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## CHIASTIC CONTOURS AND THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE MESSIANIC COMMUNITY AND CHRISTIAN MISSION

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*It is possible to attend so resolutely to context that we miss the integrated theology that holds the Bible's grand narrative together. God conveys the biblical message as a unified story that begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation. The narrative develops through various plot structures that bring the message into focus. The Bible tells the story of God's boundless love for creation and his plan of redemption, centered in the life of Christ and whereby we are active participants, awaiting a final renewal.*

-Dr Ajilon Ferdinand

### Introduction

In the sequel to Luke, which has come down to us as the book of Acts, the writer appears eager to show that the early followers of the Messiah not only sought to understand their world but engaged it in an effort to introduce other-worldly life transforming values. The conviction here is that the Lucan plot is no mere narrative, but a story which invites us to share its world, the commitment of its leading characters, and its enthusiasm for life.<sup>1</sup> What we find in Luke-Acts, then, are bio-narratives.<sup>2</sup> In the first volume, the dominant figure is the Messiah himself, with others in the background. In the second, Peter takes centre stage in chapters 2-11, while Paul makes his salvific entrance in chapter 9, and maintains his prominence until the end. Of course, for Luke, though the Messianic presence is in the background in Acts, He is still 'large and in charge' of Empire (cf. Rev 1:5b).

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1861-1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 445.

<sup>2</sup> On the flexibility of genre, see O. Padilla (*The Acts of the Apostles: Interpretation, History and Theology* [Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2016], 46-52). As I see it, Luke's gospel is, in terms of emphasis, a *Bio-narrative*, and its sequel *Bio-narrative*—both are responsible and reliable history.

Schnabel is certainly correct when he affirms that “[t]he biographical focus of many passages in Acts suggests that Luke intends his readers to emulate the deeds of . . . Peter, Phillip, Barnabas, James and Paul, and women like Lydia and Priscilla . . . [precisely because Acts is] the story of the life and missionary work of the early church.”<sup>3</sup> Although the lives of the aforementioned individuals are definitely paradigmatic (see e.g., 1 Cor 11:1; Phil 4:9), the main focus of Acts is still that of God, his exalted Son, and the Spirit of promise—Ultimate Reality ultimately paradigmatic.<sup>4</sup> This paper proposes that one way to benefit from Luke’s bio-narrative in terms of his central focus outlined above is to appreciate his artistic ring structuring of the scroll/papyrus.

A perusal of the *Art of Rhetoric*<sup>5</sup> reveals no discourse on chiasmus, putatively a part of Luke’s artistic design. Longenecker informs us that Aristotle’s Greco-Roman successors were equally silent on the matter.<sup>6</sup> What Longenecker detected in the arrangement of Luke’s second volume is a chain-link composition. This enables the author to make a significant connection between his content and style. “From that structure emerges a theology intent on bolstering confidence in the God whose power Luke depicts as promoting the inevitable advance of the Christian movement.”<sup>7</sup> Longenecker opts for a four-fold outline:

Acts 1:1-8:3 Early Christianity in Jerusalem

Acts 8:4-12:25 Persecution and Consequent Spread (with the transition beginning at 8:1b)

Acts 13:1-19:41 The Spread of Christianity through the Ministry of Paul (with transition beginning at 11:27)

Acts 20: 1-28:31 The Spread of Christianity through Events that Take Paul from Jerusalem to Rome (with the transition beginning at 19:21).

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<sup>3</sup>Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 109. After all, Luke was writing another bio-narrative (*diēgēsin* (cf. Luke 1:1), with an emphasis on the fact that “[a]s Acts presents it, the Christian Church is a missionary Church.” (E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*. Trans. R. M. Wilson [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 144); italics original.

<sup>4</sup> See Burchell Taylor, “The Self-Revealing God and the Human Predicament,” in *Diverse and Creative Voices: Theological Essays from the Majority World*, ed. Dieumeme Noelliste and Sung Wook Chung (Eugene Oregon: Pickwick, 2015), 48-66.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1926).

<sup>6</sup> Bruce W. Longenecker, *Rhetoric at the Boundaries: The Art and Theology of the New Testament Chain-Link Transition* (Waco, Texas, 2005), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 8. Richard Pervo (*Acts: A Commentary* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008], 20) mentions chiasmus without any elaboration; later (p. 75) Peter’s Pentecost speech is shown to contain it, and there is one that encompasses 22:3-21 about which we read: “The ease with which the structure yields to a chiasmic analysis confirms its completeness (p. 560). K. R. Wolfe, “The Chiastic Structure of Luke-Acts and Some Implications for Worship,” *SWJT* 22 (1980): 70, plausibly suggests that the Ascension is the centre of Luke’s two volumes; S. Porter (*The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary* [Sheffield: Phoenix, 2015], 54) denies that there is any macro-structure like this in the NT.

The strength of his chain-link proposal appears to be its explanatory power to solve crucial exegetical problems by showing how Luke makes certain literary transitions smoothly through the employment of a not-so-fairly-well-known rhetorical device. The proposal is also detailed, covering the entire book. A weakness, it seems, is that it has no centre, or perhaps better stated, it ignores what is considered by many the fifteenth chapter by lumping it with his “third macro-text unit”. I hope to demonstrate that by placing a centre in the midst of Longenecker’s outline—better—by making good use of Luke’s employment of chiasmus with its discernible central focus, we may be better able to grasp an important element of the Lukan plot. The author’s chiasmus<sup>8</sup> also may enable the reader to see four ways in which the willing Deity reached out to peoples of the first-century to ensure human flourishing for his own glory. So we are not surprised in hearing that the book:

exhibits careful attention to structure at several levels. . . . Structural organization is apparent also in units of different sizes, such as the cycles of persecution in chap. 3-7, and individual units such as 19:1-7. Ring composition (chiasmus) and inclusion are means of presenting rounded sections. Chapters 13-14, for example, are framed by a complex inclusion. When travel is involved, the pattern follows the time honoured “there and back” formula, as in Jerusalem-Samaria-Jerusalem (8:14-28). This pattern continues with Paul, who repeatedly returns to Jerusalem, but is decisively broken off in chaps. 27-28.<sup>9</sup>

We will now re-examine Luke’s second volume in light of a new (suggested) structure.<sup>10</sup> Our proposal underlines the way in which the gospel is extended to unbelievers and embraced by them and the people of God in an involuntary or voluntary manner. It also enables one to see more clearly the dynamic of human responsibility and divine sovereignty in a different light, by accenting the willingness of God in Lukan soteriology (cf. 2 Peter 3:9; Isa 18:19). Finally, it

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<sup>8</sup>The device may be defined thus: an “inverted sequence or cross-over of parallel words . . . sentence, or larger unit.” (Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 2edn. [Atlanta: John Knox, 1981], 40). On the following page, Soulen describes N. W. Lund’s ground breaking work, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1942), as “over zealous”; yet it has no proposal for the book of Acts. Chiasmus belongs to an author’s surface structure; therefore, as J. P. Louw (*Semantics of New Testament Greek* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982], 77) puts it, “This means that if an author wishes to say something (deep structure), he will choose a specific form (surface structure) in which to say it.”

