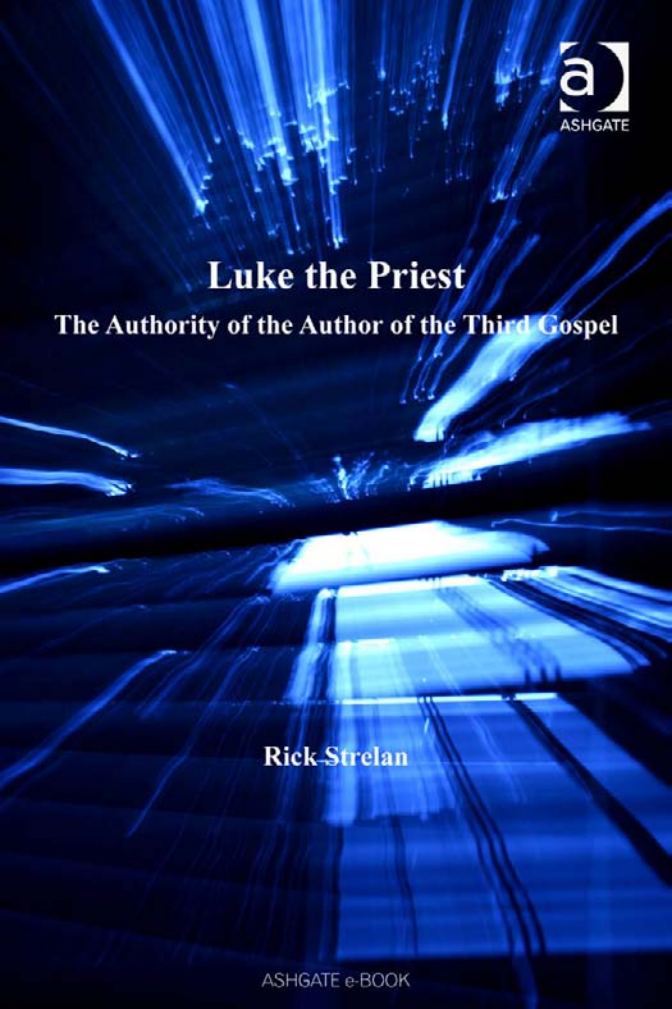
ASHGATE
Luke the Priest
The Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel
Rick Strelan
ASHGATE e-BOOK

LUKE THE PRIEST

To the evening star

Luke the Priest

The Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel

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ASHGATE

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Preface

This book follows on from previous research I have done in the Acts of the Apostles where my focus has been on the cultural context of that book. It was only natural that sooner or later I would move to include in my research the first volume of Luke's writings, namely, his Gospel. To try and say anything remotely new in Gospel studies is becoming increasingly more difficult, but the question of authority, I think, is still one that finds room for debate and for research. This book in no way claims to fill this gap in scholarship, but I hope it might make a small contribution in that direction and stimulate further discussion and study.

In my own research, I have always tried to put myself in the places of people who heard the New Testament writings for the first time. I have tried to recover their world, as difficult and as speculative as that endeavor inevitably is. I must admit to drawing on my own experiences in cultures other than my own which is 'Western', English-speaking, and Australian. I spent five years in Papua New Guinea at a time of intense and speedy political change, and I had to learn a foreign, local language and felt forced to try to hear the Bible as they were hearing it through their own cultural ears. Many people were illiterate, but I worked mainly with English-speaking university students and soon realized the power and authority of the dominant language, and the authority of the language of the dominant. I also learnt from them how their stories began, developed and were transmitted, to whom they 'belonged', and who were the authoritative story-tellers – something I also have learned from studying anthropology and from discussing such matters with Aboriginal Australians. It made me think about how authority and control of stories might have worked among the first Christians, and, in the case of this book, what authority someone like Luke had to teach, to interpret, to write, and to transmit the tradition as he did.

It has been a fun exercise, and as part of the fun I'd like to thank especially one of my doctoral students, Allie Ernst (who recently received her doctorate with an excellent thesis on Martha traditions). We spent many hours together over coffee, speculating and discussing and throwing ideas around with quite some abandon. I thank her for the stimulation and for the reality checks on my imagination. Some will think more was needed! I also thank many other students, at various educational levels, who have consciously or otherwise stimulated my thinking in New Testament studies.

I would especially like to express my gratitude to the staff at Ashgate for their professionalism, patience and encouragement in the production of this book. Particular thanks go to Sarah Lloyd, Sarah Charters and Kate Brown, and also to Philip Hillyer for his expert and patient editing.

Rick Strelan

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List of Abbreviations

ad Marc	Tertullian, *ad Marcionem*
Adumbr. in 1 Petr.	Clement of Alexandria, *Adumbratio in 1 Petrum*
A.H.	Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*
Ant.	Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*
1 Apol.	Justin, *First Apology*
Apost. Preach.	Irenaeus, *Apostolic Preaching*
Apost. *Trad.*	Hippolytus, *Apostolic Traditions*
C. *Apion*	Josephus, *Contra Apionem*
Comm. *John*	Origen, *Commentary on John*
De Consens. Evang.	Augustine, *De Consensu Evangelistarum*
De Conserv. *Evang.*	Augustine, *De Conservatione Evangelistarum*
De Lib. *Educ.*	Plutarch, *De Liberis Educandis*
De Princ.	Origen, *De Principiis*
De Vir. Illustr.	Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*
Dial. *Tryph.*	Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*
Eclog. Proph.	Clement of Alexandria, *Eclogue Propheticae*
Ep. *ad Damasum*	Jerome, *Epistula ad Damasum*
Ep. *ad Rom.*	Origen, *Epistula ad Romanes*
Ep. *Mor.*	Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*
Expos. *Gos*. *Luke*	Ambrose, *Exposition on the Gospel of Luke*
Git.	*Gittin*
Haer.	Epiphanius, *Haereseis*
H.E.	Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*
Homily in Princ. *Act*.	Chrysostom, *Homilies in Principium Actorum*
LXX	The Septuagint
M. Sanh	*Mishnah, Sanhedrin*
Meg.	*Megillah*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
On Lit. *Comp.*	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Literary Composition*
Panathen.	Isocrates, *Panathenaicus*
Pedag.	Clement of Alexandria, *Pedagogue*
Pes.	*Pesahim*
PG	Patrologiae Graecae

Philo

Agr.	*De Agricultura*
Conf.	*De Confusione Linguarum*
Fuga	*De Fuga et Inventione*
Quod Deterius	*Quod Deterius Potiori Insidari Solent*
Quod Omnis	*Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit*

Sacr.	*De Sacrificiis Abelis et Cain*
Sobr.	*De Sobrietate*
Somn.	*De Somniis*
Spec. *Leg*.	*De Specialibus Legibus*
Vit. Cont.	*De Vita Contemplativa*
Vit. *Mos*.	*De Vita Mosis*
Phaedr.	Plato, *Phaedrus*
P. *Oxy*.	*Papyri Oxyrhynchi*
Praep. *Evang.*	Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelii*
Pref. Comm. *Matt*.	Jerome, *Preface to the Commentary on Matthew*
Qumran	
CD	Damascus Document
1QH	Hodayot
1QM	War Scroll
1QpHab	Pesher Habakkuk
1QS	Community Rule
1QSa	Rule of the Congregation
1QSb	Rule of the Blessings
4QMMT	Miqsat Ma'ase ha-Torah
11QT	Temple Scroll
RSV	Revised Standard Version
Sot.	*Sotah*
Strom.	Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*
T. Levi	*Testament of Levi*
War	Josephus, *Jewish War*

Introduction

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John – the names of the four Evangelists are very well known to any reader of the Christian sacred texts. It is not possible to measure the impact of the writings that carry their names on the lives of millions of people, directly or indirectly, for the past two thousand years. Without them, we would know very little about the life, teaching, and other activities of Jesus. There were, of course, other texts, both written and oral, that also narrated 'the things about Jesus' (τοῦ Ιησοῦ, Luke 24:19, 27; Acts 18:25) in some form or another, but it is these four that have remained dominant among Christian communities over the centuries. They have been read for private devotion and in public lectionaries, preached in sermons, taught in Sunday schools and university faculties, and they have been the inspiration for many writers, artists, movie-makers, and musicians. They have also been the subject of thousands of scholarly books and articles.

The aim of this book is to construct the writer of the Third Gospel, 'the Gospel according Luke' as it has become known. The basic questions that interest me are: Who, or what, gave this 'author' the authority to write the Gospel and Acts? What authority did he (I will assume that gender) have to interpret the traditions of Israel, including its Scriptures? By what authority did he interpret the traditions about Jesus and about some of the apostles, especially Paul? Why did he write a Gospel at all, especially since he was aware of other attempts?

In discussing these questions, I will be asking whether or not the Gospel text itself reveals anything about its author. Albert Schweitzer famously claimed that when nineteenth-century scholars looked into the well hoping to find the 'historical Jesus', what they saw was a reflection of themselves. In other words, they created a Jesus after their own image. I intend to read the Gospel of Luke as the work of a writer who looked into various wells looking for Jesus, for Paul, for Israel, for an understanding of the Scriptures, and who saw reflections of himself in each of those wells. In a way, the author of Luke-Acts created Jesus and Paul in his own image, according to his own agenda and goals. He interpreted the Scriptures of Israel to reinforce his own reading of Jesus and to claim authority for that reading. He used the accepted authority of Jesus and Paul to give authority to his own writing by putting words into their mouths in his narrative, words that he himself probably spoke to his own community and that he would want to say to any audience who had access to his writings. That is to say, he understood the voice of Jesus to be a voice which continued to live through his own voice, the voice of the author. If that is the case, then those texts reveal something about him. I suggest in this book that the author, whom tradition has called 'Luke', might well have been a Jewish priest who, of course, had come to believe that Jesus is God's Lord and Christ, the fulfillment of Israel's Scriptures. It was the author's status as priest that gave him the authority to interpret the various traditions he deals with and to write his interpretations as authoritative texts for his audiences.

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Chapter One

Who Were the Gospel Writers?

The blunt truth is simply expressed by Burridge (and acknowledged to various degrees by most others) that 'despite two thousand years of tradition, research and speculation, it is important to stress at the outset that in fact we know practically nothing of who the original authors and audiences of these texts were' (2005: 100). But, as he also says, 'human beings are naturally curious animals', so this ignorance is not going to stop a curious animal like me from constructing the author and speculating about him.

There is very little internal data in the Gospels to help answer the question. Paul at least offered a little self-disclosure when he introduced himself in most of his letters by name and, for example, as 'an apostle … a servant of Jesus Christ' (Rom 1:1). He also signed himself off at the end of some of his letters with his own mark (1 Cor 16:21; 2 Thess 3:17). But the Gospel writers did nothing of the kind. The Gospels of Mark and Matthew have no self-referents, no signature at all; they are not even pseudonymous. The closest we get to any author identification is in the Gospel of John, but the data there are more confusing than clarifying. In its intriguing closing section there is a reference to 'the disciple who has written these things' (21:24), and it then refers to 'we', a group who have received the text and verify to its truth (21:24); but then the last sentence uses the first person singular (21:25), and that person is not the 'disciple who has written these things'. In the Third Gospel, the writer does refer to himself in 1:3 ('it seemed good to me', ἔδοξε κἀμοί) as 'one who has followed things accurately from their beginning' (παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς), but he too refers to 'us' in 1:1 ('the things accomplished among us', περὶ τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν), and again also in 1:2 ('as they delivered to us', καθὼς παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν). From 1:5 and throughout the Gospel narrative only the third person is used. In Acts 1:1 the writer refers to himself again: 'I wrote the first account …' (τὸν μὲν πρῶτον λόγον ἐποιησάμην…), only to immediately continue in the third person until 16:10 which introduces the first of the famous and puzzling 'we' passages which occasionally punctuate the rest of the narrative of Acts. That is all we have in terms of any explicit identity-disclosure on the part of the writer of Luke and Acts. Interestingly, what little is disclosed has much to do with authority.

'Luke' has left us two texts, but they can be read as one continuous narrative – they are both addressed to the same person, Theophilus; they both portray their central characters in the same way, and they are connected by the theme of the Lordship of Jesus which is arguably at the very heart of the author's thinking. While there are some who prefer to call the two writings 'Luke and Acts', I will side with the majority who use the term 'Luke-Acts'. In any case, it would appear that the author is personally closer in time and place to the characters and events in Acts than he is to Jesus and his life in Palestine. He appears to include himself as an eyewitness

of asking who it is who has formulated, reformulated, or transmitted a text' (1991: 86). Byrskog (2002) follows Gerhardsson and likewise aims to counter the form critics' view that the sources for the Gospels were a collective enterprise within a community. He stresses instead that individuals, like Peter, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Jesus' siblings and kin, were the evangelists' sources, and he accuses the form critics of neglecting the importance of aurality, autopsy, and individual experience. Byrskog recognizes collective memory and that individuals were never in social deserts, but he insists that 'groups and cultures do not remember and recall; individuals do' (2002: 255). The focus on individuals as authorized tradents rather than on communities is also crucial in Bauckham's recent book (2006) in which he claims that eyewitnesses, who in many cases can be named, played crucial roles in the transmission of the 'things about Jesus', and these eyewitnesses were regarded by Luke and his first audiences as reliable transmitters of authentic data, which for Bauckham is the equivalent of data that is 'historically reliable'.

There is, however, little suggestion in scholarship that the Lukan texts come out of a Lukan 'circle', even if they might have been written for a Lukan community. This is partly because the writer talks in the first person (1:3), and because Luke-Acts is addressed to an individual, Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). Esler (1989), however, insists that Luke writes to address concerns within a particular local 'Lukan community', and that those concerns have shaped his stories of both Jesus and Paul. The stress on the oral performance of the Gospels makes it explicit that the written Gospel texts are for a community, if not indeed from a community. The Gospels are concerned with the memory of Jesus, and that memory in particular, if not all memory, is not that of an isolated individual, but of a community, or at the very least of an individual who belongs within a community and whose memory is shaped by that community.

There is some support for the opinion of Bauckham (1998) that the Gospels were not intended for local communities but for wider Christian audiences. Mount would agree, claiming that Luke-Acts was written for all Christians living 'in a Hellenistic (literary) culture' (2002: 80). Mitchell (2005) counters Bauckham's claims and calls on the witness of the patristic literature in which there is the commonly-known tradition that each Gospel came into written form at the request of a local community. In addition to these 'audience request' narratives that Mitchell notes, John Chrysostom, in the fourth century, was a little bothered as to why 'for the sake of a single individual he [Luke] took such pains as to write for him [Theophilus] an entire Gospel … and why he did not make one book of it, to send to one man, Theophilus, but has divided it into two subjects'. His answer to the first question was that Luke had 'benevolent and apostolic feelings', and to the second, 'for clarity, and to give the brother pause for rest. Besides, the two treatises are distinct in their subject matter' (*Homily 1*, *Acts of Apostles*). They are hardly answers that satisfy today, but the point is that Chrysostom understood Luke-Acts to be written for one individual, not for Christians at large. It is the opinion of Origen and Theophylact as well, although they extend the readership by claiming that others might also be called θεοφίλοι and thereby rightly see themselves as being addressed in the Gospel (Origen, *Homily on Luke*, 1.10).

In any case, it is worth remembering a few factors concerning early Christian communities. First of all, the 'circles' of Christians in any one given location in the latter quarter of the first century of the Common Era were very small – we are probably right to think of something like 40–60 people, or even less. Secondly, such small groups nearly always find themselves dominated by one powerful, sometimes charismatic, person who has unchallenged influence and control (often also of a financial nature) over the group. Thirdly, in an educational or instructional setting, the teacher or instructor often has total control and authority; they and their teaching shape the group's identity and its distinctiveness from others. Fourthly, we have to consider the high and significant possibility that the majority of Christians were illiterate. And finally, such 'circles' do not write books; individuals do, especially the teachers (or their literate students, who note and publish their teachings). In general, I agree with the point of Hengel's comment, 'The authors of these works do not represent the view of a collective community, but of an individual yet authoritative teacher of one or more communities …' (2000: 107). I suggest that this is also true of the author commonly known as 'Luke'.

The Anonymity of the Gospels

While the prefaces to the Gospel and to Acts indicate that an 'I' was involved in the writing, no name is given. The author is anonymous, and it has to be a possibility that his text circulated anonymously for some decades, simply being referred to as 'The Gospel', as 'The Narrative', or as one of the 'Memoirs of the Apostles'. This baffles Bovon, 'The absence of the author's name in the prologue remains a riddle to me, despite the church's tradition, and the possibility that the name was mentioned in the title of the work' (2002: 18).

The anonymity of the Gospels already raised some problems for Tertullian which he then attempted to address. The problem was in part caused by the creation of Marcion's Gospel which was anonymous. Tertullian saw this as a weakness in Marcion's defence: 'A work ought not to be recognized which holds not its head erect, which shows no boldness, which does not assure of its trustworthiness by fullness of title and the fitting declaration of its author' (*ad Marc*. 4.2). When talking of those Gospels that he did accept, Tertullian claims that they had apostles as their authors 'to whom was assigned by the Lord himself this office of publishing the gospel'. Obviously aware of the questionable status of Mark and Luke, he goes on to include them as *apostolici* who 'do not stand alone but are with apostles and after apostles'. Mark published Peter's gospel, and 'Luke's form of the gospel men usually ascribe to Paul. And it may well seem that the works which disciples publish belong to their masters' (*ad Marc*. 4.5). Tertullian knows he is on shaky grounds because Luke is associated with Paul, and the latter was only a 'later apostle' who had not known Jesus as an eyewitness. He also knew, of course, that Marcion claimed to accept Paul's gospel. But, says Tertullian, the gospel of Paul by itself is not enough. 'There would still be wanted that Gospel which Paul found in existence, to which he yielded his belief …' namely, the gospel of the apostles themselves, whose approval Paul sought in Jerusalem. And then the concluding statement in his argument, 'Therefore,

as the enlightener of Luke himself desired the authority of his predecessors for both his own faith and preaching, how much more may not I require for Luke's gospel that which was necessary for the gospel of his master?' (*ad Marc*. 4.2).

Anonymous writings were certainly not unusual, including those of Jewish and Christian origins. After all, many writings of the Jewish Scriptures, both canonical and not, are anonymous. This is especially true of writings that might be read as 'historical' – Kings, Chronicles, Maccabees, but it is also true for the Pentateuch. Among the Dead Sea texts, too, there are many that are anonymous. There is no indication of the names of authors in the Qumran texts themselves, nor were they 'tagged' with titles or authors' names. Josephus does not identify himself by name in the *Antiquities*, although he does in the *War*; and Philo rarely introduces himself by name in his extant writings. Among Christian writings, all the canonical Gospels fall into the anonymous category, as do writings known today as Hebrews, *Barnabas*, and the *Didache*. The apocryphal acts invariably do not introduce or identify their author. Among the Greeks and Romans, there are also texts that are anonymous. As just one example, *De Elocutione*, ascribed traditionally to Demetrius Phalereus, was not written by that author but is a later work. There is no authorial self-reference in the extant text.

Some later Christian Gospels were not so reserved about revealing, or making claims about, their authors. The *Protevangelium of James* ends by saying, 'I, James, who wrote this history in Jerusalem [thank God] for giving me the gift and the wisdom to write this history' (25). The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* claims the text was 'written in Hebrew by the blessed evangelist Matthew and translated into Latin by the blessed presbyter Jerome'. The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (in its first Greek form) begins, 'I, Thomas, an Israelite, write you this account.' Interesting also are those Gospels that claim to be based on some research. *The History of Joseph the Carpenter* purports to be the written report of a conversation the apostles had with Jesus who speaks in the first person about his father, Joseph. The holy apostles 'left it written down in the library at Jerusalem'. *The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Savior* begins by claiming that 'we' write this on the basis of what was found in the book of Joseph the high priest, who some say is Caiaphas. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* begins, 'I, Ananias … searching also the memorials written at that time of what was done in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ … found these memorials written in Hebrew, and by the favor of God have translated them into Greek … in the seventeenth year in the reign of our lord Flavius Theodosius …'.

There are those today who suggest that the anonymity of the Gospel of Luke (for example) stems from a piety which did not want to draw attention to the author. The real author of the Gospel was Jesus and that is why the writings were anonymous, says Hengel (2000: 49). To me, this sounds a little too pious, but ancient Christian writers also implied this when they said that the 'real' author of the 'gospel' is God. Important is the fact that this piety is never hinted at in the texts themselves. In fact, the preface to Luke's Gospel does not refer to God at all; it reads very much like a human author writing according to a commonly accepted form and style. The alternative reading of 1:3 in some Latin manuscripts, 'It seemed good to me and to the holy Spirit' might be an attempt to give the holy Spirit a little more credit for the Gospel than Luke himself implied!

One reason for anonymity can be seen in the nature of a 'Gospel' itself. The gospel ultimately was believed to come from God. As Irenaeus says, collectively and individually, Christians have the gospel of God (*omnes pariter et singuli eorum habentes euangelium dei*), but it comes to them through the various forms of the various authors (*A.H.* 3.1.1). In addition, the human author was not writing anything 'new' but was passing on a traditional memory, a story that he had already received from others in oral, and possibly also in written, forms. Luke did not see himself as a creator of a new tradition; he was handing one on. F.C. Grant says of Mark, 'To all intents and purposes we must study the Gospel as if it were anonymous, like most books of the Bible – a "traditional book", that is, a book based on a common tradition, not a product of personal literary authorship' (1951: 632). But Grant overstates the case. Individual authors did have a very significant say as to how the tradition was shaped and how it was to be handed on.

Luke writes anonymously. But that does not mean he writes 'in the chains' of his literary mentors or of the tradition he has received. In Luke-Acts, there is the 'I' of the prefaces, and while the author is putting the traditions into an order, the fact remains that it is an 'I' who does that. It is the author who selects, edits, constructs, adapts, and revises the various traditions that have come down to him. This gives him significant control and authority. Mount is right: 'Lk-Acts does not emerge out of the anonymity of public worship of a Christian church community, but out of the intellectual inquiry of an individual, the authorial "I", into apostolic traditions' (2002: 33). Once again, parallels can be found in the Teacher of Righteousness known in the Qumran texts. As with the author of the Third Gospel, we do not know his name, but he clearly was influential and authoritative; modern scholars try to find a name for him by identifying him with a known historical figure, as they do also for the author of the Third Gospel and Acts. But the writings of both are anonymous.

Mount continues, 'In speaking with his own voice, the author shifts the literary context of his work from the anonymous interpretive voice of early Christian communities rooted in Judaism to the authoritative voice of an author writing a Hellenistic narrative that is specifically Christian' (2002: 33). I agree that the author has an 'authoritative voice', and that is at the heart of what this book is about. But the fact remains that the Gospel is anonymous, if by that word we mean we do not know the name of the author. Mount, others, and I need to accept that and take it seriously.

It is possible that the Gospel is deliberately or consciously anonymous, and that we miss its point when we try to find a name for its author. By coming as an anonymous text to Theophilus, in the first place, and to any other receiver of the text in the second, the Gospel took on an authority of its own, as a text independent of the authority of its composer. Only in later times with their specific agenda did the Gospel take on the name of an author. That is not to say that Theophilus did not know the name of the author – it is most likely that he did. But that very fact makes the non-reference to the author's name the more significant. Theophilus receives the Gospel not from 'Luke' but from the traditions shaped by Luke. Luke passes something on, he is a link in the chain of tradition, and as such his name is not necessary. Each reading, in each community, had the authority and the power to shape that community. Each community, or more precisely, each reader of the text in a sense became its author and took on authorial authority. The history of the

manuscript traditions associated with Luke-Acts, but also with the other Gospels, would suggest that this might well have been the case. David Parker (2005) hints in that direction when he writes:

> The manuscripts of the Gospels cannot be used in restoring a lost original text, not because the task is impossible but because the Gospels were never that kind of text: instead, the manuscripts in their differing wordings reveal the many ways in which Christian communities read and understood the tradition.

