

Is Luke an Exponent of

'Early Protestantism'?

Church Order in the Lukan Writings

(continued)

by Kevin Giles

The first part of Mr Giles' article appeared in THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY 54, 1982, page 193. In this second part he discusses Christian leadership in the early church as presented by Luke and finds further evidence that it is inappropriate to regard Luke's ecclesiology as 'early catholic'.

FORMS OF LEADERSHIP

In his gospel Luke emphasises that discipleship is a costly matter.⁶¹ Those who would follow Christ must take up their cross daily and follow him. The same demands are made upon all. The twelve are not asked to make any extra sacrifice or to offer any additional service. They are not elite disciples: they are not at the top of a spiritual hierarchy. In fact Jesus emphatically rejects such ideas. In the context of the Last Supper Luke includes the account of the dispute about who is the greatest (Lk. 22:24ff) in which Jesus lays down the principle: 'Let the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader as the one who serves' (22:26). Schweizer sums up the meaning of these words in the following way: 'Special ministry takes place in the Church only in special subordination.'⁶² Luke stresses that service is basic to all discipleship in his many parables which speak of the master's servants and of their duties.⁶³ Those who would lead in the Christian community are not rulers but servants.

In the book of Acts 'spiritual egalitarianism'⁶⁴ still prevails although now Luke must take into account the reality of leadership within the Christian community other than that of Christ himself. The apostles, the prophets and the elders are the leaders Luke mentions, and we will

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⁶¹ I discuss Luke's ideas on discipleship as seen in his Gospel in detail in my essay 'The Church in the Gospel of Luke', *SJT* 34, 1981, 121-146.

⁶² *Church Order in the New Testament*, London, 1961, 178.

⁶³ Lk. 12:36-40, 12:41-48, 14:16-24, 17:7-10, 19:12-27.

⁶⁴ The community approves Peter's suggestion to select a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:15f.) and the apostles' suggestion to appoint 'the Seven' to serve tables (6:1-6). It sends out and receives messengers (11:22, 14:26f., 15:3f., 40). It even calls Peter to account (11:1f.). It also approves the decision of the council at Jerusalem (15:22). However, O. Linton, *Das problem der Urkirche in der neueren Forschung*, Uppsala, 1932, 189-194, reminds us that the early community can only be understood in its given cultural context and that to use words such as 'egalitarian' or 'democratic' is not strictly appropriate.

discuss each of these in a moment, but he does not present them as ecclesiastical office bearers who stand apart from or above other Christians. Thus the most common designation Luke gives to the whole community is 'the brethren',⁶⁵ he stresses that the Spirit is given to all, and he allows that some of the most significant advances in the spread of the Gospel are made by ordinary disciples.⁶⁶ Harnack calls these people 'informal missionaries'.⁶⁷ When Jewish priests become believers (Acts 6:7) no special function is given to them.

The Apostles

4 The difficulty of determining Luke's theological perspective from an examination of a descriptive narrative is illustrated by the discussion of Luke's understanding of apostleship. While it is agreed that for Luke 'the twelve' are apostles in a unique sense, there has been much scholarly debate as to their distinctive role. Different details in Acts are brought forward to substantiate different positions. For some scholars the primary role of the apostles is ecclesiastical leadership.⁶⁸ Evidence for this view is found in the prominence given to Peter and John and from such passages as Acts 2:42, 6:1-6 and 15:6-29 where the apostles are singled out from other disciples. But in response one may note that Luke never presents the apostles as leaders of local congregations, does not make other ministries dependent on them,⁶⁹ and nowhere suggests that their apostolate is transmissible.⁷⁰ Their prominence in the early part of Acts may be given to them by Luke simply because their

⁶⁵ Some 25 times.

⁶⁶ Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:4ff.), others in Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (Acts 11:19), and yet others apparently even in Rome, for when Paul arrives in Rome he is met by 'brethren' (Acts 28:15). Luke's explicit mention of the brethren from Rome makes Haenchen's thesis (op.cit., 720), that it is the intent of the author of Acts to make Paul the founder of the church in Rome, quite untenable.

⁶⁷ *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, Gloucester, Mass., Torch Book Ed., 1961 319, 368.

⁶⁸ Campenhausen, op.cit., 14, says that for Luke 'the twelve were the real leaders and governors of the primitive community'. So also E. Schweizer, op.cit., 70.

⁶⁹ The only possible exception to this would be in the story of the appointment of 'the seven' (6:1-6), but see the discussion of this incident below.

⁷⁰ The twelve are never said to have instituted the presbyterate nor are the prophets dependent on them. The twelve apostles, by Luke's definition in Acts 1:21f., are a chronologically limited phenomenon. E. Nellessen, *Zeugnis für Jesus und das Wort: Exegetische Untersuchungen zum lukanischen Zeugnisbegriff*, Köln-Bonn, 1976, 178 concludes, on the basis of his critical redactional study of Acts 1:15-26, that 'Mit keinem Wort deutet die Perikope an, dass es sich bei der Zeugenschaft um ein Amt handelt. Wohl bedarf es für die Funktion des Zeugnisgebens einer Designation oder Weisung Jesu'.

prestigious position, as original disciples of Jesus, made it appropriate. If this is the case then it is not theologically motivated. Another possibility is that for Luke the twelve apostles were essentially missionaries.⁷¹ This might be deduced from their commission in Acts 1:8 (cf. Lk. 24:47) but besides some preaching in Jerusalem Luke does not allow that the twelve do any missionary work apart from the activity of Peter and John in Samaria (8:25).⁷² Yet another opinion is that the twelve apostles are, for Luke, the regents or leaders of the new Israel.⁷³ Appeal is here made to Lk. 22:30 and to the symbolism of the number twelve. But in his version of this pericope, Luke leaves out the number 'twelve' before thrones and so implies that the promise is to all disciples. Moreover, Luke does not portray the Christian community as a break-away movement from Israel being something altogether new.⁷⁴ What then is the primary role or function of the twelve apostles in Acts? We suggest it is twofold: symbolic and authenticative.

