit of the envoys from Cornelius would have proceeded so peacefully.”\(^{814}\) Luke subsequently presents the Spirit-led actions of Peter, who now inquires what the messengers want of him (vv 21-23). Peter follows the Spirit’s command to “go with them without hesitation” and arrives at the house of Cornelius (vv 23b-33).\(^{815}\)

The introduction of the Spirit-command at this stage of the narrative becomes important for the narrator as he prepares the mind of the reader for the subsequent criticism and question (cf. Acts 11:3) that results from this initiative. Before the questioning and criticism, the reader knows two things: first, that Peter goes to the Gentiles in obedience to the Holy Spirit; and second, that the Holy Spirit had also sent the Gentile emissaries to fetch Peter. In this case, the narrator has presented a situation whereby both parties are acting in obedience to the Spirit. The evidence here suggests that the Spirit is more than just a reliable commentator as

\(^{814}\) Wilson, “Jew-Gentile Relations,” 92.
\(^{815}\) Peter’s opening remarks show clearly that he did not on his own desire to come down to the Gentile territory, or to associate with the Gentiles (because he thought it unlawful), but that he has come down based on the vision from God and the prompting of the Spirit. This is a clear narrative device to make it plain that God is demolishing the barrier which existed between Jews and Gentiles. Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles, 350, and f/n 4. In this way, Luke again is letting the implied reader know that the Gentile mission is initiated by God, and propelled by the Holy Spirit.
suggested by Shepherd, the Spirit has been employed as the endorsement and legitimator of the mission which is about to ensue.

iii. Peter at Cornelius’ house (10:34-48)

Cornelius, expecting the arrival of Peter and those he sent, gathers his relatives and close friends (v 24). The concept of a gathered ethnic assembly awaiting Peter’s arrival tells the implied reader that there is something significant about Peter’s trip to Caesarea (cf. Luke 24:33; Acts 2:1; 4:31; 8:17; 13:1-3; 19:1-6). For “rather than sending Cornelius from Caesarea to Joppa to inquire of Peter there, the Lord has so orchestrated events that Peter must leave the safe confines of a Jewish home in Joppa to visit the home of the Gentile centurion in Caesarea.”

Peter receives a warm welcome though he does not know why Cornelius sends for him. Peter lets the gathered guests (and by implication the reader) know how unusual the situation is for a Jew to associate with Gentiles – it is unlawful (ἀθέμιτον, v 28a). He quickly adds however: “But God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean” (v 28b).

In a recent article, Nicholas J. Schaser strongly argues against Peter’s statement in Acts 10:28 that: “it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.” While Schaser’s assertion

---

816 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 200.
820 Citing references from the OT (especially Jonah LXX and Deut 10:17-19) and the broader narrative of Acts 8-15 which alludes several times to divinely endorsed interaction between Jews and Gentiles, Schaser rightly contends that “Peter’s assertion about the supposed illegality of Jewish relations with non-Jews contradicts the Lukan view that it has always been lawful for Jews to associate with Gentiles” (Schaser, “Unlawful for a Jew,” 188). Schaser is also right to point out that “in Acts 10, Luke’s God has not ‘restructured the world’ so that non-Jews can finally repent” (Schaser, “Unlawful for a Jew,” 193). However, his line of reasoning that the Spirit’s intrusion into Peter’s speech in the Cornelius’ event rules out Peter’s role as an apostle to the nations (and necessitates Paul’s takeover of the Gentile mission) undervalues the legitimating role of the Spirit in the narrative of Luke-Acts (see for instance Acts 10:19). In my view, the presence of the Spirit in the Cornelius narrative as in other texts throughout Luke-Acts, affirms the legitimacy of this mission to the nations, rather than portraying Peter’s inadequacy for the task. At the narrative level in Luke-Acts, Peter acts as the bridge and unifier between Jewish and Gentile missions, and not as a negative example or as opposition to Paul.
may be right on one level that Acts 10:28a “is not a statement of fact that Luke endorses,” 821 he overstates his argument when he maintains that “it reflects a level of Petrine ignorance that the evangelist uses to exclude the apostle from activity among the nations;” and that “Luke presents Peter’s rooftop vision in terms that reflect deficient discipleship.” 822 Schaser seem not to have considered the Cornelius episode in the light of the whole Lukan narrative, nor the particular social implications of the law. It is true that Luke does not consider it unlawful for Jews to have contact with Gentiles; this and more is what Luke has been trying to convey right from the start of the gospel, that Gentiles have always been part of God’s plan and purpose (Luke 2:32; 4:25-27; 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2:39; 28:28 and so on). 823 But for circumcised Jews to enter and stay ‘several days’ (10:48, eating ‘Gentile food’) in a Roman centurion’s house in a city (Caesarea Maritima) where there was a Temple honouring the Emperor, is pushing the limits of Jewish tolerance if not the Law itself. The narrator uses the vision of Peter (and the command to eat) to show that ethnic hospitality and food are ongoing problems for devout Jewish believers amongst the Gentile faith communities (as also shown by the expressions ‘idol meat’, ‘blood’, and ‘strangled’ in Acts 15:29), and these represent continuing issues that limit the inclusion of, and engagement with τὰ ἔθνη in the early churches. As we have seen, Luke alludes to these issues already in the gospel (cf. Luke 4:25-30) and continues to point it out in the Acts narrative (see for instance Acts 11:1-3; 15:1-5). 824 Also, James’ statement in Acts 15:19 that “we should not trouble those of the nation who turn to God…” points to situations of tension and conflict in the communities that Luke addresses. Here, there is a clear indication of ‘we’ and ‘them’. 825 It is for the same reason that Luke does not endorse the unlawfulness of Jewish fellowship with the nations that this narrative (Acts 10:1-48) addresses every trace of resistance to social intercourse between members of the Lukan communities with a view to overcoming the doubting and resisting members. Thus, while the Cornelius’ account may not be about

---

822 Schaser, “Unlawful for a Jew,” 198.
823 As White shows, the phrase πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔλεγχοι ἐκ μακράν (all who are far off) in Acts 2:39 is an idiom for the nations observed elsewhere (cf. Isa 57:19; Acts 13:33; Eph 2:13, 17). Aaron White, “Reading Inclusion Backwards,” 210.
824 Cf. also White, “Reading Inclusion Backwards,” 205, who shows that some Jewish Christians objected to Gentiles becoming Christians who were not associated with the synagogue and not subjected to the law of Moses.
Jewish-Gentile relations in general, it addresses the tensions and conflicts in relationship and hospitality in the Lukan communities between some Jewish and ethnic followers of Jesus. The Cornelius’ narrative therefore is a clear indication, not just for Peter but also for resisting Jewish believers in Jesus who regard their ethnic counterparts as unclean or common (cf. Acts 11:1-3), to overcome such attitudes and extend a warm hand of fellowship (cf. Acts 11:17-18). Peter who is the leader of the apostles is shown to have given a good example by not discriminating, hence he says “when I was sent for, I came without questioning” (ἀναντιρρήτως, v 29). This shows that Peter has overcome the initial hesitation and resistance so typical in the communities that Luke is addressing (cf. Acts 15:1-5), and constitutes a call to obviate any shades of resistance to Gentile inclusion in the communities, and also to Jewish participation in Gentile communities of faith.

From the guests gathered Luke implies that the Christian faith in Caesarea finds a footing not with a single person but with a recognised community who wait patiently for what the Lord has commanded Peter to say. For this reason, Cornelius acknowledges that “we all are present before God” (v 33). The narrative thus builds up a sense of expectation both with the guests and the implied readers.