As I will show, there is no evidence that the name 'Luke' gave the Gospel authority until the latter part of the second century. Presumably, before then the Gospel had authority in its own right, and had no need for an author's name. I am attracted to the suggestion, made by Dibelius, for one, that all the Gospels originally circulated independently of the others and that some churches only had access to one Gospel. They knew that Gospel as 'the gospel of Jesus Christ', or something similar, without any reference to its author. It was only when these churches came across other Gospels that they saw the need to distinguish them, and so they did so by associating them with certain authors, without any critical investigation as to whether they were actually the authors. So the Third Gospel received the title 'according to Luke' (ΚΑΤΑ ΛΟΥΚΑΝ) because of its (and his) alleged association with Paul, and in order to give it apostolic authority.

Chapter Two

Gospels, Authors, and Authority

Modern readers tend to associate the authority of a written text with that of its author. In the case of biblical texts, many of them have their authority precisely because of their authors. To take a few examples, those who believe that God is the 'real author' of the Bible will obviously see the text as having authority. Those who insist that Moses wrote the Pentateuch or that Paul wrote the Pastorals might be driven by a fear that if that were not the case, then in some way the authority of those texts would be diminished. I will discuss shortly how important it was for some second-century Christian writers to attach a Gospel to an author who had apostolic authority. The Gospels are anonymous texts – to say it again – but later authority issues among Christians forced them to identify Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as authors of the Gospels, and, in turn, to associate these names with apostolic authority. The author gave the text authority, and so it was important for the author to have a name and to be apostolic.

Much of the Gospel was first known in oral form, and these oral forms were memorized and some were committed to writing. In one sense, this is what Luke does. He is aware of these oral forms of the Gospel (and of written ones) but 'it seemed good' to him 'to write' (Luke 1:3). This transfer of the oral to the written is what Eusebius thought happened in the case of Mark's Gospel:

> So greatly, however, did the splendour of piety enlighten that mind of Peter's hearers, that it was not sufficient to hear but once, nor to receive the unwritten doctrine of the gospel of God, but they persevered in every variety of entreaties, to solicit Mark as the companion of Peter, and whose gospel we have, that he should leave them a monument of the doctrine thus orally communicated, in writing. Nor did they cease their solicitations until they had prevailed with the man, and thus become the means of that history which is called the Gospel according to Mark. They say also, that the apostle [Peter], having ascertained what was done by the revelation of the spirit, was delighted with the zealous ardour expressed by these men, and that the history obtained his authority for the purpose of being read in the churches. (*H.E.* 2.15.1–2)

He says something similar of Matthew:

> Matthew also having first proclaimed the gospel among the Hebrews, when on the point of going also to other nations, committed it to writings in his native tongue, and thus supplied the want of his presence to them, by his writings. (3.24)

And of John's Gospel, he says:

> [T]hey say, that John, who during all this time was proclaiming the gospel without writing, at length proceeded to write it . . . on the following occasion. These gospels previously

> written, having been distributed among all, and also handed to him; they say that he admitted them, giving his testimony to their truth; but that there was only wanting in the narrative the account of the things done by Christ, among the first of his deeds, and at the commencement of the gospel. (3.24)

He also notes that Clement of Alexandria claimed the Fourth Gospel was written as 'a spiritual gospel' because John was 'aware that the physical facts had been recorded in the gospels, [and] encouraged by his pupils and irresistibly moved by the Spirit', he wrote his own Gospel (*H.E.* 6.14.7).

But what about Luke – why does Eusebius repeat no tradition about the Third Gospel coming about as the result of pressure from others to write? Instead, Eusebius repeats a perception common by his time: 'It is actually suggested that Paul was in the habit of referring to Luke's gospel whenever he said, as if writing of some gospel of his own: "According to my gospel"' (*H.E.* 3.4.6). Luke's Gospel did not have the same community-linked traditions that the other Gospels had. It was not a community that gave it status but a single person, Paul. In fact, the implication is Luke's authority to write the Gospel was believed to have been accepted by Paul. In other words, Luke was no junior! In any case, the Third Gospel is odd in the tradition of the Gospels' origins.

Eusebius commonly attributes his information to what 'they say'; in other words, he has heard reports to this effect, reports that obviously predate him. I think that on a certain level 'they' got it right. Luke himself was aware of various oral (and written) forms of the Gospel and he took it upon himself ('it seemed good to me') to write. The primary interest of this book is to examine who or what gave him that authority. Luke asserts his authority as one who has 'followed everything closely from the beginning' (παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν, 1:3). What figure in a Christian community would do that? I suggest that a priest fits that category of person better than most.

In what sense can we call Luke an author? In the sense that he was, or claimed to be, an authoritative teacher of the traditions, probably first as an oral instructor who took the Scriptures (that is, written texts) and expounded from them the things about Jesus. I suggest he was authorized to do so by his status and self-understanding as a priest, a status that he believed gave him the authority to write as 'it seemed good' to him. On this point, I agree whole-heartedly with Hengel that 'all the authors of the Gospels were already *experienced teachers with authority* and not *neophytoi* or unknown "Gentile Christians" riveted solely to their limited present and the acute problems of their community' (2005: 91; italics his).

I also suggest that Luke was the author in the sense that his own oral performance or performances of the text were refined and edited and made available to Theophilus in written form. A text was not thought to be complete until it had gone through the two stages of delivery – performance and writing. Writing was fundamentally an aid to memory and an aid therefore to performance. So the author and the authority of the text were known by an audience not only in written form but also in performance. Then in the tradition or transmission of the text, authority lay again not only in the written text but also – and possibly, primarily – in the performance by the reader who was nearly always an officially appointed communal teacher who did not simply

recite the text but elaborated on it and expounded from it. In doing so, the claim was that he was keeping alive the voice of the author. The *lector* was Luke's *viva vox* which kept 'the Gospel according to Luke' alive. Jaffee says of *4 Ezra*: 'The book originated from an author's voice and extended that authorial voice in writing through the mediation of a scribal copyist. The messenger who read out the contents of the book made present in his voice the persona of the author' (2001: 25). I suggest that a similar process happened with Luke and his Gospel.

Successive oral performances in turn led to alterations in the written texts. So, there was an ongoing and complex relationship between the oral and the written, between 'author's pen and actor's voice', to borrow from the title of Robert Weimann's book (2000) on Shakespeare. According to Weimann, the performance of a Shakespearean text had more authority than its written form. It might well have been the same for the Lukan text. But for all that, 'behind' the performance and behind the text was an author, an authoritative writer and performer of a text, whom later tradition identified as Luke.

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Chapter Three

The Status of Luke in Scholarship

Rarely, if ever, do scholars (including the Scandinavians and others like Hengel and Bauckham) write and talk as if behind the Third Gospel there was some giant, dominant, authoritative, and influential figure. Instead, Luke has been seen more as an editor or compiler, as someone who played second fiddle to the maestros; as someone who could write beautifully and tell wonderful stories, but who was no great shakes as a theologian, and who had no great influence in the formation of early Christianity. In his Gospel, he is heavily dependent on his sources, and in Acts he gets Paul all wrong. The form critics certainly adopted this view. Dibelius, typically of his ilk, believed that in Acts, Luke 'acts as an author, but in the Gospel rather as a collector and editor … These matters are no longer in doubt' (1971: 3). He believed that the Gospel writers had almost no responsibility at all for shaping the tradition because 'they took over material which already possessed a form of its own. They joined some paragraphs together which beforehand had possessed a certain independent completeness' (1971: 4). The Gospels never reach the level of Belles Lettres, but are forms of popular literature, and 'the lowly people who use this style write according to laws which are independent of the individual personality' (1971: 7).

From this elitist perspective, it is understandable that, as Fitzmyer notes, Luke has been called 'The Rev. Mr. Luke', and 'the dim wit among the evangelists' (1981: 5). Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, the editors of the significant and influential *The Beginnings of Christianity*, frequently refer to 'the editor of Luke-Acts', and have a section entitled, 'The Identity of the Editor of Luke and Acts' (1922: 205). Even Fitzmyer himself calls Luke 'a compiler of his [Paul's] preaching' (1981: 38). Franklin rightly notes that Luke has been pushed into the background and is always seen as being in the shadow of Paul and not in the same league. He has been straitjacketed by theologians and scholars. But, says Franklin, Luke 'was less constrained, less clear-cut, more complex and better nuanced than they tended to allow' (1994: 11–12). It is this assessment that I wish to substantiate in this book. In the matter of Luke–Paul relations, I will argue that Paul was not someone whom Luke blindly idolized, but rather that Luke felt he had the authority and control to correct some of Paul's ideas and to provide a counter-balance to some of them. Luke did not agree with Paul on all issues and so he constructed a Paul that fitted his own agenda and own views. In other words, he controlled 'Paul' so that Paul said what Luke wanted him to say. To do that required some accepted or assumed authority. In the case of the Gospel, I suggest Luke claimed to be writing a 'safer' version (Luke 1:4) than those that were available in Luke's knowledge of the attempts to write a narrative of the 'things about Jesus'. I propose he did not simply rewrite or regurgitate his sources (especially Mark and Q), but that he wanted to counter and

control them and to reinterpret the things about Jesus as they saw them. That too required authority.

Luke's status is not helped by the fact that in many (but not all) ancient canons and lectionaries, as well as in modern Bibles, his Gospel is placed third behind Matthew and Mark. This implies some kind of ranking of the Gospels, even if it is not intended. And the fact that Luke, by his own admission, was not an eyewitness of events narrated in his Gospel particularly, and probably used sources, which we might identify as Mark and Q (and some would argue Matthew), implies that he is more an editor and redactor than the others who preceded him. Many scholars have been obsessed to discover, or at least to construct, the 'historical Jesus', and it is reasonable for them to prefer the earlier sources like Mark and Q. Why use a later, secondary source like Luke when there are earlier, primary sources? And in Acts, Luke's apparent admiration of Paul has been a contributing factor to the picture of him as a reporter and as a second-hand dealer in information. Again, why use Luke when there is access to data directly from Paul himself?

It is true that since the 1950s, Luke has finally made it in some scholars' opinions – at least as a theologian and as a historian! Van Unnik wrote that Luke has since then 'appeared no longer as a somewhat shadowy figure who assembled stray pieces of more or less reliable information, but as a theologian of no mean stature who very consciously and deliberately planned and executed his work' (1976: 23). Marshall (1971) titled his book, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*; and the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* divides its entry under 'Luke' into *Historian* and *Theologian* (1992: 4.398, 402). These epithets are anachronistic, or at least misleading, if it is assumed that what moderns mean by them is also precisely what a first-century Mediterranean reader might have meant; and they run the risk of reflecting more the ideals of modern scholars than those of any ancient Christian author. For my purposes, the epithets can stand; but my question is, what kind of person had the status and authority to be 'theologian and historian' among early Christians? It seems to me that a Jewish priest, now Christian, had better credentials than most and was as likely a candidate as any.

It was largely due to the work of Vielhauer, Käsemann and Conzelmann in the 1950s–1960s that the status of Luke rose. Conzelmann, who saw in Luke-Acts a well-devised, conscious construction of salvation history, with its three periods of Israel, Jesus, and the church, gave the impetus for Luke's rise to such high honor as 'theologian'. But even then, not everyone has been convinced. Barrett believes Luke 'is not sufficiently interested in theology … to be called a *theologus* of any colour' (1979: 84). And Haenchen questions his purpose as a historian: 'Luke was no professional historian and was not interested in writing a history of early Christianity' (1976: 258), but he is a 'fascinating' and a 'popularizing narrator' (1976: 260). Luke's status as a historian is still heavily discussed and debated, with the various opinions conflicting quite sharply. Some, to a greater or lesser degree, support Ramsay's conclusion that Luke was 'the writer of an historical work of the highest order' (1982: 420), although they tend to say that far more in relation to Acts (to which Ramsay is referring) than they do about the Gospel. Others remain much more skeptical, particularly in regard to Luke's portrayal of Peter and Paul in Acts. Alexander's significant thesis on the preface to Luke's Gospel (1993) has added support to those who do not think Luke is writing historiography. Her

cogently argued claim is that the preface does not fit the pattern of historiographical prefaces, but rather resembles prefaces 'within a different literary tradition which had its own preface-conventions' (1993: 103), namely 'scientific' (*wissenschaftlich*) writings. There are also other scholars who, rightly in my opinion, insist that Luke the theologian and Luke the historian ought not to be played off against each other. That one must be *either* a historian *or* a theologian is a position that, in the early 1960s Gerhardsson called 'an extremely tenaciously-held misapprehension among exegetes' (1961: 209).

There has been another effort to save Luke from the editor or compiler fate and that has come mainly from North American scholars who focus on his literary skills as a writer rather than on his skills as a historian or theologian. Talbert's work best represents this rescue attempt. He thinks Luke is not only a theologian but an artist who had such command of language and style that he could vary both to fit the varying circumstances and the characters in his narrative (1974: 1). Many scholars have also been attracted to and by the balanced formal patterns that are used in Luke-Acts, a feature that Talbert himself wanted to give greater focus (1974: 2–3, 16–18, 23–4). These parallels, and other smaller subsections that parallel, Talbert argues, cannot be explained simply on the basis of the 'historical facts' or on the basis of the author's sources. They must ultimately be attributed to the skill and design of the author, and be the result of 'an intentional arrangement of material on his part' (1974: 25, 29). They are due to Luke's 'conscious intent' (1974: 48), and Talbert believes that Luke 'deliberately adapted his materials' (1974: 56). His basic point is that Luke's writings are 'rooted in the same architectonic principle, that of balance', as is found in other Jewish, Christian, and pagan literature and in art (1974: 59). The conclusion that Talbert reaches is that Luke was an educated author, possibly trained in literary styles. He is not, then, an editor or compiler, but a skilled writer.

This book joins this effort to let the writer of the Gospel of Luke stand on his own feet and to be seen, heard, and understood for himself as an authoritative, skilled, and independent thinker and author. I am especially interested in the authority that Luke had to write and to interpret as he did. I will suggest that he had an authority similar to that held by a teaching, writing Jewish priest, if indeed he was not such a priest himself. It should be noted at this point, however, that what I am offering is a construction, and it is not my intention to argue that the writer was 'in fact' a priest, because it is simply not possible for us to know that. I picture him to be somewhat in the mould of Josephus, who was a priest, and who implicitly claimed that his priestly status gave him authority to retell the history of Israel and to 'update' that history into his own times. Luke retells God's will and plan for Israel as demonstrated in and through Jesus of Nazareth, and then he adds his own 'updated' material with God's actions through the apostles of that same Jesus.

The parallel with Josephus is often noted. Craig Evans writes, 'Luke rewrote the story of Jesus much as Josephus rewrote Israel's sacred history' (1993a: 4), and he thinks that the retellings of the Jesus traditions also have much in common with the general category of 'rewritten Bible' (1993a: 2). Dahl says that Luke's 'own conscious intention was to write history in biblical style or, rather, to write the continuation of the biblical history. This gives him a unique place even among New Testament writers' (1976: 152–3). Others, like Jervell, go even further and say

that Luke not only rewrites the story of Jesus, but he also rewrites the history of God's people, of Israel (Jervell, 1996). The updating of history that is found in both Josephus and in Luke has its precedents in Jewish canonical writings which might well have served as models for both later writers. Schniedewind claims that with the Deuteronomistic editor as the model, in Jewish canonical tradition 'we have authors who constantly bring history down to their own times' (1999: 159). The Chronicler is an example of this updating of history, and I suggest it is no coincidence that Josephus and the Chronicler were priests, and that it was precisely as such that they had the authority to rewrite Israel's history and to update it. I suggest Luke was also a priest, who therefore claimed and possessed similar authority. As I will show, the priests of Israel were the 'historians and theologians' who controlled, guarded, and transmitted Israel's history.

The question, why Luke wrote Acts, has bothered scholars for a long time. Why is there no 'synoptic' of Acts? Why did the other evangelists not also write an update? van Unnik claims that 'Luke's Acts is a unique achievement within and outside the borders of Christianity' (1960: 27). But was it really? I suggest that Luke was continuing his Gospel narrative, continuing to tell the story of 'the things about Jesus' as he understood them in the light of his Scriptures. As far as he is concerned, the Gospel was his 'first book' (πρῶτον λόγον, Acts 1:1) and writing a second followed the literary tradition of other Jewish writers who wrote more than one book on a given subject matter (for example, Philo, *Vit. Mos*. 2.1.1; *Spec. Leg*. 2.1.1; and Josephus, *C. Apion* 2.1.1–2).

Conzelmann's famous answer to the question, 'why Acts?' is that Luke had a theological, particularly non-eschatological, understanding of history. Within the history of salvation, the church becomes the institution of salvation, and it had to come to terms with having a continued existence in the world. Acts is written to tell readers that this is the 'time of the church'. I am not convinced that Luke-Acts is any less eschatological in its understanding of God's actions in and for Israel than any of the other Gospels, and I think Conzelmann drew lines far too firmly, and too divisively, between his three epochs, and in too linear a fashion. Conzelmann has not provided the full answer. Other parts to the answer must lie elsewhere. Many have focused more on the role of the Gentiles in the plan of God as the crucial reason for Acts, a factor that has more eschatological ingredients than Conzelmann might be prepared to admit.

I would like to add another aspect into the mix by asking: Who gave Luke the *authority* to update the history, to provide a 'revisionist history of God's people, Israel' (if that is what it is), in other words, to write the second book? Who or what gave him the authority to interpret and to revise not only the Jesus traditions but also the traditions about Paul and Peter and the other apostles? By what authority could he construct his leading characters – Jesus, Peter, and Paul – along very similar lines? I suggest Luke could do this on the basis of his authority as a Jewish priest, just like the Chronicler and like Josephus. Like them, he claimed to understand God's actions and plans for Israel and he brought them up to date. By implication, the other evangelists might not have had the same authority to do this. My understanding of Luke as a Jewish priest obviously will mean that I read Luke-Acts according to Jewish priestly views of history. Barrett suggested that with Acts, we have 'a screen

upon which two pictures are being projected at the same time – a picture of the church at the first period, and, super-imposed upon it, a picture of his own times' (1961: 52). I suggest there is a third picture clearly recognizable beneath the two Barrett could see – a picture of God's actions in the history of Israel.

I see Luke also as being like another priest, namely the Teacher of Righteousness who is depicted in the texts found at Qumran. The latter was a writing, teaching, Scripture-interpreting priest who had great influence and legendary status as the founding father of the Community, and for whom righteousness and godly living were of great importance as he and his community awaited the end of days. Again, it might be noted that despite the obvious status and authority of this Teacher, the texts do not mention his name, neither the texts that tell the history of the Community nor those that might have been composed by the Teacher himself. I think Luke was very much like this Teacher. In fact, I would say that even if we had no Dead Sea Scrolls, it would be perfectly apt to call Luke the 'Teacher of righteousness'. As will be seen, righteous people and their actions are central in Luke's writings, to the point that Luke's climax in the Gospel is reached in the centurion's verdict at the crucifixion: 'This man was certainly righteous' (δίκαιος, 23:47). For Mark, the climax of the Gospel, and the full realization of who Jesus is, come with the declaration of the centurion, 'Surely this man was the son of God' (Mark 15:39). For Luke, it is that Jesus was a righteous man. The connection between 'son of God' and 'a righteous man' is much closer than might at first appear, but my point is that Luke has a concern for righteousness, a concern for walking according to the laws and statutes of God. He believed that righteousness and righteous living were modeled and personified in the person of Jesus whom God vindicated by raising from the dead. Such a concern and such an interpretation of Jesus sit well with a priest.

In writing, Luke was revising and reshaping the Jesus traditions and the traditions of the apostles (of Peter and Paul in particular). Some of these traditions obviously were already known in oral or written form or in both. By the second and third generation of Christians, that is, by about 75–85 CE when a written form of Luke's Gospel was probably first known, communities gave these traditions some authority in that they read, performed, memorized, and recited them in their worship and in their instructional teaching. Instruction in the gospel traditions was central in the communal and individual life of the very earliest generations of Christians. Paul, the earliest known Christian writer, occasionally appeals to his audiences to 'stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter' (2 Thess 2:15; compare 1 Thess 4:1; Eph 4:20; Col 2:7; Tit 1:9). Luke writes for an audience living at least one generation after Paul. What he offers is an accurate and safe reading of the Jesus and apostolic traditions in written form. In so doing, he sets himself up as an illuminated teacher who can expound the meaning of the traditions to Theophilus and to any one else who gathered to hear and to study these authoritative traditions.

Before continuing too far, I will do some more spadework. There are quite a few more basic questions that are relevant to my construction of the author of the Gospel.

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Chapter Four

Why Write Another Gospel?

This question implies that Luke knew that a Gospel had already been written. According to Gregory, there is 'the very strong likelihood that Luke drew on written and/or oral traditions and the strong possibility (perhaps the probability) that Luke included in his narrative very little that was not known elsewhere' (2005: 403). Gregory accepts the commonly held opinion that Luke drew 'almost certainly' from Mark and 'very probably (or perhaps even most certainly)' from Q (2005: 402). Nearly all scholars would accept this understanding of things, although there have always been a few who prefer that Luke also used Matthew. In any case, if Luke writes little that was not already known, then why does he bother to write at all?

None of this is as simple or obvious a matter as it might at first appear. In the first place, it is highly unlikely that Luke knew the word 'Gospel' as a literary genre. Nor can we assume that Luke knew the 'Gospel according to Mark' or any other 'Gospel' as we know them today. If Luke did know Mark's general contents, it is very doubtful that he knew it by that title. We cannot assume that he knew its written form, as if he sat there (like a modern academic) with a copy of Mark's Gospel in front of him. There is a growing tendency to think that the Gospel writers were more influenced by common oral traditions than they were by written texts. But even if Luke did know the written Gospel of Mark, it is most unlikely that he knew it to have been written by Mark or that Peter was the apostle behind it, as the traditions of later centuries claimed. If Mark is the author of the Gospel by that name and the same Mark is the fellow-worker of Paul, and if Luke is the author of the Third Gospel and also the fellow-worker of Paul, then Luke must have known Mark personally as they seem to have worked together or at least have been in the same place together (Phlm 24; Col 4:10, 14). In that case, why not acknowledge his Gospel and/or Mark himself as a source? And if Luke knew Peter was behind Mark's Gospel, then again, why does he not acknowledge that, since he clearly holds Peter in high regard as a controller and interpreter of the Jesus tradition? Why hide Mark and Peter behind the 'many' or among the 'eyewitnesses and ministers of the word'? The silences raise questions about the later traditions – about whether Luke was the author, and about whether he knew Mark's Gospel at all. Did he have access only to 'many' narratives (διηγήσεις), both in oral and written form, some of which happen to have had much in common with what we know today as 'The Gospel according to Mark'?