The symbolic role of the apostles is seen in Luke's emphasis on the number twelve. It is his belief that the apostles were twelve in number and this fact is of fundamental importance. His redaction of Mk. 14:10 (= Matt. 26:4) clearly discloses this concern. Mark describes Judas 'ὁ εἰς τῶν δώδεκα' which Luke changes to the more elaborate 'ὄντα ἐκ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ τῶν δώδεκα' (Lk. 22:3). This would seem to imply that Luke thought 'Judas belonged to a group for which the number twelve was constitutive'.⁷⁵ Luke's account of the choice of a successor for Judas shows this same stress on the number twelve (Acts. 1:21ff). Klein calls the passage the 'lukanischen Magna Carta des Zwölfapostolats'.⁷⁶ The point of the story is not that twelve men are needed for the task but that the apostles must number twelve. No attempt is made to fill the place of the martyred James (Acts 12:2). Death removes James from the work but not from the number, whereas Judas' apostasy and death removes him both from the number and the work.⁷⁷ Luke did not invent the

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⁷¹ That the twelve apostles should be understood as missionaries is one of the oldest traditions about them. See I Clement 42:3f.; Justin, *Apology* 1:39:3; Hermas, *Sim.* 9:25:2. That this is Luke's view is advocated today by W. Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church*, London, ET 1971, 247ff.

⁷² Haenchen, *op.cit.*, 144, n 1.

⁷³ S. Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke*, Rome, 1963, 64, 96; J. Fitzmeyer, 'Jewish Christianity in Acts in the Light of the Qumran Scrolls', *Studies in Luke-Acts*, 235; A. R. C. Leaney, *The Gospel According to St Luke*, London, 1958, 270 *et al.*

⁷⁴ Jervell, *op.cit.* 41-74.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁷⁶ G. Klein, *Die Zwölf Apostel*, Göttingen, 1961, 204.

⁷⁷ K. H. Rengstorf, 'Die Wahl des Matthias', *Studia Theologica*, 15, 1962, 35-67; C. K. Barrett, *The Signs of an Apostle*, London 1970, 48.

story of the appointment of Matthias but he does draw the scene with great vividness and locate it in a context which highlights its importance.⁷⁸ He inserts the story of the restoration of the twelfth apostle between the ascension of Jesus and the giving of the Holy Spirit, two events which according to Acts 2:33 belong together. It does not seem to overstate the case to say that Luke believed that the Spirit could not be given until the number twelve was restored.

The fact that there are twelve apostles and twelve only is consistently maintained by Luke in the early chapters of Acts. Acts 1:2 speaks of 'the apostles whom he had chosen'. The use of ἐξελέξατο reflects Lk. 6:13 — 'he called his disciples, and chose (ἐκλεξάμενος) from them twelve whom he named apostles'. In Acts 1:12f. the names of the eleven are given and they are differentiated from the other disciples present. In Acts 6 Luke equates the titles 'the twelve' (6:2) and 'the apostles' (6:6). In contrast to Luke's practice in his Gospel, the twelve apostles are never called in Acts by the more general title 'the disciples'. The tendency, if anything, is rather to clearly distinguish between the twelve apostles and the disciples (see Acts 2:42, 6:2, 6, 8:1, 11:1, 15:22).

6 It is widely agreed that this stress on the number twelve carries symbolic or typological significance. Often it has been interpreted to mean that the twelve apostles are the counterpart of the twelve patriarchs and are thus the founding fathers of a new Israel — a new religion. But this is certainly not Luke's understanding of the twelve. The Christian way for him is not a new religion but a restoration of Israel. For Luke the twelve symbolise the fact that God in Christ is restoring Israel to what it should be. The Christian community is Israel — true Israel. All who recognise Jesus as the Messiah are drawn within the fold (15:14) and those Jews who reject him are 'to be destroyed from the people (λαός)' (3:23). The number twelve therefore emphasises not a break with the past but continuity with it.⁷⁹

The second role that Luke gives to the twelve apostles is their activity as witnesses.⁸⁰ Here we see how the material in the Gospel account prepares for the definition of their work in Acts. The qualifications demanded for one to be appointed a member of this select group are laid down in Acts 1:21f. Such a person must have accompanied Jesus

⁷⁸ Haenchen, *op.cit.* 163.

⁷⁹ Jervell, 75ff.

⁸⁰ This is stressed by B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, Copenhagen, 1964, 221ff.; C. H. Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics*, Nashville, 1966, 17ff.; U. Wilckens, 'Kerygma und Evangelium bei Lukas' *ZNW* 49, 1958, pp. 288ff.; E. Franklin, *Christ the Lord: A study in the Purpose and Theology of Luke-Acts*, London, 1975, 96; Nellesen, *op.cit.*, 76 *et al.*

during the time 'he went in and out amongst us' and specifically be a 'witness of his resurrection'. Thus the primary role of the twelve apostles is that they are Christ's witnesses (μάρτυρες) who testify (μαρτύριον) to everything about him, particularly his resurrection. In Acts 4:20 (*cf.* 26:16) we read, in terms of common Jewish legal usage, that the apostles, as reliable witnesses, only bear witness to what they have seen and heard. In the early preaching Luke repeats the claim that all that is proclaimed is based on apostolic witness (2:22f, 3:12f, 4:8f, 5:29f, 10:34f). In this role they are the guarantors of the Word which brings the Christian community into existence. They are, however, not the only witnesses for all the disciples who followed Jesus from the time of John's ministry until the ascension can perform this function (Acts 1:21-22),⁸¹ but nevertheless they are singled out by Luke as 'die bevorzugten Zeugen'.⁸²

