

ARTICLE

## **Is Paul's Turn to the Gentiles a Turn away from the Jews?** The Eschatological Context of Paul's Encounter with the Jewish Community in Rome and Accusations of an Anti-Jewish Bias in Acts

### **I. Introduction**

In the mid twentieth century, western society and culture began a process of self-examination following the trauma of war and genocide. In particular, the murderous campaign of the Nazi regime against the Jewish people raised uncomfortable questions about the origins and extent of anti-Semitism in the western world. While the Nazi ideology was atheistic and even anti-Christian, questions also arose regarding the participation of believing Christians in the machinery of genocide and regarding Europe's tragic history of persecution of Jews by Christian individuals and communities. Even if Christianity did not, and could not, endorse Nazi crimes, had its own past prepared the ground for the terrible harvest of death?

In this process of self-examination, students of the Bible have asked similar questions of the biblical traditions. Strong rhetoric, critical of Israel and the Jews, is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Over previous centuries, individuals and communities cited such passages as cause or justification for juridical and non-juridical actions against Jewish minority communities living amidst Europe's Christian majority. While acknowledging the facts of this tragic past, an important question remains regarding the use of such biblical passages: do such claims distort the biblical text, reading anti-Jewish bias into the text, or do they draw upon an anti-Jewish bias that is constitutive to the text?

Catholic teaching holds the biblical text to be the inspired, inerrant, Word of God, revelatory of God's Own Self.<sup>1</sup> As such, it would be odious to suggest that the biblical text could itself encourage hatred or violence against any human community. This important doctrinal assertion, however true it may be, does not silence the questions or accusations that arise in the setting of the academy.

There, scholars focus on the New Testament record and its polemical rhetoric arising from a context of debate between first century Christian communities and early Rabbinical Judaism. While acknowledging that, taken out of context, such passages have been misused to justify immoral actions, many

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<sup>1</sup> The Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 101-114.

scholars assert that such polemic is not anti-Jewish in itself. However, an increasing number of studies suggest that, more than mere internal religious debate, such polemic represents early Christian anti-Jewish bias. Typically, they distinguish such religious or philosophical bias from the racially based idea of nineteenth century anti-Semitism.<sup>2</sup>

Some more radical observers go further, directly linking the New Testament with a racial or ethnic bias, characterizing the problem as anti-Semitic rather than anti-Jewish. For example, R. Ruether believed that the post-Easter convictions of the Christian Church provided the foundation for the notion that Jews were effectively apostate in their rejection of the Christ event. Thus, by Ruether's reading, the New Testament presents the Jews rejecting their own salvation. Furthermore, the ongoing existence of a non-believing Jewish community provoked Christian anger at the Jewish participation in the death of Jesus, the conviction that the return (conversion)<sup>3</sup> of the Jews would be necessary for the "wholeness" of the Christian Church, and "twenty centuries of Christian vilification" of the Jews.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the Luke-Acts commentator J. T. Sanders claimed to find in those volumes a systematic anti-Jewish sentiment. He also linked Luke's polemic with twentieth century anti-Semitism observing that: "In Luke's opinion the world will be much better off when 'the Jews' get what they deserve and the world is rid of them."<sup>5</sup>

Such assertions present great difficulties in the Catholic hermeneutical context. While Catholic practice welcomes the critical analysis of the biblical texts, characterizations of the text as racist conflict directly with the Church's deepest convictions about the inspired Word of God. Nor can the Catholic tradition accept proposals to amend the text in light of contemporary concerns for religious tolerance.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the debate need not cease with a simple statement of Catholic doctrine. Catholic teaching on the scriptures is correct,

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<sup>2</sup> To distinguish anti-Jewish from anti-Semitic is not to suggest that the former is a good thing. R. F. O'Toole defines it as "any statement or judgment which would call Christians or anyone else to an irrational and unjust attitude of hostility against the Jews as a group or race or against their supposed characteristics." "Reflections on Luke's Treatment of Jews in Luke-Acts," *Bib* 74/4 (1993): 529.

<sup>3</sup> Ruether's language in this regard is quite polemical; she goes so far as to suggest that Christian attempts to convert Jews are the equivalent of a Christian "final solution." "The *Faith and Fratricide* Discussion: Old Problems and New Dimensions," in *Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity* (ed. A. T. Davies; New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 250.

<sup>4</sup> Ruether, 237-240, 248.

<sup>5</sup> J. T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1987), xvi, 317.

<sup>6</sup> N. A. Beck, *Mature Christianity: The Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Crossroad, 1994), 166-247.

itself inspired by the Holy Spirit, and therefore it must be possible to meet such accusations against the text with the methods of the academy.

In the academy, some scholars read New Testament anti-Jewish polemic as internal debate, misinterpreted, but not biased against Jews. Others see a more sinister strain of constitutive bias. This study proposes to look at this debate with regard to Luke-Acts and suggest that Luke's eschatological context may offer evidence for the former.

## II. Should Luke-Acts be considered anti-Jewish?<sup>7</sup>

Luke-Acts is a two-volume work, comprising 1/3 of the New Testament. It is notable for both its respectful depiction of Judaism and its strong polemical language directed at Jews. The last scene in Acts, Paul's encounter with Jewish leaders in Rome, is of paramount importance in the debate about an anti-Jewish bias. Do Paul's words and actions represent the final and definitive rejection of the Jewish people? Before examining the passage itself, it is important to consider the overall setting of Luke-Acts and the debates that continue regarding its attitude towards Judaism and the Jews.

### A. The ambivalence of Luke-Acts towards the Jews

Luke-Acts portrays an ambivalent relationship between Judaism and Christianity. On the one hand, Luke strives to place faith in Jesus in its Jewish context. His infancy narrative is filled with the atmosphere of the LXX and with pious Jewish characters. Jewish customs are presented in a positive light and the Temple remains a place of prayer even into the early days of Christianity. One of Luke's recurring themes is that of prophecy and fulfillment as he repeatedly points out that the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. Even the mission to the Gentiles is not an innovation but a part of God's plan for Israel. The Pharisees, portrayed so negatively in the other Synoptics, exhibit sympathy to the Christian message. Likewise, large numbers of Jews respond with conversion to the Apostolic preaching in

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<sup>7</sup> Although Reuther and Sanders take the radical position that Luke-Acts may be considered anti-Semitic, the language remains anachronistic. Anti-Semitism is a racial prejudice with nineteenth century European roots. For the purposes of this paper, the question regarding Luke will consider whether the volumes are anti-Jewish – namely, do they exhibit a theological bias against the Jewish faith or people.