The preface to the 'Gospel according to Luke' (as it is known in the earliest manuscripts of the Gospel, dated around 200 CE), assuming it was part of the 'original text', indicates that the author was aware that there were *many* narratives about Jesus in existence. It seems to refer to both written and oral texts. The expression 'they have undertaken to compile a narrative' (ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν, 1:1) probably indicates written texts. On the other hand, at least at first sight,

'the things … that were delivered to us by those who were from the beginning eyewitnesses and ministers of the word' (1:2) would seem to refer to oral traditions that had been handed down. Grammatically, the 'eyewitnesses' and the 'ministers of the word' are probably one group and not two. The standard view in scholarship is to understand this group as those who witnessed the ministry of Jesus that began with the baptism by John, and so it refers to the apostles. Bauckham, for example, thinks the eyewitnesses 'may not be limited to the Twelve … but surely include the Twelve prominently among them' (2006: 123). Others, however, including Kuhn (2003), have argued that the phrase 'the eyewitnesses from the beginning' (οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται) refers to those who are then depicted in the subsequent narrative – Elizabeth, Zechariah, Anna, Simeon, Mary, and so on. While Kuhn might be right in his understanding of the term, he does not take the role and status of the 'servants of the word' (ὑπηρέται τοῦ λόγου) into much account. I suggest that they are not insignificant figures for Luke and so they deserve a closer examination. The way we understand these people relates very closely to understanding Luke's claim to authority.

Taylor has argued that the ὑπηρέτης (minister, servant) is the equivalent of the synagogue's *hazzan*, and that the latter was 'the teacher of the synagogue school, as well as attendant in the synagogue, someone who worked under the authority of another, "a man who does the spade work", not a servant waiting on a superior' (Taylor 1946: 22–3). He was not a teacher (διδάσκαλος) who had the authority to instruct in the interpretation of the traditions, and so to be the living voice, teaching 'new' things, like Jesus, who taught his students a new form of prayer. Instead, the ὑπηρέτης was a servant of the word in the strict sense – he served the word, and that probably included both its oral and written forms. According to Schuerer, the *hazzan* had the job of bringing out the holy texts for worship and afterwards replacing them again; he announced the beginning and end of the Sabbath; was a servant of the congregation, and taught children to read (1973: 2.438). Indeed, Luke so uses the term ὑπηρέτης of the synagogue official who handled the Scripture roll (τὸ βίβλιον) in Nazareth (Luke 4:20). We probably have to consider the possibility that the 'ministers of the word' to whom Luke refers in his preface were those who looked after both oral and 'hard copies' of Christian versions of the 'the things about Jesus'. This sense of them being guardians of the traditions, in a more active sense, is implied when Luke uses the word for Paul in Acts 26:16. There, the appearing Lord Jesus appoints Paul as a 'servant' (ὑπηρέτην) and witness (μάρτυρα) 'of the things which you have both seen and which I will show to you'. The ascended Jesus appoints Paul as guardian of the things Jesus reveals. Obviously, this is a very significant appointment, and suggests that those 'servants of the word' in Luke 1:2 were of quite some importance, status, and authority. They might even have had a status that Luke claimed for and of himself.

Schwartz argues that the term ὑπηρέτης was also used to refer to a scribe and a Levite. Philo, for one, uses the word in reference to the Levites who perform 'all the ministrations which have a reference to perfect holiness' (*Sacr*. 132, 133); and some Levites are also known to have been scribes (1 Chron 19:11; 24:6; 2 Chron 34:13). Josephus also makes the ὑπηρέτης–Levite link when he refers to the ruling that every city should have seven judges, and each judge should have two officers

(ὑπηρέτα) 'allotted him out of the tribe of Levi' (*Ant*. 4.214). Schwartz suggests that in Mark 14:53–54, ὑπηρέται and γραμματεῖς are used interchangeably; that the Septuagint uses the term γραμματεύς to translate the Hebrew *shoter*, a word that in modern Hebrew means 'a policeman' but then was used for a minor official, usually in the area of law and enforcement (1992: 92). Schwartz also argues that the term 'scribes' is often used in the New Testament as the equivalent of the Hebrew *shoterim*, and they in turn are bailiffs, very often belonging to the Levites (1992: 93–6). In the Mishnah, the *hazzanim* seem to be Levites (Schwartz 1992: 96). There is some indication that Levites were the guardians of written traditions. According to *Jubilees*, Jacob passed on his father's books and his own to Levi 'so that he might preserve them and renew them for his sons until this day' (45.15).

If Schwartz is right, then I suggest that the 'servants of the word' to whom Luke refers were Levites who were the 'policemen' of the (written) word. Luke has access to these Levites (Barnabas was one, Acts 4:36; he heads the list of 'prophets and teachers' in 13:1) and to their information, access that a priest might readily have. In any case, I suggest that Luke is referring to 'ministers or guardians of the story', or as Taylor calls them, the 'official custodians of the oral Gospels' (1946: 45). If Schwartz is right, these ὑπηρέται were also *scribes* of the traditions; that is, they transmitted them in written form probably in a teaching context. So the ὑπηρέται might also have been responsible for guarding *written* Christian texts, possibly of what later became known as 'Gospels'.

Possibly, Luke uses a parallel term in Acts 6:4, διακονία τοῦ λόγου, which refers to the ministry of knowing, teaching, and faithfully transmitting the things about Jesus, the gospel tradition, the *logos*. Another interesting phrase is used in Acts 14:12, where Paul is said to be ἡγούμενος τοῦ λόγου. It is the spoken, oral word of which Paul is leader. As I will suggest later, the Christian story, in both its oral and written forms, was entrusted to people; it could not be handled lightly and by anyone, but only by those entrusted with it. The eyewitnesses, those who had first-hand experience of 'the things that have been accomplished among us', were the obvious and logical guardians and transmitters of the story which gave the Christian community its reason for existence and continuation. They gave credibility and authenticity to the traditions. If they were Levites, that added to their authority to do so, and it also added to the authority of the message being transmitted.

Another reason why I suggest that these 'eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word' might have at least included priests or Levites is the choice of vocabulary that Luke uses of them. He says that 'they delivered to us' (παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν, 1:2). The verb is the standard, almost technical, term used in Jewish and Christian writings for the handing on of a sacred tradition (compare 1 Cor 15:1, 3). Now, who had the authority to hand on such a tradition? It was not just anyone; but we do know that priests and Levites claimed that authority as teachers of Torah. And if the eyewitnesses and servants of the word 'delivered' in written form, then there is at least the possibility that they were of the priestly class. If Kuhn is right, and Luke is in fact referring to those actors who appear in the beginning of his Gospel, then we might note that they are all priestly or Temple-related people. Whether Kuhn is right or not, Luke then goes on to say that 'it seemed good also to me … to write'; in other words, Luke sees himself doing what these others have done – delivering

the tradition. He does so in written form. He claims an authority equal to that of the 'eyewitnesses and ministers of the word'.

'The things that have been accomplished among us' have come down to Luke through the efforts of 'many' others (1:1). Why does Luke write another narrative (διήγησις) if there were others already in existence? This is probably a question we moderns are more likely to ask, but not one that would have bothered the ancients. It would seem that many ancient cultures, especially those in which a large percentage of the population was illiterate, found great pleasure in retelling the familiar; and they thought repetition, retelling, and re-enactment (and the memorization that often resulted) to be very important, not least for the maintenance and preservation of the traditions. They were not so easily and quickly bored by repetition, as many literates are today. In addition, the ancients generally held their great predecessors in the highest regard and believed that what a writer and orator should do was to imitate, not to be innovative. Quintilian says 'no one can doubt that a great part of art lies in imitation' (10.2.1). That is partly why Luke imitates other Greek writers in his preface and why he imitates the Septuagint in his narrative. Such imitation allowed the audience to locate the authority of what they were hearing.

In Jewish literature, there are a few literary precedents to the 'synoptic' narratives found in Gospels; that is, literature which repeats a tradition, sometimes *verbatim*, sometimes in a different form or in a different literary and narrative context. For example, both Exodus (20:2–17) and Deuteronomy (5:5–21) record the giving of the Law in almost identical forms; and Chronicles and Samuel-Kings have such close, and sometimes striking, parallels to suggest that the former might have had the latter as a source. Similarly, Ezra and *1 Esdras* have very close parallels, and it would seem that *1 Esdras* draws substantially on Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah. So Luke had good precedence for repeating traditions in a very similar form to that which he had received. On a broader scale, in the *Antiquities* of Josephus the author retells and paraphrases the entire biblical history in the first half, and then follows with the subsequent history of the Jews up to his own time. Admittedly, Josephus wrote mainly for 'Greeks', but he could have simply referred them to 'the Bible', or to some books within it, rather than retelling it.

Philo wrote in various genres which Borgen says can be divided into two main categories: Rewriting the Pentateuch, and exegetical commentaries. Within these two categories are: rewriting of the biblical narrative; apology for Jews, *Vitae*, allegorical commentaries; questions and answers on Genesis and Exodus; blessings and curses, using especially Deuteronomy (1997: 46–8). It might be more helpful to look for Luke's Gospel genre here and in other Jewish Greek literary sources rather than be sidetracked by his style in the preface into looking at non-Jewish genres. Borgen notes that both Philo and Josephus 'utilise a conventional form of reviewing Mosaic history and laws, and they partly draw on common traditions and share the same apologetic tendencies … The basic structure of this form is already found in Deuteronomy, which contains a revised repetition of a large part of the history and laws of the first four books of the Laws of Moses' (1997: 59). Similar examples are the rewritings of Jewish history and biblical traditions found at Qumran, including the apocryphal texts like *Jubilees* and the *Testament of the Twelve*. It seems to me

that Luke fits well into this Jewish literary tradition. What they do with the Mosaic traditions is similar to what Luke does with traditions dealing with Jesus.

There are a number of known examples of 'rewritten' biblical history, best known of which are *Jubilees*, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, and Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*. Craig Evans has developed the idea that 'Luke's work is an example of "historical hagiographa" … a genre that is part of the Jewish rewritten Bible. Methodologically, his predecessor is *Jubilees*' (1993d: 175). There is very good evidence that *Jubilees* is the work of a priest; what Luke does is to continue an established priestly practice.

The tradition, maybe especially the written tradition, was sacred, powerful, and essential for a community's existence and identity. I use the word 'tradition' here to refer especially to that material and to that social memory that was deliberately and consciously passed on to the next generation. One took delight in repeating and memorizing this material. At best, it was variations on a theme that was valued and seen as 'new'. It was not simply that the tradition was passed down *verbatim*, but that each performance, each telling, added something while playing on the same theme. The existence of the various Gospels is evidence of this very point – they share a common core story, much common material, and even some common forms, but their tellers and 'authors' are free to retell and to reshape the story in their own style and with their own agenda and to adapt it to their own context. If the Areopagus experience of Paul according to Luke is any measure (Acts 17), Luke had little liking for the Athenians in part because they liked to tell and hear something new (Acts 17:21). In fact, Paul goes on to say that the Christian message is consistent with their pagan tradition (17:28), and so is nothing 'new' even from a pagan perspective. We might note the difference in the crowd's reactions to Jesus' teaching in Luke 4:36 ('What is this *logos*?') and the response given in Mark 1:27 ('What is this? A new teaching!'). More broadly, Luke wants to insist that the Jesus movement is not 'new', but is very much God's renewal of Israel, and he writes because he believes he has the true understanding of Israel's scriptural and ancestral traditions.

Knowles senses with Matthew what I believe is the case also with Luke:

> For those whose métier is the *production* of texts, there is great virtue in originality: scholars are forever trying to say – or more precisely, to publish! – something 'new' about other, more ancient texts … But for all that Matthew's own approach is truly original, he might be the first to argue that any subsequent originality risks betraying his particular text. As he sees it, all possible 'newness' consists already in Christ alone, in the Messiah who has fulfilled all … (2004: 76)

Luke's Purpose in Writing

Luke wants to put his own stamp on the tradition about Jesus. That might not mean he thinks previous narratives are lacking, but simply that he believes that as a transmitter and rewriter, he has the authority to imprint his own creative agenda and his own style on the known tradition. More than likely, he also has a particular audience and a particular context in mind and wanted to adapt the tradition to that audience. Possibly, Luke is not comfortable with the many attempted narratives, not so much with their

content as with the sheer number and diversity of them. So he wishes to hand on to Theophilus *one* narrative, held together by its own, distinctive and authoritative 'safety' of words (1:4). If that is the case, then he makes significant claims about himself and his writing. There is a single-mindedness in Luke's writings, as if 'there is one thing that is needful' (Luke 10:42), and his audience ought to choose that one thing rather than to be anxious and worried about the 'many things' (10:40, 41). And by doing this Luke says to his audiences that they should think the way that he does and not to be distracted by the many.

In fact, Luke gives his own answer to the question of why he writes another narrative: 'to write an orderly account … that you might know the truth (ἵνα ἐπιγνῷς … τὴν ἀσφάλειαν) concerning the things of which you have been informed' (1:4). The translation of ἀσφάλεια as 'truth' (RSV, NRSV) is an interesting choice, and it is misleading. Greek had a perfectly good word for 'truth' (ἀλήθεια), as we commonly use the word, but that is not the word that Luke uses. He is not talking about 'the facts' or 'the truth' (*pace* Cadbury 1922b: 509, Bauckham 2006: 117, and many others), or even about 'the correct interpretation' of the data. Green acknowledges that 'it has been easy to find here an emphasis on Luke's affirmation of the historical veracity of his narrative, or even to argue that Luke thus sees himself as providing a historical foundation for the Christian message' (1996: 287). But Green says, in part rightly, that it is not *validation* that is Luke's concern, but rather it is the *signification* of the historical events that is important (1996: 288; italics his).

Luke uses a word that means 'safety', 'security', and 'stability'. Together with its cognates, the noun (ἀσφάλεια) carries the sense of something that is steady and will not fall down, something that is firm and reliable. Philo uses it very often to mean the opposite of 'danger' (for example, *Quod Deterius* 36, 37, 42; *Agr*. 149, 167; *Conf*. 103; *Fuga* 80; *Vit*. *Mos*. 2.58). Luke himself uses the word or its cognates frequently in Acts (2:36; 5:23; 16:23; 21:34; 22:30; 25:26). In two cases, it is used to refer to a prison's security (2:36; 16:23), but in the other passages, it is used with verbs of 'knowing' and 'writing' and suggests 'firmness' and 'reliability' of the matter. But it can also carry the sense of 'clarity' (so Moessner 2002: 159) or 'plausibility', which is not the same as 'certainty' or 'truth'. Moessner later suggests Luke intends to offer a 'firmer grasp of the true significance' of the traditions (2005: 165).

There are some who have an obsession with historical facts that was not shared by the Gospel writers. Marshall is typical in thinking that Luke writes to Theophilus in order to confirm 'the truth of the facts', and to 'stress the accuracy of the historical facts which formed part of early Christian teaching' (1971: 38–39). Marshall does not think that what the original 'eyewitnesses and servants of the word delivered to us' was suspect historically; nor does he think Mark (or any other of Luke's sources, for that matter) was historically unreliable from Luke's viewpoint (1991: 290). In fact, Marshall claims that Luke remained faithful to 'the traditions which he took over from his sources' (1971: 20). I believe that Luke's interests are not so much in 'the truth' in the sense of historical reliability and historical facts, as in providing Theophilus with a 'stability, safety, and clarity of the *words*' – a stable written narrative of something that Theophilus had learnt orally – given that there are 'many' narratives floating around that were, by implication, either collectively or individually, 'risky, not safe,

not stable'. In the end, Luke, like the other Gospels, is providing Theophilus with a story; a story told with 'safe' words and in a 'safe' style.

The noun ἀσφάλεια and its cognates were used in Greek style guides for orators and writers. In other words, writers had a concern for the 'security' of language, not (only) of history or of facts. According to Alexander, 'there is no evidence that the word (ἀσφάλεια) was ever adopted by historians … and it does not appear in the scientific prefaces studied, except in Dionysius Calliphontis 12' (1993: 140). In addition, Alexander, while preferring to understand ἐπιγνῷς ἀσφάλειαν as 'to have assured knowledge, to find out for certain' (1993: 140), is aware that it might also refer to safety of text. She cites an ancient scholiast who interprets ἀσφάλεια to mean 'the higher security which is preserved by the written document as opposed to the purely oral statement'. She then goes on to say, 'if this is right, then Luke's stress on ἀσφάλεια would reflect a contrast not with other written Gospels but with the oral instruction (κατηχήσις) which Theophilus had received' (1993: 140–1).

A number of Greek writers use the word ἀσφάλεια and its cognates as a literary stylistic term. Dionysius of Halicarnassus repeatedly does so, using it to refer to the safe and conservative style (ἡ ἀσφάλεια καὶ τὸ ἀκίνδυνον) of orators compared to the daring and original style of Thucydides (*Demosthenes* 2.31). He talks about clauses and periods 'treading *firmly*' (24.36), having '*balanced* movement' (26.7; compare *On Lit. Comp*. 22.118), or ending on a '*firm* note' (40.56), in each case using a cognate form of ἀσφάλεια. Demetrius in his *De Elocutione* likewise talks about the 'safe' (ἀσφάλης) use of language vis-à-vis the 'risky' or 'dangerous' (κινδυνώδης) use of it. The implication is that a good writer will use language that is beyond criticism. For example, he says, 'Some writers endeavour by the addition of epithets to safeguard metaphors (ἀσφαλίζονται τὰς μεταφοράς) which they consider risky', and he then gives the example of a metaphor that is guarded (ἠσφάλισται) by a qualification (85). And again later, 'the true covert allusion depends on … good taste and circumspection' (εὐπρέπειας καὶ ἀσφαλείας, 287). It is possible that Philo uses ἀσφαλής in this way when Jews are described as sitting down 'in your synagogues, collecting your ordinary assemblies, and reading your sacred volumes in security (ἀσφαλής), and explaining whatever is not clear, and devoting all your time and leisure with long discussions to the philosophy of your ancestors' (*Somn*. 2.127). However, Philo might also be referring to the physical safety of being in a synagogue.

The verb ἐπιγινώσκω means to recognize, perceive, realize, or acknowledge something. Recognition can come through reading and hearing, of course; and the Greek verbs for both actions are closely related (ἀναγινώσκω – ἐπιγινώσκω). Luke writes so that Theophilus will recognize in the written text that the words he has learnt are stable, plausible, clear, and safe. Why would Luke want Theophilus to recognize this? I suggest it was because Theophilus was to transmit the tradition to his own community as its leader, teacher, and/or as its reader (*lector*). Luke is an older man passing on the mantle to Theophilus; he is a priest in control of the tradition and of how it was transmitted.

Concern for the text and for how it is read is evident in the pagan literature, in the Qumran texts, and in early Christian literature. Isocrates complained that his discourses (τοὺς λόγους) were abused by people 'reading them in the worst possible

manner side by side with their own, dividing them at the wrong places, mutilating them, and in every way spoiling their effect' (*Panathen*. 17). According to one Dead Sea text, 'anyone whose speech is too soft or speaks with a staccato voice not dividing his words so that his voice may be heard, none of these shall read from the book of the Law lest he cause error in a capital manner' (4Qfr5ii). Here, concern is not so much about effect as understanding. The reading and the reader almost dare not be misheard and therefore prone to be misunderstood. For this reason, the presiding priest was to be 'learned in all the regulations of the Law, speaking them in the proper way' (CD 14.7). Gamble suggests that the blessing promised in Rev 1:3 and in 22:9 to the reader who 'keeps what is written' is really a promise to the reader who preserves the text as it has been written. 'The author's concern [is] for the text itself … that it be preserved in its integrity', as Rev 22:18–19 makes explicitly clear (1995: 102).

Irenaeus also illustrates how important a 'correct' or 'safe' reading was. Commenting on Paul's style and word order, he says:

> If one does not attend to the reading and if he does not exhibit the intervals of breathing as they occur, there will not only be incongruities but he will utter blasphemy when reading, as if the advent of the Lord could take place according to the working of Satan. So, therefore, in such passages the *hyperbaton* must be exhibited by the reading, and the apostle's meaning preserved accordingly. (*A.H.* 3.7.2)

A similar concern appears in the Talmud where rabbis declare that people who come from regions where certain sounds are mispronounced may not recite the *birchat kohannim*. There were people who pronounced the 'alef' the same way they pronounced 'ayin', and so when they said, 'Ya'er Hashem Panav Elecha', they pronounced the word 'ya'er' as if it had an 'ayin', which is a word that means to curse (*Meg*. 24b). The *Megillah* in fact has a number of regulations concerning how the Torah is to be read and who can read from it.

It is possible that Luke had similar concerns. He wanted to give Theophilus a *narrative text* that would enable a safe, accurate, and orderly performance and reading of the tradition. It was also a text that was written in a style that did not leave itself open to contradiction and debate. It could not be dismissed simply because it did not sound right! The use of the word ἀσφάλεια reveals a concern for a reading and an oral performance of the tradition that is free from mistakes and free from language that might result in misinterpretation, misunderstanding and contradiction. I suggest, then, that we ought to read the phrase περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης τῶν λόγων (1:4) in a more literal sense. Luke is talking about *words* that Theophilus has been taught, not only 'matters' or 'things', as most (if not all) translations and commentators will have it (for example, RSV, Goulder 1989: 202; Alexander 1993: 139). We would then translate 1:4b, 'that you might come to recognize the stability/safety of the words that you have learned'. The verb κατηχέω means 'to learn by word of mouth', and reflects the common practice of a student repeating ('echoing') what the teacher says. It is well known that the common form of teaching, especially among Jews, was for the student to repeat what the teacher said. Even when classical texts were read, the teacher gave the 'correct' reading and the students repeated it. Luke is more

interested in the order (καθεξῆς), stability, and accuracy (ἀκριβῶς) of the words than he is in their chronological or historical reliability. As his teacher, in order to give Theophilus a certainty and stability of words, Luke puts them into writing. Given Gerhardsson's argument for the reliability of the Jesus tradition as narrated in the Gospels, it is to be expected that he is also aware that Luke 1:4 could refer strictly to the 'words' (λόγοι) that Theophilus has learnt rather than 'things' (1961: 211). But even he is prepared to accept the standard understanding that λόγοι and πράγματα are interchangeable equivalents. Cadbury thought that λόγοι in Luke 1:4 is 'used for variety' (1922b: 509).

Quintilian might illuminate what was going on in Luke's mind (not that we can ever know that). In his preface to the *Orator's Education*, he says that he has not been in a hurry to publish certain books. Instead, he had let them rest for a period and had gone over them again more carefully, 'with a reader's eyes' (*tamquam lector*). He closes the preface by hoping that the recipient, Trypho, will see that his books 'come into people's hands in correct a form as possible' (*quam emendatissimi*). Luke is aware that his text will be read, so he writes with a reader's eyes, and entrusts Theophilus with the task of ensuring that it comes into the hands of *lectores* in as safe a form as possible.

This suggestion is not entirely new. Alexander also suggests that Theophilus was given a written form of what he had already received and learned orally. 'What Luke is presenting is precisely a written version of "instruction" already heard orally – in fact of a teaching tradition' (1999: 24). She finds parallels with Galen and Hermogenes, where 'the text is presented to the dedicatee as a written version of something already familiar to him, whether as oral teaching or practical demonstration … What Theophilus is being offered, on this hypothesis, is the great "security" (ἀσφάλεια) of a written text over against oral teaching' (1993: 192). It is a hypothesis that appeals to me, especially given the use of ἀσφάλεια as an element of style.

As already noted, Alexander argues that Luke's preface has all the markings not of historiography but of a scientific text. Not everyone thinks that the two are mutually exclusive (for example, Marshall 1994: 375), and Aune rightly points out that the scientific or technical treatises Alexander talks about have no parallel with the Gospels in form or content (2002: 143). But in any case, Alexander also says that most texts in this scientific tradition have one thing in common: they are 'school texts', that is, 'the written deposit of the technē, the distillation of the teaching of a school or a craft tradition as it was passed down from one generation to another' (1986: 48–74). She suggests that Luke, like Josephus, Manetho, and Berossus, has some kind of 'fringe' status. They were outsiders trying to justify things to the dominant culture (1999: 15). Luke belongs in the broad category of Greek academic prose and 'scientific tradition', and his preface would suggest that he is writing a 'technical teaching manual' as, for example, belonged in craft traditions (1999: 17). In Alexander's opinion, then, 'Luke adopts exactly the conventional language we would expect for an unpretentious manual which claims to present an orderly account of a particular teaching tradition' (1999: 21).