Once Luke can show that the authenticity of the kerygma had been established and that Israel had been reconstituted, the importance of the twelve apostles diminishes. They cease to be prominent after Acts 6 and fade from the picture as the Gentile mission gets under way. Thus the Jerusalem community send Barnabas to Antioch (11:22), whereas before the apostles sent Peter and John to Samaria (8:14). And it is to certain elders in Jerusalem that the Christians in Antioch send famine relief (11:30), whereas earlier it was the apostles who cared for the needy (6:1-3). Indeed once the twelve apostles' basic role is exhausted the title 'apostle' is not limited solely to the twelve. In Acts 14:4 and 14⁸³ Paul and Barnabas are explicitly called apostles. They are not apostles in the same sense as the twelve for neither Paul nor Barnabas can meet both qualifications needed to be numbered among the twelve (see Acts 1:21-22) but rather they are apostles in the sense that they have been sent out as pioneer missionaries. In this usage Luke reflects the Pauline understanding of the term apostle.⁸⁴

Although Luke cannot number Paul among the twelve he does everything he can to give Paul a status equal to that of any of the twelve. This can be seen by noting that —

(a) Luke makes Peter and Paul virtual equals in the overall story of Acts;

⁸¹ Nellesen, *op.cit.*, 100 ff. Stephen's inclusion in the circle of witnesses is to be noted (Acts 22:20).

⁸² Nellesen, *ibid.*, p.210.

⁸³ The Western text (D, d, h, gig, pesh.) of Acts 14:14 omits οἱ ἀπόστολοι but h reads *apostolos* in verse 9 instead of *Paulum*.

⁸⁴ It is important to note that Paul never explicitly speaks of twelve apostles. He uses the term of an undefined number of persons; once he speaks of 'the twelve' (1 Cor. 15:5).

- (b) Luke emphasises the importance of Paul's vision of the risen Christ by giving three accounts of it. This enables Paul to meet one of Luke's qualifications for apostleship, that of being a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:21). Accordingly Paul is made to speak frequently of the resurrection (Acts 22:15, 23:6, 24:15,21, 26:6-8, 19,23);
- (c) In the vision of Ananias Paul is described as 'a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel' (9:15), while in Luke's second account of Paul's conversion he is commissioned by the risen Christ with the words: 'Depart, for I will send you (ἐξαποστέλλειν) far away to the Gentiles' (22:21);
- (d) The witness terminology used of the special function of the twelve is also applied by Luke to Paul. Indeed in the second half of Acts Paul is the witness *par excellence*. He is commissioned by the risen Christ as a 'witness' (22:15, 26:16) and in his mission is frequently said to bear witness (18:5, 20:21, 24, 23:11, 26:22, 28:23).

8 We can agree that Luke develops the idea that the twelve are apostles in a special sense but it is quite untenable to argue that all this is a Lukan invention.⁸⁵ In all the Gospels and in Paul, the twelve are singled out. Mark in particular makes them the guarantors of the Jesus tradition,⁸⁶ he and Matthew call the twelve apostles,⁸⁷ and Paul knows of an early and distinct group of apostles in Jerusalem.⁸⁸ Moreover, Luke allows that other people than the twelve can be called apostles (see Acts 14:4, 14).⁸⁹ He does not limit this title to the twelve or even to the twelve plus Paul, restrictions which became common in the second century. We cannot hold therefore that Luke's understanding of apostleship is late, let alone that it is a reflection of early catholicism. If anything, Luke's stress on the symbolic role of the twelve⁹⁰ and on their authenticating function⁹¹ may well reflect the earliest understanding of their role — that of Jesus himself.

⁸⁵ So Klein, *op.cit.*, *passim*. See Schmithal's detailed criticism of this argument. (*op.cit.*, 265-272).

⁸⁶ This is the central thesis of R. P. Meye's study, *Jesus and the Twelve, Discipleship and Revelation in Mark's Gospel*, Grand Rapids, 1968.

⁸⁷ Mk. 6:30; Matt. 10:2.

⁸⁸ Gal. 1:9. Paul does not explicitly speak here of twelve apostles in Jerusalem but he does allude to a specific group of apostles resident in Jerusalem. Does he mean the twelve and James? On this passage see the good discussion by J. A. Kirk, 'Apostleship Since Rengstorf: Towards a Synthesis', *NTS* 21, 1975, 260-261.

⁸⁹ Paul and Barnabas: Acts 14:4, 14.

⁹⁰ Matt. 19:28 is usually taken to reflect very early tradition. So S. Freyne, *The Twelve Disciples and Apostles*, London 1968, 40ff.

⁹¹ So Meye, *op.cit.*

Elders

As the undisputed Pauline epistles never mention elders, Luke's summary statement in Acts 14:23 which says that Paul and Barnabas 'appointed elders for them in every church', is frequently taken to reflect a later understanding of ministerial office.⁹² But this widely held opinion has little to commend it. Luke does not depict Christian elders as formal ecclesiastical office bearers and it seems that senior Christians, at least in Palestine, assumed some responsibility from the very earliest days of the Christian mission.⁹³

The first reference to *πρεσβύτεροι* in Acts appears in the Joel quotation in Acts 2:17ff. This prophecy, Luke believed, was fulfilled when the Spirit came upon the disciples. It meant that: 'Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men (*νεανίσκοι*) shall see visions and your old men (*πρεσβύτεροι*) shall dream dreams, yea, and on my men-servants and my maid-servants, in those days, I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy'. The picture is of a charismatic community in which men and women, young and old, all God's servants exercise prophetic gifts. It is programmatic of what Luke is going to tell us about the inner life of the Christian community. That Luke has reflected upon the significance of these words is suggested by the two alterations of the LXX text of Joel 2:28. Luke sets out the comment about the *νεανίσκοι* before that about the *πρεσβύτεροι* and adds the pronoun *μου* to *δούλους* and *δούλας*. The alteration in order can be explained by the fact that in his narrative Luke mentions *νεανίσκοι* (Acts 5:10) before he mentions Christian *πρεσβύτεροι* (Acts 11:30), while the addition of the two pronouns may be understood as an interpretative device to transform Joel's slaves, a third category for him,⁹⁴ into a description of the whole Christian community. The disciples are to be thought of as 'slaves' of God.⁹⁵