Luke introduces Peters’ sermon with the solemn expression ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα (opening the mouth, v 34), which suggests that what Peter is about to say is inspired and very important. Peter emphasises the universality of mission which prepares the reader for the following event. Also his expression ἐπὶ ἀληθείας καταλαμβάνομαι (in truth I perceive, v 34) indicates gaining an insight into some hidden truth. This insight, Luke unveils by using language such as: “...God shows no partiality” (προσωπολήμπτης, v 34); “…in every nation anyone who fears him... is acceptable to him” (ἐν παντὶ ἔθνει, v 35); “...Jesus is Lord of all” (πάντων κύριος, v 36); Jesus who was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power (v 38; cf. Isa 61:1; Luke 4:18); and, “all the prophets testify... that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness...” (πάντα τὸν

---

826 This is a phrase used to introduce some weighty utterance (Job 3:1; Matt 5:2; Acts 8:35; 18:14). It is a solemn formula and it portrays the importance of the moment and also the fact that what Peter has to say is inspired by the Lord (cf. v 33). See Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles, 338; Fitzmyer, The Acts of the Apostles, 462; Bonnah, Narrative Factor, 191.
πιστεύοντα, v 43). From Peter’s speech the reader knows that God makes no discrimination in admitting people to salvation; that there is no racial barrier to salvation. Luke informs the hearing-reader that “salvation does not remain a prerogative of Israel or the Jews, since God is not προσωπολήμπτης. But as with the situation of Acts 2, the work of salvation has an emphatically universal tone.” As Wilson argues, if then

People from every nation stand equally before one God, then that God’s work in Jesus Christ cannot be confined to a particular people or region. In this way, the universality of God’s presence in every nation becomes a springboard of Peter’s declaration of the universal lordship of Jesus for Jews and Gentile alike.

While Peter is still speaking (ἐτι λαλοῦντος τοῦ Πέτρου), the Spirit interrupts the speech and falls “upon all who heard the word” (v. 44; cf. 8:16; 11:15). "Επέπεσεν...ἐπὶ πάντας (fell upon all) suggests that it is not only Cornelius who receive the Spirit, but everyone present, his entire household; everyone hearing the word. Again, Schaser misses the point when he suggests that the Holy Spirit interrupts Peter in order to indicate the redundancy of Peter’s new pro-Gentile outlook, and that this interruption bolsters Luke’s argument that Peter is not the appropriate Jewish representative to the nations. Schaser does not seem to realise that the bestowal of the Spirit upon the followers of Jesus earlier (Acts 2:1-4; 8:14-17) and also later (Acts 19:1-6) indicates the presence of God, and hence, the approval of mission. Thus even here, the Spirit’s interruption of Peter and falling upon this audience of ethnic background suggests divine approval of Peter’s mission among the nations. As Thiessen rightly remarks, but perhaps understandably overstates,

829 Wilson, “Jew-Gentile Relations,” 94.
830 Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles, 340, proposes that Peter’s address had in reality come to an end; and that the alleged interruption (through the coming of the Spirit) is an element of the author’s art. However a literal reading of the interruption of the coming of the Spirit also make sense, for it shows God’s urgent intervention to bring God’s purpose and wishes to effect. Bonnah, Narrative Factor, 194. As Bonnah indicates, even if this is special art, it is a special art with a special purpose: to show that it is God who calls Cornelius and his household to salvation.
832 Schaser, “Unlawful for a Jew,” 196-197. We might suggest that the interruption indicates the urgency, even the impatience of the Spirit to do what humans are slow to recognise, but the slow faithfulness of Peter still provides the opportunity for the legitimation of these events by God, and connects the narrative back to the earlier signs of this in Philip and the eunuch (and to the gospel itself), and forwards to the mission of Barnabas, Paul, and others.
Luke intends for his readers to understand that the Gentiles’ reception of the Spirit and their ability to repent are formerly unanticipated possibilities. Only the presence of the Spirit in their midst could serve as evidence that God had restructured the world so that Gentiles could do these things. This is a shocking development within human history.\(^{833}\)

The participle ἀκούοντας τὸν λόγον thus indicates a situation whereby in the future everyone hearing the word is also open to receiving the Spirit (See Acts 19:5-6; cf. vv 42-43).

As the Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit, the Jews are amazed (ἐξέστησαν) that the gift of the Spirit is poured out on the Gentiles as well (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21).\(^{834}\) The Jewish Christians are amazed because until now in the narrative, only Jewish converts have been reported to have received the Spirit. This is the first report of an outpouring of the Spirit on non-Jews. Thus, as the reader now knows, this reception of the Spirit by the Gentiles shows that the preaching of the word of God among the Gentiles has the same effect as it had among Jews earlier.\(^{835}\) God indeed shows no partiality. In Bock’s words, “By recording the amazement of the Jews that the Spirit has fallen on Gentiles, a promise traced throughout Luke-Acts reappears (Luke 3:15-17; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:16-41; 11:15-17; 15:8).”\(^{836}\) The words ἡ δωρεά (gift) and καί (also) direct the reader to Luke’s Pentecost report which references the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38), a promise for everyone (Acts 2:39).\(^{837}\) Bruce refers to this (the Cornelius episode) as the “Pentecost of the Gentile world.”\(^{838}\)

The Jewish Christians are not only amazed, they also testify to the pneumatic phenomenon of tongues and praise among the Gentiles just as had happened among the Jewish Christians (v 46; cf. 2:1-4; 4:3; 8:17). This helps to settle the question of Gentile baptism and inclusion. The

---

\(^{833}\) Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 139. Again, I hesitate to emphasise the ‘shocking development’ language, since the narrator has repeatedly shown that the dimensions and signs of this development are already present in the Jewish scriptures and in the life and ministry of Jesus in the gospel.

\(^{834}\) ἐξέστησαν appears in several key passages in Luke-Acts and denotes a reaction to what is taking place: Acts 2:7, 12 (to the coming of tongues); 8:9, 11, 13 (to the work of Philip and Simon); 9:21 (to Paul’s preaching Christ after having persecuted the church); 12:16 (to Peter’s escape from prison). Interestingly, the reaction at the first Pentecost in 2:12 matches that of 10:45. Bock, Acts, 400.


\(^{836}\) Bock, Acts, 400.

\(^{837}\) Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 76.

rhetorical question in verse 47 addresses the believers present and by implication the wider resisting group of Jewish Christian readers: “Can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” Peter’s argument for baptising the Gentiles is based on the reception of the Spirit. Here again, Luke has used the Holy Spirit to justify “the unexpected action of God in accepting the Gentiles as equal members of the community, as demonstrated by the same kind of inspired speech which the first Christians experienced.”

The gospel is gradually being taken “to the ends of the earth” (cf. Acts 1:8). As Shelton summarises it, the ministry of Peter here,

was a strategic event in the advancement of the gospel; it provided divine precedence for Gentile participation in the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit confirmed that indeed a vital shift had taken place in the mission when the Holy Spirit descended upon the house-hold of Cornelius even as the Spirit had fallen on the Jewish church at Pentecost (10:47).

The implied reader now sees that the Spirit falling upon the earlier Jewish Christians inaugurated the church’s mission which began in Jerusalem. The same Spirit falling upon the Gentiles with the same pneumatic phenomenon of tongues and praise now inaugurates and legitimates the church’s mission to the Gentile world; that is, the inclusion of non-Jews into the fellowship of believers in Jesus. It is one and the same mission. Hence to oppose one is to oppose the other.

iv. Peter’s defence in Jerusalem (11:1-18)

Luke’s presentation in Acts 11:1-18 suggests that Luke intends the Cornelius’ episode to serve in legitimating the mission to the nations. Explicitly, the pericope (11:1-18) appears to be the foundation for Peter’s self-justification in Jerusalem before the circumcised believers (v 1).
Implicitly, however, it is a narrative device aimed at overcoming wider Jewish Christian resistance to the Gentile mission, and at the same time justifying and legitimating mission to the Greco-Roman world. It also serves to confirm for Gentile believers that the Spirit is behind the mission to the nations, a source of great joy and motivation for the Gentile Christians. Thus, Peter in his report to the church at Jerusalem presents a step by step justification for this Gentile mission.

Luke divides this pericope into three segments. First, the Jerusalem church learns that some Gentiles have accepted the word of God, and apparently that the Holy Spirit fell upon them too (v 1). Some of these Jewish believers criticise Peter for going to ‘uncircumcised men’ and eating with them (vv 2-3). This is like questioning the entire Gentile mission which Luke has been carefully preparing for right from the start of the gospel.\(^{842}\) The question itself, like those of Luke 1:34; Acts 1:6 and 2:37, is a narrative opening for Luke’s justification of mission among non-Jews. Thus, the stage is set for Luke to present the case for the justification and legitimation of the Gentile mission. This gives way to the Petrine argument, the second stage of the pericope.