Jerusalem. Thus, the polemical assertions are not directed at all Jews, but only those who refuse to be convinced.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, Luke's narrative also depicts the opposition of the Jewish leadership in harsh terms. Jesus' ministry begins at Nazareth where the *pericope* ends with rejections and opposition. Luke apparently sees a recurrence of the obstinacy of Israel found in the Deuteronomistic history. Just as Jesus' ministry meets opposition and persecution, so the Jewish leadership opposes the early Church in Acts. Even Jews who are Christian believers cause difficulties for Paul's preaching. And of course, Acts concludes with a harsh rebuke of those Jews who have rejected Jesus. Furthermore, this rebuke is the third warning uttered by Paul that he will turn away from his practice of preaching first to the synagogue and focus on his mission to the Gentiles who "will listen."<sup>9</sup>

### B. Critical readings of Acts and its ambivalence towards the Jews

Modern biblical criticism began in a largely Protestant context, where the Letter to the Romans had an enormous influence. At the time of the Protestant revolt, Romans (with its dichotomy between law and grace) was perceived to address the relationship between Judaism and Paul's new Christian faith rather than its original setting of a dispute within Christianity between believers with different perspectives about Mosaic observance. Consequently, most early modern commentators took Luke-Acts to have a similar purpose of distinguishing the new Christian faith from its Jewish roots. This theological opposition to Judaism (and the related conviction that Catholicism had become likewise "legalistic") meant that commentators did not see any need to ask questions about the polemical language in Luke-Acts.<sup>10</sup>

The earliest systematic consideration of the conflict in Luke-Acts came with the work of F. C. Baur (1792-1860) and the "Tübingen School." Baur worked to distinguish the interpretation in faith of scriptural texts from the historical

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<sup>8</sup> While the polemical language found in Luke-Acts offends the sensibilities of contemporary culture, such language was common in the ancient world. Jews and Christians used such language in theological disputes. And for all its harshness, the polemic of Luke-Acts is mild when compared with the inter-religious polemic of his day. Contemporary examples of such polemic are found in the work of Josephus (*Against Arion* 1.22 § 210; 2.6 § 68; 2.8 § 92-96; 2.13 § 138; 2.14 § 145, 148; 2.16 § 161).

<sup>9</sup> The first announcement of this shift occurs in 13:46, the second in 18:6, and the final announcement in 28:28 on the heels of a quote from Isaiah about a stubborn people who will not perceive God's action.

<sup>10</sup> J. B. Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 145-46.

analysis of the “real” historical events behind them. This distinction and the application of evolving historical methods to the text resulted in very new and different interpretation of texts and the reliability of the events they recount. With regard to Acts, the Tübingen School claimed to have discovered a pervasive struggle between Judaizers and Gentile converts in the early Church. The discovery of this *Tendenz* shaped Baur’s work in the history and theology of the New Testament. Although Baur did not write a commentary on Acts, the *Tendenz* notion had implications for Acts. Baur and his followers worked with the assumption that Acts was primarily a polemical work in the context of the debate between the Jewish and Gentile parties.<sup>11</sup> The *Tendenzkritik* approach did not endure long, for its weakness lay in its reading of history. When historical studies undermined the claim that there was such a pervasive dispute between Jewish and Gentile Christianity, the conclusions of these critics lost their foundation.

Although contemporary scholarship no longer accepts the solution of the *Tendenz* critics, it has yet to reach a consensus with regard to the possibility of an anti-Jewish bias in Luke-Acts. The positions taken by commentators depend upon their view of the ambivalence in Luke-Acts towards the Jews. Some emphasize the manifold positive indications in the text and argue that while Luke-Acts uses polemical language, it is not anti-Jewish, but respectful of Jewish faith and the Jewish people. The polemical language does not intend to dismiss, but to convince Jews of the authenticity of the Christian message. On the other hand, many scholars, to varying degrees and for a variety of reasons, view the polemical language as evidence that the author of Luke-Acts wishes his reader to reject Judaism and those that cling to its traditions.

E. Haenchen is among the more influential in the latter category. He believed that Luke wished to defend the mission to the Gentiles without the law. Luke’s *apologia* for this mission involved strong criticism of Jewish stubbornness and rejection.<sup>12</sup> Haenchen argued that the text revealed God’s will in this matter – even Peter and Paul must be driven to the Gentile mission by the will of God. The divinely willed Jewish rejection of the gospel allowed the Christian mission to reject the law and the Jews and turn to the Gentiles. For Haenchen, the three announcements of Paul’s intention to go to the Gentiles served to highlight Jewish stubbornness. By this reading, the third announcement can only be the

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<sup>11</sup> P. C. Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology, A Study of Ferdinand Christian Baur* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 197-201.

<sup>12</sup> E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 100.

end of God's blessing on Israel and the divine and ecclesial rejection of the Jews.<sup>13</sup>

F. F. Bruce was also convinced that Luke-Acts (and Acts in particular) gave evidence of strong anti-Jewish bias. He went so far as to suggest that Luke knowingly exploited anti-Jewish public feeling in the Roman world in the wake of the Jewish revolt.<sup>14</sup>

H. Conzelmann was more circumspect in his claims, although he too read anti-Jewish bias. He saw the positive portrayals of Jews and the Jewish faith as part of Luke's apologetic interest in demonstrating the continuity between Israel and the Christian Church. Conzelmann cited the common understanding that Luke-Acts proposes a schema of history in three divisions: the age of Israel, the all important time of Jesus, and the age of the Church as recounted in Acts. The positive picture of Israel is in the past. By the time of Acts, the age of a new Israel has dawned and the text gives the impression that the mission to the Jews is at an end, "hopeless" even, by the last chapter and Paul's harsh words.<sup>15</sup>

The mid-twentieth century French commentator, J. Jervell, was an important voice arguing for a positive Lukan attitude toward Judaism and the Jews. Jervell resolved the ambivalence of the Lukan portrait of Judaism by positing a division that occurs in the people, first in Luke's Gospel in response to Jesus' ministry and then in Acts in response to the Church and her preaching.<sup>16</sup> Jervell claimed that the all-important Gentile mission did not take place as a result of Jewish rejection, but rather Jewish acceptance.<sup>17</sup> The promises of God to Israel had to be fulfilled in Jesus and only afterwards could the promise be opened to the nations. The debate in Acts concerning Gentile converts such as Cornelius did not concern *whether* they should be brought into the faith, but *how* this should be accomplished. Paul, who might be called the "hero" of the narrative, consistently addressed Jews as "brothers" and cited Jewish hopes and beliefs (such as the resurrection) in the defense of his ministry and the gospel.<sup>18</sup> Jervell also pointed to the Jewish observance found among key characters in Acts, notably Jesus (only Luke recounts the circumcision of Jesus), Mary, Peter and Paul. Jewish piety was also to be found among the Gentiles - as is the case

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 724, 729.