Following Alexander's argument that Luke's preface reflects the literature of the crafts, I suggest that Luke writes a text that is a 'written deposit of the technē' of

Gospel reading or performing. Luke is concerned with the *words* (λόγοι), and he wants the craft tradition of the one responsible for the text to be passed on from generation to generation accurately, in order, and in safe language. I can imagine Luke giving Theophilus the same advice that 'Paul' gave to the younger Timothy: 'guard that which has been well set down' (τὴν καλὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον, 2 Tim 1:14; translation mine) and 'remain in what you have learned' (2 Tim 3:14). In the end, Luke's purpose is instruction. That seems to be the implication of Luke 1:4, as it is also of Acts 1:1.

This line of thinking probably deflates Luke as a historian (and possibly also as a theologian), and while that might not appeal to some modern scholars, it need not lower Luke's authority, status, or power as a writer. After all, Luke was not to know that nearly two thousand years later, there would be raging debates about the historical Jesus or about about his own reliability for our construction of history! For us, to be a historian and theologian might be the epitome, but why should Luke's status and ability as a controller of the tradition, a user of words, a teacher concerned with how it sounded to an audience, a story-teller, push his ranking any lower? Tradition-controllers are held in the highest regard in many oral cultures – they *are* the community's 'historians and theologians'! Story-tellers in most cultures (including my own Western culture) are powerful, honored, and respected figures. That is certainly also true of Jewish and pagan cultures, as it was indeed among the early Christians. Luke knows of 'many' who had tried to tell the story – were they, in his opinion, not very good story-tellers? Did their style leave themselves open to criticism and to objection? Was their Greek not up to his standards, whatever they might have been? Was there a problem with lack of 'order' in these versions, as Papias vaguely implies? Did they cross the boundaries and go 'too far' in their story-telling; or conversely, did they lack creativity and initiative when retelling the story? Good story-tellers knew the important, essential details of the tradition and insured that they be kept in the telling, but they also had the ability to expand on those details, to bring them color and life. Good tellers of the story survived; others did not. Many (but not all) Christians of the first three centuries clearly thought the four Evangelists were the best story-tellers and that the forms of their stories were worth preserving and retelling for future generations.

The vocabulary that Luke uses – 'accurately' (ἀκριβῶς), 'orderly' (καθεξῆς), and 'reliability' (ἀσφάλεια) – implies that he either thinks there are so many 'texts' in existence that some order and accuracy needs to be provided, or that the texts that he and Theophilus know are not orderly or accurate in themselves. I prefer the first option. There were enough reports known to both Luke and Theophilus that it was possible for confusion, inaccuracy, and the opposite of stability and safety (ἀσφάλεια) to arise, so Luke wishes to provide a text that removes that possibility. As is well known, many scholars think that Luke knew Mark (and possibly also Matthew), as well as a text known in scholarship as Q. Some, like Bovon, think that these were virtually the only written sources known to Luke (2002: 19), but that has to be questionable. In any case, did Luke think Mark disorderly? It has to be considered that Mark and Matthew did the same thing as Luke; they too knew the various traditions that were extant in the 70s–90s of the first century, and they too provided an order that gave rise to the genre called 'Gospel'. In other words, to some

degree, the Gospel writers did what Tatian was to do a century later – harmonize the Jesus traditions in a single written text. Baarda states as much: 'From the very beginning of Christian tradition, there was a tendency to combine the various oral and written sources of different types or genres into a narrative of the activities and sayings of Jesus. In itself, Mark is the result of such a procedure …' (1994: 35). If it was true of Mark, it was probably even more so of Luke.

Luke as Writer

There is a basic question yet to be considered: Why *write* the gospel if there were oral forms of it, including Luke's own? It is easy for academics (who see writing as such an important exercise) to overlook the significance and status of writing in the ancient world. Luke says that 'it seemed good to me also to *write*' (ἔδοξε κἀμοὶ … γράψαι, Luke 1:4). What authority did he have to write? What status and influence did a writer and his writing have? In all this, it is worth remembering that in Luke's world 'authorship was a superhuman function' and that writers were marked by a 'more than human genius' (Cadbury, 1999: 12). Plutarch gives some indication of the status of the writings of the historians, at least. He says that they are

> reporters of acts, men of eloquence who succeed in expression because of the beauty and power of their style. Men who for the first time read or consult their works owe them a reward for good news (εὐαγγέλιον). Of course, they are also highly praised, being remembered and read because of the men who have done successful deeds. For the records (λόγοι) do not accomplish the acts, but because of the acts they are thought worthy of a hearing. (*De Gloria Atheniensium* 3)

I do not believe that it is an accident that Luke decides to write rather than to transmit the Gospel to Theophilus only in oral form. He wishes to leave Theophilus with a written, and so more permanent, model of the Gospel tradition, and by so doing he separated himself to some degree at least as a writer from the vernacular world of oral exchange. While in the ancient world of the Greeks and Romans the written was supplementary to the oral, by the time of the first century things were changing in the relationship, if Quintilian is any indication. True, much writing was still done as a servant to the oral (mainly oral speeches written down by slaves), but there was a growing identity of the orator as writer. The identity of the writer transferred to the written text.

More importantly, since I wish to argue that the writer of the Third Gospel was a priest, a reason for his writing might be related to this fact. Luke wrote because as a priest he valued the written over the oral. We know from Jewish literature that there was a constant debate over the oral and written forms of the Torah. Some elevated the oral above the written; others did the opposite. According to Josephus, for example,

> The Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory

> which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers. (*Ant*. 13.10.6)

The Sadducees were, of course, largely members of the priestly class. They were the writers; the Pharisees, on the other hand, taught and transmitted the oral tradition which they believed had also been delivered to Moses on Sinai. It appears that they hardly wrote anything at all! 'There are no Pharisaic texts', says Schniedewind (2004: 205; see also Jaffee 2001: 39). Paul was a Pharisee, and he writes almost nothing about Jesus' teaching and activity. Did he have a typically Pharisaic preference for the oral vis-à-vis the written? Does Luke, on the other hand, write out of a priestly interest in written texts? The transmission of the written form of the Torah was almost solely and totally under the control and authority of the priests and Levites. The Deuteronomist, so interested in the written form of the Torah, was a priest. There is conversely almost no evidence that the priests were interested in the transmission of the oral Torah, or that they had the authority to interpret it. Priests and writing were closely linked; the oral belonged to others. If Luke is a priest, then it is logical that he would prefer to write the 'new Torah' as interpreted by Jesus for The Way rather than to transmit it to Theophilus only in oral form.

It is difficult for us who live daily with the printed word to understand illiteracy and the status, power, and authority that the written word carries in an illiterate society. In Jewish tradition, and in most ancient cultures, writing was commonly believed to have creative power and authority, and those who could write belonged to an elite group. Literacy indicated status, prestige, power, and authority. We get a glimpse of the authority of the written word in Paul's comments on his apostolic authority. One needed a written document to authenticate apostolicity, 'letters of recommendation' (2 Cor 3:1–6; see also 1 Cor 16:3; 1 Thess 5:27, 2 Thess 2:2, 15; 3:14; all of which indicate the authority that the written word had). In turn, Paul believed his written word had authority, and so did some of his audiences. He is aware that some Corinthians, for example, were saying that 'his letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account' (2 Cor 10:10).

The authority of the written sacred text is clearly demonstrated by the Deuteronomic writers (who influenced Luke to quite some degree). It was the rediscovered book of the Law that was at the heart of Josiah's reform (2 Kgs 22:8 – 23:3). Deuteronomy repeatedly says that the revealed Law was 'inscribed by the finger of God' (9:10), that is, written by Yahweh (4:13; 10:4), and Moses and Israel are commanded to set up stones and to 'write on them all the words of this Law' (27:3, 8). Every house was to have some words of the Law 'inscribed on the doorposts of your house' (6:9; 11:20). The king was to have a copy 'written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. It shall remain with him and he shall read it all the days of his life' (17:18–19). Eventually, the book containing the Law was to be placed alongside the Ark of the Covenant (31:24). Priests were concerned with the written text and it was natural for them to make God a writer of such texts.

In reality, what happened with the Gospels? True, they were copied, but that was an expensive and laborious task. Very few Christians had a written copy of Luke's Gospel – or of any other Scripture – in their hands. But they did have a copy in their memory, in their minds! They memorized Luke's Gospel; and I suggest that Luke

wrote his Gospel with that process in mind. When Luke says to Theophilus that he decided to write in an 'orderly' fashion, he might well mean that he writes the material in an order and in a style that facilitates memorization. He wrote to assist the memorization process, and order (which is a cultural construction) is good for that process. As the fourth-century writer Fortunatianus wrote: 'order most secures the memory' (memoriam vehementer ordo servat, *Ars rhetorica*, 3.13). Memory has two gates: hearing and seeing, and these two are very close especially in the act of story-telling. When one hears a story, one sees the action in one's mind; the words acts as pictures, re-presenting the story in the mind and memory of the listener. The well-known ability of Luke to write and tell a good story, to paint a good picture on the canvas of the mind, might well be due to his awareness that his written text was going to be heard and to be memorized. Words, like pictures, are aids to memory.

It has been argued, especially by Kelber, that the Gospels betray an oral tradition. In fact many scholars would now accept that as a given. The Gospels were written for an illiterate audience; so Luke's Gospel too was written with an illiterate audience in mind. It is not that Theophilus was to be Luke's publisher (a commonly-held idea that will be discussed later), but that Luke gave Theophilus a 'safe' form of words that he could in turn pass on through oral teaching to his illiterate audiences who in turn memorized and learned them. In other words, instead of seeing orality and illiteracy as in some way 'behind' or detectable 'in' the written text, I suggest they are the purpose of the written text. The fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus has the picture of an empty vase into which a titulus, written in increasingly shorter lines, falls like water. It suggests that the words of the book were to flow into the memory, since vases and cages and storerooms were common metaphors for the memory. If texts (and sacred ones particularly) were thought to be for the memory, then it follows that writers wrote in such a way that their texts were the more easily memorized.

Most scholars would agree that the oral traditions about Jesus preceded the written, and that the written, to a debated degree, is based on the oral. Later, I will argue that not every Christian had the authority to be a guardian, transmitter, proclaimer, or teacher of the tradition. If the things about Jesus circulated only in an oral form in a basically illiterate community, the Gospel ran the risk of including elements that in the end detracted from it, as some understood it; and if the gospel was communicated only orally and only by a select group of people, then what happened if those people were not available to a community? In written form, the Gospel had much greater portability. It no longer relied on eyewitnesses or ear-witnesses or on someone who knew the oral traditions and had the authority to perform (and so to repeat) them; it only needed someone who could read – someone who was given the authority to read the Gospel in the community. The reader was tied to 'the text' more than the oral proclaimer was. True, by putting it in writing, the oral tradition was put under some threat, both in terms of its authority and in terms of its content-limits; but it survived well enough. In the fourth century, Chrysostom can still say that the sacred writers did not write down everything; 'in fact, there are many things which they have delivered by unwritten tradition' (*Homily 1*, *Acts of the Apostles*). Presumably, he knew some of these things so handed down. Eusebius too knew of oral traditions that came from 'the Saviour's human relations' (*H.E.* 1.7.14); he was aware that Clement of Alexandria, at the insistence of his friends, wrote down 'the

oral traditions that had come down to him from the earliest authorities of the church' (*H.E.* 6.13.9); and he says that traditions about Origen 'have been passed on orally by the older men of our day' (*H.E.* 6.33.3).

It seems that the various oral traditions and written narratives (διηγήσεις) that were known to Luke lacked order of some kind. As narratives, they might not have been as integrated and cohesive as he would have liked, and that might have applied even to whatever version of Mark's Gospel he knew. Most likely, in my opinion, they were insufficient for catechetical instruction. But why was 'order' of such importance? As Goulder says, in the preface Luke constructs his sentence in such a way as to highlight the issue of order. 'He could not emphasise the order more; the only thing he does not say is what order he is thinking about' (1989: 199). Sequence is what interests Luke, says Goulder, who thinks Luke means chronological order; he uses the Eusebius fragment of Papias (*H.E.* 3.39.1, 14–16) to support his argument. That fragment implies that Mark had no intention about order; Matthew did, but his work was in Aramaic. Luke gives a full and proper order and in Greek (1989: 200). Goulder concludes that 'Luke is writing a reconciliation of Mark and Matthew to reassure Theophilus that the apparent dissonant Gospel tradition is trustworthy' (1989: 200). Citing Creed, he says, 'Chronological order was probably in his mind' (1989: 204). Goulder and Creed might be right, but the chronological order of events in Luke is not significantly different to what is found in Mark and/or Matthew.

Moessner is another who senses that order is crucial for Luke, and that order was something Luke had not found in the 'many' narratives. '*Something* about these narrative sequences or arrangement of the whole is found wanting – Luke's purpose with his audience is a telling clue to his own motivation to write' (2002: 160; italics his). But what was that 'something'? Is it order in a theological sense so that Luke wanted to highlight the continuity between Israel, Jesus, and the apostles in the fear that something might be lost without it? Did Mark, for example, lack the link with Israel on the one hand, and with the apostles on the other, whereas Luke stresses the continuity by beginning with Israel (Luke 1–2), and by writing a second *logos* on the apostles? 'The two volumes must be construed together as one larger plot, lest Luke's unique "management" be missed "altogether"' (Moessner 2002: 163). Moessner notices the 'completions' of a period of time 'which themselves introduce a new stage of fulfillment in Israel's festal calendar or Torah observance or promises of the prophets', and he then lists examples in Luke-Acts (2002: 160 n.19).

Or, was Luke's concern for order liturgically-driven, or educationally-motivated? Goulder changed his mind between 1974 and 1989, because in the earlier publication he says that καθεξῆς 'cannot mean "in chronological order"… why should it not mean "in liturgical order"? There is in fact no satisfactory alternative interpretation' (1974: 456). So strongly did Goulder hold this position that he said, 'Attempts to press the words into claims of chronological order end by making Luke a liar' (1974: 457). He continued by reading Luke along the lines of a Pentateuch lectionary: 'Luke was providing a year's readings for a Greek church which was loosening its Jewish roots but retaining its Jewish Bible' (1974: 466). He even went as far as constructing 'The Lucan Year' (1974: 472–3). I wonder what made Goulder change his mind and later to prefer a chronological concern. In the early decades of the Christian movement, it is less likely that chronology was given the same concern that later

third-century and fourth-century writers gave it. Worship and instruction are likely to have had much higher priority. Luke wishes to supply Theophilus with a stable text in an order that would be required in his community's worship and instructional contexts. These two contexts were not mutually exclusive, of course.

Marshall suggests that if Theophilus and the wider intended audience had 'received instruction in the kerygma which was of a fairly general character, then it would be important to fill out the story for them by giving an account of those events which lay behind the kerygma', and that is the ἀσφάλεια that was needed (1991: 288). A variation of this idea would be that the Jesus traditions circulated orally and in writing among the first and second generations of Christians, but in excerpted forms – some consisted of a passion narrative, others of birth stories, others of the sayings of Jesus, and so on, with the result that some communities ended up with the 'abridged' gospel story which was not dissimilar to a modern Children's Bible Story book. It has been a common modern mission practice in illiterate oral cultures first to tell portions of the Bible in the local language, then to use the printed versions of those stories as the medium for literacy, before finally giving them 'the full works'. The oral and the written then existed side by side. In addition, literacy and the written word went hand in hand. It was also a common ancient practice to abridge texts, and to arrange texts around certain themes, resulting in what have been called *Testimonia*. Such Bible excerpts and anthologies have been found at Qumran; for example, 4Q Deut n (easily portable, being 7 cm high), 4QDeut j, 4Q Ezek a, 4Q Tanhumin, and 4Q Testimonia. Fitzmyer believes that Jewish testimonia 'resemble so strongly the composite citations of the New Testament writers that it is difficult not to admit that testimonia influenced certain parts of the New Testament' (1957: 534). From the Egyptian papyri comes the interesting request, 'To my dearest lady sister in the Lord, greeting. Lend the Ezra, since I lent you the little Genesis. Farewell from us in God' (*P. Oxy*. 4365). This would suggest that copies of individual books (probably in abridged forms) were available and that they were 'swapped' between Christians. Did they also exchange some form, possibly abridged, of a written Gospel? Given the cost of reproducing a Gospel, it would not surprise to learn that some early Christians did have condensed versions.

Among the pagans, similar evidence can be found for the use of notes and note books, abridged versions, excerpts and so on. The Latin writers, Seneca and Pliny, had notebooks in which they had excerpts and distilled versions of larger texts (Snyder 2000: 31–2). It seems to have been very common to note extracts from writings and to store them up, often to assist the memory. In his Attic Nights *Preface*, Aulus Gellius says:

> But in the arrangement of my material I have adopted the same haphazard order that I had previously followed in collecting it. For whenever I had taken in hand any Greek or Latin book, or had heard anything worth remembering, I used to jot down whatever took my fancy, of any and every kind, without any definite plan or order; and such notes I would lay away as an aid to my memory, like a kind of literary storehouse, so that when the need arose of a word or subject which I chanced for the moment to have forgotten, and the books from which I had taken it were not a hand, I could readily find and produce it.

Seneca the Elder assumes that one is supposed to assemble memories in 'strict order' (*certum ordinem*) but pleads old age for not being able to do so (*Controversies*, *Pref.* 3–4). According to Snyder, the Epicureans also had access to epitomes and condensed versions of their writers (2000: 55). He also notes that Plato's dialogues could be arranged in different ways (Snyder 2000: 96–7), and that there were 'commentaries' (ὑπομνήματα, a word that refers to anything from a collection of notes to a formal treatise) on some of Plato's writings (Snyder 2000: 100ff.). In addition, there were abridged versions of Plato's works; for example, the *Timaeus Locrus* which in fact has noticeable differences in content, style, organization from the original *Timaeus* (2000: 107). It truncates and simplifies (2000: 109). The papyri indicate too that parts of works were copied and distributed; for example, *P. Oxy*. 2192 includes a request for copies of Books 6 and 7 of Hypsicrates' *Characters in Comedy*.

Luke knew that there were many and various forms of the traditions about Jesus, and he wanted to provide (or, to leave) Theophilus with an order that would offer a textual stability. In that regard, he is reminiscent of Lucian, who advises the writer of history: 'When he has collected all or most of the facts let him first make them into a series of notes, a body of material as yet with no beauty or continuity. Then, after arranging them into order, let him give it beauty and enhance it with the charms of expression, figure, and rhythm' (*How to Write History*, 47–8). Presumably what Luke gives Theophilus is a version arranged in a deliberate order (not simply chronological) which filled a practical and pastoral need. But it was also very much a shaping and controlling action.

In the end, Luke is concerned about what is going to be handed on. Certain things have been 'delivered to us', and Theophilus has been informed about those things. And he already knows that many have compiled the traditions in narrative form. But what will he make of these traditions? Will he recognize what is accurate, orderly, and safe? And probably most important of all, what will he hand on, in his turn, to the next generation of disciples? Luke does not dedicate his work to Theophilus; instead, like a father passing on a family tradition to his son, he leaves Theophilus with a text because he wishes him to maintain the tradition accurately and safely. Luke also now wants to deliver the tradition to Theophilus in written form partly because he distrusts its aural and oral transmission. In order to make sure that Theophilus gets the story right, Luke writes his version of the tradition. As one responsible for the Jesus traditions, he has virtually unquestioned authority within his community. But what will happen after his departure? Who will own, control, and guard the tradition?

Chapter Five

Owning, Controlling, Guarding the Tradition

In 1989–1990, two Gospel Symposia were held, one in Dublin, Ireland (1989) and the other in Gazzada, Italy (1990). At the end of these meetings of a select group of Gospel scholars, a statement was drawn up which included 'Pointers to Further Investigation'. The second of those pointers was headed *Control* and it posed the following questions:

> Was there recognition from the beginning of the need for control of transmission and its variability? Was there a conscious exercise of control, and if so, by whom? Was such control at all uniform and effective among the churches? What criteria were used? When and why was the Jesus tradition put into the form of the written Gospels, and on whose authority? (Wansbrough, 1991: 13)

This book is written with some of these questions in mind. By writing, Luke was, consciously I suggest, controlling and shaping the traditions. He shaped traditions that were not much beyond their infant stage, the traditions of 'the things about Jesus', and the 'the things that had been accomplished/ fulfilled among us' which included the things about Peter and Paul, Stephen and others. Conzelmann, while not interested in the issue, recognizes accurately Luke's role: 'He understands himself to be the steward of the tradition. He does not limit himself to handing it on, but he reflects on the *nature* of the tradition by defining his own standpoint in the chain of tradition' (1976: 305; italics his). Conzelmann goes even further, 'He offers not a contribution to the tradition, but *the* tradition' (1976: 305; italics his). I agree whole-heartedly, but on whose authority did Luke do this? Who was he, and who did he think he was? What status, office, role or reputation did any of the Evangelists (including Luke) have to write down the traditions? I suggest that there is the reasonable possibility that Luke had authority and status as a Jewish priest.

It is well known that Paul struggled to have his authority accepted, and that his authority went hand-in-hand with his apostleship. Clearly, being accepted as an apostle meant having significant and controlling authority. Paul on occasion pulled rank, and when that happened, he assumed that there would be no more argument. What he said as apostle could not be gainsaid. We also know that, in the second century especially, the authority of the Gospels was inextricably linked to their apostolic status. But in the first century, what authority did the writing evangelists have, either in their own opinions or in the opinion of others? It appears to be an authority that sat comfortably with them. Luke gives no suggestion that he writes as an apostle or even under the authority of an apostle, as second-century writers

claimed. There is no *imprimatur* or apostolic authentication of his Gospel; nor does he write under an apostolic pseudonym, as others later did. He does not even claim to write as a result of some divine revelatory experience or commission. Instead, he writes with a comfortable, presumed authority.

In the cultural world in which the Jesus movement began and spread, traditions were highly valued because they provided a community with a history, a memory, a sense of identity, and of belonging to something bigger than themselves and their contemporaries. These traditions and myths linked them with their ancestors, with their past, their history, and they gave the present generation the creative power to survive into the future, no matter what the external changes might be, such as being under foreign control, or being dispersed away from their native, ancestral land. Religious myths, in particular, provided communities with this source of creative, sustaining power. As long as a community had its story, it would survive. The community's memory was maintained by transmitting its traditions from one generation to another through the basic process of recollection and repetition. In this way, the past helped shape the present and the future. Without the past there was no future.