This suggests that Luke intends his readers to regard the mention of

⁹² Haenchen, *op.cit.*, 436; Schweizer, *op.cit.*, 71; G. Bornkamm, *TDNT*, 6, 665, *et al.*

⁹³ So E. Schweizer, *op.cit.*, 47; Goppelt, *op.cit.*, 86. Goppelt points out that 'we cannot determine geographically the limits of the Palestinian influence:' and therefore, he adds, 'it is quite possible that this title though not used in Macedonia, Greece or Rome, was used in parts of Asia Minor from the very first'. He asks if the title 'elder' was not used by Paul because 'this name for an office was foreign to Hellenistic man, even to Hellenistic synagogues, or was it because there was no place in principle for an office of this type in the Pauline Church' (as H. von Campenhausen *op.cit.*, 20ff. and others have argued). He suggests that the first reason is the most plausible.

⁹⁴ So Haenchen, *op.cit.*, 179.

⁹⁵ Luke's interest in *δούλος* as a term to describe the disciples is to be noted. See Lk. 12:37, 43, 45, 46, 46, 14:17, 21, 22, 23, 17:7, 9, 10, 19:13, 15, 17, 22, Acts 4:29, 16:17.

πρεσβύτεροι in the Joel passage as significant and to understand that the term refers simply to senior members of the community. Thus he speaks of νεανίσκοι at 5:10 and Christian πρεσβύτεροι at 11:30 without further introduction or comment. He does not record a formal institution of an order of elders because he does not know of such a thing⁹⁶

This picture of elders is confirmed by Acts 20:28 where it is said that the elders of Ephesus had been made 'guardians'⁹⁷ of the flock by the Holy Spirit. It is to be noted that Luke does not say Paul or the Spirit made them elders but that the Spirit had made them, as elders, guardians of the flock. Only time can give seniority and only the Spirit can give gifts of leadership.

That Luke's understanding of Christian elders reflects, to some degree, the parallel phenomenon in Palestinian Judaism is to be accepted,⁹⁸ but a study of this usage does not prepare us for the emergence of a class of Christian elders who are elders by ordination, set apart for a specific spiritual ministry, as is often assumed.⁹⁹ In Palestinian Judaism two types of elders were known. There were elders in the Jewish Sanhedrin who are mentioned in all the Gospels and appear throughout the book of Acts (4:5, 8, 23, 6:12, 23:14, 24:1, 25:15).¹⁰⁰ These elders were senior lay representatives of the patrician families in Jerusalem and as the function of the Sanhedrin was essentially judicial, its members must be thought of as judges first and foremost. Secondly each local Jewish community had 'elders' who were its civil and religious leaders. They were laymen who gained their recognition and title on the basis of age and social standing. In the New Testament they are mentioned only in Luke 7:3.

These elders were not office bearers in the synagogues as is almost

⁹⁶ Although Acts 6:1-6 has been taken as the institution of the presbyterate, (so A. M. Farrer, 'The Ministry in the New Testament', *The Apostolic Ministry*, ed. K. E. Kirk, London 1957, 138ff., p.143), we assume that the νεανίσκοι of Acts 5:10 are simply young men in the congregation who like the πρεσβύτεροι are distinguished by age. However, on the use of the former term see J. H. Elliott, 'Ministry and Church Order in the N.T.: A Traditio-Historical Analysis (1 Pet. 5:1-5 & p11s)', *CBQ* 32, 1970 370ff.

⁹⁷ There is no basis in this text for the equation of bishops and elders. The noun ἐπίσκοπος is used to describe their function: it is not a title. So Schweizer, *op.cit.*, 71.

⁹⁸ So Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6, 651ff.; M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Minnesota, ET, 1972 77ff. and especially A. E. Harvey, 'Elders', *JTS*, 1974, 25, 318-332.

⁹⁹ As Harvey, *ibid*, 332ff., stresses.

¹⁰⁰ It is to be noted that Luke continues to speak of Jewish elders after having introduced Christian elders.

universally believed.¹⁰¹ The synagogue had but two office bearers: the ruler of the synagogue (ἀρχισυνάγωγος, Lk. 8:41, 13:14, Acts 18:8, 17) and the 'servant' (ὑπηρέτης, Lk. 4:20).¹⁰² The former decided who should lead in prayer, read the lessons and preach; the latter executed the orders of the ruler and served the community in other ways. In neither case however were they 'ministers' as we know them in the modern church. The synagogue was always a lay institution.

As Luke demonstrates an intimate knowledge of Jewish communal life and of synagogue practice we would expect him to tell us if he understood Christian elders in some new and distinctive way, but this is just what he does not do. The impression he gives is that Christian elders parallel Jewish elders: they are senior persons who are respected and honoured because of their age. They are the 'natural' leaders of that time and culture, and thus the very people through whom the Spirit would be expected to work when leadership was needed.

A similar understanding of Christian elders is seen elsewhere in the New Testament.¹⁰³ In 1 Peter 5:1-4 the apostle addresses the elders and instructs them on how to shepherd the flock. Clearly these elders have some pastoral responsibility but in the next verse he continues — 'in the same way (ὁμοίως signifies a logical connection) you young men (νεώτεροι) should be subservient to elders.' In other words Peter considers elders as congregational leaders and demands that they be respected because of their maturity in years. This contrast between the elders and younger Christians also appears in 1 Tim. 5:1ff. Here Timothy is told that elders are not to be rebuked but exhorted, 'as you would a father', whereas younger men (νεώτεροι) are to be treated as brothers. These senior Christians are mentioned again, a few verses later, when a distinction is made between 'the elders who rule well' and those who 'labour in preaching and teaching'. (1 Tim. 5:17).¹⁰⁴ In the

¹⁰¹ All office bearers were elders but all elders were not office bearers.

¹⁰² See further E. M. Schürer, *The Jewish People at the Time of Jesus*, Edinburgh, ET, 1893, 2:2, 63ff.