<sup>14</sup> F. F. Bruce, "The Acts of the Apostles: Historical Record or Theological Reconstruction," *ANRW* II.25.3 (1984), 2569-2603.

<sup>15</sup> H. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), xiv, xlvi-xlvii, 227.

<sup>16</sup> J. Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 42-43, 48-49

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 45, 50-51, 65.

with Cornelius. For Jervell, Acts portrayed a time of judgment for Jews and Gentiles.<sup>19</sup> Jewish believers must acknowledge the action of God and find their place in a new and expanded Israel as promised by the Lord. And as Jervell pointed out, many did just that. So while Jervell acknowledged the Gentile mission as an overriding concern in Acts, he believed that the universalism of that mission continued to hold the place of Israel in God's plan in special regard.<sup>20</sup> Although Jervell read Paul's encounter with the Jews in Rome in a negative light, he did not see it as a dismissal of Jews, but the indication that the mission to Israel has already been accomplished. Even if individual Jews might yet repent, the mission to the Jewish people had already taken place.<sup>21</sup>

Jervell's ideas have been very influential among those who argue against an anti-Jewish bias in Luke-Acts. His thesis of a divided response to the gospel among Jews allows for a reading of the polemical language as internal theological debate rather than the rejection of an entire class of people.<sup>22</sup> L. T. Johnson took this view, arguing that the rhetoric is rather mild by comparison with other models of the day and that it represented debate "between schools." He also proposed that the rather tiny Christian minority had no intention of demonizing the Jewish faith or people in the Gentile world. Rather, the Christians found themselves traumatized by the fact of Jewish rejection of the gospel and striving to make sense of the scandal.<sup>23</sup> Maddox, in his analysis of the purpose of Luke-Acts, likewise suggested that the strong language emerged from the crisis of Jewish rejection. D. Moessner examined Luke's apparent interest in the Deuteronomistic view of Israel's history. The proposed editor of the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings viewed Israel's own history as one of rebellion and disobedience, including the frequent rejection of the prophets of the Lord. The rather bleak portrait is made lighter by moments of repentance and the existence of faithful remnants among the people. Moessner read the picture in Acts as fitting the pattern with an important difference. The intervention of God in the resurrection has brought a new possibility of repentance and the evidence that, even in the face of rejection, the promises of God will prevail. In this setting, Luke's polemic becomes an urgent call to the Jewish people to return to the Lord, rather than an exclusion of the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 61.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 68.

<sup>22</sup> For example, this perspective is adopted by J. Fitzmyer in his Anchor Bible Commentary on Acts. *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 521.

<sup>23</sup> L. T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 5; Collegeville, Minn.: Glazier, 1992), 423-424, 441.

Jews from the Lord's graces.<sup>24</sup> Also agreeing with Jervell's thesis of internal debate, M. Salmon went so far as to argue that Luke himself is Jewish, an "insider" to the debate, and therefore incapable of being anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic.<sup>25</sup> In his study of the use of 'οι Ἰουδαῖοι in Acts, A. Barbi also emphasized internal debate, arguing that the term itself was not negative. Instead, the key issue was the proper response of the Jewish listener.<sup>26</sup>

For all their influence, the contributions of Jervell and like-minded scholars have not resolved the debate. In fact, recent decades have seen the gap between the two positions widen. In 1984, J. T. Sanders, quoted above as holding Luke-Acts to be anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic, published *The Jews in Luke Acts*. In that work, Sanders rejected any notion of a divided Israel, arguing that Luke-Acts consistently portrayed all Jews, even those who respond positively to the gospel "in as bad a light as possible."<sup>27</sup> In the case of Paul's encounter with the Jewish leaders in Rome, Sanders did not acknowledge any divided response or any hope that the gospel remains open to the Jews. Instead, he saw this last moment as the confirmation of a "Jewish essence" presented throughout Luke-Acts. The portrait of a stubborn, rebellious people had been prepared throughout the narrative and now found completion in another failure and Paul's dramatic indictment of the people.<sup>28</sup> Here at the end, they live up to the criticisms leveled at them throughout the book. Even their scriptures merely demonstrated God's will in this process and the truth that "God's salvation was never intended for the Jews."<sup>29</sup> In a later article defending his book against critics, Sanders used polemical language of his own, asserting that Luke-Acts presents the Jewish people as generally "opposed to the purpose of God, as unable to understand their own scriptures, and as both foreordained to reject and willfully rejecting their own salvation."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> D. P. Moessner, "The Ironic Fulfillment of Israel's Glory," in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People* (ed. J. B. Tyson; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 49.

<sup>25</sup> M. Salmon, "Insider or Outsider? Luke's Relationship with Judaism," in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People* (ed. J. B. Tyson; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 82.

<sup>26</sup> A. Barbi, "The Use and Meaning of (*Hoi*) *Ioudaioi* in Acts," in *Luke and Acts* (eds. G. O'Collins and G. Marconi; trans. M. J. O'Connell; New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 140-141.

<sup>27</sup> Sanders, 16.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 298-299.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 81-82.

<sup>30</sup> J. T. Sanders, "Who Is a Jew and Who Is a Gentile in the Book of Acts?" *NTS* 37/3 (1991): 436.

In his analysis of Luke-Acts, Sanders placed great emphasis on the statements found in the speeches of Acts about Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus. These statements are more uniformly negative and accusatory towards the Jewish leadership and people, and Sanders believed them to represent Luke's true perspective. Reading all of Luke-Acts through this prism, Sanders claimed that all the positive Jewish characters or positive depictions of Jewish faith represented Luke's claim that the Christian community could now claim the mantle of Israel's special relationship with God. And Sanders observed that even Christian Jews proved themselves troublesome as they obstructed Paul's mission and demanded Mosaic observance. The key question was revealed at Nazareth where Jesus' fellow villagers rejected Him over the question of the inclusion of the Gentiles. In Acts, Jews inside and outside the Church followed the same pattern.<sup>31</sup>

When considering the motive of Luke for such a negative portrait of the Jews, Sanders rejected possibilities such as emotional reaction to Jewish persecution of the early Church or a desire to ingratiate the fledgling Christian community with the Romans. Nor was the issue one of conflict with newly influential Rabbinical Judaism. In fact, Sanders believed the mission to the Jews had been abandoned already for some ten to twenty years by the time Luke wrote. Instead, he proposed that the polemic began with an internal Church argument over the Pauline question of whether Gentile converts must keep Mosaic law. For Sanders, Luke's passionate defense of the Pauline perspective on the matter went beyond criticism of fellow Christians to the wholesale rejection of the Jewish people.<sup>32</sup>