<sup>9</sup> Richard I. Pervo, *Acts*, 20; Luke Timothy Johnson (*The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, Revised Edition [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999], 220) adds the following: “[E]vents in Acts clearly parallel those of the Gospel. . . . The cyclical patterns in Luke-Acts are placed within a story that is essentially and intentionally linear.”

<sup>10</sup>Divine plan ‘A’ and ‘B’: A-chapter 1; B-chapter 8; B'-chapter 16; A'-chapter 28. In these four panels, there are four momentous movements, which sandwich another panel that is of no less missiological moment. The A-B structure straddles the eight Lukan summaries, dividing them in three parts (2:47; 5:14; 6:7/11:21, 24; 12:24/16:5; 19:20). Also each “of the key editorial markers (6:7; 12:24; 19:20) climaxes a section of the narrative recording the resolution of some conflict or the cessation of opposition and persecution” (D.G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 33). “Another significant point of progression,” says Peterson (p.70), “is the offering of salvation to the Gentiles (1:8; 8:-40; 9:15; 10:34-43; 13:46-48; 22:21; 28:25-29).

foregrounds the Messianic law as an integral component for theological reflection relative to Christian mission. The proposal is as follows:

**A. Messianic Community<sup>11</sup> Go Willingly<sup>12</sup> (Plan): Acts 1:5-8**

The form of the imperative in verse 8 (“you shall be my witnesses”), I think, should be carefully noted.<sup>13</sup> It is the same form of that found in Deuteronomy 6:5, and there is a possibility that Luke wants Theophilus (and any other ‘lover of God’) to make the link: only the love of God (objectively) can truly motivate the people of God to carry out this mandate. The mission of Luke 10 is definitely a localized one, but the one in Acts 1:8 is global in scope.<sup>14</sup> Any discussion of the purpose of Acts must factor this in. And however we understand the baptism of the Spirit (1:5-8 vis-à-vis Acts 2:1-3, 38; and chapters 10 and 11), what is unmistakable is that the boldness and empowerment for the mission is tied to it. This is ably demonstrated by Luke’s catalogue of power-encounters throughout.<sup>15</sup> If chapter 1 verse 8 mandates witnessing, then the first act of witnessing is to be seen in chapter 2. That took place after the one hundred and twenty

<sup>11</sup> According to C.K. Lehmann (*Biblical Theology, vol. 2: New Testament* [Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald, 1974], 255), “Not until the incident of Ananias and Sapphira did Luke introduce the word church (Acts 5:11).”

<sup>12</sup> This is the intention of the command, i.e., willing obedience, e.g., 9:19-22; 13:1-3.

<sup>13</sup> On this C.F.D. Moule (*An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* [Cambridge: CUP, 1959], 178) notes, “This is a normal Hebrew construction [i.e., commands expressed by the future indicative], and is familiar to readers of the N.T. because of quotations from the LXX such as Luke iv. 8 . . . .”

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the following from the Psalms of Solomon: “[God] brought someone from the end of the earth . . . one who attacked in strength; he declared war against Jerusalem, and her land.” *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 659, ed. J.H. Charlesworth. Yorke suggests

that the last section of Acts 1:8, to wit, καὶ ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς, is primarily a reference not to Rome or even Spain way out West but to Africa, the outermost reaches of the Roman Empire and beyond, way down South, and must, therefore, be taken as a geographical cue and clue as to the direction in which the earliest expansion of the Christian faith was being contemplated as well. (“To the Ends of the Earth: An Afro-missiological Take on Acts 1:8”: Paper Presented at the 69<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of SNTS, Szeged, Hungary, Seminar 6 “The Mission and Expansion of Earliest Christianity,” Thursday, August 7, 2014; Presenter: Gosnell L. Yorke).

May be it is best to see, like Padilla (*Acts of the Apostles*, 99), καὶ ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς as a proleptic statement pointing to the mission to the Gentiles; Luke’s locating Paul, then, in Rome (the centre of Gentile power) supports this interpretation nicely. But see Yorke’s “To the Ends of the Earth: a Cursory Afro-missiological Take on Acts 1:8”, pp. 1-15, in this vol. of *CJET*.

<sup>15</sup> On some of these, then and now, see Craig Keener (*Miracles: The Credibility of New Testament Accounts*, 2 vols. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011]); on 1:30 he observes, for example: “Luke does not describe miracles in Corinth, [but] Paul reports them as a dramatic and observable part of his ministry there (2 Cor 12:12). Whereas Luke mentions miracles merely in several locations, Paul seems to believe that they occurred virtually whenever he preached (Rom 15:18-19).”

potential leaders of the soon-to-formed Messianic community prayerfully awaited the Spirit for about ten days.

An amazing feature of the story is how quickly the Spirit-filled people of God became aware of a gross misunderstanding (2:13). More significant was the apostles' telling response. The Spirit enabled the apostles to 'short-circuit' their worship in order to defend (cf. 1 Peter 3:15) the divine phenomenon, and to engage in witnessing that brought much clarity to the occasion, including an invitation to be baptized (2:38):<sup>16</sup> "Repent," said Peter, "and each of you become identified<sup>17</sup> with the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift—the Holy Spirit." Those who received Peter's exhortation, according to verses 41-42, were then immersed and devoted themselves to the principles and practices of the newly constituted Messianic community.