While these traditions belonged to communities, there were particular people within each community who were the 'owners', the guardians and keepers of the story. They were what Byrskog calls the 'professional traditionists' (2000: 157). They were the ones who had the ultimate authority over the story and its telling, and so also of its transmission from one generation to another. Not every individual member of the community had the authority to tell the story and so to transmit it to another generation. This was especially so in a communal, ritual setting. Byrskog, who often rightly acknowledges that scholars too easily read first-century cultures through their own contemporary eyes, might be misleading in this regard. He looks for eyewitnesses who might have been oral sources for the gospel traditions – the disciples, the women, the family of Jesus, and 'the local people' – and they might well have been sources for the traditions (2000: 67–91). But did they have the authority to *tell* the story in the Christian communities, especially in the worship context? Did they have any control of the tradition? I suggest that they did not all have such authority. This question of ownership and authority might in part be the reason why, in Luke for one, the women who are witnesses to the resurrection have their witness limited and subjugated to the male apostles. The 'things about Jesus' were, in terms of first-century Jewish culture, really 'men's business', and while there were radical reformers like Paul who theoretically, if not also practically, could urge that gender and other social divisions no longer exist for those who are 'in Christ' (Gal 3:28), the later interpreters of Paul, like Luke, could not handle that. They returned to their dominant cultural ways, and so while women could teach the tradition among women (and among male children who were not yet 'of age'), they did not have authority to tell the story to adult men. The official tradition belonged under the control of males; in the common worship of Christians and in their education of the next adult generation, it was commonly thought that only males should transmit the authorized version of the tradition, as the Pastorals indicate. A 'false teacher' was as much an unauthorized teacher as one who taught 'false' things.

In Jewish communities there were three groups of people who had the authority and responsibility to control the traditions: Priests, Levites, and elders. Byrskog

gives Egyptian priests and Persian *logioi* as examples of professional traditionists (2000: 157), but curiously, never mentions priests as serving a similar role in Jewish (or Christian) communities. Since I intend to see Luke as belonging to this group, knowing something about priests, Levites, and elders will be significant for my construction of him. I will comment on them in more detail later, but for now a few basic observations can be made about their status as controllers of the traditions.

While discussing the role and duties of the Levites, Philo says:

> It is the perfect duty of guardianship to deliver to memory the well-practiced contemplations of holy things, the excellent deposit of knowledge to a faithful guardian, who is the only one who disregards the ingenious and manifold nets of forgetfulness, so that the Scripture, with great propriety and felicity, calls him who is mindful of what he has learnt, the guardian of it. (*Quod Deterius* 65)

Philo also quotes the praise of Moses for Levi, 'He has guarded thy oracles and kept thy covenant' (*Quod Deterius* 63–67). It is worth noting that the same Scripture cited by Philo says of Levites, 'They shall teach Jacob thy ordinances and Israel thy law' (Deut 33:9). It is clear, then, that the Levites were guardians and authoritative transmitters of the tradition. As Philo continues, 'when he became competent himself to guard what he had learnt, he then received the power and rank of a teacher … he is the best interpreter and declarer of his [God's] justifications and laws' (*Quod Deterius* 66). Obviously, there was a very close link between guardian and teacher, and between teacher and interpreter. These are links I wish to establish also in the case of Luke. He too was guardian, teacher, and interpreter of the traditions. He fits Philo's criteria for 'the good man [who] is the guardian of the words and covenant of God' (*Quod Deterius* 68).

Two classic examples of priests as writers and text-guardians in Israel are Ezra and Josephus. Ezra, the Aaronic priest, was 'a scribe skilled in the law of Moses' (Ezra 7:6) and he had control especially of the copying of the sacred books. But he was also a teacher with ascribed authority. He 'set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach (καὶ ποιεῖν καὶ διδάσκειν) his statutes and ordinances in Israel' (7:10; compare Acts 1:1 where the phrase ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάσκειν is used of Jesus). It was Ezra and the Levites who read and interpreted the Law to Israel in Jerusalem (Neh 8.1–8, 13); on each day of the Festival of Booths, Ezra 'read from the book of the law of God' (Neh 8:18). It was Ezra who, like Stephen in Acts, retold the story of God's dealings with Israel (Neh 9:9–31). As priest, he had the authority to tell the story, to renew the covenant, and to bring the current generation into line with the God of Israel's tradition.

I have already mentioned some of the close links that scholars have observed between Josephus and Luke. They were contemporaries, and I suggest that both were writing priests. Josephus was proud of his own priestly ancestry and status. He is an example of the status and activity of some priests after the Temple's destruction. It is a little curious, then, that Byrskog can list Josephus among the 'major historians', and can also note that 'he was a politician, a soldier, as well as a writer', and yet not even mention that he was a priest (2000: 62). Yet his priesthood was a significant factor in the authority he had to be a 'historian' in and for Israel. As noted of the

Levites, so also it is true of priests that they were guardians of the traditions, they were Israel's historians and theologians. Josephus says that his forefathers took great care in the recording of their traditions and history, and they 'committed that matter to the high priests and to the prophets' and 'these records have been written all along down to our own time with the utmost accuracy … for our forefathers did not only appoint the best of these priests … but made provision that the stock of priests should continue unmixed and pure' (*C. Apion* 1.28–30). These priests had particular authority to record not only genealogies, but also the writings that are in their sacred books. Josephus also infers that priests had control over the recording of other histories in Israel. 'Everyone is not permitted of his own accord to be a writer', he claims (*C. Apion* 1.37). He also implies that he could translate the *Antiquities* because 'I was a priest by birth' (1.54).

Priests and Levites were very important owners, controllers, and transmitters of the sacred traditions of Israel. They had authority therefore also to interpret those traditions.

The Status and Role of Elders

Another very important group who controlled the traditions, especially in Christian communities, were the elders (οἱ πρεσβυτέροι). They were men and women who were respected for their age, but more importantly, for their wisdom and their knowledge. For Philo, some are called elders 'not because they are oppressed by old age, but as being worthy of honor and respect'; only 'the wise man' deserved that status (*Sobr*. 16–18). Philo also says that the Therapeutae 'do not look on those as elders who are advanced in years and very ancient'. Even younger men could be called 'elders' because an elder is one who 'from their earliest infancy have grown up and arrived at maturity in the speculative portion of philosophy' (*Vit. Cont.*. 67). The elders, then, were people held in honor and respect for their wisdom, and for that reason they were responsible for the collective memory of their communities and for its safe-keeping and transmission to the next generation. Hanson argues that the status of the elders in the early Christian church can be overstated and that 'we must envisage the group as more fluid and indefinite than a recognizable body of men formally commissioned by the apostles to maintain the tradition could be' (1962: 43–5). I have no argument with the claim that there is little evidence that the elders in the very first generations of Christians were 'formally commissioned by the apostles', or with the notion that they were a fluid and indefinite group. However, the evidence that there were significant 'elders' who were responsible for the traditions is strong.

Among Jews, elders controlled many things in their communities, including the meting out of justice and punishment for crime and transgression of Torah (see, for example, Deut 19:12; 21:19). In the Gospels, the elders are commonly linked with the ruling priests in the trial of Jesus (Luke 9:22; 22:52) and they challenge the authority of Jesus to teach as he did in the Temple (20:1). But they were also the controllers of Israel's history. Israel was encouraged by Moses in his final address to them to 'remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you' (Deut 32:7). Modern

Westerners, with a decreasing understanding and knowledge of their own history, probably cannot grasp the significance that the past and the remembrance of the past had in most ancient cultures. It was the elders who had a large say in how those traditions were maintained, transmitted, and understood. In the foundational myth of Israel as God's people, Moses took seventy elders with him on to Sinai where 'they saw the God of Israel' (Exod 24:9). It is tempting to see the seventy whom Jesus sent out to go ahead of him (Luke 10:1) as a group that Luke parallels with those seventy elders of Israel. As will be seen later, some ancient Christian writers believed that Luke himself belonged to that group of seventy. When Ptolemy requested from Jerusalem translators of the Hebrew sacred writings into Greek, the high priest Eleazar selected seventy elders to do that work. They were 'thoroughly skilled in the Scriptures and in both the languages' (Irenaeus, *A.H.* 3.21.2). Very often in both Jewish and Christian communities, the elders did not write down the traditions, but passed them on orally. They were commonly heads of families (not in the nuclear sense only), and as such it was their entrusted responsibility to guard, protect, and transmit the traditions from one generation to the next. Philo, in his writing on the life of Moses, says he learnt both from the sacred writings and 'from having heard many things from the elders of my nation, for I have continually connected together what I have heard with what I have read' (*Vit. Mos.* 1.4). As we will see, some later Christian writers did exactly the same thing. If they wanted to know something about their history and traditions, they read their written texts, and they sought out the elders. These elders not only knew the traditions, but they also interpreted and explained them, and their interpretations were held in very high regard.

In the Gospels, Jesus is sometimes said to have been in conflict with those who maintained the 'traditions of the elders' (Mark 7:5, for example). In a conservative culture, this is a very risky, if not dangerous, thing to do at any time and for any one. But it was even more so for a younger person. Was Jesus' age a factor that counted against him as an *authoritative* interpreter of Moses and of the traditions? Why does Luke explicitly state that Jesus was 'about thirty years old' when he began his ministry? (Luke 3:23). In the Qumran texts, the priestly leader of the community and the Overseer had to be between thirty and fifty or sixty years old (CD 14.7–8). Does Luke the priest feel impelled to say that his Teacher and Interpreter was 'of age'? In the Gospel of John, Jesus' age is an explicit issue – 'you are not yet fifty years old' (8:57). Some later Christian traditions believed Jesus was about fifty, and Irenaeus indicates that Jesus' age might have been a cause for some debate. Interestingly, he cites the elders as his authority on the issue: 'But some of them [elders] saw not only John but also other apostles, and heard these same things from them, and they testify to the statement [that Jesus was nearly fifty years old]' (*A.H.* 2.22.5).

Was the 'youth' of some of the disciples a problem? In the Synoptic Gospels, James and John, while acknowledged as being close to Jesus, also are portrayed as the ones who are often the cause of division among the group because whenever they are reported to say anything, it has to do with being the greatest (for example, Mark 10:35–45). In one Gospel, their mother does the talking for them (Mth 20:20)! The only time John speaks by himself in the Synoptics is to criticize those who do not belong to the group for exorcising demons. He is put into his place by Jesus (Luke 9:49–50 // Mark 9:38–40). A few verses later, James and John are again rebuked by

Jesus for wanting the Samaritans to be destroyed (Luke 9:54–55). In the Synoptic accounts, James and John are nowhere to be seen in the Easter narratives; in the Fourth Gospel, however, the 'other disciple, whom Jesus loved' outruns Peter to the tomb, 'saw and believed' (John 20:4, 8). Do Luke, and the other Synoptics, prefer as primary witness to the resurrection and to the transmission of its tradition, the older man, Peter, to the young man at the center of the Fourth Gospel's narrative? In Acts, John accompanies Peter but has no character, no voice, and none of his own 'acts' are included in the narrative. Is that a reflection of Luke's traditional respect for the elder?

Within the rest of the New Testament, it is clear that the elders of the communities were entrusted with the control and transmission of the traditions about Jesus and the gospel generally. When Paul leaves his Asian and Greece mission, it is the elders of Ephesus that he gathers together in Miletus, and whom he exhorts to maintain his teachings faithfully against the wolves that threaten (Acts 20). In 2–3 John, the elder has a deep concern that the 'truth' be preserved and continued. I have already mentioned Hengel's claim that behind the Johannine community and its literature stood an elder who was a teacher of great status and influence. The book of Revelation is written by the elder John who is very concerned that the churches remain faithful to the tradition as he has taught it and to reject those who teach contrary to it and to him. In general terms, the elders were highly authoritative when it came to important interpretations and decisions among the Christians. So in Acts 15, it is the apostles and elders in Jerusalem who are the supreme arbiters in the crucial questions about circumcision and what is expected of the Gentiles (Acts 15:2, 6, 22).

The same status and authority of the elders can be detected in the second century of the Christian movement. Eusebius makes the general comment that Papias resorted to the knowledge and wisdom of the elders in his inquiries: 'I shall not hesitate to append to the interpretations all that I have ever learnt well from the presbyters and remember well … I inquired into the words of the presbyters' (*H.E.* 3.39.2–3). Papias was a hearer of the elder Aristion, and Eusebius reports some information that had come to Papias 'apparently by tradition' (ὡς ἄν ἐκ παραδωσέως). Elsewhere, he also says that Papias 'sets down other information which apparently came to him from unwritten tradition' (ὡς ἐκ παραδωσέως ἄγραφον). He was also aware of traditions that Papias reputedly had received from the presbyter John.

In the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Hermas is directed to write two books and 'in this city, you shall read it yourself with the elders who are in charge of the church' (*Vision* 2.4.3), which implies that the readings and their readers were under the control of the elders. Irenaeus was another who occasionally talked about seeking out the elders in order to learn about the tradition and to hear their testimony about it. Well known is his recall of Polycarp and that older man's memory of the apostle John and of the others who had seen the Lord and had heard things from him (Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.20). The memory of these elders (probably again, those of old age and of wisdom, rather than those belonging to any formal, official group) provided vital links that could testify to the veracity of the traditions because they had direct eye and ear access to the apostles who, in turn, had had direct access to Jesus himself. Irenaeus seems to have trusted the traditions received from the elders and considered them authoritative and determinative for correct opinions, including on matters of

Scripture interpretation. One such interpretation, he says, he 'heard from a certain presbyter, who had heard it from those who had seen the apostles and from those who had been their disciples' (*A.H.* 4.27.1). He also says, in answer to the heretics, 'We refer them to that tradition which originates from the apostles and which is preserved by means of the successions of presbyters' (3.2.2). In his Letter to Florinus, he says of the recipient's opinions, 'The presbyters who were before our time who had associated with the apostles did not deliver (παρέδωκαν) these opinions to you' (Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.20.4). He even asserts, remarkably (from the perspective of those who trust written rather than oral traditions), that Jesus was close to fifty years old 'as the gospel and all the elders testify; those who were conversant in Asia with John, the disciple of the Lord, [affirming] that John conveyed to them that information'. Irenaeus goes on to say that the apostle John 'remained with the elders until the time of Trajan. But some of them saw not only John but also other apostles, and heard these same things from them, and they testify to the statement [that Jesus was nearly fifty years old]' (*A.H.* 2.22.5).

The elders are often referred to as 'the disciples of the apostles' (*A.H.* 5.5.1; 5.36.2; *Apost. Preach*. 3), by which Irenaeus implies that the elders carried on the tradition they had learned from the apostles, as students learn from teachers, and *for that reason* had the authority of the apostles. The elders performed a function (rather than holding a formal office) and that was to 'hand down to us' certain things (*Apost. Preach*. 3); that is, they were the shapers and transmitters of the tradition. Irenaeus implies that it was the *function* of elders to do so when he refers to Polycarp as a 'the blessed and apostolic presbyter' (ὁ μακάριος καὶ ἀποστολικὸς πρεσβύτερος), even though he knew full well that Polycarp held the office of bishop (Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.20.7). In reference to certain eschatological predictions, Irenaeus says it is 'just as the elders who saw John the disciple of the Lord remembered that they had heard from him how the Lord would teach about those times' (5.33.3). And again, a little later, he says that things in heaven will be 'as the elders say' (5.36.1; compare *Apost*. *Preach*. 31).

According to Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria wrote in the now lost 'On the Pascha' that he was 'compelled by his friends to hand down to posterity in writing the traditions (παραδόσεις) which he happened to have heard from the primitive presbyters (παρὰ τῶν ἀρχαίων πρεσβυτέρων, *H.E.* 6.13.8, 9). Clement himself gives an argument as to why the presbyters did not commit the traditions to writing:

> They did not want to give time from their responsibility for teaching the tradition to the responsibility of writing, or to occupy, in writing, their opportunities for meditating upon what they were to speak. And perhaps because they were convinced that to carry through successfully the task of compiling books and to teach were not suitable to the same temperament, they left the task to those who were by nature fitted for it. (*Eclog. Proph*. 27)

Eusebius goes on to say, 'Again, in the same books, Clement gives *the tradition of the earliest presbyters***,** as to the order of the Gospels' (Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.14.5).

In some communities, the elders and the traditions that they passed on were so highly regarded that there was a custom of praying 'for those elders (*seniores*) too

who handed on the tradition taught us' (Hippolytus, *Apost. Trad.* 36.12). The elders were remembered. The *Apostolic Constitutions* refer to the bishop as 'the minister of the word, the keeper of knowledge, the mediator between God and you in the several parts of your divine worship. He is the teacher of piety'; while the presbyters 'represent the apostles' and are to be 'teachers of divine knowledge', who 'labor continually about word and doctrine' (2.26–27). There remained the consistent role of elders: To teach and to control the words.

It was the elders, then, who shaped the memory, and that memory held the community together. What made a Christian community distinct from other communities (Christian and other) was their common memory. Bovon (2003a) rightly reminds us that the memory was not only of the things about Jesus, but also of the apostles. It is clear that at Corinth, if not elsewhere, there were 'saints' who claimed to belong to a particular apostle or teacher – Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Christ – and that this was a cause for quarreling and dispute (1 Cor 1:12). Whoever and whatever the Christian groups wished to remember, when they came together for festivals and meetings, they repeated, reinforced, shared, proclaimed, and performed that memory. In liturgical actions especially, the shared memory took on even greater significance as it bound the community together with its Lord. The eucharistic meal especially was a festival in which the very re-enacting of the tradition meant that the Lord was 'remembered', and that meant that the participants in the present were drawn into the power of the past in which their Lord had acted. Jews remembered the Exodus as a time when 'we' were slaves in Egypt, so also Christians remembered the death of Jesus as being 'for us'. In such ritual actions, the past and the present and the future are caught up into one. The form was not fixed. It was memory of the formula rather than of the fixed form. Some used the traditional form as passed down through Matthew's Gospel; some communities knew it in Mark's version, and so on. Similarly, when Christians prayed the Lord's Prayer, the formula was common to them all, but not the form.

Luke, who seems to have had the role and the status of an elder (Goulder, with quite a different agenda, suggests that Luke was in his mid-sixties when he wrote, 1974: 453), wrote down the memory; and in many cases the written memory was then used for instruction, for preaching, and for guidance in righteousness in the community. It is no coincidence that one of the earliest known terms for the 'Gospels' is τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστολῶν (Justin, *Dial. Tryph.* 100.1) – if the memory was to be authoritative and constitutive for Christian communities, it had to have apostolic status. That is one reason, probably the main reason, why the Gospels of Mark and Luke were associated with Peter and Paul respectively. The apostles were the mythic figures in the origins of the Christian community; Luke would be seen as writing something 'new', beginning a new tradition, a new source of the community's power, if he did not have direct links with an apostle. That would make him no better than Marcion. It is this concern for the story to be linked with the original power of the mythic founders that saw the Gospels we know as Luke and Mark being so closely linked with Paul and Peter in the Christian tradition. The 'heretical' Gnostics did the same thing when they claimed to have secret teachings of Jesus that had been revealed to the apostles and which in turn had been handed down, often through oral tradition, to the Christian communities.

Entrusting the Tradition

As Koester says, remembering 'was decisive for the trustworthiness of the oral tradition (1990: 34). Given this very high regard for the memory of the community, the tradition, it is almost to be expected that early Christian writers would talk of it as something that was *entrusted* to certain people. And such a trust was not to be taken lightly. The tradition was to be guarded. As I said, it was often the elders, the old men and women who by their experience had developed some wisdom, who were entrusted with the role, the duty, and the authority to guard the tradition and to pass it on. Since the elders were the controllers of the tradition, they very often were also the teachers. Dunn says rightly, 'It is clear that in the earliest Christian communities an important role was filled by *teachers and tradition*' (Dunn 1987: 28; italics his). He realizes the significance of their role: 'In sociological terms the teacher in a sect plays an absolutely crucial role in consolidating and preserving the sect's self-identity, by recalling the sect to its distinctive character and to the reasons for its separate identity' (1987: 29). These elder/teachers shaped and controlled the very memory, the myths, the traditions of the community; they shaped and determined to a degree its theology, its ethics and morals; they shaped its worship and rituals, its songs and prayers. They provided the community's memory with 'order', 'accuracy', and ἀσφάλεια. In sum, they shaped the community's identity. It is in this category of teaching priest/elder that I would place Luke and probably also Theophilus.

In this matter, it is worth a few comments on the status of Paul as a transmitter of the traditions and on his knowledge of traditions. In the first place, it is clear that for him 'the gospel' is something that was orally proclaimed (Rom 16:25), and that when he talks of 'my gospel', he means the gospel not only as he understood it, or even as he proclaimed it in oral form, but also as something that had been given to him by revelation from God (Gal 1:6–12). It was a gospel that appears to have very little interest in, and even basis in, the content or the 'facts' of Jesus' ministry. It was very much a gospel of a living Lord, a Christ Jesus elevated to God's right hand whom God revealed to Paul (or *in* him) as Son. It is a gospel that is the kerygma of Jesus Christ 'according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages' (Rom 16:25). Paul felt that he was entrusted with that gospel, that mystery, and much like the prophets, he talks about it as if it were a solemn and sacred burden thrust upon him (Rom 1:1 'set apart for the gospel of God'; 1 Thess 2:4 'we have been entrusted by God with the gospel'; Rom 16:25–27, 'according to the command of the eternal God'). In the Pastorals, 'Paul' also says he had been entrusted with 'the gospel of the blessed God' (1 Tim 1:11), and Timothy is encouraged to 'guard that which has been entrusted to you' (1 Tim 6:20; compare also 2 Tim 1:12, 14; 2:2; Tit 1:3). The gospel is the μυστήριον that has been entrusted by God to someone, and that person has been appointed to be its witness, teacher, proclaimer, and transmitter to the next generation. Mysteries are just that; they are not meant to be revealed to anyone and everyone because they are the sacred, precious, life-creating, and sustaining myths of the community. To proclaim the mysteries was a high honor, something God himself entrusted to the proclaimer.

But Paul not only speaks of a gospel that he has received by revelation and which has been entrusted to him, but he also speaks of the traditions concerning Jesus that

he has received from earlier Christians, and which he shares in common with other Christians. Paul often talks about these 'traditions' (παραδόσεις; 1 Cor 11:2, 23; 15:1ff.; Gal 1:9; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 2:13, 4:1, 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6). The traditions refer not only to 'facts' but also – and possibly even more importantly – to a way of life, the paranaesis, that has been taught and handed on (2 Thess 3:6). In addition, Paul occasionally reminds his addressees of what they have heard and learnt (Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 2:15). The latter passage suggests that the tradition was taught both orally ('by word', διὰ λόγου) and in writing ('by letter', δι' ἐπιστολῆς), and again the inference is that the tradition dealt with behavior rather than with historical information or data.

It is well known that while Paul might have alluded to some sayings of Jesus, his 'gospel' seems to have focused almost entirely on the death and resurrection of Jesus. Or, to be more precise, his gospel focused on the crucified and risen Lord. He reveals little knowledge of 'the facts', little knowledge of what Luke calls 'the things concerning Jesus'. Of course, that does not mean he did not know them. Marshall suggests that the reason why Paul is silent on such matters is because Paul writes letters and the Evangelists write Gospels – two quite separate and distinct types of material which 'were deliberately kept separate' because 'the Gospel tradition was a distinct stream in the early church with its own special channel of transmission. Both Paul on the one hand and the Synoptic Evangelists on the other are witnesses to the fact of this differentiation' (1971: 48). I would suggest another, not totally dissimilar, solution: Paul did not have the *authority* to teach and transmit 'the things about Jesus'. The fact that he was not an eyewitness to 'the things about Jesus' might have ruled him out. On the other hand, he does claim to have been an 'eyewitness' of the living Christ (1 Cor 15:8). So Paul passes on only that tradition which 'I also received' (ὃ καὶ παρέλαβον), namely, the tradition concerning Christ's death, his burial, resurrection, and appearances (1 Cor 15:3). That was the gospel tradition that had been *entrusted* to him. Possibly, Paul did not have the status, and therefore the authority, of an elder or of a guardian of the whole Jesus tradition in the communities or in the 'church' as a whole. He was not a 'teacher', a servant of the *logos*, involved in the διακονία τοῦ λόγου. On the other hand, Luke was. As one 'who had followed all things accurately from the beginning' (Luke 1:3), Luke had status and authority as elder and a teacher. If this were the case, it raises questions about the relation between Paul and Luke. It certainly questions the quite common claim that Luke was a younger or junior member of Paul's group. It would even raise the possibility that Paul was dependent on Luke (or someone like him) for the traditions about Jesus and accepted his authority as a guardian and teacher of 'the things concerning Jesus' and of 'the things that had happened among us'. Scholars have noted that the eucharistic words of Jesus as Paul knew them from the tradition he had received 'from the Lord' (1 Cor 11:23) and those narrated in Luke's Gospel (22:17–19) are very similar. Bauckham says, 'Paul's version is verbally so close to Luke's that, since literary dependence in either direction is very unlikely, Paul must be dependent either of a written text or, more likely, an oral text that has been quite closely memorized' (2006: 267). It is at least an indication of a common shared tradition, and it might indicate that Paul and the Corinthians were transmitters and receivers of what later became known as the Lukan version of the Jesus traditions.