¹⁰³ So Harvey, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

¹⁰⁴ The witness of I Clement is also important. In this letter πρεσβύτεροι are obviously senior members of the congregation who because of their age should be respected and allowed to lead. Clement's repeated argument against those in revolt is that they should honour the elders because of their seniority (91:3, 3:3, 21:6). These πρεσβύτεροι are clearly understood as congregational leaders (44:5, 47:6, 54:2, 57:1). That Clement considers their leadership is based simply on seniority is seen in 1:3 and 21:6 where subjection to leaders (ἡγούμενοι) is the same as honour due to the aged, and in 3:3 where the problems of Corinth are designated as a rebellion of the young. Thus the πρεσβύτεροι at Corinth are what we might call 'a patriarchal college'. Bornkamm, *op.cit.*, 672 and also Harvey, *op.cit.*, 327.

case where a young man held a position of responsible Christian leadership in the early Church, special comment is made.¹⁰⁵ Since Timothy is young, Paul urges him not to let others hold him in disrespect (1 Tim. 4:12). The need for such a comment suggests that leadership by young men was exceptional.

It is interesting to note that in Acts Luke does not prescribe any specific function to Christian elders. He allows that their work varied from place to place and from time to time. In Acts 11:30 elders appear to be responsible for famine relief and in this capacity they fulfil a role similar to that of the seven (Acts 6:1-6) and of the later deacons. In Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22 the apostles and the elders form a council to decide on a practical and doctrinal issue and as such seem to reflect a Christian version of the Sanhedrin.¹⁰⁶ In Acts 20:28 the elders of Ephesus are overseers of the flock. In Acts 21:18 the elders resemble a synagogue council with James as the leader.¹⁰⁷ It could be that some of these roles were already defined in earlier pre-Lukan tradition¹⁰⁸ but the point is that by preserving this material Luke shows that he does not have a dogmatic understanding of the term πρεσβύτερος. For him Christian elders were not a class of office bearers appointed by ordination with a specific function, but rather senior Christians who in the power of the Spirit took responsibility and offered leadership in many different contexts.

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We now can return to Acts 14:23 where we are told that Paul and Barnabas 'appointed elders' for the churches of Derbe, Lystra and Iconium. The verb translated 'appoint' is χειροτονεῖω which means 'to choose or elect', a procedure which in the Greek city-states was carried out by a show of hands.¹⁰⁹ 'To choose' is the meaning of the word in its only other New Testament occurrence (12 Cor. 8:19) as well as in its three occurrences in Ignatius and in the one occurrence in the Didache.¹¹⁰ Thus Luke is not depicting an ordination scene but a selection process. This probably involved either the naming of certain senior Christians as leaders of the new communities on the basis of the gifts given to them by the Spirit (*cf* Acts 20:28), or the appointment of certain senior Christians to specific ministries.

If then our arguments are correct, Luke does not introduce us, with his references to Christian πρεσβύτεροι, to a ministerial office, instituted by ordination and with specific responsibilities. Rather he

¹⁰⁵ A similar exhortation is made by Ignatius (*Magn.* 3) on behalf of the bishop of Magnesia who is also a young man.

¹⁰⁶ Bornkamm, *op.cit.*, 662; Gerhardsson, *op.cit.*, 251.

¹⁰⁷ Bornkamm, *op.cit.*, 663.

¹⁰⁸ Bornkamm, *op.cit.*, 663.

¹⁰⁹ See *A. & G.*, 889.

¹¹⁰ *Phil.* 10:1; *Smyrn.* 11:2; *Poly.* 7:2; *Did.* 15:1.

reflects a situation in which the Holy Spirit selects and empowers certain senior Christians, in a given locality, for various kinds of leadership. They are like Jewish elders in that they are senior lay men who are honoured and respected because of their age, but they are unlike Jewish elders in that they are men of the Spirit, leaders of the community of 'the last days'.

Prophets

Although Luke is able, through the Joel quotation in Acts 2:17ff., to introduce the term elder, his primary focus in this passage is on Joel's prediction that when the Spirit is given to God's people 'in the last days' it would mean a widespread outbreak of prophetic activity, including visions and dreams.¹¹¹ Luke's belief that the coming of the Holy Spirit gave to the first converts the gift of prophecy is reflected in Acts 2:17f., 4:31, 10:46 and 19:6.¹¹² The experience of prophetic inspiration may also be seen in Luke's description of certain people as being 'filled with the Spirit' on a particular occasion (*e.g.* Acts 2:4, 4:8, 31, 9:17, 13:9). The confidence of inspiration is clearly evident when Luke speaks of the boldness (παρρησία) of the disciples' testimony (Acts 2:29, 4:13, 29, 31). Moreover, Luke often describes instances of individual guidance as due to prophetic visionary experience (ὄραμα, Acts 9:10, 12, 10:3, 17, 19, 11:5, 16:9f., 18:9), which sometimes come while the recipient is in a trance (Acts 10:10, 11:5, 22:17).¹¹³

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All this would imply that all who received the prophetic Spirit could be inspired to prophesy or receive prophetic visions and dreams, but the fact remains that Luke says far more about certain "leading men" (15:22) who are specifically designated prophets than about the more general occurrence of prophecy. There is one group of prophets who appear to be connected with the Jerusalem Christian community amongst whom are Agabus (11:27f., 21:10), Judas Barsabbas and Silas (15:22, 32). In Antioch another group appears, which includes Barnabas, Symeon, Lucius, Manaen and Paul (13:1). The daughters of Philip, resident in Caesarea (21:9), may be taken as another group.

¹¹¹ It would seem that Luke added the words 'and they shall prophesy' (2:18b) to emphasise the importance of this activity. See above.