Peter begins his presentation by making references to the vision of Acts 10:9-16 (11:4-10). The church listens attentively; the reader hears/reads in anticipation. Peter reiterates his resistance to associating with anything unclean, but three times ‘the voice’ answered him: “what God has cleansed you must not call common” (vv 9-10). Luke wants the resisting readers at this point to see themselves in opposition to God’s initiative. Peter gives strength to his argument when he recounts the direct intervention of the Spirit as reason for going with the emissaries from Cornelius: the “Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us” (vv 11-12).\(^{843}\) The reader now understands that it was not just the vision that made Peter go

---

\(^{842}\) Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 354, argues that the accusation is directed only at table fellowship and that Luke does not make the Jerusalem congregation protest openly against the baptism of the Gentiles. However, a reading of 10:47 and 11:17 suggests that the accusation included the whole of the Gentile mission and its implications. While 10:47 describes those who stand in opposition to Gentiles being baptised, 11:17 indicates a hindering of God, which Peter would not want to be part of, having overcome his own resistance on the basis of his earlier vision.

\(^{843}\) This differs from Peter’s earlier pastoral visit to the Saints in Lydda, which was a personal initiative. See Acts 9:32-35.
with the messengers from Cornelius, it was the command of the Spirit who ordered Peter to go, and not to make a distinction. Peter also refers to the angel of the Lord who appeared to Cornelius, which means that God has made Godself known to this Gentile (vv 13-14). Furthermore, Peter makes another reference to the Spirit in verse 15, where he testifies that Cornelius and household received the Holy Spirit while he was still speaking. The reference here stresses the fact that the experience of the Gentile community and those of the Jerusalem church in regards to the Spirit reception were identical. This assertion is strengthened by the use of ὀσπερ καὶ in verse 15: ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγιόν ἐπὶ αὐτοὺς ὀσπερ καὶ ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ἐν ἀρχῇ. It is this identical experience of the Holy Spirit by both Jewish and ethnic believers in Jesus that will prove to be the ground for the admission of τὰ ἔθνη into the communities of the followers of Jesus (see Acts 15). This testimony proves to the doubting reader and the Jerusalem church that the Gentile church has received the same gift, the Holy Spirit, that the earlier disciples received (v 17; cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:38, 39). Peter interprets this as baptism with the Holy Spirit (v 16). Just as the Jerusalem church ended their criticism of Peter with a question, so also Peter ends his explanation with a question: “If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?” (v 17).

From Peter’s speech then, the reader understands that “God has not merely modified kitchen and dining room regulations, but has offered ‘even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life’ (Acts 11:18).” By this appeal to the gift of God’s Spirit to Gentiles as well as Jews, the Gentile believers are reassured of their place in the plan of God, and the Jewish Christian is called upon to desist from opposing this mission to the nations.

---

844 Peter’s explanation shows that the reception of the Spirit by the Gentiles is God’s initiative just as had happened in Acts 2. In Acts 8 and 19, the Samaritans and the Ephesians respectively receive the Spirit by the laying of hands.
845 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 204. So also Hur, Dynamic Reading, 248; Tannehill, Narrative Unity, 143; Esler, Community, 136, 142.
846 Shepherd, Narrative Function, 203.
The third segment of this pericope is the reaction of the apostles and the Jerusalem church after listening to Peter. Luke states that “they were silenced” (ἡσύχασαν) and then they began to praise God (v 18). As Haenchen observes, “Peter’s opponents hold their peace and recognise that God has now admitted the Gentiles to the community – and hence to the way of salvation implied in μετάνοια εἰς ζωήν – without their first having to become Jews.”\(^{847}\) It can therefore be said that “for those Jewish-Christians in Acts 11 that questioned Peter concerning the conversion of Cornelius’ household, it was the divine initiation via the Holy Spirit that convinced them.”\(^{848}\) This is what Luke wants from the resisting reader: first to overcome every resistance to mission to non-Jews; and second, to welcome mission as Luke has presented it in the narrative, thereby accepting Gentile Christians as they are. In this pericope as elsewhere, Luke appeals to the legitimating role of the Spirit to achieve this.

From the evidence at our disposal, it can be deduced that the narrative has been constructed to overcome some Jewish Christian resistance to the wider non-Jewish mission and also encourage Gentile Christians in their faith. Luke emphasises the role and power of the Holy Spirit in the compiling of this narrative. With a threefold reference to the Spirit Luke asserts the justification and legitimation of the mission to τὰ ἔθνη. First, the Spirit asked Peter to go with Cornelius’ envoys (Acts 11:12); second, the Spirit came upon the Gentiles even while Peter was still speaking (Acts 11:15) which recalls and fulfills the words of John the Baptist about being baptised with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:16); and third, if the Gentile church has received the same gift of God (the Spirit) that the Jewish church received earlier, who then is to be a hindrance to the path of Gentile salvation (Acts 11:17). Arguing thus, it becomes clear that Luke employs the Spirit, amongst other authorities, to legitimate the Gentile mission as he has in the legitimation of mission generally in the narrative. It is in fact the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which eventually justifies the baptism of Gentiles and the entire Gentile mission. This thesis thus argues that the role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts is not just for narrative reliability or simply an empowerment for mission as some earlier scholars have suggested. Luke also employs the


\(^{848}\) White, “Reading Inclusion Backwards,” 205.

In summary the Cornelius episode reveals that while some Jewish believers questioned the admission of Gentiles into the church (Acts 10:14, 28, 47; 11:2, 8, 17), God welcomed the Gentiles into the Christian communities (Acts 10:3, 11-16, 22, 30; 11:5-10, 13). In Luke’s presentation the Holy Spirit is God’s legitimating agent of Gentile entry into the church (Acts 10:19, 20, 44, 47; 11:12, 15-16, 17). While the active presence of the Spirit among Gentiles helps overcome Jewish Christians opposed to the Gentile mission, it also reassures Gentile believers and affirms their faith. Luke now portrays a church which began with Jews, and that has opened its doors to non-Jews under the direction of God by means of the Holy Spirit.849

6.4.3 The Church in Antioch (Acts 13:1-4)

From this moment the narrative opens up to describing the Gentile mission freely and the Holy Spirit is very active in the mission among the Gentiles. Barnabas is sent to Antioch, for he is a “good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith” (Acts 11:22-24; cf. 4:31-37; also Luke 23:50; Acts 6:5). By this recommendation, Luke shows that Barnabas’ participation in the Antiochan mission is prompted by the Holy Spirit.850 This further indicates Luke’s portrayal of the divine approval of the mission to τὰ ἔθνη. The reader also learns that both Barnabas and Paul are in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26), preparing the implied reader for the narrative in Acts 13 and onwards, where Paul becomes the chief spokesperson. From Acts 13, the reader realises that the ministry of Paul among the nations dominates the narrative and that the Holy Spirit will be seen to be in full action.

Both Paul and Barnabas are listed among a group of prophets and teachers in the Antiochan church (Acts 13:1) where a wider mission is about to begin. Consistent with his technique, Luke describes the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit instructs the church to “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). This is another instance where the Holy Spirit speaks in first person (cf. Acts 10:20). Luke presents the context

849 See Turner, Power from on High, 378.
as one of prayer and fasting. This alerts the intended reader to the fact that the community is at this point withdrawn from the influence of the world, and completely dependent upon the divine. Therefore, Luke quotes the Spirit who “said,” (εἶπεν τὸ πνεῦμα ἅγιον) to set apart (ἀφορίσατε) for “me” (μοι) Barnabas and Saul for the work (εἰς τὸ ἔργον) to which “I” have called them (δ ἐν προσκλήματι αὐτοῦ). The use of the first person, “me” and “I” gives emphasis to the voice of the Spirit, strengthened by the imperative ἀφορίσατε (set apart). Ordinarily, it is one of the prophets who would speak such words at the direction of the Spirit (cf. Acts 11:28 – Agabus), but here Luke shields the human agency in order to project the direct command of the Spirit.851 The reader learns that the mission which follows is initiated by the Holy Spirit, just like Peter’s mission to Cornelius’ house (Acts 10). Any resistance to this mission is resistance to the ἔργον of the Holy Spirit (work, cf. Acts 13:2).