When Paul refers to Luke as 'beloved physician' is he implying more than that Luke had medical qualifications? I will return to that question, but for now I would say 'yes'. I will also take up later the traditions that identified Luke as an 'evangelist', that is, as an oral proclaimer of the gospel, and even as being the 'famous' one to whom Paul refers in 2 Cor 8:18. If Luke were that, it would add weight to my suggestion that he was in no way inferior to Paul. Not only was he not inferior to Paul, but he even claimed control of the traditions about Paul!

There are three basic traditions that Luke interprets and so shapes and controls. The first are the Jewish scriptural traditions that he interprets in his own way. The obvious and well-known hermeneutical principle that Luke uses is that the Christ, who is Jesus, is the fulfillment of the prophets, especially in his suffering and death (for a summary and example, see Luke 24:25–27). From a traditional Jewish perspective, this Christian principle and interpretation was radical, and it resulted inevitably in splits within and from Jewish communities. 'The Christ of the Scriptures is Jesus' was the shibboleth that distinguished the Christians from other Jewish groups. The second tradition taken up by Luke and interpreted in his own style is the Jesus tradition. He occasionally refers to this tradition as 'the things about Jesus' (Luke 24:19, 27; Acts 18:25). Luke does not simply repeat the traditions that he had received, and that Theophilus had learned (probably from Luke), but he expounds, interprets, and shapes them for his own purposes and in his own style. As a faithful transmitter of the tradition, he retains its formula and its core, but he provides his own form and adds his own touches to what he had received. That, too, implies that the author has status and authority either in his own mind or, and this is more likely, in the mind of the community to which he belongs. Luke is not merely an editor or collator, he is not merely a follower who regurgitates the tradition, but he puts his own stamp of authority on it. The third tradition shaped and interpreted by Luke is that dealing mainly with Paul and Peter, but also with Stephen and Philip and some of the other apostles and disciples of Jesus. Here too Luke is not merely a follower, but one who believes he has the right to interpret these traditions in his own way, and therefore to be their controller and guardian. As such, Luke was a highly important and significant figure in some Christian communities.

There is another matter to consider in the control and interpretation of the traditions. There is some evidence that some Christian communities believed that they were 'taught by God', and that idea was closely related to their eschatological hopes that in the end times God himself would teach Israel. John's community saw itself as being one 'taught by God'. In the Gospel of John, Jesus cites Isa 54:13 (compare LXX), 'And they shall all be taught by God (δίδακτοι θεοῦ)', and claims that 'everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me' (John 6:45). Jesus also promises the Johannine community that 'the holy Spirit will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance (ὑπομνήσει) all that I have said to you' (John 14:26; compare also 1 John 2:27). Paul likewise says the Thessalonians are 'taught by God' (θεοδίδακτοι) to love one another and so need nothing to be written to them on that issue (1 Thess 4:9). And Paul's notion that the gospel is the revelation of a mystery hidden for long ages (Rom 16:25) is not far removed from the θεοδίδακτος idea.

The notion of God as teacher/revealer/instructor in the end times appears also in Qumran. God 'has arranged that there should be for himself people called by name … He taught them through those anointed by the holy spirit, the seers of truth' (CD 2.12). And in the days of the Community, he has 'raised up from Aaron insightful men and from Israel wise men and has taught them and they dug the well of knowledge' (6.2–3). In addition, he gave them the 'Beloved Teacher' (20.1). God has given the Instructor the spirit, and 'I have listened faithfully to your wondrous counsel by your holy spirit' (1QH 20.14–15). The sons of Zadok, the priests are 'chosen by God … to prove his precepts among his people and to teach them as he commanded' (1QSb 3.23–24)

Are there any indications of this notion in Luke-Acts? Does Luke see himself as an instrument of God for the instruction and edification of Israel in the last days? It would appear not, at least on a surface reading. But if we give merit to the argument that the character of Jesus in the Gospel reflects to some degree the image Luke had of himself, then we might mount an argument. Luke portrays Jesus as an eschatological teacher, acting as an agent of God for the instruction of Israel. Already as a twelve-year-old, Jesus is seen in the Temple sitting (the position of a teacher) 'in the middle of the teachers' and amazing them with his wisdom (2:26). Jesus is commonly addressed as 'teacher' (διδάσκαλε) in the Gospel (7:40; 9:38; 10:25; 11:45; 12:13; 18:18; 19:39; 20:21, 28, 39). In nearly every case, he is so addressed by some other 'teacher' or authority in the Law, and there might well be some irony in their use of the term to address Jesus. In addition, on two occasions in the narrative, the narrator refers to Jesus as 'teacher' (8:49; 22:11), and Jesus is regularly described as teaching the crowds or his disciples or as teaching in the synagogue (4:15; 5:3; 5:17; 6:6; 11:1; 13:10, 22; 19:47; 20:1; 21:37). Jesus' teaching was brought up as a charge against him before Pilate (23:5). Finally, but not insignificantly, Jesus assures his followers that when they are brought before the courts, the holy Spirit 'will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say' (12:12). Given this emphasis on the teaching role, status and authority of Jesus, one might be justified in assuming that Luke sees himself in a similar role. Jesus teaches his community through the mouth and voice of Luke. As Luke's Jesus says, 'A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher' (6:40). Luke believed that he himself was 'fully taught' (κατηρτισμένος; that is, that he was matured, prepared, equipped), and therefore was 'like his teacher'.

Authoritative Control through Language

A further way in which a person can claim or demonstrate authority is through the choice of language. This might well be the purpose of Luke's Gospel: To write in such a way, with such a style, that Theophilus will recognize the 'safety' that is in the words that he has learned (1:4). Luke offers a text whose style matches its content. Once again, it is necessary to remember that texts were heard and were written to be heard. The effect of the sounds of the words, the sounds of the phrases and of the sentences, was what aided its claim to be heard and to be taken as authoritative.

Luke writes in Greek. Not that he had much choice – probably, only Hebrew/Aramaic and Latin were his options, and even they probably were not viable ones. The first-century Mediterranean world was full of languages and dialects, and it definitely cannot be assumed that everyone knew and spoke Greek. The great majority only knew Greek as a second language at best; they knew enough to get by when trading and doing business, but it was not their mother-tongue. Greek was the language of the upwardly mobile, and so by writing in Greek Luke gave his work a future. But there is another more significant reason for writing in Greek. By writing in that language, Luke linked his audience with the past actions of God as told and retold through the traditions in their liturgy and Scriptures which were heard and known in Greek by Jews and Christians in many parts of the Mediterranean world, including Palestine. It is well known that, in certain sections of the Gospel particularly, Luke's language is a very close imitation of Septuagintal Greek. He switches the language register between 1:4 and 1:5, and people whose ears were well-attuned to such code-switching, and to the various linguistic forms and styles, would have quickly recognized this and might have assumed that Luke had some purpose in mind by using the language in that way. Greek might have been the language of the future for Luke, but he was not going to throw away his past, and he certainly was not going to leave himself, or the Christian movement, open to the charge of belonging to the Gentiles, the pagans, by using their language in talking of sacred things. The 'classical' style of the preface was not to be misleading. Luke certainly did not belong to the sophists and orators of the pagans any more than Paul did. They both hung on to their Jewish and scriptural traditions – hence the swift shift in style and language after the preface when the real story and the transmission of the tradition begin.

Greek had the advantage of being the 'church language' of many; as such, it held the communities together in a cultural climate where language was so readily a divisive factor. Not that any one common target language can really hold a multilingual community together very well! When Paul speaks of the unity of Christians and says there is neither Jew nor Greek (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11), he might in part also have language divisions in mind. It is most likely that some oral Christian traditions were already known in other languages. The Pentecost narrative (Acts 2:11) seems to indicate Luke's awareness that the 'mighty works of God' were being proclaimed and their reports repeated in various languages throughout the Roman world. If modern mission contexts show anything, it is that language division within tribal Christian communities is very hard to break down. Identity and language, culture and language were almost inseparable. It would be naïve to think that it was much different within early Christian communities.

The use of Greek by many Christians in their worship leads to another possible purpose for Luke's Gospel, namely the intention 'to be read serially round the year, to give suitable Christian material for both the festivals and the weekly lections' (Goulder 1989: 25). If Theophilus is a lector, or even the one taking up Luke's mantle as authoritative teacher and interpreter of the traditions, then the worship context would need to be taken seriously. And if, as I suggest, Luke wants Theophilus to have a 'stable text', then again the context for such a desire might well be worship, if not even liturgical. Goulder rightly admits that the data for constructing the

weekly lectionary are too slim, if not non-existent, but he insists the argument for the use of the Gospels (not only Luke) for festal contexts is strong (1989, ch. 5). He draws attention to Papyrus Bodmer XIV (in P^{75}) and its system of divisions which is 'second-century evidence for lectionary use of the Gospel' (1974: 455 n. 6). One thing is certain and that is that Luke did not write for the libraries or for academics of his or later generations. He writes for, and as one of, the 'us' among whom things had been accomplished or fulfilled (Luke 1:1).

That is not to imply that Luke is all piety and that other factors play no part. There are often worship-controllers, and there are those who within the very acts of worship show off their status and authority. We are rightly told frequently that honor and shame were at the very heart of New Testament societies and communities, including in the churches. A good speaker or writer, especially a poet who was gifted with the divine art of creating images, gained high honor for themselves and in turn brought honor to their families and to their communities. In a multilingual world, language selection was significant. One selected a form of language when speaking to another depending on the social relation and on the social context. In writing, the use of Greek, the dominant target language of the time, made a statement about the author's claims to social status. The way one spoke, the choice of language or dialect, and the use of vocabulary were all important factors in claiming or maintaining one's prestige. The way one speaks, the language one uses, can easily bring out the snob in the speaker! Many societies in the world have a sense of a 'high' use of their language and a 'low' or vulgar use. Greeks called people 'barbarians' (βάρβαροι) largely on the basis of how they spoke. It is still quite common for scholars to talk about Luke's 'good Greek' and to refer to Revelation as using 'bad Greek'. It is a well-known fact in our modern world village that in cultures where English is not the local language but the language of the upwardly mobile and of the politically and socially powerful, then it is used by speakers to 'show off', to impress the audience, and to claim honor for themselves (and their family and community) and authority for what they were saying. There is little doubt that Greek-speakers did that as well in their multilingual world.

If Luke 'corrects' or improves the Greek of the tradition he knew (of Mark, for example, if he knew that version), as sometimes appears to be the case, then again some might have thought him to be making a statement about his own status. Some might even have thought him to be a little pretentious in his language. Bovon comes close to implying this. While he thinks the language of Luke's preface indicates the social class of Luke, he acknowledges that it is a matter of 'effort as much as ability' (2002: 16), an indication that Luke is deliberately adopting a particular style rather than using one that comes 'naturally' to him. Bovon goes further. Speaking of the prologue's Greek style, he says, 'This does not necessarily mean that it appears particularly beautiful in comparison with those in classical prose. But one can sympathize with the author's efforts' (2002: 16 n. 4). In other words, Luke is what some people might call a 'try hard'! For some, it might be difficult to ascribe less than noble motives to the Christian writers whose texts came to be accepted as authoritative, inspired Scriptures. But the estimation and evaluation of motives is something culturally-determined.

In Bovon's opinion, 'What ever sounds vulgar to the educated (sc. in Mark), or irritates Christian sensibilities, Luke replaces' (2002: 14). Bovon does not consider what Luke might be doing by treating the tradition that way, or why Luke should think the text needed those alterations. It would fit Luke's claim to be writing an orderly, accurate, and safe text. I suggest it also had as much to do with Luke's claim to authority as it did with anything else. Luke's preface deliberately uses the language not just of a particular genre (history, or Alexander's preferred 'scientific' text) but also to create an impression of his status with the audience, and thereby to claim a hearing. It shows an 'unmistakeable effort at stylistic excellence' (Cadbury 1999: 198). Cadbury has shown that it was not at all uncommon for writers to use one style in their prefaces and another in the main body of their writings. The demands of rhetoric had to be carefully observed in the preface. He explains:

> The writer must be sure here at the start to make a favorable impression. The words must be choice and elegant, the sentences well-balanced, and the whole preface, whether long or short rounded off with a good clausula … Even purely scientific works had artistic prefaces. (1999: 196)

I might add that the length of words, and even of vowels and diphthongs, also contributed to the effect of the *sound* of the preface and to the author's claim to a hearing. A quick glance through Demetrius' *De Elocutione* (possibly a late-first-century CE text) illustrates how important style, choice of vocabulary, length of words and vowels and diphthongs, order of words, rhythm, metre, and balance all were in order to convey what one intended. Particularly important was the sound of the opening 'sentence'.

It is possible that far too much time is spent by scholars on the preface – something an original audience would not have done. Luke wanted to *sound* authoritative. Those interested in *logoi*, whether writer or orator, had to attract and hold the audience. In a sense, the audience was the master (Downing 1995: 102). That is true not only of Luke's preface but of the rest of his writings as well. I would repeat with emphasis that how a text sounded to the ears was essential for anyone wishing to write with a 'safety of words' (λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν, Luke 1:4). It is abundantly clear from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for example, that nothing be done to offend the ear, and so length of words, the juxtaposition of vowels, the avoidance of vowel-clashing, of using semi-vowels and consonants in combination are all important (*Demosthenes* 39–40). So is rhythm. Dionysius says that in prose writing, it 'is not to be classed as an inessential adjunct, but … I can consider it the most potent device of all for bewitching and beguiling the ear' (*Demosthenes* 39.12–13). It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a modern to recapture what the text sounded like to an ancient audience; and it is too easy to underestimate the importance of sound and to drown it with other concerns.

Luke fits the bill as an authorized controller of the traditions. This implies, then, that Luke had some authority not only to pass on the traditions but to shape and interpret them as well. It was the authority of an older person or head of an ancient Jewish family or community, the authority that a priest would have had. What Dawsey claims of 'the many' in Luke 1:1 could also be said of Luke himself.

He, like them, 'would have had much in common with the priests of Israel whose function it was to remember and repeat the tradition of the people, keeping alive that which had been passed down to them … It was with these figures that the narrator identified himself' (Dawsey 1986: 109).

Jews, Christians, and their Books

Luke writes a book, although he does not explicitly refer to his work as such. Instead, he calls it a *logos* (Acts 1:1). This term could suggest that Luke means his writing to be publicly spoken/performed and not simply read in private. I will return to the written–oral relationship again. By writing, Luke put himself in the company of his faith-predecessors who were writers and also of his writing faith-contemporaries. Jews had their books and were very proud of them, especially the 'books of Moses', which not only contained the Torah for righteous living, but were also filled with great wisdom. Many Jews studied their sacred books, as the Qumran texts indicate; and Josephus says the Essenes were particularly interested not only in studying books but also in copying them (*War* 2.136, 142). Philo indicates a strong interest in sacred texts also among the Therapeutae. Incidentally, he gives an interesting insight into the way the Therapeutae studied their Scriptures, a practice which might well have been followed by some Christians. Indeed, Eusebius believed the Therapeutae *were* Christians (*H.E.* 2.17.14), which implies that he knew of Christians who did precisely the kind of things that Philo describes. Philo refers to a method of instruction in which the instructor

> [lingers] over his explanations with repetitions in order to imprint his conceptions deep in the minds of his hearers, for as the understanding of his hearers is not able to keep up with the interpretation of one who goes on fluently, without stopping to take breath, it gets behind and fails to comprehend what is said; but the hearers, fixing their eyes and attention upon the speaker, remain in one and the same position listening attentively, indicating their attention and comprehension by their nods and looks, and the praise which they are inclined to bestow on the speaker by the cheerfulness and gentle manner in which they follow him with their eyes and with the fore-finger of the right hand.

This instruction took place in the context of a meal and concluded with hymn-singing, thanksgiving, and a feast that lasted all night (*Vit. Cont.* 76–77).

Philo gives further insight into what took place in regards to learning and teaching in the 'schools' (διδασκαλεῖαι) on every Sabbath. For example,

> on the seventh day there are spread before the people in every city innumerable lessons … during the giving of which the common people sit down, keeping silence and pricking up their ears, with all possible attention, from their thirst for wholesome instruction; but some of those who are very learned explain to them what is of great importance and use, lessons by which the whole of their lives may be improved. (*Spec. Laws* 2.62)

The reading of Scripture and interpretation of the reading are the two very clear features of such schools. An Egyptian governor and prefect wanted to prevent Jews from their Sabbath observations which, he noted, included 'reading your sacred

volumes in security and explaining whatever is not clear' (Philo, *Som*. 2.127). This might well describe what Luke wants us to imagine happening among the first Christians in Jerusalem who 'devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching …' (Acts 2:42). It certainly fits his description of Paul's behavior on Sabbaths, 'as was his custom' to go into the synagogues and to 'discuss' the Scriptures with those present (Acts 17:2–3; 18:4; 19:8; 20:7).

Throughout this book, I assume that Luke was a Jew – I will discuss the issue later. If that were the case, then his writing of a book of the 'things that had been accomplished' and 'the things about Jesus' was not a new or surprising thing to do. Jewish students of the Scriptures were instructed by their teachers in the 'mighty works of God', in the things that God has done in Israel and in the things that God promised to do at the end of days in and for Israel. They were familiar with writings that focused on individual characters who modeled faith, courage, and righteous living like Ruth, Esther, Daniel, Tobit, Judith, and Sussana. Philo wrote 'Lives' of the heroes of Israel, of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses. So by writing about Jesus and the apostles, Luke, perhaps unconsciously, put himself in the tradition of these teachers and of other Jewish writers who interpreted the will and plan of God both for Israel and for 'the nations'. By so doing, he was claiming a status and an authority for himself not only as a scribe, a writer, but also as a guardian of 'the things concerning Jesus' that he had received and which he was now passing on to Theophilus, who was equipped in turn to tell them accurately and safely to another generation and another community.

Although the Greek and Roman worlds in which Jews and Christians lived were largely oral cultures, books had become an important commodity in some limited circles. Of course, as with so much else, what we know about books, their availability, and their use comes almost exclusively from books! So it is possible to overstate their significance because, while we can guess that literacy levels were very low by modern standards, we really rely for our evidence on those who wrote, read, copied, published, distributed, bought and sold books. And that was an elite group of people. It is very doubtful that too many people, apart from those among the wealthy, owned books, let alone libraries of books.

Writing about literacy in Palestine, Jaffee says:

> For one thing, the group of people who could actually compose, transcribe, and communicate the contents of written compositions – whether brief letters or lengthy literary works – was quite small in relation to the society as a whole. Such skills were regarded as esoteric professional acquisitions rather than a general cultural patrimony. Persons possessing them were, for the most part, members of elite scribal guilds associated with official institutions of palace, law court, and temple. Outside such groups, the ability to write was routinely limited to elementary forms of record-keeping. For most people, reading was a matter of retrieving and utilizing the information of such records. (2001: 15)

He continues:

> [B]ooks, expensive and time-consuming to produce and copy by hand, were themselves primarily objects of the official, rather than the domestic, domain. In addition, inscribed

> objects in general, and books in particular, commonly functioned as ritual objects whose iconic significance transcended that of the information they preserved. (2001: 16)

Luke, as a writer, belonged to a very elite group, and one of the reasons why I think Luke can be constructed as a priest is that priests dominated the literary elite and were the ones who controlled the writing, reading, and maintenance of books. Jaffee makes this very clear:

> [E]ven if a scribal career was not limited to men of priestly lineage, it was likely an important avenue of employment for priests not directly connected to the lineage of the High Priestly families. An earlier tendency of historians to posit the existence of a large number of 'lay scribes' serving the needs and political-religious interests of a nonpriestly urban middle class, and establishing themselves in competition with official priestly teaching authority, has for some time come under criticism. The existence of lay scribes serving at the levels of the notary, as accountants, or as private tutors to the children of wealth is by no means out of the question, but a significant nonpriestly literary community beyond the reach of Temple authorities, and functioning as an independent center of literary or intellectual tradition among a growing class of urbanized intellectuals, is difficult to account for in economic terms … scribal literary culture was largely a phenomenon associated with priests or those trained in priestly milieus, whose economic existence was sustained by ideologically committed sociopolitical communities. It was not a 'popular' culture. The bulk of the surviving writings of the period corroborates this conclusion, both those texts now included in the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures and those that eventually ceased to be copied and circulated in rabbinic communities. (2001: 21–2)

We know that in Jewish and Christian circles the reading from sacred texts was a central component of worship, and we also know that they had access to books for study. Philo's description of what happened among the Essenes is not atypical: 'one takes the books and reads aloud and another of special proficiency comes forward and expounds what is not understood' (*Quod Omnis* 80–83). Such reading, hearing, and interpreting of the sacred texts might well have been the hallmarks of the Essenes and the Therapeutae in particular (Philo, *Quod Omnis* 82; *Vit*. *Cont*. 75), as we have seen, but it also was the common feature of all Jews who assembled on any given sabbath. Sacred texts would be read and someone would interpret and explain the difficult parts. It was a tradition and practice that the Christians followed.

Written texts, books, were crucial in the formal education of both Jews and non-Jews. Snyder says 'written texts were part of the every-day business of teaching and learning' (2000: 1). Plutarch's advice for those wishing to educate their children includes that they 'not be indifferent about acquiring the works of earlier writers, but to make a collection (συλλογήν) of these'. But he is also very conscious that his advice is for the more wealthy, so he suggests, rather patronizingly, that the poor 'do the best they can' (*De Lib*. *Educ*. 10–11). Plutarch probably had no idea of how 'the poor' lived.

Among Latins and Greeks, in the training with texts, reading was essential; it was a performance that required practice. The better the reading, the better the understanding; smooth reading was thought to be essential for correct understanding. And correct, smooth reading had to be learnt. At least in the schools, one hardly ever picked up a text to read *de novo* as we might. It was read in the context of the living

voice of the teacher. 'The role of the living teacher was crucial', especially when the students were reading an ancient text (Alexander 1990: 244). In the Hellenistic schools (as in the rabbinic), there was a suspicion of written texts and a distinct preference for the living voice, or at least the latter was considered subordinate to the former (Alexander 1990: 244). In any case, students did not read a text in advance of a class, but they had learned how to read the text from their teachers who provided the ἐπαναγιγνώσκη – the expert reading. Students went away from the class with both the correct reading and their own written version of the text. So the teacher was both text-provider and text-broker (Snyder 2000: 25). For Jews – possibly especially for them – careful reading of the text was an essential requirement. In the Qumran texts, a blasphemous slip in the act of reading a text which included the Name could lead to expulsion from the Community (1QS 7.1). I noted earlier that the *hazzan* (often a Levite) in a synagogue community had among other duties, the responsibility of teaching children to read, and the 'textbooks' he used were the Scriptures. Children learnt not just to read, but to read in a certain way, a correct and safe way. It is quite possible, then, that a number of Jews (and Christians) were 'literate' only in their sacred texts. They could 'read', or recite (or probably even more accurately, chant) the sacred Scriptures without being able to read in the modern sense of the word. While communities probably had their sacred texts (see Philo, *Vit. Cont*. 25), undoubtedly the vast majority of individuals did not, although it is possible, if not likely, that a wealthy minority did have portions of it, as we have seen. The eunuch (obviously a wealthy man) in the narrative of Acts 8 obviously had personal access to the text of Isaiah or to a portion of it.