One notices as well Luke's overall understanding of witnessing is not limited to evangelism in its strictest sense as in Acts 8 with the Ethiopian eunuch but includes works of righteousness, welfare engagements and worship. This kind of vigorous witnessing resulted in trials and persecutions culminating in the murder of the first Christian martyr. Like Peter at Pentecost, Stephen, faithful witness, knew how to expound and apply Scripture in such a way as to bring conviction to his audience, and like Peter (2:14-15), there was also an apologetic element to his discourse.

As Stephen, fully under the Spirit's control, made his way to the portals of heaven, he "saw the Glory of God, that is, Jesus standing" at God's side.(v. 55).<sup>18</sup> Then he shouts, "Look . . . I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."(NIV). If Boyarin's bold and intriguing thesis is to be accepted that the title Son of God is more associated with the humanity of the Christ and Son of Man His deity, then we can better appreciate Saul's (and that of the executioners) horror in listening to Stephen's final words.<sup>19</sup> If the fledgling Messianic community was tested internally with the challenge of meeting the needs of their own in chapters

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<sup>16</sup>Including the will and willingness (*boulē*) of God (2:23) to surrender his son to effect salvation; "*boulē*, when referring to God's will or counsel, always denote 'irrefragable determination'" (Moisés Silva, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 2nd ed. 5 vols. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014], 1:528).

<sup>17</sup>Figurative use of *baptizō* (J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [New York: UBS, 1989], 539). These two nuances of 'immersed' and 'identified' pretty much sums up the semantic range of this term throughout the NT as Matt 3:11 illustrates. Interestingly, this verse bears both senses in a remarkable pun. At the time of its use, Peter was a disciple of John the Baptizer. Peter, of course, I want to suggest, was impressed with the play on the word. It evidently also impressed Peter's new Master, judging from its use in Acts 1:5 (cf. 11:16).

<sup>18</sup>Nigel Turner, *Christian Words* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), 187.

<sup>19</sup>Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012), 30-31. Cf. J.E. Taylor, "The Son of Man," *The Bible Translator* 48 (1997): 101-108. We therefore disagree with Barrett (*Acts* vol. 1, ICC [London: T & T Clark, 1994], 383) that "It would be mistaken to lay too much stress on the Christological significance of . . . [Stephen's] vision".

2-4, the lies of two of their own in chapter 5, the imperative of prioritizing in chapter 6, then the test of chapter 7 is overtly external but no less challenging. Chapter 8 (and following) is Luke's report of how this challenge was met.

***B. The Messianic Community Goes Unwillingly<sup>20</sup> (Persecution): Acts 8:1-4***

To judge from Luke's report it does appear that the early believers did their best in carrying out the Messianic mandate of Luke 24 and Acts 1:8. But a reading of verse 1, with its mention of Jerusalem-Judea-Samaria collocation, seems to suggest that there was still room for improvement. The first time we see these place names together is in chapter one verse eight. The believers are now located in these spaces, courtesy of a severe persecution. We are not sure how long the people of God experienced their phenomenal growth both in numbers and maturity; one thing seems certain: there was no clear evidence of any plans on their part to reach out to the Judeans or Samaritans.

Bruce comments that the "new Ecclesia, like the old, was to have its Diaspora (cf. 1 Pet. I. 1). . . . The persecution led them to carry out further the terms of their Lord's commission in i. 8."<sup>21</sup> The old Ecclesia was definitely scattered on account of their sin; it is debatable whether their new covenant counterpart suffered a similar fate.<sup>22</sup> If we assume that the church at this juncture was guilty of disobedience, we also note a difference. The old covenant people were punished for straying (idolatry) in the land, whereas the post-Pentecostal people were guilty of staying too long (inertia?) in the same piece of real estate, particularly the capital where the success was phenomenal. Did the apostles stick around to consolidate this success to protect the weak (widows, children, infirmed et al.?), or to make themselves available to answer charges on behalf of the fledgling Messianic community? Luke does not tell us. Luke's interest at this point is to show Theophilus how the good news winged its way from Jerusalem to other parts of Palestine (v 4).

The mission to Gentiles started here in chapter 8 with the African, then to the European in chapter 10, and then to other Gentiles in chapter 11.<sup>23</sup> The mission receives a new impetus in

<sup>20</sup> Other examples include the following: 11:19; 13:13.

<sup>21</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale, 1952), 181. He also cites an interesting parallel from 2 Baruch i. 4: "I will scatter this people among the Gentiles, that they may do good to the Gentiles."

<sup>22</sup>Cf. D. von Allman, "The Birth of Theology: Contextualization as the Dynamic Element in the Formation of New Testament Theology," *International Review of Mission* 64 (1975), 39.

<sup>23</sup> Chapter 9 records the conversion of an Asian, the apostle to Gentiles and Jews. For the significance of the Eunuch's salvation for Luke's purpose, see Beverley Roberts Gaventa, "Whatever Happened to Those Prophesying Daughters?" in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, with Marriane Blickenstaff (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 57; and especially Mickeal Parson, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 123-142).



chapter 13 with the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul and, of course, the divine initiative.<sup>24</sup> Both men were already missionaries, and both were given new assignments through the agency of the Spirit and the blessing of their assembly. So Barnabas and Saul:

. . . sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.<sup>5</sup> When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.<sup>6</sup> They travelled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. . . .<sup>13</sup> From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch.<sup>25</sup> On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down.<sup>15</sup> After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.” (13:4-15).<sup>26</sup>

Above Luke introduced his first transcript of Paul’s gospel proclamation to a group. Ten more are to follow; they are as follows: to Gentiles (14:15-18; 17:22-31), Christians (20:17-38), Jews (22:1-21; 23:1-6), Gentiles (24:10-21; 25:8-11; 26:1-23), Jews (28:17-20; 25-28).<sup>27</sup>

The next section of the chiasmic arrangement takes us to the heart of Luke’s second volume.

***C. The Messianic Covenanters Come together Willingly to Discuss the Cruciality of Canonical Soteriology for the Purpose of Mission(Problem):<sup>28</sup> Acts 15:1-33***

Verse 1 sets the agenda for this crucial pericope: By what ethical code will the new people of God be guided, and on what is their salvation grounded? The Pharisaic faction in the church stoutly maintained the viability of the Mosaic code of ethics as well as its salvific relevance, while Barnabas, Paul, Peter, and James oppose it.