Sander's work has been an important contribution to the debate over Luke-Acts and the Jews. His was the first work to systematically examine all the passages in Luke-Acts that treat of Judaism or the Jews. The comprehensive nature of the study reveals the seriousness of the question. Even if an individual holds to Jervell's analysis of a mixed portrait and a divided response, the weight of Sanders' evidence demonstrates that Luke-Acts uses a great deal of anti-Jewish polemical language. Sanders' work also helped the contemporary critic understand how bigots could employ Luke-Acts out of context.<sup>33</sup> Even so, there are serious questions with regard to Sanders methodology. First, Sanders was

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<sup>31</sup> Sanders, 315-317.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 304-305, Sanders *NTS*, 437. It is interesting to note here that Sanders' thesis sounds very like the previously rejected claims of the *Tendenz* critics.

<sup>33</sup> There is an irony in Sanders' work in that his work begins with the desire to rid Christianity of cause for anti-Semitism. However, in his stubborn insistence that Luke-Acts is consistently and unrelentingly anti-Jewish he may unwittingly offer "fuel to the fire" to those who would twist the scriptures to justify hate.

not disinterested in his analysis of the text. He began with the presumption that anti-Semitism is a serious contemporary issue and that its roots are to be found in the New Testament. Not unsurprisingly, he found that very anti-Semitism in the text of Luke-Acts. Furthermore, his decision to use the speeches as the key to his reading weakened his conclusions. Indeed the speeches are crucial to Acts, but his decision that they represented Luke's entirely negative view of Judaism lead to an inconsistent reading of the question. Wherever Sanders found positive depictions of Judaism, he argued that they existed solely to underline Christian legitimacy. In cases where Jewish Pharisees were sympathetic to Christianity or large numbers of Jerusalemites repented and converted, Sanders dismissed them as an argument directed at Christian Pharisees. Finally, the negative depictions were always presented as the definitive rejection of Judaism and the Jewish people.

With regard to Sanders use of the speeches as the key to his thesis, F. Matera has argued that here too Sanders was mistaken. Agreeing with Jervell's thesis of a divided Israel, Matera pointed out that the speeches revealed a "hidden plan of God." Even the disciples who announced the good news failed to understand the ministry and message of Jesus and needed openness and repentance. The speeches presented the Jewish people as paradoxically fulfilling God's will in their rejection of the Messiah. Even so their crime was not a failure to recognize His identity, but rather His innocence. Furthermore, the speeches allowed for repentance and salvation. Their polemical language emerged from the seriousness of this moment of decision in which the hidden had been made plain.<sup>34</sup>

Sanders' rejection of a divided Israel and his emphasis on the negative, anti-Jewish rhetoric to be found in Acts has influenced ongoing studies of the question. S. G. Wilson agreed with Sanders that the language emerged from internal debate over Paul's perspective on the Gentiles. He argued that any positive depictions of Jews were overwhelmed by the overriding fact that they are the principal opponents of Paul and the Christian message. Wilson suggested that the negative perspective might have emerged from a life setting similar to that of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>35</sup> L. Gaston disagreed with the notion that the conflict was internal to Christianity, arguing for conflict between Church and Synagogue. Nevertheless, he agreed with the severity of the portrait. While

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<sup>34</sup> F. J. Matera, "Responsibility for the Death of Jesus According to the Acts of the Apostles," *JSNT* 39 (1990): 78-79, 80-81, 88.

<sup>35</sup> S. G. Wilson, "The Jews and the Death of Jesus in Acts," in *Paul and the Gospels* (eds. P. Richardson and D. Granskou; Vol. 1 of *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*; Studies in Christianity and Judaism Number 2; Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 163-164.

acknowledging that there are positive portrayals of the Jews in Luke-Acts, he asserted an increasing conflict in which the Jews gradually become the consistent and inveterate enemies of the Christian message. Thus the end of the story became a moment of final rejection of the Jews.<sup>36</sup>

### C. The importance of Acts 28 to the debate

As the above survey demonstrates, the debate concerning the perspective of Luke-Acts towards the Jews continues. With variations in the details, the debate is largely bipolar, divided over the question of whether the polemical rhetoric should be interpreted as internal theological debate or as constitutively anti-Jewish. At the heart of the difference in perspectives lies the question of the turn to the Gentiles and conflicting readings of the final scene in Acts. If Paul's harsh words represent a definitive end to outreach to the Jewish community, then the assertion of an anti-Jewish perspective is strengthened. If Luke intends the reader to see the Jewish mission as ongoing, then the rhetoric must be seen in a different light.

At present J. B. Tyson is among the most important writers to adopt the position that Acts is a story of the rejection of the Jews, with several publications on the matter. In his reading of a strongly anti-Jewish portrait, he highlighted the final scene in Acts 28 as evidence that the "mission to the Jewish people has failed, and it has been terminated."<sup>37</sup>

By contrast, there have also been a number of other arguments that assert the unfinished nature of Paul's last encounter with the Jews in Acts. T. L. Donaldson cited the "remnant mentality" of Luke-Acts, drawn from Old Testament models as a way of understanding Luke's attitudes towards Israel. Just as in the past, there is moment of flux and conflict and a competition for the allegiance of the Jewish people. Therefore Paul's strong language in Acts 28 is a "Jewish phenomenon."<sup>38</sup> R. L. Brawly also cited the LXX models of faithful remnants to explain the strong language and the success and failure that the gospel and Paul met among Jews. If Paul has failed to convert the Jewish

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<sup>36</sup> L. Gaston Gaston, "Anti-Judaism and the Passion Narrative in Luke and Acts," in *Paul and the Gospels* (eds. P. Richardson and D. Granskou; Vol. 1 of *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*; Studies in Christianity and Judaism Number 2; Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 134-135, 150-152.

<sup>37</sup> J. B. Tyson "The Problem of Jewish Rejection in Acts," in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People* (ed. J. B. Tyson; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 137.