¹¹² It appears that Luke equates speaking in tongues and prophesy. So E. E. Ellis, 'The Role of the Christian Prophet in Acts', *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, op.cit., 55; Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 27; G. Friedrich, *TDNT* 6, 829. Cadbury and Lake, *Beginnings* 4, 26, include Acts 2:38 in this list and point out that the words, 'you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit', if they were 'used in the Jewish sense would mean become prophets'.

¹¹³ See Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 170ff.

They are said to prophesy and, although not called 'prophetesses', this appears to be what Luke intends his readers to infer.¹¹⁴ Those who are prophets in this latter sense seem to be understood by Luke to have formed 'a charismatic order to which a recognized position was given in the Church'.¹¹⁵ They are Spirit-led men and women. Their authorisation and ministry is Spirit-given. There is no mention of prophets being commissioned or ordained and their ministry is not said to be legitimized by the twelve apostles.

Various activities are ascribed to the prophets. They can predict the future (11:28, 20:23, 25, 27:22), declare judgement (13:11, 28:25, 28), engage in symbolic actions (21:11), exhort and strengthen the disciples (11:23, 13:13f., 15:30f., 16:40), and, if we allow that Peter, Stephen and Paul are thought of by Luke as prophetic men,¹¹⁶ give Spirit-inspired christological interpretations of the Old Testament Scripture. Examples of this prophetic exegesis are thought to be present in the Acts speeches, especially in Paul's synagogue sermon at Pisidian Antioch (13:16-41).¹¹⁷

14 Luke's ideas on prophets and prophecy differ somewhat from those of Paul but are not institutionalized and therefore indicative of a later viewpoint. The variation in terminology is one such point of difference. In Acts Luke uses the noun προφήτης 30 times whereas in Paul's epistles it appears only 13 or 14 times.¹¹⁸ On the other hand Paul uses the verb προφητεύω 11 times whereas in Acts it is found only four times. These details confirm what has already been noted, namely that Luke's primary interest is in the prophets themselves and their work

¹¹⁴ Friedrich, op.cit., 829 states that 'there was an obvious hesitation to ascribe the title prophetess to women, hence the verb was chosen in designation of their function'. He refers to Matt. 7:22 to show that the verb could be used to mean 'to act as a prophet'. Dunn, op.cit., 403, n. 62 draws attention to the present tense of προφητεύουσαι which he says indicates that they exercised this gift regularly, the patristic references (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3:31:4; 3:37:1) suggested that their prophetic activity was not an occasional phenomenon.

¹¹⁵ H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, London, 1910, 377.

¹¹⁶ Ellis, op.cit., 55ff. points out that Luke's description of Peter and Paul is often suggestive of his description of the Christian prophets while in the Gospel Luke calls Jesus a 'prophet' and 'a teacher' in the same context (Lk. 7:39f.). That Luke considers Paul a prophet is denied by Dunn, op.cit. 171, on the basis of the second 'τε' in Acts 13:1. This however, is flimsy evidence (see *A. & G.*, 815). On p.186 Dunn himself argues that we should not distinguish 'prophecy and teaching too sharply'. We may note also that prophets and teachers are linked together in *Did* 15.1. That Luke considered Stephen a prophet is implied by his reference to him as a man (permanently) 'filled with the Spirit' (6:3, 5, 8, 7:55) which is also how the prophet Barnabas is described in Acts 11:24.

¹¹⁷ Ellis, *ibid.* 58; Dunn, *ibid.* 172ff.

¹¹⁸ The last reference is found in Titus 1:12.

rather than the occurrence of prophecy. Another contrast between Paul and Luke is that Paul depicts glossolalia and prophecy as congregational activities whereby those assembled are edified (1 Cor. 12 and 14) whereas Luke does not. For Luke, the manifestation of tongues in Acts 2:4ff., 10:46ff. and 19:6, which in the first and last instance seems to be equated with prophecy,¹¹⁹ is but a sign — an objective confirmation — that the Holy Spirit has been received. Furthermore, the prophets' ministry in Acts is not limited to a congregational setting. They can minister in a Christian assembly (Acts 11:27f., 13:1f., 15:32) but also in some other setting (Acts 13:9-11, 20:23, 21:9).

These differences do not, however 'date' Luke's position. His consistent interest in prophecy is ample witness of a personal knowledge of the dynamic activity of the Holy Spirit. With Dunn we agree that, 'Luke seems to share the first flush of enthusiasm at the reappearance of prophecy; he shows us communities which seem to have regarded all inspiration within their meetings as coming from the Spirit.'¹²⁰ What is more we find no expression of ecclesiastical control over such activity, nor desire for it, but only an abiding awareness of the complete sovereignty and freedom of the Holy Spirit now active once again amongst God's people.

15

Evangelist and Teacher

Just once Luke mentions the ministry of the evangelist and possibly once that of a teacher. In Acts 21:8 Philip, who is one of the seven appointed in Acts 6:1-6, is called an evangelist. This seldom used word in the New Testament¹²¹ is probably introduced by Luke to distinguish Philip from the man of the same name who was one of the twelve and because Luke thought it was a most appropriate title to give Philip. In Acts 8 Luke highlights Philip's evangelistic word using the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι four times (vs. 12, 35, 40). No other title is ever given to Philip. Neither he nor any of the seven are called 'deacons' by Luke. Acts 6:1ff. is not to be taken as an account of the institution of the diaconate.¹²² Luke does not use the noun in this passage, or elsewhere in reference to a specific ministry, nor does he describe the activities of any of these men in terms that reflect the later office of the deacon.¹²³ The story as it stands is used

¹¹⁹ See note 112 above.

¹²⁰ Op.cit., 175. He criticises Luke, however, for leaving many questions on prophecy 'unanswered, or to be more precise, unasked' (176).

¹²¹ It is only found elsewhere in Eph. 4:11 and 2 Tim. 4:5.

¹²² Schweizer, op.cit., 49. This interpretation of Acts 6:1ff. is as old as Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 1:26:3.