Was Luke's Gospel written in order to be published? By that I mean, was the Gospel written for public distribution and consumption? As one who writes books, I am in danger of making Luke in my own image. I live with books, and my profession and my livelihood depend to a degree on books. I am also, in a sense, a professional writer in that I write to publish. It is a matter of 'publish or perish' in most university contexts. None of these factors applied to Luke. It cannot be assumed that Luke intended his writings to be published. He possibly did not even intend it to be copied and distributed among other Christian communities (*pace* Bauckham, 1998). But if he did, he, like most other ancient writers, certainly did not make a living out of it. To write the Gospel (and Acts) in the first place would have been a very costly exercise. Millard suggests that an Isaiah roll might have cost at least three days' wages (2000: 165), so a copy of Luke might have cost about half that much. Again, the pragmatic matter of cost indicates the status that Luke had, because in order to write something of the magnitude of Luke-Acts, you were either rich to start with or you had a rich patron. Latin authors, especially, seemed to have had patronage (so Vergil, Martial, Quintilian), and it has often been suggested that Theophilus filled this role for Luke (for example, Marshall 1971: 38).

In fact, many scholars believe that Luke depended on Theophilus to see to it that his writings found their way into circulation. Haenchen, for example, says that 'the person to whom the book was dedicated would give permission for copies to be made and to see to its dissemination' (1971: 136 nn. 3, 4). Wengst says the same thing: 'the function of the dedication is to ensure that the person whom it honors sees to the public circulation of the work' (1987: 101; see also Gamble 1995: 102). But

I am not so sure that this was the case. I am not even convinced that Luke-Acts was *dedicated* to Theophilus. I am even less sure that the purpose was for Theophilus to widely disseminate the texts in written form. Instead, Theophilus was selected by Luke to carry on the tradition as Luke knew it, and in one sense, then, the Gospel and Acts are written only for his benefit. Luke was a great and influential teacher in his community, and he had some distrust of the narratives that he knew, in terms of their 'safety', their order, and even their accuracy. He believed that his words got it right and he wanted to make sure that his teaching was passed on reliably, especially if his texts were to be read and performed in a worship context. In that sense, he was like John who also had great control over the Jesus traditions and whose witness the next generation claimed and accepted as their own. Now Luke was entrusting Theophilus with the text. This does not mean he was locking Theophilus into a set text, a text that must be followed word-for-word. Luke knew and expected his written text to be performed and read and heard. He also knew that the reader had an authority to expound and to be creative. I am inclined to think that the written text Luke provided was meant to be an aid to the memory of 'the things about Jesus'. The reader was free to elaborate and to comment, in much the same way as the narrator himself does in the Gospel. The link between Gospel reading and sermon or homily today undoubtedly continues that very ancient practice. The written text must always have a living voice.

Written texts were to be publicly read or performed. Such public performance or reading was very common, and in fact it was probably the dominant form of transmission for a text. Naturally, there were better times than others for such public readings, with festivals and competitions being the obviously good times because of the wider and bigger audiences. There were also 'professional', or better, authorized readers (*lectores*). Christians, of course, were in no position to give such public performances, even if they had wanted to, so they kept their traditional stories going by telling and retelling them in their meetings and at their own festival times. It was common for texts to be copied wholly or in part, and that probably is what happened also with Luke's Gospel. Those copies in turn were read and performed, memorized and taught, and so the process continued. It is highly likely that many people memorized parts of the Gospel and Acts and recalled those texts from their memory in their proclamation and teaching of the gospel.

Chapter Six

The Oral and the Written

Modern Western scholars have had an implicit, if not explicit, preference for the written over the oral. As just one example, Bovon says that 'the merit of Luke [is] that he *raised* what was oral and popular tradition to the literary level' (1994: 166; italics mine). On the other hand, in recent years a number of scholars think New Testament scholarship has been too text-bound, and so rightly stress that, despite the growth in written literature, orality did not die. Some postmoderns want to dismantle what they perceive to be the arrogant authority claims made of the written text. And so frequent reference is made to some ancient writers' skepticism about the written text, especially vis-à-vis the *viva vox*, the living voice. Already Socrates, according to Plato, had his misgivings about writing, or at least about making writing public, because it was open to the danger of drifting 'all over the place, getting into the hands not only of those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it', and once misused or even abused, it cannot defend itself (*Phaedr*. 275d–e). Plato also claims that 'written words go on telling you just the same thing forever'; in a sense, they become a dead voice.

For many orators of the time, writing served the main purpose of aiding the memory. The written words are images to remind the speaker. As Plato says, written words are there 'to remind the one who indeed knows the matter about which they are written' (*Phaedr*. 275d). The relation between the oral and the written was also a feature of the debates between Alcidamas and Isocrates in the fourth century BCE. The former ridiculed the written, while Isocrates defended it. Isocrates was concerned that oral statements ran the risk of being falsified. He wrote, 'If I succeed by my writing in bringing out and making clear what my views are about education and about the poets, I shall stop my enemies from fabricating false charges and speaking utterly at random' (*Panathen*. 25). It is probably true to say that the living voice held sway well into the Common Era, with the written supplementing the oral. Seneca claimed, 'You will gain more from the living voice (*viva vox*) and from sharing someone's daily life than from any treatise' (*Ep. Mor*. 6.5). Another who had doubts about the written form was Arrian who seems to be aware that something might be lost by transferring Epictetus' oral performances to a written text (1.1.5–8). In general, there are indications of an underlying hesitancy to put things in writing, a fear that did not apply to the *viva vox*, for obvious reasons. To some degree, there was a greater trust in the reliability of memory and of the living voice than of written words.

The ancient teachers generally agree that in the learning process, the oral dialogue between master and student, and the oral performance of a written text, were by far the best educational tools. For Galen, teaching (and learning) from books is secondary to oral teaching, and most of his books are versions of lectures and demonstrations he had first given (Alexander 1990: 231). Likewise, Arrian, a student

of Epictetus, published his teacher's lectures and public speeches. The traditions that Mark wrote down what Peter taught, and that Luke wrote what Paul preached, are indications that this practice was known in Christian circles as well. There is a hint of it in John 21 – where the writer is called, deliberately I suggest, 'the disciple' (μαθητής) – and in Johannine traditions generally. Students wrote down what the master said (not always to the master's satisfaction, it needs to be added). While copyist mistakes might have annoyed writers like Quintilian and Cicero, it appears that the point of copying and of publishing teachers' lectures and speeches was not to preserve the exact words of the teacher; the tradition could receive elaboration, amendment, and improvement (Alexander 1990: 236).

There are signs also in Christian literature that authors were aware that their written texts could be miscopied or deliberately changed and even falsified. The elder of Revelation warns against any hearer adding to 'the words of the prophecy of this book' (Rev 22:18). Paul suspects that there were letters claiming to have come from him and his colleagues, but in fact were not (2 Thess 2:2). He also seems to have a preference for being physically present with the Corinthians rather than writing to them – trust in the *viva vox* might partly explain this preference. Much later, Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, complains that his letters were altered by the 'apostles of the devil' (Eusebius, *H.E.* 4.23).

As for the importance of the *viva vox* among Christians, well known is the reported comment of Papias which some think indicates his preference for the oral over the written. The passage survives through Eusebius;

> If anyone ever arrived who had been in the company of the presbyters, I enquired for the words of the presbyters; what Andrew said or Peter, or Philip or Thomas or James; or what said John or Matthew, or any other of the disciples of the Lord. For I did not suppose that statements from books would assist me as much as statements from a living and abiding voice. (τὰ παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης, *H.E.* 3.39.1)

Papias did have access to books, and of course he wrote books himself. Nor was he critical of Mark for writing down 'all that he remembered of the Lord's sayings and doings' that he had received from Peter (*H.E.* 3.39.14–16). So a number of scholars do not think the above statement about the *viva vox* indicates Papias' preference for the oral *against* the written. For example, Hanson believes that, at best, Papias is saying no more than that 'if anyone is looking for witnesses of words or deeds, it is most satisfactory to meet the witnesses themselves and speak to them rather than to rely on other people's written accounts of them; failing that, it is better to meet those who have met the witnesses' (1962: 38). Gamble, too, says Papias did not denigrate written texts; rather, he highly esteemed first-hand information (1995: 30–31).

Papias was not the only one to value the words that the presbyters had heard from the apostles themselves. As I have mentioned, Irenaeus and other early Christian writers also hint at trusting the authority of ear-witnesses and of the *viva vox*. The *viva vox* is nearly always that of the presbyters, those revered older men and women who had immediate and direct access to the apostles and what they had said. In this regard, Irenaeus is not too different from the heretics that he refutes. According to him, they claimed that 'the truth was not delivered by means of written documents

by people who do not know the tradition. For that tradition is not transmitted in documents, but by the living voice (*per vivam vocem*, *A.H.* 3.2.1). It sometimes seems as if Irenaeus had to justify the use of written texts, and had to insist that there was no conflict between the written and the oral. He says, 'For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary in that case to follow the course of the tradition that they handed down to those to whom they handed over the leadership of the churches?' (*A.H.* 3.4.1). No matter whether one appealed to the written or to the oral, for Irenaeus the point was that it had to be apostolic in order to be authoritative. It needs also to be said that for all the emphasis that the heretics might have given to the oral traditions, they too had their written versions of the gospel.

Irenaeus provides interesting evidence that the oral tradition continued, especially among 'the barbarians', by which he means non-Greek-speaking Christians. They 'without paper and ink, carefully preserve the ancient tradition … who in the absence of written documents, have believed this faith' (*A.H.* 3.4.2). Given that the Hellenistic world was multi-lingual and illiterate (most languages had no written alphabet), to the point of fragmentation, oral transmission in those languages must have been very common.

Very early in the third century, Clement of Alexandria had to defend his right to write – the pagans are allowed to write 'in their own shameful manner, but he who proclaims the truth is to be prevented from leaving behind him what is to benefit posterity'. It seems that some criticized him for writing, preferring instead the oral. This preference for the oral might seem strange to moderns who have so much confidence in the written word and who see the oral as 'an uncertain and usually corruptible vehicle of information' (Hanson 1962: 17). One genuine fear and misgiving Clement associated with writing about sacred things was that it ran the risk of casting pearls before swine (*Strom.* 1.12). But, he argues, 'if both proclaim the Word – the one by writing, the other by speech – are not both then to be approved?' (*Strom*. 1.1). Clement implies that some write for glory and reputation, and even for money, but he writes for the edification of his readers, and 'as a remedy against forgetfulness' of those 'vigorous and animated discourses which I was privileged to hear, and of blessed and truly remarkable men' (*Strom*. 1.1). These men (probably including Tatian and Theodotus) 'preserved the tradition of the blessed doctrine derived directly from the holy apostles, Peter, James, John and Paul, the son receiving it from the father' (*Strom*. 1.1). For all his justifying arguments for writing, Clement had very high regard for the oral traditions that he had received.

I believe Luke wrote in order to pass on the tradition, as a father might pass it on to his son or a teacher to his student. In writing down the tradition for Theophilus, Luke was taking some risks. He risked upsetting those who believed that the traditions they already knew, both oral and written, were sufficiently accurate, safe, and in order. If Luke wrote in Rome and for Romans, as some suggest, and if Mark's Gospel was also written there, then what was Luke saying about that (earlier) Gospel? Were the two Gospels read and heard side by side? Did some communities use one and others the other? The same questions can be asked if Antioch was the provenance of Luke's Gospel, as some say, and if Matthew's Gospel also derived from that community, as some also suggest. Again, what was Luke saying about the Matthean understanding of

the tradition? These questions become even more pertinent if we accept Bauckham's argument that the Gospels were written for the wider Christian audiences and not just for a single one in a particular locality. Of course, we will probably never know the answer to these questions which have hypothetical circumstances anyway. We can consider that Luke risked the complaining mumblings of those who were happy with the traditions as they already knew them, and he risked the accusation that he was setting himself up as an authority superior to the one his audience had already received and accepted. But if he realized these risks at all, he obviously saw the advantages as outweighing them, and so he wrote.

Author, Text, and Orality

The anonymity of the Gospel texts does little to help discover what kind of people their authors were. But there have been many others factors that have distracted scholars away from any interest in the authors. By far the most interest in the Gospels has been in what they contribute to the search for the historical Jesus, and nearly all approaches, from form critical to oral critical, have as their goal the search for the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, or, as Crossan would have it, the *ipsissima structura*, that is, the element of stability that is in oral forms (1983: 38). Historical authenticity becomes the purpose and issue, not the forms or styles or genres for themselves. Since the 1830s, this search has been primarily based on an evolutionary model, assuming that there is a fairly smooth, linear progression from the simple to the complex. That which is less complex is the earlier, and if the earlier, it is closer to the authentic. If Jesus is less complex, and the narrative about him is less complex, in Mark's Gospel, then it must be the earlier Gospel, and therefore it must be closer to the 'historical' Jesus than later, more complex Gospels such as John.

Form critics were interested in the various forms that can be detected in the Gospels and tried to locate these forms in the life of the communities out of which, they believed, the Gospels came. They were very aware that some of the material that the Gospel writers used came from an oral tradition, but they generally assumed that these oral traditions were simple, short, concise, and easily remembered units. They basically consisted of short sayings and stories and riddles. These base units of the tradition were thought to have been expanded and developed by the Christian communities as they adopted and adapted these basic oral units of tradition for their own situation and context. The Gospel writers then linked them together, rather loosely, into a narrative. This construction tends to leave the modern reader with the impression that the Gospel writers were little more than collators and editors, reflecting more the understanding and interpretation of the traditions within their communities than the creativity of the authors themselves, let alone of their 'original' source. Taken to its extreme, it meant the authors like Luke were scissors-and-paste men who picked up the various units to which they had access in the traditions and stuck them together into a loose narrative form.

Redaction criticism went some way to correct that impression by giving some credit to the creative and theological motives and intentions of the authors. The traditional association of Luke with Paul had done little to allow Luke to stand in

his own right, and the fact that by his own admission he had access to sources did not help his cause. But the search for the theology of Luke, that began in 1950 with Vielhauer and was strengthened by Käsemann and Conzelmann and taken up by English writers like Marshall, let the possibility of Luke standing in his own right gain ground because it became increasingly clear that Luke's theology is hard to reconcile with that of Paul, and in fact might even be understood as being in contradistinction to it. Once Luke is cut from the apron-strings of his sources (Mark and Q being very tight strings) and of Paul, then he is allowed to be seen finally as an important and significant figure because of his peculiar understanding of Jesus – and of Peter and Paul, for that matter. Just as Luke felt he had the right to interpret Jesus more accurately and to provide ἀσφάλεια for what Theophilus had been taught, so he also felt he had the authority (and duty) to interpret Peter and Paul for Theophilus. If we accept the notion that Luke's work is a two-volume whole and that his opening to the Gospel is also applicable to his second volume, then we also need to consider that the ἀσφάλεια that he offers to Theophilus is not only in what is written about Jesus but also in the written traditions about Peter and Paul. The fact, as is well known, that Luke portrays all three in very similar ways suggests that all three were seen by Luke to be characters who, inspired by the Spirit, revealed and participated in the plan and will of God for Israel and for the nations. And if there is any truth in the notion that a writer's heroes are constructed in the self-image of the author, then we might suggest that Luke saw himself also as inspired by the Spirit to reveal the plan and will of God for Israel and the nations.

Generally, the assumption has been that all the Gospel writers had access to some written sources, even if it is also acknowledged that oral sources were used. Bovon is fairly typical of the mainstream of scholarship in claiming that Luke basically used written sources, but he 'can have occasionally emended or augmented his written sources from the storehouse of oral tradition' (2002: 8). In his preface, Luke indicates he was aware of other 'gospel texts', but it is not clear as to whether they were written, oral or both. Christopher Evans concludes, 'Luke's writing will have entailed a considerable degree of search for, and investigation of, Christian traditions' (1990: 29). It is this assumption that is now seriously questioned, if not thought false, by a growing number of North American and British scholars especially. These scholars now argue that rather than written sources being the predominant sources, oral sources were more likely to have been the main 'texts' used by Luke, for example. Dunn says that 'it is surely more plausible to deduce that Matthew and Luke knew their own [oral] versions of the story', or that 'they follow Mark in an oral mode' (2001: 101). The suggestion is that the Synoptic similarities are not due to the copying of one or two written sources, but to common oral traditions which varied in their form. As Dunn says, 'We really must free ourselves from the assumption that variations between parallel accounts can be explained only in terms of literary redaction' (2001: 105). The idea that Luke basically used two written sources (Mark and Q; some would add Matthew) becomes, then, questionable, if not impossible. This would rule out Nineham's typical comment, 'As most readers will know, when St Matthew and St Luke were writing they both had copies of Mark in front of them and incorporated almost the whole of it into their Gospels' (1963: 11). Instead, the oral critics argue, the Synoptics are what Lord calls 'three oral traditional

variants', and the relationship 'is that of three or four men telling the "same" oral traditional story' (1978: 64). The variations in the texts are due not so much to the authors' correcting or editing or theological tendencies, but to the variations that existed already in the oral traditions. Lord goes so far as to claim that the Gospel texts 'vary from one another to such an extent as to rule out the possibility that, as a whole, one could have been copied from another' (1978: 90). Studies in modern illiterate oral cultures show that while stories and traditions had a very central core that was not altered (even in its vocabulary), there was always room for variation in the details, thus allowing the story-teller some freedom for his or her own creativity and adaptability to a certain situation. The formula remained the same, but the form was variable.

The emphasis on orality has also drawn attention to the *performance* of the text, and whether we talk of an oral performance or a written performance, in both cases all performances are 'original', and so it is not possible – nor is it even right or logical – to look for 'the original text'. There are 'multiple originals'. All of this inevitably leaves any idea of an 'original author' either out of the equation or at least leaves the question on the very periphery of scholarship. There is really no point looking for an original text, let alone an original author, because even if there was such a thing, the pursuit is quite futile and misguided.

The relation between orality and textuality is a very complex one, and this is the case especially in the Gospels. Aune rightly says that 'the interplay between oral and written transmission of the Jesus tradition was an extraordinarily complex phenomenon which will probably never be satisfactorily unraveled' (1991: 240). One complicating factor is that it is obviously impossible to hear the living words of Jesus – words once spoken vanish; and yet it is argued that the written recitation of Jesus' words have 'to an extraordinary degree … kept faith with heavily patterned speech forms, abounding in alliteration, paronomasia, appositional equivalence, proverbial and aphoristic diction, contrasts and antitheses, synonymous, antithetical, synthetic and tautologic parallelism, and the like' (Kelber 1983: 27). And all this is true even though Luke and the others carry the sayings of Jesus in translation from Aramaic to Greek!

There is, however, one quite uncomplicated factor, namely that the Gospels were written to be heard or performed rather than to be read silently. It is now quite commonplace to say this in some circles, but its importance cannot be overestimated. As Jaffee writes, 'For most people and for most of the time, a book was a commodity that one "heard" through the medium of another human voice; "reading" was the activity of declaiming a text before an audience in a social performance approaching the gravity of ceremonial ritual' (2001: 17).

If the Gospels were texts that were heard, then it follows that they were probably written to be heard. The writers drew on patterns of speech and rhetorical styles that were based on oral communication, and so they wrote with an ear for the *sound* of the text and its impact on the ears of the audience. These skills can easily be missed when reading a text silently to oneself; and more importantly, it is quite possible that we who read the text that way (and so can go back and forward within the text) might draw meanings from the text that would not be noticed or would not have significance in a heard text. Written texts allow us to compare 'word for word', but in

a culture where individual 'words' per se are not the important thing, but the 'sense' conveyed through a group of words, then 'word for word' copying is not going to matter that much. The fact that the oldest New Testament manuscripts did not have word divisions also suggests a different notion of 'word' than ours. Small has shown that Greeks did not learn to read by whole words but by syllables and their sounds (1997: 23–4). Her simple comment is worth noting, 'for oral cultures it is not the words but the story or the gist that counts' (Small 1997: 7). This in part explains why later copyists could change 'the words', without feeling that they necessarily were changing the sense; in fact, changing the words might make the sense clearer and, as was Luke's concern for Theophilus, 'safer'.

Since each oral performance is unique and since *verbatim* repetition was not the main goal of oral performances, a logical question is whether or not the same understanding can be seen in the written text. Every written performance of the text is also unique, particularly because scribes or 'copyists' did not feel obligated to repeat their given texts *verbatim*. As a result, there was quite some fluidity in the transmission of the Gospels, for example. This understanding of how transmission and performance work has been seen by some scholars to provide an explanation for the variations in the texts of the Gospels. So, for example, the 'Gospel according to Luke', of interest to us, has a long and complex textual history. Both Marcion (who adapted and adopted only Luke's Gospel or some form of it) and Tertullian accused each other of adulterating the gospel texts (*ad Marc.* 4.4). Bovon observes, 'We should also admit … that the ecclesiastical form of this Gospel (Luke) is possibly not its oldest version' (2003c: 223). Parker has shown that of Luke's last 167 verses, some forty of them provide 'incontrovertible evidence that the text of these chapters was not fixed, and indeed continued to grow for centuries after its composition' (1997: 172). He argues that 'behind the various texts and groups of witnesses there may be observed a tradition that permitted and encouraged the expansion of the Lukan passion narrative' (1997: 173). In some cases, this was driven by a desire not to let the heretics use the text they way they wanted to (1997: 173). Not only did apocryphal gospels have accretions, but such accretions can be found within the canonical Gospel as well. 'The Gospel story continues to grow within as well as beyond the canonical pages. We might say that Luke is not, in these early centuries, a closed book. It is open and successive generations write on its pages', says Parker (1997: 174). This observation adds to the evidence that variability and fluidity existed – and was presumably taken for granted – in the transmission of the traditions. There was no absolute control of the text that meant it had to be repeated (in written or in oral form) *verbatim*. Writing down the tradition might have provided some limitations on its transmission, but clearly it did not provide absolute control. A further indication of this is the fact that the 'original' manuscripts were not preserved. Presumably, another 'copy' (or better, possibly, 'version') could be produced, and the old one put away, possibly never to be read again.

If each reading of a text is an 'original', then which version or edition of the Gospel are we referring to when we refer to that Gospel? Seeing that the oldest texts of the Gospel, or parts thereof, only date from the beginning of the third century, with what confidence can we talk about the 'original text' anyway? If we work with third-century texts, then should we be giving more emphasis to that period of time in

the life of Christian communities who 'composed', performed, read, and heard these texts? Do the texts tell us things about the third century – almost as much as they might tell us about first-century Christian communities? We cannot assume a smooth straight line between a first-century text of Luke and a third-century one, any more than we can assume a smooth relation between a sixteenth-century performance of Shakespearean play and a twenty-first-century one.