Luke stresses further in verse 4 that it is the Holy Spirit who in actual fact sends Barnabas and Saul on mission from Antioch. At Paphos, a certain magician, Elymas, proves to be a hindrance to this work of the Holy Spirit by seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith (Acts 13:6-8). Luke reiterates that Saul now called Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit (πλησθεὶς πνεύματος ἅγιον, Acts 13:9; cf. Acts 4:8; 7:55), like the earlier disciples, and refutes Elymas’ resistance. The resistance of Elymas qualifies him to be referred to as “full of all deceit and villainy” (ὁ πλήρης παντὸς δόλου καὶ πάσης ῥαδιουργίας), “son of the devil” (ὑιὸς διαβόλου), and “enemy of all righteousness” (ἐχθρὲς πάσης δικαιοσύνης, Acts 13:10). His acts of resistance are interpreted as “making crooked the straight paths of the Lord” (Acts 13:11). This is a similar rebuke to what ‘the voice’ said to Peter about “not calling common what the Lord has cleansed” (Acts 10:15). Here Luke brings to the awareness of the resisting reader that every form of resistance to this mission is in fact standing in the way of the Lord’s initiative. This revelation is made possible by the inspiration of Paul who is filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:9), and is a clarion call to resisting Jewish Christians to overcome their doubts about non-Jewish mission. From this point Paul addresses both Israelites and God-fearers (Acts 13:16, 26) so that everyone who believes is set free (Acts 13:39), for the mission is to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:47). The Christian

community in Pisidia is now addressed as disciples filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:52). Luke informs the implied reader that the Christian mission is truly expanding to Gentile territories and the Holy Spirit is confirming this expansion at each step.\(^{852}\) It is clear that the presence of the Holy Spirit at each stage of this expansion signals the approval of God and thus legitimates this mission of the church.

**6.4.4 The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:6-35)**

With the expansion of the church into Gentile territories some further issues regarding the keeping of the law, especially the law of circumcision, begin to arise. While some of the Jewish believers insist on the Christians of ethnic background keeping the law (Acts 15:1, 5), Paul and Barnabas think otherwise (Acts 15:2). The matter is referred to the church in Jerusalem. Once again, Luke (apparently) recalls the Cornelius episode (cf. Acts 10:44-47; 11:4-18) by having Peter address the gathering of the apostles and the elders (Acts 15:6). Peter appeals to the reception of the Holy Spirit by Gentiles as a mark of the legitimation of mission to the nations. He argues that if God “gave them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us” then God makes no distinction between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 15:8-9; cf. v 11).\(^{853}\) Making any further demand on the Gentiles, in Peter’s interpretation, is putting God on trial (νῦν οὖν τι πειράζετε τὸν θεόν, v 10). With this argument, once again, Peter silences the “whole assembly” (Acts 15:12). Similarly, Luke proves through the exegesis of James that Gentile believers are to be included in the Christian communities without circumcision (Acts 15:15-18).\(^{854}\) Though the question here is the observance of the law of Moses and circumcision (Acts 15:1-5), the context shows that what is ultimately at stake is the mission to the Gentile world.\(^{855}\)

---


\(^{853}\) White, “Reading Inclusion Backwards,” 211.

\(^{854}\) White, “Reading Inclusion Backwards,” 205.

\(^{855}\) Bonnah, *Narrative Factor*, 367.
Luke invokes the legitimating agency of the Holy Spirit in the apostolic letter to the Gentile communities after the Jerusalem council. In Acts 15:22, the implied narrator writes that: “then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders with the whole church” to send people together with Barnabas and Paul with a letter to the Gentile community. In verse 25, the composer of the letter indicates that “it has seemed good to us in the assembly,” apparently referring to the council members in verse 22. Just before the council’s proposal and the key terms of the document are made known to the Gentile community, the composer of the letter mentions a third “it seems good.” This time, the use of γὰρ (for) gives the expression an emphatic meaning. Moreso, another character is introduced into the list of the authorities who approve what is about to be read out, except that this character by being named first is given pre-eminence and prominence. Hence, Luke writes: ἔδωξεν γὰρ τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν (Acts 15:28). The letter is addressed to the Gentile community, who now manifests the presence of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 13:52) and will be very pleased that the Holy Spirit approves the recommendation for them. This is also a call for every resistant Jewish reader to realise that the recommendations have the approval of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. Lampe suggests that ἔδωξεν γὰρ τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν means “the Holy Spirit, by coming upon the Gentiles, made it clear to ‘us’ that we ought not to impose such a burden upon the converts; and we therefore testify to what the Spirit has thus shown to be the right.” This is like saying if anyone is to blame in this endeavour, it is God in the Spirit. For Conzelmann, it “is a concession that enables Jewish-Christians to live with Gentile Christians, and particularly to


have table fellowship.” Hence every well meaning Jewish Christian reader realises that to continue to resist this mission is to continue to resist God’s work and initiative.

White argues that “the Decree is best understood as a Lukan re-reading, or construal, of Leviticus 17-19, ‘the law of the resident alien’.” Although White does not use the term, this is what legitimation means. For as Watts avows, such ancient texts “have the unique property of appearing to ‘speak’ from the distant past,” and so provide a public means of validating the accuracy of local traditions. White thus reads correctly when he proposes that “Luke reads Leviticus 17-19 and appropriates this portion of the law as a blue-print of the life of one eschatological and multi-ethnic church made up of two associate peoples.” This is also supported by James’ citation of Amos 9:11-12 to buttress his argument that the inclusion of τὰ ἔθνη has long been within God’s plan (see Acts 15:16-17). David Kelsey is correct in observing that:

> When a theologian appeals to scripture to help authorise a theological proposal, he appeals, not just to some aspect of scripture, but to a pattern characteristically exhibited by that aspect of scripture, and in virtue of that pattern, he construes the scripture to which he appeals as some kind of whole.

Luke first draws attention to the Jewish scriptures, and secondly engages the Holy Spirit to strengthen scriptural authority, thereby reinforcing the justification for his case. In this way, Luke gives credence and legitimation to this all-important written document about the Gentile mission by reference to the Holy Spirit; a document which carries with it a firm tone of authority. Witherington rightly argues that “the invoking of the Holy Spirit means that the words have divine sanction and so should be readily obeyed.” Pervo also asserts that the “…to the Holy Spirit and to us” reflects confidence that their resolution was guided by the

---

861 White, “Reading Inclusion Backwards,” 203.
863 White, “Reading Inclusion Backwards,” 203.
Spirit. For Polhill, “the overall impression left by the letter is that the Jerusalem leaders are making every effort to communicate in an authoritative form and fashion that would be well received by the Greek-speaking Christians in Antioch.” I also content that Luke’s use of the Spirit in this context appeals to both the esteemed place of the Spirit of God in the Jewish scriptures and the revered space of the Gentile’s spiritual experiences. This gives the apostolic document divine authority for both Gentile and Jewish believers. It is reasonable then to say that this letter invites Jewish Christians opposed to the Gentile mission to recognise and accept the Holy Spirit at work and desist from opposing this mission, and also exhorts the ethnic believers to accept the essential ethical recommendations. Hence, while the letter is addressed to the Gentile community in Antioch, it also speaks to and addresses resisting Jewish Christians that certain burdens should not be laid on their Gentile counterparts. In other words, let the Gentiles be Gentiles as they make their way into the church, and as Luke indicates, the Holy Spirit endorses this decision. If this resolution thus pleases the Holy Spirit, the hesitant reader is placed in a tight corner – they either accepts the decision of the Holy Spirit or be found to oppose the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 7:51). This use of the Holy Spirit is similar to Acts 5:32 where the Holy Spirit is a witness alongside the apostles. So it is that in Acts 15 Luke lets the hearing-reader know that the Holy Spirit gives approval to the decision alongside the council members. The Holy Spirit here does not only legitimate the authority of the apostles and the Jerusalem church, but also legitimates the written document of the council (for both Jewish and Gentile Christians) which is important for the mission in this fourth phase – the mission to the wider world.

6.4.5 The community in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7)

In Acts 19:1 Luke records the arrival of Paul in Ephesus and his meeting with some disciples there. Paul enquires whether the disciples received the Holy Spirit when they became believers (v 2a). Luke is not concerned about what prompted Paul’s question; he simply notes the ignorance of these disciples concerning the Holy Spirit (v 2b). Paul subsequently catechizes

867 Pervo, Acts, 382.
them (v 4) and they are baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus (v 5). Paul then lays his hands on them and “the Holy Spirit (comes) upon them,” effecting tongues and prophecy (v 6). The number of those who received the Spirit here is “about twelve.”870 This is reminiscent of Acts 8:17 where Peter laid hands on some Samaritans and they received the Holy Spirit. In Shelton’s argument, since this Spirit visitation resulted in tongues and prophecy, the purpose of the Spirit’s reception would have been for effective witnessing.871 This may well have been an immediate outcome of the bestowal of the Spirit leading to effective witnessing in compliance with Acts 1:8, but for the hearing-reader it is a continuation of the Lukan technique for legitimating yet another advance in the mission of the church. Again, this challenges any opposition from those who are resistant to mission in non-Jewish territories, and confirms for Gentile believers that God (through the Spirit) is in their midst affirming their faith. It shows the Spirit being manifest itself continuously in the diversely ethnic churches, as a sure sign of God’s continuous approval.