The pericope on a whole:

<sup>24</sup>E.g., see the thought of 13: 48b and the following comment: <sup>24</sup>“The present verse is as unqualified a statement of absolute predestination — ‘the eternal purpose of God’ (Calvin 393) — as is found anywhere in the NT. . . . This can hardly be avoided by saying, with Schmithals (127) that what we have here is not Prädestinationslehre [a doctrine of predestination] but Ebrauungssprache [edification talk]. . . .” (C.K. Barrett, *Acts* vol. 1 [London: T & T Clark, 1994], 658).

<sup>25</sup> “In the heart of present-day Turkey,” according to Paul Ellington, “Acts 13.38,” *The Bible Translator* 45 (April 1994): 242.

<sup>26</sup> Were they familiar with the Jesus tradition which likens evangelism to the catching of fish? Implied in the metaphor is the thought that the best way to catch fish is to go to their natural habitat. The synagogue in those days was the best place to reach Jews, proselytes and god-fearing Gentiles.

<sup>27</sup> Adapted from Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 552.

<sup>28</sup> “It is not by chance that the Apostolic Council occupies the middle of the book” (Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 115). We concur. Fitzmyer (*The Acts of the Apostles* [New York: Doubleday, 1998], 538) supports the centrality of the pericope by pointing out that both the sections that precede and succeed chapter 15 have approximately 1,200 words.

relates . . . how the early church reached a consensus decision regarding the disputed question of whether Gentile Christians should submit to circumcision and to the wholesale obedience to the Mosaic law. The passage states (with Peter) that faith in Jesus and the grace of the Lord are the basis for salvation. It states (Paul and Barnabas) that God has authenticated the Gentile mission in which Gentiles are not told to become Jewish proselytes. And it states (James) that Gentile Christians are members of God's people as Gentiles, worshipping God in the temple . . . which is the messianic community of the last days, and that Gentile Christians need to comply only with some fundamental regulations that the law stipulated for Gentiles living among Jews.<sup>29</sup>

Schnabel continues:

The episode . . . is made up of eight incidents.

1. Luke relates the prehistory of the meeting in Jerusalem . . . (vv. 1-3).
2. The Antioch delegation arrives, with a report of Paul and Barnabas (vv. 4-5).
3. The apostles and elders convene a council meeting . . . (vv. 6-7a).
4. Peter gives a speech . . . (vv. 7b-11).
5. . . . Paul and Barnabas report about their missionary work . . . (v.12).
6. James gives a speech (vv. 13-21) that confirms the theological consensus
7. The decision of the assembly ("the apostolic decree") is recorded in a letter (vv. 22-29).
8. Luke ends the narrative . . . in Antioch . . . (30-33)

There appears to be another chiastic arrangement within this central C-section (1-33):

**A** Antioch (v. 1)

**B** Revelation of the problem by the delegation, apostles and elders (vv2-7a)

**C** Peter's speech (7b-11)

**D** Missionary report featuring the acts of God (v.12)

**C'** James' speech (13-21)<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, 621-622.

<sup>30</sup> "Tannehill [too] notes a neat chiasm in v.16, built around four first-person singular future verbs beginning with the Greek prefix *an-*" (Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 431). The construction will look something like this:

**A** I will return after this

and

**B** I rebuild David's fallen tent

and

**B'** and I will restore its ruins

and

**B'** Resolution of the problem by the delegation, the apostles and the elders (vv 22-29)

**A'** Antioch (30-35)

For Luke, then, even when the missionaries are not carrying out their substantive responsibility, the acts of God in terms of miracles among the Gentiles, take centre-stage.

We now return to the question of the two ethical codes (Mosaic and Messianic) that are at the heart of the discussion at the apostolic council. If this issue were not dealt with adequately, then, quite likely, there would have been a very different end to the story—not only for Luke's two volumes but also for subsequent ecclesiology and the missiology that drives it. The question is of paramount importance.<sup>31</sup> We continue with a biblical-theological survey of three crucial codes to cement the point.

Right throughout the canon one senses a strong ethical tendency. In both the Old and New Testaments we see that all of humanity is subject to a ubiquitous ethical imperative, a clear sense of divine ought. Though not explicitly stated, this must have been the basis of the global-flood judgment; the human race at the time was said to be violent and evil. Ample time was given to them for repentance but there was no behaviour modification. There were murder and bigamy before the flood, and the punishment of these sinful acts assumes an ethical frame of reference that was divinely sanctioned. Sin in every era then is the transgression of an ethical standard. What we are positing here is that this standard is part and parcel of the *imago Dei*. It is not surprising therefore to find in Genesis an individual called Melchizedek whose commitment to authentic ethical behaviour pattern qualified him, among other things, to function as priest of the Most High God. It is no surprise either to hear God's word to Isaac that his father "obeyed me and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Genesis 26:5). And given the pre-Israelite background and chronology (twentieth-century BCE?) of the protagonist, our understanding of Job 23:12 takes on new significance.

Outside of Scripture, we hear a voice like Epictetus echoing Holy Writ with these wise words: "If a man could only subscribe heart and soul, as he ought, to this doctrine, that we are all primarily begotten of God, and that God is the father of all men . . . I think that he will entertain no ignoble or mean thought about himself."<sup>32</sup> Such laws, we further submit, belong to an ethical

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**A'** I will rebuild . . .

<sup>31</sup>M. Dibelius (*The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004], 134-139) appears to value the literary and theological import of the 'Council' but is extremely sceptical of its historicity.

<sup>32</sup>*Epictetus* I-II LCB (Cambridge, MA, 1925), 25. Of course, one has to admit that the echo is faint, since the writer has in mind Zeus and not YHWH. He also writes about what we have called above the mesographic law: "I cannot transgress any of His commands [*entolōn*]. . . . These are the laws [*nomoi*] that have been sent to you from God, these are His ordinances; it is of these you ought to become an interpreter [*exēgētēn*], to these you ought to subject yourself . . ." Idem II: 313.