<sup>38</sup> T. L. Donaldson, "Moses Typology and the Sectarian Nature of Early Christian Anti-Judaism: A Study in Acts 7," *JSNT* 12 (1981): 44-45.

community in Rome, Brawley argued that he still enjoys partial success, evidence that Brawley cited to argue for an ongoing openness to Jews at the close of Acts.<sup>39</sup> D. L. Tiede argued that Simeon's oracle in the Lukan infancy narrative provided a way of understanding Luke's complex relationship with Judaism. That oracle (Acts 2:29-32 and 34-35) foretold the very division depicted in Acts, but also spoke of revelation to the Gentiles and "glory" for Israel. While the narrative depicted the mission to Gentiles, for Tiede, Acts 28 left the "glory" unfinished. As a result, he read Acts 28 as both an ending and a beginning.<sup>40</sup>

At present, R.C. Tannehill is a principal representative of the perspective that defends the notion of a divided Israel and Luke's hopes for the Jews. Tannehill, who acknowledged the tragic irony of Jewish rejection of the gospel, also argued for a continued openness to Jews. For Tannehill, the moment in Rome represented a turn away from a mission to the Jewish people and leadership, but not an abandonment of hope for individual Jewish believers who may yet come to faith and salvation. Furthermore, Tannehill argued that Paul's encounter continues to defend and emphasize his "Jewishness." Just as the prophets of the Old Testament demanded a response of the people and often received a mixed response, so Paul and other Christian preachers in Acts met divided reactions.<sup>41</sup> For Tannehill, Acts depicted the promises of God as fulfilled and continuing to be fulfilled. Tannehill pointed out that Paul's Roman defense followed on repeated claims to be attacked for his belief in the resurrection. This assertion did not concern individual hopes for life after death, but a hope related to the expectation of the messianic kingdom.<sup>42</sup> In the end, Tannehill characterized Luke-Acts depiction of the Jews as a tragic story of divided response rather than a summons to hatred against Jews. And for all the tragedy of rejection, hope in God's promises and their fulfillment remains. If the Jerusalemites who took part in the death of the Lord could hear and respond to the gospel in Acts 2, then hope remains for the reversal of the admittedly tragic circumstances of Acts 28<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> R. L. Brawley, "Ethical Borderlines between Rejection and Hope: Interpreting the Jews in Luke-Acts," *CTM* 27:6 (Dec. 2000): 420.

<sup>40</sup> D. L. Tiede, "'Glory to Thy People Israel': Luke-Acts and the Jews," in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People* (ed. J. B. Tyson; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 26-29.

<sup>41</sup> R. C. Tannehill, "Rejection by the Jews and Turning to Gentiles: The Pattern of Paul's Mission in Acts," in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People* (ed. J. B. Tyson; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 88, 96, 100.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 95

<sup>43</sup> R. C. Tannehill, "Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story," *JBL* 104/1 (1985): 75-77, 81, 85.

Tannehill's reading of Acts 28 as leaving the story unfinished with ongoing hopes for the fulfillment of God's promises raises the question of Luke's eschatological perspective. This is a question that has not been addressed by critics of Luke's alleged anti-Jewish bias such as Sanders. If an eschatological perspective is present in Acts 28, then it may have a direct bearing on the question of whether Paul's words constitute a definitive rejection of the Jews. We therefore turn to the question of Luke's eschatology and his presentation of Paul's encounter with the Jewish community in Rome.

### III. Lukan eschatology and the question of Paul's turn to the Gentiles

#### A. Does Luke-Acts concern itself with "future" eschatology?

The first necessary task is to address the nature of Luke's eschatology. It differs significantly from that of the Gospel of Mark. Whereas Mark has an almost apocalyptic urgency, Luke goes beyond the story of Jesus' life and mission to that of the Christian community. He clearly has lengthened expectations regarding the end and elements of eschatological effects realized in the life of the Church and believers (e.g. The action of the Holy Spirit, relationship to the exalted Lord). In Luke's treatment of the material found in Mark 13, some of the elements that Mark presents as signs of the end take place within the narrative of Luke-Acts.<sup>44</sup> Because of this shift from the more urgent eschatology of Mark, some commentators questioned whether Luke had any future element in his eschatology. For example, E. Kasemann rejected any notion of eschatology in Luke. He believed that Luke replaced the eschatology of the early Christian community with salvation history.<sup>45</sup>

While Luke's writings do not share the same apocalyptic fervor of other New Testament writings, they nevertheless do have an eschatological dimension. While Luke had to face the fact that the *parousia* might not be imminent, he continued to expect it.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Earthquake (Acts 16:26), famine (11:28), signs and wonders (4:30; 8:13) imprisonment (4:3), trials (4:5, 26; 18:12), testimony (3:15). For a treatment of this question, see R. B. Ward, "Eschatology in Luke-Acts," *RQ* 5/3 (1961), 147-156.

<sup>45</sup> E. Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (SBT 41; London: SCM, 1964), 28.

<sup>46</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (AB 28; New York: Doubleday, 1981), 21.

In some instances, Luke's Gospel gave both a present and future sense to the Kingdom.<sup>47</sup> In the Passion Narratives of all three Synoptic Gospels, Jesus asserts that he will be seated at the right hand of power.<sup>48</sup> However, Luke's Jesus will do so from *now* on. Luke's Gospel also invests the resurrection with a different nuance. The resurrection proves that Jesus was already Messiah in his earthly life.<sup>49</sup> Thus in Luke's worldview, the Kingdom has already arrived in Jesus' ministry even though the final consummation is yet to come.

Furthermore, in both the Gospel of Luke and in Acts, Luke sees events as the unfolding of the plan of God.<sup>50</sup> The gift of the Spirit in Acts allows the dual reality of present and future to proceed. Events follow the plan of God and move toward the future day of the Lord (Acts 2:17-21) when the Lord Jesus will judge the world (Acts 17:31). Jesus has been received into heaven, but will return in a time of restoration (Acts 3:21).

At the beginning of Acts, the disciples question Jesus about the *parousia*, and are told that they will not know the time or season (Acts 1:6-7). Meanwhile, they are to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and until the end of the earth (1:8).<sup>51</sup> After Jesus ascends to heaven, the disciples are chided for looking up to heaven and assured that the Lord will return (1:10-12). As the narrative of Acts concludes in Rome, the witness has followed and completed this geographic outline. Even so, the story has not yet been completed, as the return of the Lord remains unrealized.

#### B. Paul's encounter with the Roman Jewish community at the close of Acts

On three occasions in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul informs Jewish audiences that he will turn to the Gentiles (14:46-47, 18:6, 28:28). The third of these warnings occurs in the context of Paul's encounter with the Jewish Leadership of Rome. As we have seen, some understand the third warning at the

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<sup>47</sup> J. Nolland, "Salvation-History and Eschatology" in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I.H. Marshall and D. Peterson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 65-8.

<sup>48</sup> Mark 14:62, Matthew 26:64, Luke 22:69.

<sup>49</sup> I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1970), 167.