The reader later realises in Acts 20:28 that it is the Spirit that appoints leaders among the Ephesians. While Peter asks for Spirit-filled people to be put in-charge of the Hellenistic food distribution in Acts 6, here Luke shows that the Holy Spirit placed overseers (ἐπισκόπους) to shepherd the church of God (ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ). The reference to the “church which the Lord obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28) clearly tells the reader that this Ephesian’ church has always been part of the redemptive work of the Lord. As Paul addresses these elders, he lets them know that the Holy Spirit has made them overseers of the flock, to shepherd the church of God. This is another instance where the Spirit is actively involved in the selection of the missionaries/leaders (cf. Acts 13:2, 4), and the reader knows that both instances are in the wider Gentile church.

871 Shelton, Mighty in Word and Deed, 135.
6.4.6 Paul’s speech in Rome (Acts 28:1ff)

As the narrative in Acts eventually relates, not only has the gospel come to the Gentiles, it has also come to Rome, “the capital of the civilized world at that time.” Consistent with the Lukan theme of the Spirit legitimating mission to the wider world, Luke makes one final reference to the Holy Spirit.


By appealing to the Holy Spirit in this way, Luke “affirms that what is said in scripture represents the voice of the Holy Spirit, not merely a human opinion,” and so is still very relevant and applicable to God’s people. This Jewish audience in Acts 28 proved headstrong and obstinate in fulfilling the words that the Spirit spoke through Isaiah. Subsequently Paul declares, “This salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen” (Acts 28:28; cf. Luke 2:30-32; 3:6). It is fair to say that Luke cites the Isaiah text to prepare for verse 28 where the reader is told one more time that salvation is to be proclaimed to Gentiles. Luke’s reference to the Holy Spirit as having spoken those words through the prophet again informs the resisting reader that the mission to the Gentiles has always been part of God’s design. Luke thus admonishes the readers who oppose this design in order to overcome their resistance.

876 Hur, Dynamic Reading, 268.
According to Holladay, “Luke sees the Christian mission to Jews as finished, probably hopeless....”\textsuperscript{877} It should be noted, however, that the “salvation of God sent to the Gentiles...”does not mean a final turning away from the Jews and a permanent turning to the Gentiles only (cf. Acts 13:46; 18:6 where Paul made a similar comment, but continued to speak to his fellow Jews). Rather, it suggests that the next step which would be followed when the Jews reject the gospel in a particular place would be to focus on evangelizing the Gentiles.\textsuperscript{878} This is why even though the mission in Rome has been extended to the nations, Acts 28:30 makes it clear that everyone (πάντας, all) is welcome to hear and accept the message.

Jesus’ mission proclaimed in Luke 4 finds support from an Isaianic pneumatic citation in Isaiah 61. As Luke draws the narrative of the church’s mission to a close it is fitting that Luke supports this mission with another pneumatic text from Isaiah. From both ends the active presence and direction of the Holy/Spirit of God signals God’s approval of mission as Luke presents it in the communities. The reader who opposes the mission of the church to all ethnic groups opposes the Spirit of God. While the resisting Jewish believer is called upon to overcome every opposition to this world-wide mission, the believer of ethnic origin are encouraged to stand firm in the faith. In both cases, references to the Spirit of God provide the legitimating authority.

\textbf{6.5 Summary and conclusion}

This chapter has explored the roles played by the Holy Spirit especially in Acts with the intent of asserting that Luke employed the Spirit to overcome resistance to the Church’s mission, especially mission to non-Jews, and to support and encourage Gentile believers in their acceptance of the faith. As observed, Luke began by appealing to the Spirit from the first chapter of Acts. Luke informs the hearing-reader that Jesus instructed the church by means of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2). This same Spirit came upon the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4), commissioning believers as witnesses in Jerusalem and its environs (Acts 1:8). At the appointed time, the same Spirit came upon the ethnic community (Acts 10:44) just as it happened with

\textsuperscript{877} Holladay, “Acts,” 1024.
the Jerusalem community earlier in the narrative. This is Luke’s chief argument – a chain of analogous events that widen the scope of God’s mission. Three times, Luke lets the reader know that the same Spirit that came upon the Jerusalem church also came upon the Gentile church with the same effects (Acts 10:47; 11:17; 15:8). Luke’s point is very clear – if the Jewish mission is legitimate by reason of the presence of the Spirit’s activity, then the Gentile mission is equally legitimate for the same reason. In Acts 1:8 Jesus makes it clear that the reception of the Spirit confers the power for witnessing. This is the case in both missions – among the Jews as well as among the nations. As it was noted in chapter two, some Jewish Christians resisted the non-Jewish mission. Luke in Acts informs the reader that the Spirit is the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4; 2:39; cf. Luke 24:49); the gift of God (Acts 2:38; 11:17); and the power from on high (Acts 1:8; cf. Luke 24:49 and 1:35). All these affirmations, for the resisting Jewish reader, recall OT times when God promised the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28; cf. Isa 44:3; Ezek 39:29), and Isaiah’s language of “Spirit from on high” (Isa 32:15). For the Gentile reader, the description of Spirit manifestations recall the varied and numerous spirit-related experiences in the Greco-Roman context. In Luke’s argument, since the Spirit is active in both the mission in Jerusalem and its environs and in the Gentile mission, the Spirit is testimony that one and all are legitimate missions. In the final analysis, Luke informs the hearing-reader that in the event of continued opposition, the mission is going to the Gentiles under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Acts 28:28).

Luke brings to the consciousness of the reader that the Spirit is more than just the director, initiator and/or empowerment for mission. The Spirit is also the legitimator of mission both to the Jews and to the Gentiles. Opposition to the mission of the church in either way is opposition to the Holy/Spirit of God. The resisting reader is thus invited and challenged to overcome every form of resistance and accept mission as Luke has presented it.

In all of the above narrative techniques, the legitimating role of the Holy Spirit is very obvious. For where the prophetic authority is employed, the Holy Spirit is referred to (cf. Luke 2:25, 26, 27; Acts 11:28); where scriptural authority is sought, the Holy Spirit is employed to strengthen the argument (cf. Luke 4:18; 24:49; Acts 2:17; 28:25); where “a voice” is used, the Holy Spirit is
also called upon to bolster the authority (Acts 10:19). Thus, from the beginning right through to the end of the narrative, the legitimating role of the Spirit in mission is manifestly evident at every level.
Chapter seven

Conclusion

As we have seen, much has been written about the various roles of the Holy Spirit in the narrative of Luke-Acts. After a careful review of Lukan scholarship, however, particularly in the area of the Holy Spirit and mission, this thesis has argued that the particular role of the Holy Spirit as legitimating mission to the wider world has not been investigated sufficiently. As noted in chapter one, the more the pneumatic texts in Luke-Acts are studied, the more they call for an undergirding and unifying explanation. In this thesis I have argued that Luke has crafted the narrative about the mission of Jesus in the gospel, continued by the followers of Jesus in Acts, so that the intended readers learn not only about the fulfillment of the promised salvation to the Jews, but also that this salvation includes the Gentiles. Since the wider Lukan communities comprise both Jewish and non-Jewish Christians, this thesis has explored how Luke’s appeal to the Holy Spirit can effectively communicate within both these religious contexts. It is precisely here that this thesis makes its contribution to Lukan scholarship: first, that Luke seeks to overcome the opposition of resisting Jewish Christian readers to the Gentile mission (and affirm other Jewish Christians who are open to mission to the nations) by appealing to the legitimating authority of the Spirit of the Lord in the Jewish scripture. Secondly, and equally relevant, that Luke also seeks to affirm, support and encourage the Gentile Christians by using ‘Spirit’ language and expressions that resonate with aspects of their Greco-Roman religious context. In this way, the Lukan community, in all its ethnic and religious diversity, is given the hermeneutical framework and encouragement it needs to continue in its development as a united network of communities of Jewish and Gentile Christians. This provides a more comprehensive explanation of the role played by the Holy Spirit than has hitherto been recognised by Lukan scholars.