system or code that we may call the ‘Mesographic Law’.<sup>33</sup> This Law is given to everyone and is therefore universal in scope (cf. Amos 4:13). Thus an observant atheist can write regarding the Decalogue: “Admonishments of this kind are found in virtually every culture throughout recorded history. . . . It is a scientific fact that moral emotions—like a sense of fair play or an abhorrence to cruelty—precede any exposure to scripture.”<sup>34</sup> We agree. This innate sense of morality is the basis, for example, of the ethical imperative of thanksgiving<sup>35</sup> which in part provides us with a better understanding of humanity’s culpability in Romans 1: 21(they were guilty of ingratitude).<sup>36</sup>It was this ‘mesographic’ revelation that enabled the Greco-Roman philosopher/priest and contemporary of the apostle Paul to have penned the following treatise on deity: “God is . . . timeless. . . . He, being One . . . has with only one ‘Now’ completely filled ‘Forever’. . . . Under these conditions, therefore, we ought, as we pay him reverence, to greet him and to address him with these words, ‘Thou art’; or even, I vow, as did some of the men of old.”<sup>37</sup> Similarly, we have the following testimony from Hellenistic Jewry: “[T]hose who dwell on earth shall be tormented, because though they had understanding they committed iniquity, and though they received the commandments they did not keep them, and though they obtained the law they dealt unfaithfully with what they received.”<sup>38</sup>

But before the Hellenistic age another Law was given, the famous Mosaic variety. This Law was limited in scope (Psa 147:19-20) but was of much more significance than that which preceded it, since its stipulations (613 of them?) set apart all who had a special covenant with Yahweh. So

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<sup>33</sup> What Bruce Demarest and Gordon Lewis (*Integrative Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 1: 95) call ‘the implanted law’. Cf. Alan F. Segal (“Paul’s Jewish Presuppositions,” in *The Cambridge Companion to St Paul* ed. James Dunn [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 166), who mentions the “seven commandments which the rabbis assumed were given to all humanity before Moses.” This universal variety may be dubbed ‘mesographic’, i.e., written inside (cf. Rom. 2:14). We are therefore not surprised at the solemn declaration of Micah 5:15.

<sup>34</sup>Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 21. See also Simeon McIntosh (*Reading Text & Polity: Hermeneutics and Constitutional Theory* [Kingston: Caribbean Law, 2012], 1): Every “judicial opinion uttered by the judge in the name of the law carries implicitly a claim to moral truth.”

<sup>35</sup>Cf. *Epictetus*, 39, 319: “From everything that happens in the universe it is easy for a man to find occasion to praise providence, if he has within himself these two qualities: the faculty of taking a comprehensive view of what has happened in each . . . individual instance, and the sense of gratitude [Gk. *euchariston*] . . . we should be giving thanks to God for those things for which we ought to give Him thanks.”

<sup>36</sup>May be also ‘the law of God’ in Rom 7:22, according to Udo Schnelle, *The Human Condition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 71.

<sup>37</sup>Plutarch, E Delph. 20, cited in Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. E. Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 218. According to Schnelle, “There were two sources of the knowledge of God: (1) the idea of deity implanted in the human consciousness in view of the majesty of the cosmos [Mesographic revelation?], and (2) the traditional images of God conveyed in the old myths and customs.” This second ‘source’ is condemned in Rom. 1:18-32; it is nothing but an imaginative corruption of the first. The point is conceded even by a First Century pagan (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 2.26-27) who excoriates those “worshiping ghosts and making a god of one who has already ceased to be even a man.” Idem, *Theology of the New Testament*, 226.

<sup>38</sup>2 Esdras 7:72 (RSV) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/r/rsv/rsv-idx?type=DIV1&byte=3652195>.

how does this Mosaic variety relate to its Mesographic counterpart? “The moral law in its written form does not contradict or change the will of God. Rather, it makes it explicit and amplifies that will as originally expressed in natural law [Mesographic]. Since the will of God does not change, the law remains virtually the same throughout redemptive history.”<sup>39</sup>

The Old Testament which implicitly and explicitly informs us about the Mesographic and Mosaic codes of ethics also points to another system in Jeremiah 31: 31-37. Like its predecessor, this new system, far superior to the others, is also tied to a covenant (Luke 22:20). Based on Galatians 6:2 and 1 Corinthians 9:19-21, we are justified in classifying this variety the Messianic Law (MeL). MeL is promulgated, circulated, and has come to be understood as “my commands” (John 14:15), “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1: 25),<sup>40</sup> “that pattern of teaching to [which] you were entrusted” (Rom 6:17 NET), “dominical directive” (1 Cor 14: 37, our translation), “the commands of God” (Rev 14:12), as well as the “but I [*egō*] say on to you” refinements of the Sermon on the Mount. In all of these NT genres, the ethical imperative is evident. MeL was first announced by Jeremiah 31:31-37 (cf. Isa 55:3; Eze 16:60), and even a fragment from the Qumran community (4Q521) appears to anticipate (or reflect) it, “. . . [the hea]vens and the earth will listen to His Messiah, and none therein will stray from *the commandments* of the holy ones[*q<sup>e</sup>dôsim*].”<sup>41</sup>

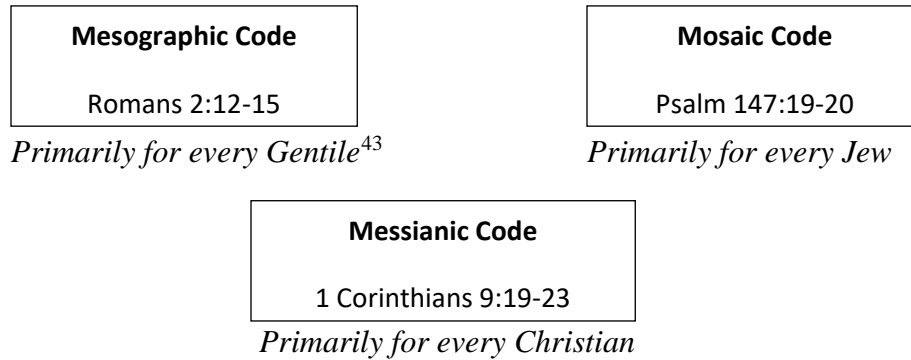
So where in the book of Acts do we find evidence of such a code of ethics? Chapter 1 with its dominical directives to wait (in prayer?) in Jerusalem for the coming of the Spirit, along with the devotedness of the three-thousand strong to the apostolic didache (2:42) all point in that direction. (The Jesus tradition in Acts 20:34-35 qualifies as well.) The resolve of apostles to give themselves to prayer and proclamation in chapter 6 seems to be another example. The Jerusalem Council (JC), with its strategic placement in the narrative should not be overlooked in this regard. The rhetoric of 15:11 (cf. 15:26b) is a timely reminder that there is a new Lord. One wonders as well if the statements concerning the salvific grace of the lord in verse 11, supernatural acts of God in verse 12, and the shared goodness of the Spirit in verse 28 are not theologically pregnant in this regard. Almost any reading of chapter 15, then, leaves the impression that the Messianic lordship and law (seen as a unit) is prominent and preeminent, and the Mosaic law which bears witness to it is to seen as a backdrop—an important backdrop to the

<sup>39</sup> W. A. VanGemen, “The Law is the Perfection of Righteousness in Jesus Christ: A Reformed Perspective,” in *The Law, The Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views*, ed. Greg L. Bahnsen et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 21. We agree with VanGemen although we express some reservation about the virtual immutability of the law.