<sup>50</sup> This is demonstrated by Luke's use of  $\delta\epsilon\iota$  to express divine necessity. Luke 2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 19:5; 21:9; 22:37; 24:7,26,44; Acts 1:16,21; 3:21; 4:12; 5:29; 9:6,16; 14:22; 15:5; 16:30; 17:3; 19:21; 20:35; 23:11; 24:19; 25:10; 27:24.

<sup>51</sup> Fitzmyer argues that "the end of the earth" is an allusion to Rome. J. A. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 206.

end of Acts as Luke's final and definitive rejection of the Jewish people. But does the Book of Acts close the door on the Jewish people? Its narrative clearly upholds the importance of the Jewish people in salvation. If Paul's rhetoric is harsh in his last speech, can the harshness be explained by a sense of eschatological urgency in his mission to both Jew and Gentile?

Paul makes a number of speeches in Acts and to a variety of audiences.<sup>52</sup> Paul speaks to a Jewish audience (13:16-41), in a Gentile setting (17:22-31), and to Christians (20:18-35). He also makes a series of defense speeches in which he defends the Christian message and his ministry (22:1,3-21; 24:10-21; 26:2-23).

This encounter with the leaders of the Jewish community in Rome is the last of Paul's speeches and enjoys the importance of a "last word." When Paul arrives in Rome, he returns to his missionary pattern of preaching first to the Jews (13:42-48; 18:5-7; 19:1-10). However, in this case Paul cannot go to the synagogue as he is under house arrest (28:16). Instead, he invites the leadership of the Roman Jews (τῶν Ἰουδαίων πρώτους)<sup>53</sup> to visit him. Paul will make two very different but related statements. Along with important summaries in verse 23 and verses 30-31, these statements will leave a powerful last impression on the reader and reiterate some of Luke's most important interests.

Paul's first set of remarks echoes the defense he has been making since chapter twenty-two. He begins with the address he has employed elsewhere in addressing Jewish audiences: ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, one that emphasizes his kinship with Jews<sup>54</sup> He goes on to speak of doing nothing against "our people" or the customs of "our fathers" (v. 17).<sup>55</sup> Paul has repeatedly stressed his fidelity to his people and to Judaism.<sup>56</sup> In this instance, his remarks sum up the defense and serve as an *exordium* for this speech.<sup>57</sup> Paul also implicitly criticizes his opponents in verse 17 when he explains that they handed him over to the Romans.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Biblical scholarship has demonstrated conclusively that the speeches recounted in Acts are the compositions of the author. They may be based on sources or even notes from the events recounted, but their language and arrangement are Luke's. Therefore they are helpful for understanding Luke's point of view.

<sup>53</sup> Literally: "the first," but Luke has employed this word before to indicate the leadership (Luke 19:47; Acts 25:2).

<sup>54</sup> Acts 13:26; 22:1; 23:6.

<sup>55</sup> Here, *λαός* recalls Luke's usual designation for the people of God. Luke 1:68; 2:32; 7:29; 18:43; 20:1; Acts 2:47

<sup>56</sup> Acts 22:3; 24:14-19; 25:8-10; 26:4-8; 26:22.

<sup>57</sup> The speech is not strictly a defense speech, but his stress upon his Jewish credentials is meant to gain the favor of his listeners.

<sup>58</sup> For any subject people, the surrender of one of their own to the oppressor has connotations of betrayal and treason. In fact, the Temple Scroll calls the surrender of a Jew to a foreigner an act of treason (11QT 64:6-8).

Paul then sums up what the reader has already witnessed. The Romans found no legitimate charge against him. They correctly identified the dispute as an internal Jewish matter (23:29; 25:19-20; 26:31-32). Paul next explains that the opponents who betrayed him to the Romans forced his appeal to the Emperor. The appeal was not motivated by antipathy to Israel.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible that there is an implied threat in Paul's remark. In Roman law, making a false charge was a serious offense. More likely, Paul wants their attention for his message and he wishes to explain his predicament in a positive light.

In verse 20, Paul explains that these events are the reason for his asking to see them. Finally, he informs them that he is a prisoner<sup>60</sup> "for the sake of the hope of Israel." Paul defended himself in this way to the council of Pharisees and Sadducees (23:6; hope of the resurrection), before Felix (24:15; hope in the resurrection) and to Agrippa (26:6-8 hope in the promise of God). In the first two cases, Luke explicitly identifies hope with resurrection. In the third instance, the hope is more generalized in the promise of God (Although the following verse indicates that resurrection is at issue). Finally in Rome, Paul simply refers to the hope of Israel. Because of this context, some hold the understanding of hope strictly to the resurrection.<sup>61</sup> While it is correct to note that a messianic interpretation of hope would be stretching the text, it remains important to remember the meaning of resurrection in Luke. The Pharisee's hope in the resurrection is for some future resurrection of the just. Luke uses this hope to forge a link between Judaism and Christianity, but his notion of resurrection is much larger and more specific. In Luke-Acts, the resurrection is the event that confirms Jesus' identity as the Messiah and Son of God. The very specific event of this one man's resurrection reveals his status and gives believers the possibility of repentance, conversion, and salvation through faith in Jesus. When Paul speaks of the hope of Israel in this context, his Roman Jewish audience may only understand the Pharisaical hope for resurrection. Nevertheless, Luke's Christian reader knows that the resurrection of Jesus is the fulfillment of the much larger hope of Israel spoken of by Moses and the prophets; a hope that looks forward to its final confirmation in the return of the Risen Lord.

Following Paul's initial remarks, there are five verses of intervening material. In verses 21-22, the leaders surprise the reader by with a degree of

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<sup>59</sup> Paul has previously denied any such antipathy (Acts 28:19; 22:3; 23:6; 24:14; 26:4-5).

<sup>60</sup> Paul expresses this by speaking of the "chain" that binds him. Acts has spoken of this fact a number of times (21:33; 22:5,29; 23:29; 24:27; 26:29,31). It may be a metaphorical expression or it may be an expression of literal reality, that Paul is chained to his guard.

<sup>61</sup> Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 793.

openness. Previously in Luke-Acts, Paul has experienced some good response from Jewish people,<sup>62</sup> but leaders have generally been hostile. In their response, they refer to the Way as a ἄρρεσις (v. 22). Their phraseology reiterates that the dispute is internal to Judaism.<sup>63</sup> Their reaction further develops after the brief summary in verse 23. In verses 24-25a, the divided response to the Way so typical in Acts occurs.<sup>64</sup> Some were convinced,<sup>65</sup> while others disagreed (v. 24).<sup>66</sup> The group disputes among themselves as they prepare to leave (v. 25a). Those who read this passage as anti-Jewish point out that those who respond positively do not convert, but are merely convinced. Admittedly, the language here differs, but that does not change the fact of a mixed response to Paul's message.