The first chapter of the thesis established that several scholars have indeed contributed to the study of Lukan pneumatology – with a particular focus on their presentation of the Spirit in relation to mission. Although Turner and Bonnah have indicated that the Spirit has a
legitimatory role in Luke-Acts, it was concluded that despite their compelling efforts, more work needed to be done across both volumes of Luke’s work in order to show the Spirit as legitimating the mission to τὰ ἔθνη for Luke’s implied readers.

In the second chapter, this thesis argued that Luke wrote for a network of communities composed of Jewish and Gentile Christians. The examination of texts showed that Luke wrote in a context where some Jewish Christians were very critical of Gentile inclusion (see for instance, Acts 11:1-3; 15:1-5). As the chapter highlighted, Luke painted a chaotic situation within the communities; a situation demanding resolution. Luke was determined to bring harmony into the body of believers in Jesus. But Luke had to do this in a way and manner that appealed to the diverse membership of the communities. The concept of the Spirit proved very appropriate: while the Jews welcome the Spirit-motif from their OT Jewish background, the τὰ ἔθνη did so from their Greco-Roman religious context. On the basis of this foundation this thesis has argued that Luke, appealing to the Spirit motif, addresses Jewish Christians opposed to the Gentile mission, but also affirms Jewish believers who are open to mission to the nations, and supports the Gentile followers of Jesus in their acceptance of the faith.

From the beginning of the gospel narrative, Luke furnishes the wider communities with a preview of the expansion of the mission to the nations (Luke 2:32) and carries it to the end of Acts (Acts 28:28). The narrative taken as a whole supports the proposition that the mission to the wider world was very clear in Luke’s mind from the beginning. Chapter three of this thesis indicated how Luke’s use of the Spirit could have resonated with the Gentile readers in the religious context of the Greco-Roman world. Similarities between the ‘spirit-concept’ and the activities of the gods in the Greco-Roman religious environment and the Spirit activities in Luke’s work provided the Gentile followers of Jesus with the means to affirm and support their new faith, Luke’s emphasis on the role of the Spirit provided a framework for these non-Jews to give ‘spiritual’ and ‘divine’ interpretation to the Spirit-related events, and thus accept them and confirm their own legitimate place in the community of believers.

Working on the proposition that Luke appealed to the Holy Spirit in order to overcome resistance from Jewish believers opposed to the Gentile mission (and affirm Jewish Christians
open to this mission), this thesis examined the concept of the Spirit of the Lord in the OT (see also the Appendix laying out the background evidence for this chapter). Chapter four worked from the premise that Luke has knowledge of the OT and that he used it richly in the narrative of Luke-Acts. This chapter particularly explored the texts of Numbers 11:17-25; Isaiah 61:1-3; and Joel 2:28, which Luke appealed to in Luke’s gospel and in the narrative of Acts. This led to the conclusion that the resonances of the OT pneumatic language and expressions within Luke-Acts are not simply accidental. While I agreed with Hur that the OT Spirit motif forms the literary repertoire for Luke’s usage of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts, chapter four took this further and showed that Luke’s appeal to the Spirit demonstrates that what is obtainable and evident in the wider Lukan communities is the result of the initiative and activities of the same Spirit which was active in the OT. As the thesis argued, Luke does this with a view to overcoming the resistance of some of Luke’s implied readers to mission to the wider world.

What has been sought here is a more unified and coherent logic to Luke’s appeal to the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts, teasing out the claim of the thesis across both volumes of Luke’s work is essential. Therefore, in chapter five, consideration was given to how the Holy Spirit serves a legitimating role in the mission of Jesus in the gospel of Luke. The mission of the church in Acts continues the mission of Jesus (cf. Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). The legitimation of the church’s mission to the nations (cf. Acts 9:15; 10:44-48; 11:3; 13:1-3, 46-47 and so on), therefore, hinges on the legitimation of Jesus’ mission. In order to appeal to the resisting Jewish reader (and other Jewish believers in the communities) Luke begins the entire narrative by showing that Jesus (and his mission) is from God, and that the Holy/Spirit of the Lord which was active in the Jewish scripture is also active in the ministry of Jesus. Luke takes the reader to the beginning of Jesus’ conception (cf. Luke 1:3) and preparation for his mission, and shows that Jesus is one in whom the Holy/Spirit of the Lord is active (Luke 1:35; 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18). In the passage of Isaiah quoted in the Nazareth synagogue (Isa 61:1-2), the allusion to the Spirit of the Lord explains and legitimates the prophet’s mission in the consolation of Zion.\(^\text{879}\) In Luke, the application of the Isaiah text to Jesus is Luke’s pneumatic explanation which serves to legitimate the inclusive mission of Jesus in the narrative: this includes mission among the Jews and the opening up of


In chapter six, the thesis explored how the Holy Spirit is depicted as legitimating the mission of the church in Acts. This chapter paid particular attention to the role of Joel’s prophecy in the event of Pentecost in Acts 2. Luke informs the reader that Acts 2 is the fulfillment of the Joel’s prophecy. Of particular significance is the narrative about Cornelius which ushers in the Gentile mission on a wider scale. Again, Luke shows the Holy Spirit to be at work. Luke informs the implied readers that it was the Holy Spirit who convinced Peter to not discriminate. The same Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles with much the same manifestations as with the earlier Jewish believers. Peter used this as an argument to silence some Jewish resistance to Gentile involvement in the account of the subsequent gathering in Jerusalem (Acts 11:18). The importance of this Cornelius episode can also be seen in the later Jerusalem council, when Peter for the third time appealed to the Holy Spirit as legitimating authority in the mission to the nations. Lastly, as Luke relates, not only has the gospel come to the nations, it has also come to Rome, “the capital of the civilized world at that time,” thus fulfilling mission “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In order to bring his narrative to a close, and to justify and legitimate the mission to the wider world, Luke for the last time invokes the Holy Spirit who is portrayed as having spoken through the prophet Isaiah (Acts 28:25-27; cf. Isa 6:9). The reference to the Holy Spirit strengthens the scriptural testimony, with two quotations from Isaiah bookending the mission of Jesus and the mission of his followers. Luke’s assertion is clear: the mission must extend to the wider world (Acts 28:28).

From the narrative of Luke-Acts it can be plainly seen that the mission to τὰ ἔθνη is an important issue pervading the Lukan narrative, and that the narrator leaves no stone unturned to convince the resisting reader that this mission is as important, legitimate and part of the divine plan as the mission in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. For this reason, Luke employed the

---

authority of the Spirit particularly to provide this legitimation for both Jewish and ethnic members of the communities. From the forgoing overview, the following conclusions can therefore be drawn.

7.1 The Holy Spirit building harmony and unity in the communities

As noted in chapter two, with the expansion of the church to include non-Jews there was a corresponding suspicion and developing tensions in the wider Lukan communities regarding the authenticity of the Gentile mission. Consequently, disunity and division among believers was beginning to manifest itself (Acts 11:3 for example mentions the “circumcised party” and the “uncircumcised men”). In Luke’s argument, God approves the mission to τὰ ἔθνη by signaling this mission in the gospel (Luke 2:32; 4:25-27) but especially by the outpouring of the Spirit upon the ‘uncircumcised’ (Acts 10:47; 11:15, 17; 15:8), just as the Jewish believers had received the Spirit earlier (Acts 11:15; 15:8). Luke thus employed the authority of the Spirit in bridging the racial and ethnic barriers between Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Jesus, promoting harmony, acceptance and unity among community members and the inclusion of Gentiles in the communities (cf. Acts 10:34-35), modeled on the mutual hospitality of Peter and the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:23, 48).