<sup>40</sup> C. L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James: Exegetical Commentary on New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 91-92. On Lukan chiasm, see also Blomberg, “Midrash, Chiasmus, and the Outline of Luke’s Central Section,” in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, Vol. 3, ed. R.T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 217-261. On p. 234 Blomberg reports that C.H. Talbert (*Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* [Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974], 56-58) “finds a chiasmus in Acts 15:1-21:26.”

<sup>41</sup> Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1997), 391-392. Italics added. The “holy ones” in Hebrew could also be construed as singular (the Holy One) as in Prov. 9:10; taken this way the reference is to YHWH and not to the saints. Cf. also the following with its NT fulfilment: “He who liberates the captives, restores sight to the blind, straightens the b[ent] . . . . For He will heal the wounded, and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor.”

drama of redemption nonetheless—but should never be foregrounded in any shape or form.<sup>42</sup>In this way the book of Acts (and the mission it promotes) is in sync with the other documents that make up the literature of the new covenant. In sum, the three codes of ethics that govern the world look like this:



Interestingly, from a historical perspective the first (mesographic) code is tied to creation as a necessary component of the image of God; the last (Messianic) is intimately connected to the new creation (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). Both the first and the last are written within (Rom 2:14-15; Jer 31:31-33, respectively). It is the second that is written on stone, possibly suggesting its interim character.

All three codes, it is to be noted, have the same ‘Parent’ and constitute a graphic triplet. This accounts for their strong resemblance. That there are differences among the three ‘sisters’ no one denies. The difficulty is to work out how much continuity or discontinuity there is between the Mosaic that gladly plays the role of a John Baptist in pointing to the Messiah (cf. Luke 24:13-49) and the Messianic which underscores the importance of the former (Matt 5:17-21).

Once the council members were able to have a consensus on the centrality and cruciality of the Messianic categorical, they had no qualms in expressing the sentiments of 15:28-29. With this the mission delineated in 1:8 can resume with clearer lines of integrity and conviction, for the Messianic code (unlike its typological predecessor) not only sends (evangelisation); it is also the main basis of the process of strengthening believers new and old (edification).

With the Council out of the way, Luke returns to the itinerary of first-century Christian missionary engagement. The council, however, reminds the reader that such engagement needs the kind of theological reflection that would encourage humility in the face of divine authority (13:48), engender a proper sense of industry and accountability (14:21-28), and ensure as much as possible spiritual integrity vis-à-vis the missionary context in its proper canonical alignment

<sup>42</sup>Conzelmann’s comment on 15:20 to the effect that “The intention of the [apostolic] decree is not to retain the Law as valid, not even symbolically or ‘in principle’” may be too strong; *Acts*, 118. For a more nuanced approach, see Justin Taylor, “The Jerusalem Decrees (Acts 15.20,29 and 21.25) and the Incident at Antioch,” 47 (July 2001): 372-380.

<sup>43</sup>Borrowed from *mesographos* “drawn [or written] in the middle [heart?]” (H. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon 1997], 500).

(15:15-41).<sup>44</sup> In the following chapter, Paul is once again on the move, this time with a new colleague. His next challenge (Acts 16:1ff), though not overtly theological as the council, is not without doctrinal import (16:17b: “A way of salvation” or “the way of salvation”?)

***B' Messianic Communicators Welcome the Unwilling<sup>45</sup> (Portent<sup>46</sup>): Acts 16:25-31***

The pericope (16: 25-31) illustrates another way in which people come face to face with the gospel. After the unfortunate split between the two apostles (14:14)<sup>47</sup> following the Jerusalem council, the latter chose Silas and continued the same kind of activity with which he and Barnabas were engaged in terms of edifying the relatively new converts. Following this we have an interesting discourse of Paul's itinerary in relation to the *voluntas Dei*. In verses 6 and 7 the willing witnesses are hindered from serving in the province of Asia and Bythiana but allowed to pass through “the region of Phrygia and Galatia,” (v. 6), having passed by Mysia on their way to Troas (v. 8). One wonders if Paul and Silas entertained any doubt concerning their mission (especially the former whose ‘ungrateful’ behaviour toward Barnabas, the brother who was instrumental in introducing him to the fledgling Messianic community). If they had any misgivings concerning the viability of their missionary enterprise, it was soon removed by a vision that clarified their mission, while at the same helping them to understand the perceived setbacks. The steps (as well as the stops!) of good men are ordered by the Lord.

Having arrived in Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia, the team's first converts were Lydia and members of her household. In the case of Lydia, one senses the heart of God in his eagerness to reach the heart of humanity (16:14). If there is success with Lydia, there is trouble ahead with another female. In contrast to Lydia, this one appears willing to help the evangelists announce the way. Both Bruce and more recently Schnabel express doubts concerning this superficial understanding of the girl's assistance. Bruce, for instance, suggests the following translation: “a way of salvation.”<sup>48</sup> Wallace simply labels the construction debatable.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Verses 36-40 demonstrate how Luke bought into what we may call realistic historiography, since: “The holy books of no other religion depict their followers so negatively as the Bible does the Jews and the Christians. scripture describes very graphically the doctrine that Jews and Christians are also sinners and capable of the most dreadful sins, and denounces not only the atrocities carried out by the Gentiles, but also those of the supposed (or true) people of God. This pitiless self-criticism is integral to Judaism and Christianity, in contrast to other religions. no other faith criticizes itself so severely as old testament Judaism or new testament Christianity. scripture exposes the errors of the leaders very clearly, and God often employs outsiders to recall His people to obedience” (Thomas Schirrmacker, *Towards a Theology of Martyrdom: The Persecution of Christians Concerns Us All*. [Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008], 43).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Acts 17:16-24.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. 2: 19.

<sup>47</sup> We are not quite sure what Childs means by the following: “What is of course striking is that Paul is not described as an apostle by Luke, but rather as the great missionary to the Gentiles.” Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 293.