¹²³ The qualifications laid down for 'the Seven' are far higher than those demanded of deacons in 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

by Luke simply to show that when a particular need arose, the community was quick to appoint men qualified for the task. There is no suggestion that by their appointment a permanent office was instituted. In Luke's overall structure the story serves to introduce us to Stephen whose martyrdom he is about to recount.¹²⁴

The noun διδάσκαλος appears only once in Acts and there is some ambiguity as to what is meant. In Acts 13:1 Luke speaks of certain 'prophets and teachers' at Antioch. We cannot be sure whether some of those mentioned were known as prophets and others as teachers or if the whole group were considered to be prophetic-teachers.¹²⁵ As Luke does not speak elsewhere of a distinct ministry of the teacher the latter is to be preferred. Luke's main interest is in the work of teaching which is primarily undertaken by the apostles and the prophets. Here we recall Professor Filson's comment that 'every leader of the primitive Church was a teacher'.¹²⁶ In no instance does Luke allow for mono-ministry. He speaks of elders and prophets in the plural when he mentions them in a given church, and in Acts 15:35 he says that 'Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also'.

16

Ordination

We have already shown that Luke does not speak of the ordination of elders, but it is often stated that Acts 6:1ff. and 13:1ff. reflect a belief in the necessity of ministerial ordination such as is hinted at in the Pastorals.¹²⁷ The key issues in these two passages are whether or not a specific ministry is envisaged in either instance and what is the meaning of 'the laying on of hands'.

If ordination is to be understood in Acts 6:1-6¹²⁸ we must ask to what ministry does Luke think the seven are appointed? Whatever the actual historical situation behind this passage may be, Luke gives to the seven no permanent or specific office. He does not treat this incident as the origin of the diaconate, as we have shown, nor of the presbyterate. That the seven are placed in subordination to the apostles is nowhere implied.¹²⁹ Luke does not explicitly say that hands were laid upon them

¹²⁴ Haenchen, op.cit., 265.

¹²⁵ See note 116 above.

¹²⁶ 'The Christian Teacher in the First Century', *JBL*, 60, 1941, 322.

¹²⁷ See 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6.

¹²⁸ Rackham, op.cit., 84 writes that, 'Luke evidently means us to take this as a typical picture of apostolic ordination'. Also A. Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Ministry*, Edinburgh, 1958, 22f.

¹²⁹ So Schweizer, op.cit., 49.

solely by the twelve¹³⁰ nor does he make them agents of the twelve. Stephen and Philip are in fact drawn as prestigious evangelists and leaders who are more prominent than any of the twelve save Peter. Furthermore, it is important to note that the election of the seven and the subsequent laying on of hands was a recognition of charismatic authority and not a bestowal of it. They are said to be men 'full of the Spirit', apparently an abiding endowment, even before hands are laid on them (6:3, 5).

Acts 13:1ff. raises similar problems. If ordination is implied, what office does Luke have in mind? Paul and Barnabas are introduced as 'prophets and teachers' and they have already been shown to have exercised faithful Spirit-filled ministries (11:19-30). It has been suggested that it is the office of apostle,¹³¹ since only in Acts 14:4, 14 are these two men called such. Earlier Luke had reserved this title for the twelve. But the idea that the right of Paul and Barnabas to be called apostles in the sense of pioneer missionaries, rests on their ordination in Acts 13:1-3 must be rejected. It is difficult, to say the least, to understand how their equals could ordain them as apostles and why Luke might think such a practice was needed. In Acts 1:21-22 ordination is not one of the requirements for the appointment of an apostle in the narrower sense of the word and so why here?

E. Lohse, conscious of these problems, argues that the laying on of hands in Acts 13:3 is not intended as an ordination to the apostolate as an office but is patterned on the sending out of a *shaliach*.¹³² This is how Luke intends the word ἀπόστολος to be understood in Acts 14:4, 14. Paul and Barnabas are commissioned for a specific task with limited duration. The problems with this argument are that — (a) Luke seems to consider Paul to be more than an apostle in this limited functional sense for, as we have shown, he sets out to deliberately make Paul, in so far as he can, the equal of Peter, the leader of the twelve. (b) Paul's 'sending' finds its ultimate origin in the command of the risen Christ (Acts 9:15, 22:31) and only in a secondary sense in the congregational setting at Antioch. (c) The parallels with the commissioning of a *shaliach* are not convincing. Ehrhardt has shown that the laying on of hands is not found in Jewish sources before 140 A.D.¹³³

A third interpretation of this passage takes it as Luke's example of the

¹³⁰ Cf. Acts 6:6; Jervell, *op.cit.*, 95; Haenchen, *op.cit.*, 262.

¹³¹ So Rackham, *op.cit.*, 198; John Knox, *Chapters in the Life of St Paul*, London 1957, 118, 127; B. S. Easton, *Early Christianity*, New York, 1935, 59f.

¹³² E. Lohse, *Die Ordination im Spät-Judentum und im Neuen Testament*, Göttingen, 1954, 71ff.

¹³³ A. Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession in the First Two Centuries of the Church*, London, 1953, 15f.

ordination of 'full time missionaries'.¹³⁴ Thus E. Best argues that in Acts 13:1f. Luke is showing how 'Paul and Barnabas are set apart to a professional ministry to do for the Church what it can no longer do for itself They are sent out as representatives of the whole group. The others made them into their extended selves.'¹³⁵ Best admits dependence on Daube's thesis that Luke has modelled the story on the setting apart of the Levites in Numbers Ch. 8.¹³⁶ Daube's case is built on the parallels between these two passages. He notes that in both we see a laying on of hands, in both we find the words ἀφορίζω and ἔργον, and thirdly there are similarities between the ministries of the Levites and that of Paul and Barnabas.¹³⁷ Leaving aside the first detail for the moment, let us consider the other two points. The description of the activity of the Levites and Paul and Barnabas as 'ἔργον', is of little significance for the word bears no technical meaning and is extremely common. With regard to the use of ἀφορίζω, the fact is that the LXX does not have it in this Numbers passage. Instead we find διαστέλλω (Num. 8:6, 14). To point out that ἀφορίζω can be used to translate *hibdil* (Num. 8:14) does not help for Luke only appears to use the LXX. Then we have the parallel between the two ministries. How one might find a close parallel between the sacerdotal ministry of the Levites and that of the missionary activity of Paul and Barnabas is difficult to imagine. The idea that Paul and Barnabas 'are in a fuller sense than their fellows, wholly given to the Lord',¹³⁸ introduces a principle on which the later clergy/laity division was made, an idea completely foreign to Luke. The only real parallel therefore is that in both cases we have the laying on of hands. The meaning of this we must now discuss.