The summary verse (23) provides the occasion for the development in their initial response to Paul. We learn that Paul has been testifying all day to the kingdom of God. He is striving to convince them regarding Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the prophets. Strictly speaking, this verse is not a part of the speech at hand. Yet, Luke has demonstrated before that he does not waste words. These are topics already covered in Paul, and the summary suits his purposes nicely.

The verse is rich in content. It has seven vital points in common with Paul's speeches: witness, kingdom, God, Jesus, law, Moses, prophets.<sup>67</sup> Paul is both living out the command of the Lord in 1:8 and 9:15 and the content of his preaching (the kingdom of God) is identical to that of Jesus (1:6). Paul is a true follower of Jesus.<sup>68</sup> The verse links the kingdom of God to Jesus. This twin emphasis is found at the beginning of Acts in 1:3, 6.<sup>69</sup> For Luke, Jesus is the successor to the Davidic line.<sup>70</sup> The expression βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ is not unique to Luke, but it is very common in Luke-Acts.<sup>71</sup> Luke also gives the phrase unique

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<sup>62</sup> Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 21:20.

<sup>63</sup> Johnson, 470.

<sup>64</sup> Acts 2:12-13; 4:1-4; 5:12-17; 6:8-14; 9:21-25; 13:42-45; 14:1-2; 17:1-5; 18:4,12-17; 19:8-10.

<sup>65</sup> Acts 13:48; 17:4, 12, 34; 18:8.

<sup>66</sup> Luke employs the imperfect for both verbs in this verse, implying an ongoing response. J. D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1996), 354.

<sup>67</sup> M. L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1994), 131.

<sup>68</sup> R.C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (Vol. 2; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1990), 346.

<sup>69</sup> In fact, this key verse may be an *inclusio* with the earlier mention. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 352.

<sup>70</sup> Luke 1:32, 33, 69-70; Acts 2:25-36; 13:22-23,32-37.

<sup>71</sup> Forty six occurrences in Luke and eight in Acts.

meaning. Whereas in Matthew, the kingdom refers to the content of Jesus' message, Luke interprets the kingdom as the sending of Jesus. The kingdom is already historically present in Jesus (Luke 11:20; 17:21) and for the Church it is present in Jesus through the Spirit (Acts 1:6-8). Even so, the use of kingdom language also recalls the unfinished nature of the gospel. Its urgency, in fact, derives from the fact that an end will come even if the timing remains veiled.

After the events of the summary elicit a mixed response, Paul shifts from defense to indictment. In a striking change from 13:26 (to us [Jews] the word of salvation has been sent), Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9-10. The quote is taken from Isaiah's inaugural vision where he expresses fear of going to the people. This text became a part of Christian apologetic to explain the scandal of Jewish rejection of Jesus.<sup>72</sup> The citation in the text follows the LXX closely, but makes an important change. The imperative verbs in Isaiah become aorist verbs in Luke.<sup>73</sup> The effect of the verbal change is that the blame for the people's dullness, deafness, and blindness rests with the people themselves rather than the command of God.<sup>74</sup> While a number of commentators have cited the use of this quote as a demonstration of Luke's particular antipathy towards the Jews, its general use in early Christian settings demonstrate that it is not particularly Lukan. Instead, Luke is using a common tradition to make a crucial point. Furthermore, the original Isaiah passage never intended to condemn or exclude the Jewish people, but to return them to proper relationship with the Lord.

After citing Isaiah, Paul makes his third and most dramatic announcement (v. 28) that the message is now for the Gentiles (previously in 13:46-47 and 18:6): the "salvation of God" has been sent to the Gentiles. In Acts, Luke more often uses the feminine σωτηρία when speaking of salvation. In 28:28, he uses the neuter phrase τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ. This is another allusion to Isaiah (LXX 40:5). The allusion to Isaiah indicates the new mode of salvation in Jesus. As Isaiah prophesied, salvation now has a universal character. This universalism has been affirmed repeatedly in Luke-Acts.<sup>75</sup> The reader also knows that this last prophecy of Paul has begun to be fulfilled in the course of the narrative and had indeed been fulfilled by the time of Luke's writing of Luke-Acts.

Still, does this important affirmation of the Gentile mission represent an end to Paul's pattern of outreach to Jews? After all, the two previous assertions

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<sup>72</sup> Luke 8:10; Mark 4:12; 8:17, 18; Matthew 13:11-15; John 12:39-40; Romans 1:8.

<sup>73</sup> For example: God commands Isaiah to make the people's hearts dull while Luke describes the people's hearts as dull.

<sup>74</sup> B. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 804.

<sup>75</sup> Luke 2:11, 14-30, 30-32; 3:6; 4:24-27; 24:47; Acts 1:8; 10:1-11:18; 13:47.

did not effect any change in the ongoing interest in bringing the gospel to the Jews. In an interesting analysis of Luke's editing of his Markan source, B. Kinman argued forcefully for the ongoing interest of Luke in Jewish response to the gospel. In Mark, the cursing of the fig tree is often understood to be a definite rejection of the Jerusalem leadership (Mark 11:12-14, 20-21). Luke omits the passage and Kinman points to a Lukan miracle involving a fig tree that allows for repentance and the reversal (Luke 13:6-9).<sup>76</sup> Kinman believed that the pleading for repentance and the hope for a time of refreshment found in Acts 3:20-21 represent further evidence for a Lukan eschatological perspective on a future for Israel in relationship to the Lord.<sup>77</sup>

At the end of Acts (vv 30-31),<sup>78</sup> Paul is in his lodging. With complete openness and without hindrance he proclaims to all the kingdom of God and teaches about the "Lord Jesus Christ" (v 31b). Again, these verses do not form part of Paul's speech, but they are a very powerful summary of Paul's message. At the very beginning of Acts, Luke referred to his Gospel as an account of what the Lord did and taught (1:1) and how the Lord spoke to his followers after the resurrection of the kingdom of God (1:3). Here at the close of Acts, Paul speaks of the kingdom as well. Paul also teaches, but he teaches about the Lord Jesus Christ. In Paul's ministry and speeches, proclaiming the kingdom has become proclaiming Jesus Lord. Although the reader knows that Paul will yet go to a martyr's death, Luke ends with a note of victory for the witness has reached the end of the earth (1:8) and it is offered boldly and openly (v 31).<sup>79</sup>

#### IV. Conclusions

The ambivalence of Luke's opinion of Judaism raises a question regarding Paul's words to the Roman Jews. Does Paul mean to say that salvation is now denied to the Jews and offered to the Gentiles? Is this their last chance to repent and believe? Is Luke suggesting that their rejection of Jesus has resulted in God's rejection of them? Certainly a number of scholars have suggested that this is in fact the case.