<sup>48</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 316.

Certainly the evangelistic team was not amused with such promotion; eventually, the team was incarcerated for voicing their concern in the form of an exorcism. Verse 25 is a surprising response on the part of Paul and Silas. The fact that the prisoners heard most likely for the first time a redemption song may explain the jailer's question later in verse 30. He too was a prisoner of sort; the eyes of him and his family were open that night. The final verse of the chapter gives us a picture of the embryonic Messianic community in Macedonia. In chapter 17 the missionary team is in Thessalonica. There, for over two weeks, Paul "reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead" (Acts 17: 3). The results of Paul's exposition of the Scriptures were encouraging; willing hearts—women and men—responded positively (v 4). Others responded negatively (vv 5-10). The retreat of the missionaries, Paul and Silas, to Berea reminds one of the dominical counsel of Matt 10:23.

The Bereans, Luke informs us, appear to be model disciples from the get go (vv 11-12), but just as it was in Thessalonica, opposition came from some adherents of Judaism. This resulted in a temporary split of the team, with the apostle Paul ending up in Athens. Again Paul's ministry began in the synagogue, but it was not restricted there (v 18). His presence in the Greek capital afforded Paul the opportunity to witness to two of the most prominent philosophical groups of the day: the Epicureans and the Stoics. Keener's comment on this episode is apropos: "If Paul is like a new Socrates . . . then he, rather than the novelty-seeking Athenians (17:21), stands in continuity with the true philosophic tradition."<sup>50</sup> If philosophy is seen (broadly speaking) as a way of life, Paul was completely sold out to the Way, the Truth and the Life and was thoroughly convinced that others should be also (cf. Rom 1:1-3). This conviction takes the apostle to Corinth (18:1-27), to Ephesus (chaps 19-20), back to Jerusalem (chaps 21-26), and finally to Rome itself—all along through much trial and tribulation. In his own words, he has

*. . . been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.<sup>24</sup> Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea. . . . I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.<sup>28</sup> Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.<sup>29</sup> Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? (2 Cor 11: 23b-28 NIV).*

Whether Paul is in Jerusalem, Athens or Rome, whether incarcerated or not, like his Master, his major concern is for people, especially the Messianic community and its potential membership. This is also borne out by the final chapter of Luke's synopsis.

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<sup>49</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 101.

<sup>50</sup>C. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 3:2625.



*A.' Messianic Communicator Welcomes the Willing (Providence<sup>51</sup>): Acts 28:30-31*

One of the ways in which the Lucan plot is advanced in Acts is by the provision of a variety of progress reports.<sup>52</sup> These reports serve well the trajectory of his narrative, which moves inexorable from the religious capital (Jerusalem) to the imperial capital that was no less religious but much more pluralistic in orientation. A central part of the narrative juxtaposes the conversions of three prominent individuals who appear to be descendants of Ham, Shem and Japheth, the three men given the primary responsibility of re-populating the earth, according to the Genesis record.<sup>53</sup>

After citing a few instances of ‘mass’ conversions, Luke begins his triadic show-piece by telling the story of a Gentile treasurer, who may well have been regarded as among the first-fruits of the promise found in Psalm 68:31 (Acts 8). The third example of an individual coming under the influence of the Messiah (chapter 10) appears to be an adumbration of the final episode of Acts which is located in Rome. The centre-piece within the triad indicates Luke’s main interest in the former Semitic zealot who became the chief agent in carrying the evangel beyond the borders of Palestine into the very centre of the evil Empire. Saul of Tarsus, then, becomes for Luke the best example of a person who has fully committed herself or himself to the redemptive and imposing Messianic Presence whose power is mediated through the Pentecostal Spirit. This fact can be easily borne out by the amount of space (an estimated two-thirds of Luke’s material) dedicated to the apostle. From chapter 13 to the end, then, Paul has been Luke’s hero.<sup>54</sup> Now the hero is in Rome. Why Rome? Kilgallen’s response to this query is worth considering:

One of the teachings to Theophilus in this tumultuous century is, it seems most likely, an explanation as to how it is that he, a pagan, has become a full member of an exclusionary religion that began as thoroughly Jewish. This attention to Theophilus, it is suggested, makes necessary a story that geographically and chronologically arrives and finishes at the place where Theophilus and his community are. . . . This strongly suggests Luke’s satisfaction that he has told a story which finally arrives where Theophilus is. That Luke stops his work at Rome, 61 AD, indicates Theophilus and his church are there. By Luke’s story, Theophilus understands the truth . . . , particularly about his place in God’s plan of salvation.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Seen here as the outworking of God’s plan (26:30-32; cf. 2:23), about which Luke has much to say (e.g., 27:21-25; see also D.G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, NNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 29-32).

<sup>52</sup> See n. 10 above.

<sup>53</sup> On these, see J. Daniel Hayes, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Leicester: Apollos, 2003), 51-65, 157-180.

<sup>54</sup> For an interesting take on this hero, see Brittany E. Wilson, “The Blinding of Paul and the Power of God: Masculinity, Sight, and Self-Control in Acts 9,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 367-387.

<sup>55</sup> John Kilgallen, “Luke Wrote to Rome—a Suggestion,” *Biblica* 88 (2007), 255. For a credible proposal as to why Luke is silent on the outcome of Paul’s trial in Rome, see Daniel Marguerat, “The End of Acts (28:16-31) and the Rhetoric of Silence,” in S.E. Porter and T.H. Olbricht, eds., *Rhetoric and the NT: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (Sheffield: SAP, 1993), 74-89.

There is a sense in which the book of Acts is a tale of two cities: Jerusalem and Rome. The former was one of the largest centres of Jewry; the latter was an urban area of around a million people, roughly half of whom were slaves.<sup>56</sup> Both in Luke's first and last chiasmic frames (A-A')<sup>57</sup> he has the willing-and winning God reaching down and reaching out to "the poor . . . the prisoners . . . the blind . . . [and] the oppressed" and others (Luke 4:18) in the most significant metropolitan areas.<sup>58</sup> It is a sacrificial venture. If the Messiah (Act 2:23) and Stephen (Acts 7: 54-59) die in Jerusalem, Peter and Paul will die in Rome. The deaths of these witnesses did not signal the end of the Way (John 14:6 admits no cul-de-sac). They point to a new beginning. Put another way, Rome makes way for new frontiers (cf. Rom 1: 1-16).<sup>59</sup> So the apostle's willingness to go to Rome was an assault on the capital of Empire, not to take life but to give life through the One whose life was taken by Rome.