The laying on of hands is an action that Luke associates with different situations. It is connected with healing (Luke 4:40, 13:13, Acts 9:17, 28:8), with the reception of the Holy Spirit (8:17 and 19:6), and with the incidents related in Acts 6:1ff. and 13:1ff. Daube has argued that behind these diverse usages lie two separate and distinct Old Testament terms. There is firstly the term *samad* 'to lean one's hand upon someone

A similar critique of this argument is made by W. Schmithals, *op.cit.*, 98-110. He says that there is nothing at all which is common to the two figures, for even though the name suggests it, the *Shaliach* is not simply one sent. He is rather, whether sent or not, a commissioned one. The apostle, on the other hand is 'one sent forth' (106). Cf. Rengstorf, *TDNT* 1. 397f.

¹³⁴ E. Best, 'Acts. 13:1-3', *JTS* 11, 1960, 344-349. Quote, 347.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 348.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 347. D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, London 1956, 224-246.

¹³⁷ Best, *op.cit.*, 347.

¹³⁸ Daube, *op.cit.*, 240.

or something',¹³⁹ which carries the idea that "by pressing in this way upon a person or animal you are pouring your personality into him."¹⁴⁰ It is the word used when Moses appoints Joshua (Num. 27:18f, Deut. 34:9) with the result that Joshua becomes, as it were, a second Moses.¹⁴¹ Secondly, we find the term *sim* 'to place one's hands', which is used when a blessing is conferred and the main element 'of the ceremony is the touch.'¹⁴² The former term, Daube argues, lies behind New Testament accounts of the laying on of hands in connection with the reception of the Holy Spirit and ordination and the latter behind the healing miracles. But there are difficulties in maintaining these distinctions in the New Testament¹⁴³ and particularly so in the Lukan writings.

One of these difficulties, which Daube himself recognises, is that the LXX, Hellenistic Jewish authors, and the New Testament writers use only one expression ἐπιτίθημι τὰς χεῖρας.¹⁴⁴ Another difficulty is that the Dead Sea Scrolls have produced a passage where *samad* is used of the healing of Pharoah by prayer and the laying on of hands.¹⁴⁵ Then there is the question, if one still concedes that the Hebrew concepts should be kept distinct, of the category to which the various uses of the laying on of hands belong. The separation in New Testament usage is by no means self evident,¹⁴⁶ and there is nothing in Luke's writings that would help us to distinguish one concept from the other. Indeed it is easier to conceive that all of his uses convey one basic idea. This we hold, is symbolic prayer¹⁴⁷ expressed in the context of Christian fellowship. In the passages under discussion this is evident by the close connection between prayer and the laying on of hands in Acts 6:6, 13:1-3, (cf. 14:23) and from Luke's own interpretation of the events of 13:1-3 in 14:26. In this latter passage, Luke says that Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, that city 'where they had been commended to the

¹³⁹ Op.cit., 224.

¹⁴⁰ Op.cit., 225.

¹⁴¹ Op.cit., 225.

¹⁴² Op.cit., 225. The illustration given concerns Jacob's placing his hands on the sons of Joseph (Gen. 48:14, 17).

¹⁴³ So Beasley-Murray op.cit., 122f. J. K. Parratt, 'The laying on of hands in the New Testament', *Exp. Times*, 80, 1968-69, 210-214. E. Ferguson, 'Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination', *JTS*, 26, 1975, 1-12.

¹⁴⁴ Op.cit., 226.

¹⁴⁵ D. Flusser, 'Healing through the Laying on of Hands in a Dead Sea Scroll', *Israel Exploration Journal*, 7, 1957, 107f.

¹⁴⁶ As stressed by Murray, Parratt and Ferguson.

¹⁴⁷ This was originally suggested by Augustine, *De Bapt.*, 111:16 and is argued today by Parratt, op.cit., 214, and Ferguson, op.cit., 11. But see Dunn, op.cit., 165 who maintains that the laying on of hands is an act of prophetic symbolism.

grace of God'. That this commendation was by prayer is to be understood.¹⁴⁸

If these arguments are accepted it means that the laying on of hands in Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3 cannot strictly be called ordination. No specific office is in mind in either case, no permanent work is envisaged, no new spiritual endowment is given, and no sacerdotal rite is implied. In both instances Luke simply tells us that the community expressed their prayerful commendation of certain men who were about to undertake a new and special work, men who even before this had been recognised as Spirit-endowed leaders. Thus when Paul begins a second missionary journey, this time with Silas, he is once more 'commended'¹⁴⁹ by the brethren to the grace of God' (15:40). No doubt Luke intends us to understand that this commendation involved a similar procedure to that described in 13:3. A new task demanded further prayerful support by the gathered community.

CONCLUSION

20

It would seem then that we find no evidence to suggest that Luke's ideas on church order are late or highly developed. His ideas on baptism are non-sacramental, his view of Christian communal meals is non-cultic, his understanding of apostleship is basically early even if he emphasises certain matters and his description of leadership in the church is essentially charismatic. We have therefore coined a new word to describe Luke's ecclesiology. We call it 'early-protestantism'.

¹⁴⁸ The verb is παραδίδωμι. In the LXX it means 'to deliver' in a bad sense (*i.e.* into the hands of enemies) but Luke uses it of prayer (*i.e.* delivering another into God's care).

¹⁴⁹ παραδίδωμι is again used.