7.2 The Holy Spirit convincing believers that God is in charge

Chapter four highlighted that the Spirit in the OT is the Spirit of the Lord/God. It is God who bestows the Spirit upon the various significant figures of the OT for the accomplishment of their tasks. In Luke-Acts, Luke lets the implied readers know that the Holy Spirit is the same Spirit of the Lord/God who was active in the OT (see Appendix). Thus, references to the Spirit in the infancy narrative connect the Spirit, or the recipients of the Spirit, with God who directs and empowers (see for instance Luke 1:11-15, 35, 67; 2:25-32). Likewise, at Jesus’ baptism, the Spirit comes upon Jesus at the same time that ‘a voice from heaven’ confirms Jesus as ‘my son’ (Luke 3:22), and so the Spirit upon Jesus is the Spirit of the Lord (Luke 4:18). Similarly, in Acts the disciples receive the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4; cf. Luke 24:49), who is the power from on high (cf. Luke 24:49), the gift of the Father (Acts 2:38). The outpouring of the Spirit at
Cornelius’ house is God’ gift to the nations (Acts 11:17; cf. 15:8). Peter’s explanation points to what God has done through the Holy Spirit. At the end of Acts, Luke emphatically shows that God affirms and intends the world-wide mission to the nations, since salvation of course is of God (cf. Acts 28:25-28). It is apparent that the narrator wants the wider Lukan network of communities to know that the mission inspired, enabled, and enhanced by the Spirit is the project of God who has been leading the charge, even as God’s human agents struggle to keep up with the Spirit’s advances at times. This powerfully depicts Luke’s determination to overcome the opposition of the resisting Jewish party to the Gentile mission by letting them know that God is in-charge here, and to strengthen the Gentile believers that God is with them after all; hence, the gospel is for both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; 10:34, 36, 45, 47; 11:1, 15, 17, 18; 13:47-48; 14:27).

7.3 The Holy Spirit providing affirmation for ethnic believers

The Gentile members of the wider Lukan communities lived within the context of the Greco-Roman religious environment – an environment that was replete with numerous ‘spirit’ activities. The language and expressions used by Luke when he appeals to the Holy Spirit within the narrative suggests that Luke meant to address and connect with these non-Jewish members of the communities as well. As noted in chapter three, tangible representations of spiritual realities were part of the Greco-Roman world. For instance, obstacles or signs met on the road, the flight of birds, or behaviour of flames were often interpreted as signs from the gods. Also, dreams were generally understood as inspired by the gods. Luke’s appeal to the tangible manifestation of the Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism (σωματικῶ εἴδει ως περιστεράν, Luke 3:22) and the disciples at the beginning of the church’s mission (Acts 2:2-3) thus inform the wider Gentile believers that these were events initiated and inspired by the divine being (God). Equally, Luke sets the stage for dreams and visions to mark the movement of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the early church, affirming God’s agency behind the expansion of this mission to

---

the nations (cf. Acts 2:17; 7:56; 9:4-5, 10-17; 18:1-11; 22:6-7, 19; 26:14-15). It is within the context of a vision that Peter realises that salvation also includes Gentiles who do what is right before God (Acts 10:34-35; cf. v 15); it is also through a dream that Paul is invited to take the message of salvation to Macedonia, beginning with Philippi, a Gentile city and Roman colony (Acts 16:9-10). Affirming these developments are Luke’s narratives of the Spirit speaking through human agents, the Spirit leading and directing, the Spirit seizing humans, humans being filled with the Spirit, and the Spirit initiating tongues. All these suggest Luke’s deep desire to speak to the heart of the Gentile Christians. These familiar concepts in various ways encouraged and supported the faith of Gentile believers (Acts 18:23). Thus, while Luke’s pneumatically filled narrative seeks to overcome resistance to the Gentile mission from some Jewish Christians, it also affirms, supports and encourages the Gentile believers.

7.4 The Holy Spirit establishing continuity with the Old Testament

The narrative of Luke-Acts is rich with references to the OT aimed at convincing Luke’s implied audience that the narrative is reliable and legitimate. Luke shows that the Spirit of the Lord, operative in the OT mission, is the same Holy Spirit inspiring, guiding and directing the expansion of mission as narrated in Luke-Acts. It is in this way that the Spirit descending upon Jesus at the start of his mission (Luke 4:18) is the Spirit of the Lord as prophesied in Isaiah 61:1; the descent of the Spirit upon the followers of Jesus at the inauguration of the church’s mission (Acts 2:1-4) fulfills the prophecy of Joel 2:28; and the Spirit that fell upon the Gentiles at the start of the mission to τὰ ἔθνη in Acts 10:44 is the same gift that God gave to the church earlier (in Acts 2:1-4). Also referring to the Spirit as power from on high (Luke 24:49; cf. Luke 1:35; Acts 1:8) and as the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4) draws the reader’s attention to OT texts (for instance Isa 32:15 and Joel 2:28) where God made promises of the outpouring of the Spirit. Luke wants the implied reader to know that what is happening in the wider Lukan communities, and especially as mission expands to the nations, is in continuity with the OT. This is strongly in keeping with Luke’s wishes to overcome resisting Jewish readers by appealing to the same familiar and authoritative document of the Jews – the Hebrew scriptures. I have argued that for the resisting Jewish Christian reader to be made aware that the Holy Spirit
operative in the Gentile mission is the same Spirit of the Lord active in the OT is a major objective for Luke. In this way, Luke points out to the resisting reader that opposition to the mission initiated and directed by the Spirit is opposition to the very Spirit who directs that mission.


The central story of the narrative of Luke-Acts is about Jesus and his mission (Acts 1:1) – the mission prepared for before Jesus’ birth (cf. Luke 1:32-33), inaugurated by Jesus (cf. Luke 4:18-30) and continued by Jesus’ followers after his death, resurrection and ascension (cf. Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). This mission which began in Jerusalem and continued to the ends of the earth (cf. Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8) proved problematic and difficult to comprehend for the early followers of Jesus, especially some Jews who resisted the inclusion of ethnic believers within the communities (Acts 11:1-3; 15:1-5; cf. Luke 4:25-28). The narrative of Luke-Acts shows that the author is aware of this and is determined to overcome this resistance. Hence legitimating mission to τὰ ἔθνη is a strong theme infusing the narrative of the implied author of Luke-Acts achieved by appealing to the Holy Spirit in a very systematic and consistent way. This explains why, in the preface to the gospel, despite the many writings already in existence about the events “that have been fulfilled among us” (Luke 1:1), Luke insists there was still the urgent need for an orderly account, one that would (1) require a careful study of the present state of the communities in the light of the past, (2) be an orderly presentation of the results of the investigation and (3) explain and ascertain the justification of the present state of the communities (Luke 1:2-4). These Lukan communities were made up of Jews and diverse ethnic groups (cf. Luke 2:32; 4:25-27; 24:47; Acts 1:8; 8:4ff, 26-40; 9:15; 10:44-48; 11:19-26; 13:1-3; 15:1-5; 19:1-7 and so on). Luke shows that while some Jews were constantly struggling with the implications of mission outside the Jewish territories and questioning the legitimacy of the mission to the nations (cf. Luke 4:28; Acts 11:1-3; 15:1-5), God was constantly affirming this mission by the presence of the Holy Spirit among the ethnic believers in Jesus. As Luke shows,

a. Just as the OT characters who received divine assignments from God at different times in history were endowed with the Spirit of the Lord in order to fulfill their tasks, so also
the presence of the Holy Spirit upon the characters at the infancy narrative (Luke 1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25-27) testifies to the authenticity of their mission.

b. Jesus, whose conception was made possible by an act of the Holy Spirit, also receives a public endorsement at his baptism by the tangible and observable descent of the Holy Spirit upon him in bodily form coupled with the declaration of the heavenly voice (Luke 3:22; cf. Acts 10:38). Because of this, Jesus declares at the inauguration of his mission in Luke 4:18, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me…”

c. Jesus informed his followers that they would receive the promise of the Father, who is the “power from on high” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4); and that they would be baptised with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). It is the reception of the Holy Spirit by the followers of Jesus that prepares them for witnessing to Jesus (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Thus having received the Holy Spirit for witnessing (Acts 2:1-4), the mission they carry out is reliable, authentic and legitimate (cf. Acts 4:8, 31; 6:2-6; 7:55; 8:17; 9:17; 11:24).