In chapter 28:30, Paul's willingness was matched by that of his visitors, and, in a sense, by Rome in allowing him the privilege of proclaiming another king and kingdom (28:31). If Luke's first volume begins with the Anointed One *par excellence* (Luke 4:18), his second ends with another anointed (Acts 13:46; Isa 49:6) who takes his paradigmatic role with the utmost seriousness (e.g., 1 Cor 11:1). So does Luke. And it was after the first missionary journey of Barnabas and Paul, sent out from Antioch, that Luke reports the first major theological and missiological discussion, involving the two main centres of Christianity at the time. After the apostolic council and the promulgation of the first and foremost of letters of earliest Christianity, Luke began to narrow his focus on the life of one missionary whose training and commissioning made him especially equipped to embody and expound the significance of the Jerusalem-council letter that has so much import for the Messianic community in general and Gentile evangelisation in particular.

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<sup>56</sup>Stanley Porter, *The Letter to the Romans: A linguistic and Literary Commentary* (Sheffield: Phoenix, 2015), 4.

<sup>57</sup> The other points of the frame, especially B-B', suffuse the book of Acts.

<sup>58</sup> On God's heart for the upper echelon of Roman society, see James Edwards, "'Public Theology' in Luke-Acts: The Witness of the Gospel to Powers and Authorities," *NTS* 62 / Issue 02 (April 2016): 227 – 252. Says Noelliste: "Luke's interest in . . . the salvation [Christ offers embraces] the weak, the vulnerable and the outcast . . . 8:1-3; 13:10-17 (women), 17:11-19(men), 18:15-17 (children), and 23: 39-43 (the dying). Not even the rich escaped his notice (18:18-30; 19:1-10) ("Christ and Liberation," in *Diverse and Creative Voices*, 89).

<sup>59</sup>If Christianity back then was "turning the world upside down," and if in the twentieth century it was the opiate of the people, it remains today an equal opportunity 'fix'; what it did to Rome it will do to other cities. Luke wrote after the dispatch of the book of Romans, knowing fully well that the Gospel did not leave that city untouched. If Luke was familiar with Ephesians, he would have known also that Artemis of Ephesus was unfavourably compared with the people of God in 2:10. In other words, if the temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the world, God's 'poem' outlasted them all, and is the only temple that will make it into eternity (Matt 16:18).

### Summary and Conclusion

In this paper I have posited that Luke employed chiasmus<sup>60</sup> to delineate the way in which the gospel reached Rome from Jerusalem. The structure highlights certain divine initiatives<sup>61</sup> (two centrifugal and two centripetal) that engaged the Messianic community in a dominically mandated and motivated mission. A fifth initiative, the centrepiece of the macrostructure, focuses attention on the dire importance of theological discussion for the enterprise of gospel contextualization.

Finally, it true that chiasm (like beauty) is in the eyes of the beholder, and there is arguably nothing more beautiful to behold than the divine plan of cosmic liberation—a “chiasmus *in distance*.”<sup>62</sup> The cosmic character of this emancipation is seen especially in Rom 8:18-23, and from a comparison between the old and the new creation: in the former, the Creator-turned-Liberator started with the material universe before the creation of humanity (Gen 1); in the latter, humanity takes precedence. The comparison also reveals the following chiastic macro-structure: A-Material Universe (Gen 1:1-25), B-Image-bearers (Gen 1:26-31), B'- Image-bearers (2 Cor 5:17), A'- Material Universe (Rev 21-22; cf. 2 Pet 3). Although Luke-Acts began with this larger B'-panel and stops short of A', the writer was well aware of the cosmic character of liberation—from *Adam*—the first image-bearing son (Luke 3:38) to the *Apokatastasis*—the final immaculate salvation (Acts 3:21).

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<sup>60</sup>See Appendix. In commenting on Luke 9:6, Darrell Bock (Luke *1:1-9:50*, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 817-818) observes: “By way of conclusion, Luke summarizes the mission briefly by referring to two primary tasks of the twelve: preaching the good news and healing (so also Acts 13:3 with 14:1-18). These are the same two categories with which Luke introduced the passage (Luke 9:1-2), except that he now gives them in reverse order (9:2 also spoke about the kingdom). The summary thus forms an *inclusio* with the introduction (Bovon 1989: 460). Some have pointed out the *inclusio* of Acts 1:6 (‘kingdom’) and 28:31 (‘kingdom’)”; the reverse order relative to the Lukan mission mentioned by Bock appears to parallel the purported macro-structure of Luke’s second volume.

<sup>61</sup>See also Beverly Gaventa, “Initiatives Divine and Human in the Lukan Story World,” in G.N. Stanton et al. eds., *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 79-89. According to J.B. Green (*The Gospel of Luke* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 830), “[T]he story of Luke-Acts is, in large part, the tale of two competing purposes---that of God and that which opposes God.”

<sup>62</sup>A. Dimarco, “Rhetoric and Hermeneutic—on a Rhetorical Pattern: Chiasmus and Circularity,” in Porter and Olbricht, *Rhetoric and the NT*, 484; italics original.

## APPENDIX

*Chiasmus and the Book of Acts*

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**A. Plan: *Messianic Community Go willingly (Acts 1:5-8)***

**B. Persecution: *The Messianic Community Goes unwillingly (Acts 8:1-4)***

**C. Protestation: *The Messianic Covenanters Come together willingly to Discuss the Cruciality of Canonical Soteriology for the Purpose of Mission (Acts 15:1-33)***

**B.' Portent: *Messianic Communicators Welcome the Unwilling (Acts 16:25-31)***

**A.' Providence: *Messianic Communicator Welcomes the Willing (Acts 28:30-31)***

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***Chiasmus that includes the Book of Acts***

(CREATION OLD AND NEW—Luke 3:38; Acts 3:21)

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<b>A-Material Universe</b>	<b>(Gen 1:1-25)</b>
<b>B-Image Bearers</b>	<b>(Gen 1:26-31)</b>
<b>B' - Image Bearers</b>	<b>(Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17)</b>
<b>A' - Material Universe</b>	<b>(Rev 21-22; 2 Pet 3)</b>

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