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<sup>76</sup> B. Kinman, "Lukan Eschatology and the Missing Fig Tree," *JBL* 113/4 (1994): 672-675.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 677.

<sup>78</sup> It is generally agreed that v. 29 is an addition of the Western text and is therefore omitted from our discussion.

<sup>79</sup> This notion of preaching boldly/openly (*παρρησίας*) is a common one in Acts (2:29; 4:13,29,31; 9:27-28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 22:26).

Others have argued for the possibility that salvation for the Jews persists in Luke's thought, and that Acts depicts a reconstituted Israel consisting of Jews who accept Jesus along with the faithful Gentiles. For Jervell, Luke understands the rejection of Jesus by some Jews as the historical mixed reaction of God's people to the summons to faith.<sup>80</sup> The turning here in chapter twenty eight is not from the Jewish people themselves, but from those who will not open their hearts, eyes, and ears to the salvation present in Jesus.

The narrative of Acts, for all its strong rhetoric provides no firm evidence that Paul's words here are any different from previous declarations to turn to the Gentiles and return to preach again in the Jewish setting. In fact, the only real evidence in the text suggests otherwise as it makes clear that the story ends with Paul open to "all." Luke's primary focus in these matters has been upon God's faithfulness to promises. The message of the fulfillment of God's promises has been offered first to Israel consistently. Paul maintains this pattern to the very end of the two volumes. The two missions, one to Israel and the other to the Gentiles, are not contrasted as "either/or." Rather, the responses of people to Jesus are contrasted in both communities, and in this there must be a decision one way or the other.<sup>81</sup>

Until the very end of Acts, Paul's relationship to Judaism remains a critical concern. As such it is critical to Luke as well. Luke has taught the reader that Christianity can only be understood in relation to the law and the prophets. Significantly, the quote from Isaiah comes from the *beginning* of his ministry, not the end. As Acts ends, Paul's ministry is not at an end either. Acts does not shut the door of salvation to the Jews. In the final verses of Acts, Paul remains in his lodgings and receives all (v 30) who come to him. This all must mean both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>82</sup> Luke has widened salvation to include Gentiles, but he has not narrowed it to exclude Jews. The mixture of openness and closure here at the end of Acts is not exclusionary. The ambiguity is rooted in the experience of the Christian believers who struggled to understand why many in Israel rejected the fulfillment of the promise in Jesus.

In the larger context of Paul's speeches in Acts, the defense of Paul's relationship to Judaism is a defense of the relationship between faith in Jesus and Judaism. Luke has carefully taught the reader that Paul is authentically Jewish. Jesus is the Jewish Messiah sent by the Lord to save the people of Israel. He is the answer to the hope of Israel for salvation from death. He is the anointed

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<sup>80</sup> J. Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 41-69.

<sup>81</sup> Witherington, 806.

<sup>82</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 351.

successor to David who restores Israel as God promised. He is the One who brings God's kingdom to life and so fulfills the eschatological hope of Israel that God would intervene and deliver the people. Indeed, "the hope of Israel" (v 20) is as much a title for Jesus as an allusion to the resurrection.

This eschatological context, insufficiently addressed by the work of Sanders, places Paul's words and actions in a very different light. Luke-Acts has repeatedly emphasized its concern for the redemption of Israel.<sup>83</sup> The fact that some or even most of the Jews have not yet accepted the truth of this does not preclude a possible future change of circumstances. In fact, the Lukan narrative gives evidence to the contrary. It repeatedly emphasizes the reversal of fortunes and circumstances. The canticles of the Lukan infancy accounts praise God's mysterious reversals of human sin and hubris. Above all, in the resurrection, God reversed the verdict of human beings upon Jesus. That watershed moment has brought manifold reversals as the lame and the outcast have been restored.<sup>84</sup> How could it be that this narrative would then definitively abandon the hope of reversal for the people of God? Instead, the reader has learned to expect that God's power to change hearts and circumstances will be vindicated. The very quote from Isaiah implies the same as it too addressed a stubbornness that would be reversed.

While Luke emphasized the authentically Jewish nature of the message about Jesus, he brought to his message the faith of a Christian believer. In the light of Jesus' resurrection, Luke and believers like him saw an expansion of the meaning of the promise to Israel. They looked to the Law of Moses and the prophets (v. 23) in the broadest sense to interpret the events witnessed. In the resurrection, the Risen Lord revealed to the people that he was Son of God, Messiah, and Lord even in his earthly ministry. For this reason, Paul and Luke can call him "the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 31). This mixture of Lord and Messiah, odd to Jewish ears, makes sense to those who call upon the Risen Lord with both. They look to the Lord who remains active in their lives and ministry and relate to him as Israel related to the Lord in the Old Testament.

In Paul's encounter with the leadership, Luke referred twice to the kingdom of God and linked it to the identity of Jesus (vv 23, 30-31). When the OT speaks of the kingship of YHWH, it speaks of eschatological hope in God's promise and ability to offer salvation to the people.<sup>85</sup> Luke has now invested that same eschatological hope in Jesus. This eschatological hope has taken on a new

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<sup>83</sup> Luke 2:25, 38; 19:11; 23:50-51; 24:21; Acts 1:8; 15:16; 24:15; 26:6, 23.

<sup>84</sup> J. O. York, *The Last Shall Be First: The Rhetoric of Reversal in Luke* (JSNTSS 46; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 182-184.

<sup>85</sup> Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 203.

urgency. The hidden has been made plain, and all, Jew or Gentile, must now respond. Furthermore, the geographical outline of 1:8 has been completed. That completion implies that the return of the Lord promised in 1:11 is at hand. Even if Paul's last words in Acts are harsh, their harshness does not reject the Jewish people. The harshness relates to the urgency and the importance of the decision that each person must make. If the words communicate grief or even anger, such emotions are inescapably mixed with hope. Isaiah's accusation of those who refused to see or hear did not signal the end of the Jewish people. Nor does Luke's application of the same words signal their rejection. Instead, the words are a final appeal to prepare for the return of the Lord and the day of judgment. Luke has not ended his account with an anti-Jewish message, but a preaching of the kingdom and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ to any and all who would listen. Far from being anti-Jewish, the end of Luke gives evidence of an eschatological hope for the redemption of Israel even at a moment when the mission to the Jews had largely been eclipsed by the success of the mission to the Gentiles.

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