d. Luke’s orderly and systematic presentation clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit who was present at the infancy narrative (Luke 1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25-27), who descended upon Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:22), and who came upon the church earlier in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4) and in Samaria (Acts 8:17), is also present with the ethnic believers in Jesus (cf. Acts 10:44-47; 11:15; 13:52; 15:8; 19:6; 20:28). In fact, the narrator so emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit in this mission to τὰ ἔθνη that in Acts 10:19, it is the Holy Spirit who sends the emissaries from Cornelius to Peter; in Acts 13:1-3, it is the Holy Spirit who sends out Paul and Barnabas on mission; and in Acts 20:28, it is the Holy Spirit who appoints leaders in the community at Ephesus. Thus, from the narrative perspective, the Holy Spirit is proof that the mission to τὰ ἔθνη, like the mission before in Jerusalem and its environs, is legitimate and has God’s approval. This is why reference to the Holy Spirit becomes the principal argument for baptizing Cornelius and his household (Acts 10: 48), Peter’s defence for going to the nations (Acts 11:4-18), as well as the apostles’ decision not to burden the believers of ethnic origin (Acts 15:28). And lastly, the final mention of turning to the nations receives its justification from the Holy Spirit (Acts 28:25).
The Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts thus serves to explain and justify mission as Luke has presented it to members of the Lukan communities. This is what legitimation does as Esler has described it as the collection of ways in which an ‘institution’ is explained and justified to its members, and also as Berger’s submission indicates, that legitimations are answers to any questions about the ‘why’ of ‘institutional’ arrangements. As can be seen from the narrative, the justification and legitimation of mission as Luke has presented it hinges on the presence of the Holy Spirit at every stage of mission throughout the narrative. Luke has appealed to the Holy Spirit not merely to express the reliability of the narrative but to also justify and legitimate mission, and especially mission to τὰ ἔθνη.

It can therefore be stated here, as this thesis strongly argues, that Luke firmly desires to convince some of the resisting Jewish followers of Jesus who are opposed to mission to the nations (whilst also affirming Jewish believers open to this mission), and to support ethnic believers in Jesus. To achieve this aim, Luke seeks out an authority – the Holy Spirit – which appeals to all the ethnic and Jewish sub-groups of the Lukan communities. While Jewish believers identify with the Spirit of God from the OT background, the Gentile Christians are able to recognise the divine presence in the Spirit-related events based on their experiences of ‘spirit-activities’ from their Greco-Roman religious context. By so doing, the author of Luke-Acts, while seeking to overcome the opposition of those resisting Jewish Christians to the wider mission to the nations, provides a bridge for Gentiles to accept the Way and also offers support, encouragement and affirmation for other Gentile believers who face this opposition. I maintain that this is a far more consistent, unifying and meaningful explanation for Luke’s appeal to the Holy Spirit in the narrative of Luke-Acts.

882 See f/n 99.
883 See f/n 102.
Appendix

Luke wrote the narrative of the Luke-Acts in Greek for a network of communities that spoke and understood Greek. The following tables show that Luke’s language and expressions about the Holy Spirit are consistent with the language and expressions used for the Spirit of God in the Greek version of the Old Testament. This is part of Luke’s strategy for overcoming opposition from all resisting readers.

Table 1

Terms for the Spirit in Luke-Acts and their equivalents in the OT (LXX)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>Acts</th>
<th>OT (LXX)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The/my (God’s) Spirit (ὁ πνεύματος)</td>
<td>2:27; 4:1, 14</td>
<td>2:17, 18; 8:16; 10:19; 11:12, 28; 19:21; 20:22; 21:4</td>
<td>Gen 6:3; Num 11:17, 25, 29; Isa 30:1; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; Ezek 2:2; 3:12; 8:3; 43:5; Joel 2:28; 3:1; Hag 2:5; Zech 4:6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Note that ‘Spirit of the Lord’, so dominant in the LXX and meaningful in a Jewish context, gives way in Luke’s Greco-Roman context to ‘Spirit of God/Holy Spirit’, because κυρίος lacks the divine dimension outside of the LXX).

Table 2


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>Acts</th>
<th>OT (LXX)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To fill/be filled with/full of</td>
<td>Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 4:1</td>
<td>2:4; 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9, 52</td>
<td>Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; Deut 34:9; Isa 11:2; Mic 3:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Πληρώ, πίμπλημι, πλήρης)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To come upon</td>
<td>1:35; 3:22</td>
<td>1:8; 19:6</td>
<td>Num 23:7; 24:2; Judges 3:10; 11:29; 1 Sam 16:13; 19:20, 23; 2 Kgs 2:9; 1 Chr 12:18; 2 Chr 15:1; 20:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ἐπερχομαι, γίνομαι ἐπί, ἔρχομαι ἐπί)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To give/put</td>
<td>11:13</td>
<td>5:32; 8:18; 11:17; 15:8</td>
<td>Num 11:29; Neh 9:20; Isa 42:1; Ezek 37:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(δίδωμι)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To pour out upon</td>
<td>2:17, 18, 33; 10:45</td>
<td></td>
<td>Joel 3:1, 2; Zech 12:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ἐκχέω ἐπί)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To fall upon</td>
<td>8:16; 10:44; 11:15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ezek 11:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ἐπιπτώ)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be upon/on</td>
<td>2:25; 4:18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Isa 59:21; 61:1; Dan 4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(εἰμι ἐπί, ἐν)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπιτίθμι τῶν κειρῶν</td>
<td>Acts 8:17, 18, 19</td>
<td></td>
<td>Num 27:18; and Deut 34:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(laying on of hands)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To anoint</td>
<td>4:18</td>
<td>10:38</td>
<td>Isa 61:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(χρίω)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

Consequences of Spirit reception in the OT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen 41:38</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Interpretation of dream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exod 31:3; cf. 35:31.</td>
<td>Bezalel and Oholia</td>
<td>Skills in craftsmanship in building the tent of meeting and the ark of the covenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Num 11:17-25</td>
<td>Seventy-two elders</td>
<td>Prophetic utterances; assist Moses in leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Num 24:2</td>
<td>Balaam</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Num 27:18; cf. Deut 34:9</td>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Wisdom, leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29;</td>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>Leadership, military prowess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam 10:6, 10; 19:18-23</td>
<td>Saul</td>
<td>Leadership, unintelligible prophecy, military strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam 16:13; 2 Sam 23:2</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>Leadership, prophecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Kgs 2:15</td>
<td>Elisha</td>
<td>Prophetic activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Chr 12:18</td>
<td>Amasai</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Chr 15:1</td>
<td>Azariah</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Chr 20:14</td>
<td>Jahaziel</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Chr 24:20</td>
<td>Zechariah son of Jehoiada</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 42:1</td>
<td>The servant of the Lord</td>
<td>Effects justice to the nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 61:1</td>
<td>The prophet</td>
<td>Deliverance, sent to proclaim the good news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3;</td>
<td>Ezekiel</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:1, 5, 24; 43:5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan 4:8, 18; 5:11, 14</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Interpretation of dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mic 3:8</td>
<td>Micah</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luke 1:15</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Prepare a people for the Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 1:35</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>To be the mother of the son of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 1:41</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 1:67</td>
<td>Zechariah</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts 2:4; cf. 1:8; 2:17, 18, 33</td>
<td>Disciples</td>
<td>Tongues, witness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts 4:8</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Witness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts 4:31</td>
<td>Believers</td>
<td>Speak with boldness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts 7:55</td>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>Witness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts 10:44-47</td>
<td>Cornelius and household</td>
<td>Tongues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts 11:24</td>
<td>Barnabas</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts 11:28; cf. 21:10-11</td>
<td>Agabus</td>
<td>prophecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts 19:2, 6; cf. 20:28</td>
<td>Believers in Ephesus</td>
<td>Tongues, leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

Other similar expressions and images

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressions</th>
<th>Luke/Acts</th>
<th>OT (LXX)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>πνεῦματος and δύναμις (Spirit and power)</td>
<td>Luke 4:14; Acts 1:8; 10:38</td>
<td>1 Sam 11:6; Micah 3:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πνεῦματος καὶ σοφίας (Spirit and wisdom)</td>
<td>Acts 6:3</td>
<td>Deut 34:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rebelling against, grieving or embittering the Spirit</td>
<td>Luke 12:10; Acts 5:3, 9; 7:51</td>
<td>Ps 106:33; Isa 63:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐνδύσησε ἐξ υψος δύναμιν (power from on high)</td>
<td>Luke 24:49</td>
<td>Isa 32:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit speaking through human agents</td>
<td>Acts 1:16; 4:25; 28:25</td>
<td>2 Sam 23:2; Neh 9:30; Isa 59:21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