Whatever else is said about the sources of the canonical Gospels, much of the material that is now known to us only through the canonical Gospels was probably also known to ancient audiences through other channels, both written and oral. And Gregory rightly reminds us that 'vast swathes of early Christian literature have been lost'. He believes that some 85% of the literature known to us has not survived (Gregory 2003: 17, 18).That means we need to build theories about that literature very carefully indeed! In the end, it is safe to assume that Luke used sources that were both written and oral – not unlike Philo who wrote his *Life of Moses* on the basis of both the written Scriptures and the knowledge that he had picked up from the elders of his people, 'for I have continually connected together what I have heard with what I have read ...' (*Vit. Mos.* 1.4).

Kelber has argued that the scribal is antithetical to the oral, and that the Gospel writers wished to control and stabilize the oral traditions. 'Voices had to be silenced and an oral way of life subverted in order for this gospel (Mark) to come into existence' (1983: 93). There are hints of this in Luke's preface but he implies that all of the many traditions, both oral *and* written, have not been 'safe' enough in their language and have left themselves open to charges of being 'unsafe, risky' and capable of being gainsaid. If the second century is any indication, later generations of Christians grew more and more suspicious of the reliability of oral traditions and gave more and more authority to the written word. It is possible that already by the 80s of the first century, there were enough traditions, both oral and written, to be confusing and even conflicting – enough to provoke Luke into writing an orderly and safe narrative.

But Kelber cannot have it both ways. He cannot insist that written texts were always orally performed and at the same time claim that by writing the authors were trying to silence oral voices. A written text in itself is silent and cannot be heard. It is silent and dead, like a musical score, until it is read. The reader's voice gives the text voice. Mark and Luke wrote to be heard, to be voiced – that is not the silencing of the oral. It might provide some controls, a guide or a limit to the oral traditions, but it does not subvert or silence orality per se. Certainly, some later Christians read the Gospels in their churches and opposed precisely those 'heretics' who claimed access to secret texts that were not to be heard in public. There are hints in Acts that Luke insists that the Christian gospel is, in his opinion, not something secret, but is to be proclaimed 'publicly' (δημοσίᾳ, Acts 18:28; 20:20)

In general, Kelber and others who wish to insist on the importance of orality have occasionally overstated their arguments. The tendency has been to accept Lord's claim that the spoken and written word are 'contradictory and mutually exclusive' (Kelber 1983: 14). However, in the cultures of first-century Jews, whether in Palestine or in the Diaspora, which were both oral and literate, the evidence would suggest that *both* forms existed as complementary in the transmission of traditions.

This was especially true in the learning processes, as Talmon (1991) has argued from both the Old Testament and from the texts found at Qumran. It is most likely that the same complementary nature of the relation between written and oral transmission of traditions existed among the very earliest Christians. Gerhardsson (2005) has provided a strong counter-balance to the recent trends towards orality and oral criticism. He insists that the cultural examples used by Kelber and others cannot be assumed to model accurately the cultural and social conditions of the first Christians. He tones down the emphasis that is currently put on oral performance, with all its variations, and instead highlights the teaching role of Jesus and the learning role of the disciples, the importance of memorization in this process, and the fact that early Christians did have written texts and came from a tradition in which the written text was important.

The issue of the oral in early Christian culture raises some interesting possibilities regarding the Gospels and their authors. For example, it is possible that Luke, and others, originally gave oral performances of their Gospels which only later were they recorded in written form. Does the Gospel ΚΑΤΑ ΛΟΥΚΑΝ mean, then, the Gospel as Luke used to perform it in oral form, rather than the Gospel as Luke wrote it? Was the Gospel associated with Luke because someone by that name was known as a great oral presenter or performer of the Gospel; in other words, Luke was known as 'an evangelist'? This is suggested by the Church Fathers who understood 2 Cor 8:18 to be a reference to Luke. It is an issue I will raise again later.

Another related possibility is that Luke wrote his Gospel for performers and readers, one of whom was Theophilus. The 'order', 'accuracy', and 'safety' that he is concerned about are matters of delivery, memory, and performance and not only of content. Did Luke write to Theophilus who was the elder in charge of the reading and performance of the gospel tradition in his own community, much as Shakespeare wrote Hamlet for the actors, not for the audience or for a general readership? In other words, Luke writes to Theophilus so that his 'performance' of the text might be 'safe' in the sense of being without mistakes, not open to contradiction, and so right and accurate. If poor performance was an issue, as it was with some Greeks and Romans, and also with some Jews, then does Luke write in a certain style in order to make it 'safer' for Theophilus to read and perform the text? If Luke did in fact know Mark in some form, written or oral or both, did he notice that performers in his part of the world had problems with the Greek and style in that text and so he provided his own version?

All this, in turn, implies that the Gospel was written for performance in a Christian community, most likely within a worship framework. I am interested in the relation between text and worship among the early Christians. If the Gospels are written for performance within a worship setting – and we know that later they were so used – then that affects the way I think about the relation between text and performance. It means that instead of the sitting-around-the-fire-at-night-telling-tales model of performance for the Gospels (as the oralists like Kelber, and others like Dunn who move in that direction, would have it), we need to look at the model of the synagogue and that provided by passages such as 1 Cor 14:26; Col 3:16; and Eph 5:19. Using this model, the performance of the Gospel text would be more formal

and be for education and instruction rather than for entertainment; the variations in its performances would also probably not be as marked or as obvious.

But even within a more formal, worship context, the same story can be told to different audiences and with different levels of meaning and of understanding. The story of Jesus' birth told in a Sunday School to five-year-olds will not be told in the same form or with the same shared understanding as when it is told to a class of theology students studying the Gospels. I find the so-called Secret Gospel of Mark interesting in this regard, regardless of what one thinks of its origins and dating. In that Gospel it is clear that some Christians saw deeper levels of meaning to the same fundamental story, and that Christians went through a process of initiation into the depths and mysteries of their stories. My guess is that many early Christian writers, who often in modern times are spoken of rather disparagingly because they interpreted the Scriptures allegorically rather than historically or 'literally', did so precisely because they believed that their sacred traditions had different and deeper levels of meaning. Speaking of Luke's Gospel, Bovon asks the question: 'Why did the Gnostics use an allegorical method of interpretation for a document that seems to us to be historically rather than metaphorically oriented?' (2003b: 35). I suspect that in fact not only the Gnostics but very few early orthodox Christian writers actually interpreted the Gospels historically or literally in their preaching and teaching. Origen, for example, realized that the literal-historical sense of the Gospels has so many problems and contradictions that if one reads them only a that level one would abandon the faith and could not know the historical truth; a deeper level is required: 'their truth is not in their literal features' (*Comm. John* 10.14). Interestingly, Origen obviously feels comfortable in saying that not everything that is recorded in the Gospels is history or actually occurred (for example, that the devil took Jesus up on to a high mountain; *De Princ*. 4.1.16), and that in 'innumerable other passages … in the histories that are literally recorded, circumstances that did not occur are inserted'.

It is possible that the oral has been given too much importance. The fact is that what we have, and what even the earliest generation of Christians had, were written texts. Too much hinges on the 'historical Jesus', and because he apparently left nothing in writing, but was an oral interpreter of the will of God, the oral has taken precedence for some. The thinking seems to be that if we want to know the historical Jesus, we must know the oral transmission of his words because they were obviously the earliest form of the teaching. An allied thought is the claim that the writers of the Gospels were dependent on the oral tradition as it had been transmitted from Jesus to his disciples, as Gerhardsson has argued. These disciples were not sophisticated, literate men. Kelber could claim that the Qumran Community was significantly different from early Christian communities because the former were literate, text-producing, and text-studying sophisticates, while the Christians were not interested in the written transmission of their traditions. So he says that the Christian movement

> came into existence in response to an itinerant, charismatic prophet. Qumran's Teacher of Righteousness was presumably of Zadokite lineage and an accomplished student of Scripture, as was the core group of his original followers. By contrast, neither the founding figure of the Christian movement nor the nucleus of his early followers enjoyed

> the educational privileges that came from priestly descent … The dissenting priests were heirs to a sophisticated urban culture of scripture learning and handling of texts. But there is nothing in the formative stage of the Jesus movement to suggest the scriptorium as the cradle or the locus of transmission of traditions. These conspicuous differences must alert us against projecting the literary proficiency of the Qumran scribal experts upon early Synoptic processes of transmission. (1983: 16–17)

Kelber has overstated the case. On the one hand, he ignores the significance of oral tradition and of oral performance at Qumran, and that oral and written traditions were seen as complementary rather than in opposition and in conflict. And on the other, the impression he gives that Jesus himself and his followers were basically illiterate and only transmitted teachings orally needs correction. Jesus and his followers belonged to a culture that was both oral and literate; and in their religious culture that was especially the case. My guess is that Luke's own description of Peter and John as 'uneducated, common men' (ἄνθρωποι ἀγράμματοί εἰσιν καὶ ἰδιῶται, Acts 4:13) has contributed to this notion, as has the common idea that fishermen in general were illiterate and uneducated. Shiell is almost stereotypical in referring to 'simple disciples' (2004: 210). Kelber denies this romantic notion, but goes on: 'but what must be recognized is that the cultural, linguistic disposition of most of Jesus' earliest followers was formed by oral habits, displaying only tenuous connections with literate culture' (1983: 21).

But I see no logical reason to assume that among 'the nucleus of his [sc. Jesus'] early followers' there were not educated, relatively sophisticated men and women who could handle the culture of texts and their interpretation. And again, the fact is that the written transmission of Christian traditions took place among the first, if not the very first, generations of Christians. And the opinion of Alexander certainly runs quite contrary to Kelber's claim: 'A sort of scholasticism seems to emerge within the post-Easter Church: all the New Testament writings appear to attest to an intensive scholarly activity which was aimed (a) at interpreting the person and teaching of Jesus, and (b) at creating a distinctly Christian reading of the Hebrew Scriptures' (1991: 183–4). It is an opinion supported incidentally by Riesner, who thinks that 'the first life-setting of the Jesus tradition was not popular folklore and romance but a teach-and-learn situation' (1991: 191). If Alexander and Riesner are right, then it is hard to see why this should have taken place only after Easter – the followers of Jesus were not called 'disciples' for nothing! Riesner claims, 'There is no a priori reason to exclude the pre-Easter situation' from including written forms of the gospel tradition along with the oral (1991: 196; compare also 1QS 6.6–8). Riesner's depiction of Jesus' first followers goes even further, and is the direct opposite of Kelber's portrayal. He claims there was 'widespread literacy in Jewish Palestine' and that some of Jesus' adherents were 'of high-class background' (1991: 196). The former is almost definitely not the case; literacy in Palestine was probably not higher than 15% and might well have been much lower. But there are indications, especially in Luke's Gospel and in Acts, that Jesus had at least some followers 'of high-class background'. And in small communities, as the Christians were, one or two literates might well have had good claims to honor, status, and authority within their community.

In any case, even if Kelber is right about the circle of Jesus and his followers, the same cannot be said of the next generations. Paul quite obviously was to some degree 'literate' and rhetorically capable. Certainly, I will argue, there are good reasons for constructing the author of Luke precisely along the lines of the sophisticated priests of Qumran: highly literate, highly skilled in the Scriptures, greatly devoted to the learning of, and the transmission of, the teachings of his Teacher, a writer and teacher who reinterprets the traditions of Israel.

Finally, while the oralists have highlighted a very significant aspect of communication and transmission, the fact is that the Gospels were written texts. Writing brought prestige, honor, and status. It was also regarded in some circles as providing a reliable and accurate form of communication, especially of historical matters. I would repeat that writing and priestly authority went hand in hand. Remembering that Josephus was a priest, he obviously thought that one of the advantages Jews had over against others, including the Greeks, was that they had written records of their past. In fact, he acknowledges that the histories of the Egyptians and Chaldeans and Phoenicians were even greater and more reliable because they had written records. 'It was also late, and with difficulty', he wrote to Epiphraditus in his *Against Apion*, that the Greeks 'came to know the letters they now use'; and their oldest writings are those of Homer, but even they did not originate in written form but 'their memory was preserved in songs, and they were put together afterward; and this is the reason for such a number of variations that are found in them'. Then he talks about Greek historians and notes their contradictions which he puts down to the fact that 'in the beginning the Greeks had taken no care to have public records of their several transactions preserved' and that resulted in not only mistakes, but also lies. While as a Jew, Josephus is prepared to accede to the superiority of style and eloquence of composition, he gives them 'no such preference as to the verity of ancient history' because they had no written records, as the Jews did (*C. Apion* 1.2–5). And why are Jewish records so good and reliable, written with 'the utmost accuracy'? Because, he says, they were written by priests, and 'the best of priests', at that (*C. Apion* 1.6–7)!

Chapter Seven

Luke in the Tradition

It is time to examine the traditions that identify the author of the Third Gospel as Luke. This chapter looks first at what there is to learn about Luke from the New Testament, and then examines the writings of the Church Fathers as far as the end of the fourth century to see if there is any consistency between the New Testament and the later writings, and to see if there is a consistent tradition about Luke.

Luke in the New Testament

The common and ancient view is that the author of the Third Gospel and Acts is Luke, the co-worker of Paul and a medical doctor. There are three references to a person named Luke (Λουκᾶς) in the New Testament and they probably all indicate the one and the same person. These references are in Phlm 24, Col 4:14, and 2 Tim 4:11. The obvious common factor is that all of these occurrences are in Paul's letters, although only Philemon is regarded as indisputably and authentically Pauline. The other two writings, then, might reflect a later memory of Paul's associates. Twice Luke appears in greetings (Phlm 24 and Col 4:14), and in the third, he is listed in general comments 'Paul' makes about various people's movements (2 Tim 4:11).

From these passages, we can glean very little indeed about this Luke. It might be speculated that he had acknowledged status in some Christian communities in Asia Minor. In addition, in all three passages Luke is associated with Demas, and we could assume that the two were paired, as was commonly the case with Christian workers. Luke is also linked with Mark and Aristarchus as a fellow-worker (συνεργός) of Paul in Phlm 24. Paul uses that term elsewhere of Philemon (Phlm 1), Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16:3), Urbanus (Rom 16:9), Timothy (Rom 16:21), Titus (2 Cor 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), and Clement (Phil 4:3). The first three, at least, appear to have been of some wealth and social status; they all seem to have been held in very high regard by Paul and to have played significant roles in the work of the gospel. It should not be assumed that any of them were in any way inferior to Paul or responsible to him or under his control and authority. They all had significant leadership roles in various Christian communities in their own right, and traditions have many of them as bishops in the church. On those grounds, it appears that the New Testament Luke might have been a leader – and that nearly always implies having teaching authority – of some significance in at least one Christian community.

The most important reference to Luke is in Col 4:14 where Luke is referred to as 'the beloved doctor' (ὁ ἰατρὸς ὁ ἀγαπητός). It has become a foundation stone for many a large construction about him and his writings; it is one which I think cannot bear the weight.

There are two groups of workers listed in this passage. The one group consists of Aristarchus, 'my fellow-prisoner' (4:10), Mark (the ἀνεψιός of Barnabas) and Jesus Justus, who are 'my fellow-workers' (4:11); they are 'from the circumcision' (ἐκ περιτομῆς). The second group consists of Epaphras, Luke, and Demas (4:13–14). Epaphras appears better known to the Colossians and is praised by Paul; Luke is called 'the beloved doctor'; and Demas is simply named.

I have doubts that this passage permits us to understand Luke to be a medical doctor. Elsewhere Paul calls Timothy 'my son' (τεκνον μου, 2 Tim 2:1), and Mark is referred to by Peter also as 'my son' (ὁ υἱος μου, 1 Pet 5:13). I doubt whether too many scholars would take the references to Timothy and Mark in their literal sense – Mark was not Peter's biological son, nor was Timothy Paul's. The point is that they stood in the metaphorical relationship to each other of 'father' and 'son'. Similarly, when Paul sends greetings to 'Rufus' mother and mine' (Rom 16:13), does he mean that Rufus was his blood-brother and that his own biological mother was in Rome? Probably not. In addition, Paul often uses metaphorical language to describe his companions and fellow-workers. Archippus is a 'fellow-soldier (συστρατιώτης, Phlm 2); Paul addresses an unidentified 'yoke-fellow' (Phil 4:3), and refers to Epaphras as 'our beloved fellow-servant'. Philemon is a 'beloved fellow-worker (Phlm 1); Tychicus is a 'beloved brother' (ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφός, Col 4:7; Eph 6:21), as is Onesimus (Col 4:9). Is the 'beloved doctor' to be understood any differently to the 'brothers, fellow-soldiers, yoke-fellows, sons, and servants'? Are they not all metaphorical terms? Luke was no more Paul's medical doctor (or anybody else's for that matter) than Timothy was his son, but Luke and Paul stood in relation to each other of healer to patient. Luke might have been an elder (in age and in status) to Paul. Or possibly – and this is just as likely – it was the Colossians, and not only Paul, who stood in that relationship with Luke. Paul does not call Luke 'my beloved' as he does Epaenetus (Rom 16:5), Ampliatus, and Stachys (Rom 16:8, 9). Luke is simply called 'the beloved', as is Persis (Rom 16:12).

It is possible that Paul's description of Luke as a doctor adds to my suggestion that he was a priest. After all, doctors diagnose, and priests basically also had the responsibility of diagnosing a person's ritual condition, especially in matters of purity and impurity. This is clearly illustrated by the role of the priest in matters of leprosy (Luke 5:14; 17:14). So Luke was one to whom Paul and the Colossians turned when they needed a diagnosis. It might have been in a matter of halakhic understanding or in scriptural interpretation, or in the understanding of the gospel of Jesus. If a judgment was required, they turned to Luke, for a diagnosis. If so, Luke was probably older, maybe an 'elder', and someone whose advice and opinion was respected and sought. It might also suggest that he was a priest.

In two passages, Luke is closely linked with Demas, Aristarchus, and Mark (in that order in Phlm 24; compare Col 4:10, 14). In 2 Timothy, Luke alone is with Paul; Demas has deserted Paul; Mark is with Timothy, possibly in Ephesus or somewhere else in Asia Minor. There is no mention of Aristarchus here; instead, Crescens, Titus, and Tychicus are mentioned. Rather curiously, there are no greetings from Luke, even though he is the only one (μόνος) with Paul; instead, greetings come from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and 'all the brethren' (2 Tim 4:21). The fact that greetings come from all of these seems to conflict with the statement that 'Luke is

the only one with me' (Λουκᾶς ἐστιν μόνος μετ' ἐμοῦ, 2 Tim 4:11), unless Paul means Luke is 'the only fellow-worker' with him or something like that. In any case, it is a sentence that has been milked for all its worth to indicate the close loyalty Luke had to Paul, a judgment that has little weight and conviction.

There have been those who suggest that this *Loukas* is the wrong man in terms of authorship of Luke-Acts, and that we should look at the Lucius (Λούκιος) mentioned in Rom 16:21. Origen already knew of this link (*Ep. ad Rom*. 10.39), an indication that the identity of the author was problematic in some circles already in the late second century. If that person is the author of Luke-Acts, then we have a blood-relative of Paul as author since Paul in Rom 16:21 refers to Lucius and Jason and Sosipater as 'my kinsmen' (οἱ συγγενεῖς μου), unless the term is being used metaphorically. Others have suggested the Lucius (Λούκιος) of Acts 13:1 is our man; in that case, the author Luke is from Cyrene, and a prophet and teacher of the same status as Barnabas and Paul. Lucius would then be making a Hitchcock-like cameo silent 'appearance' in his own narrative. John Wenham is enthused by the idea, claiming that a 'good case' can be made for identifying both Lucius of Cyrene (Acts 13) and Lucius (Rom 16.21) with Luke (1991a: 187; 1991b: 32–8). But very few scholars today would seriously consider the possibility, believing instead that the Luke who is the most likely candidate of them all is the 'beloved doctor'. Assuming that the author's name was in fact 'Luke' (Λουκᾶς), there is no doubt that he has the best claim. But that claim is not watertight.

The 'We' Passages

The major source for information about the author probably comes by implication (only) in the 'puzzling phenomenon' of the 'we' passages of Acts which continue to be 'a vexed question' (Evans 1990: 9). Wedderburn finds it 'frustrating … perplexing … and a dilemma which I feel acutely' (2002: 78). It is frustrating because, as Wedderburn says, it has significant implications for the authorship, and by implication for the credibility and reliability of Acts (2002: 78).

These passages might be, and are, very frustrating to the modern reader and scholar, but they are also highly important when discussing the authority of the author. By using 'we', the author appears to locate himself in the narrative and so claims to be an eyewitness. We might remember that eyewitness evidence was held in the highest regard by the ancients, as Bauckham has recently (2006) emphasized. While Luke appears to acknowledge that he is not an eyewitness of Jesus' activities, he does claim to have followed very closely and accurately that which the eyewitnesses (αὐτόπται) and guardians of the word have handed down (Luke 1:2). It is that very link with the eyewitnesses and guardians of the traditions (whom I understand to be very similar to the elders) that Luke holds up as establishing his authority to write. When it comes to certain movements of Paul in the Acts narrative, the author claims to actually be one of the eyewitnesses and so implicitly claims his narrative to be reliable and authoritative. The implication might well be that if the author is an eyewitness of some of Paul's activity, then he is to be trusted in his interpretation of Paul. The use of 'we' in the narrative is a claim for authority.

This is a significant matter. The early decades of the Christian movement saw an understandable fluidity and diversity in the interpretation of Jesus and Paul, at least in some Christian circles. Luke weighs into these struggles and debates, and does so because he claims to have the authority of eyewitnesses, and even of being one himself in the case of Paul.

For all that, the eyewitness is anonymous. There is no mention of anyone called Luke (Λουκᾶς) in Acts. In the 'we' passages, the narrator, whoever it might be, is included among those called by God through a vision to preach the gospel in Macedonia (Acts 16:9–13), and then travels with Paul to Philippi, appears to stay there while Paul moves elsewhere and then rejoins them in Philippi, and together they sail to Troas from where they had first set out for Greece (Acts 20:5–6). From there, 'we' went to Assos, Mitylene, opposite Chios, to Samos, and Miletus (Acts 20:13–15); they sailed to Cos, Rhodes, Patara, and Tyre in Syria (21:1–3); then they sailed to Ptolemais, came to Caesarea and to Jerusalem (21:7, 8, 15). Finally, after Paul's court hearings, it was decided that 'we' sail for Italy, with Paul going as a prisoner, and after many adventures, 'we' finally came to Rome (Acts 27–28). The narrator ends his narrative with himself in Paul's company in Rome.

The shift in person and number in a narrative is not unusual in Jewish and Christian writings. In Ezra, for example, the narrative refers to the priest Ezra in the third person, but then suddenly in 7:28 it continues in the first person, only to return again to the third person (10:1). Nehemiah's narrative has the first seven chapters in the first person, but in 8:1, the story of Ezra is told in the third person, only to return at the end of the book to being partly written in the first person (12:31, 38, 40; 13:6–31). Luke has a number of things – besides this shift in person – in common with the Chronicler. There are other instances of the same thing. The plural, 'we', is used in *2 Maccabees* to refer to the writers in what is a preface (*2 Macc* 2:25–32, an interesting passage in itself), but at the end of the book, the writer speaks in the first person singular (*2 Macc* 15:37–38). In 2 Peter, there is a shift from 'I' to 'we' in 1:12–18.

What to do? It looks like there are three options: First, the author was an eyewitness to the events in which the 'we' appears in the narrative (so already Irenaeus) and was drawing on his travel 'diary', especially a sailing diary. If the author is an eyewitness then Luke, a 'fellow-worker' of Paul, fits the bill as well as anyone else. Fitzmyer (1998: 103) and Jervell (1998: 66) basically take this view, as do many others; second, the author did not accompany Paul on the travels, but he had access to the diary or notes of someone who did, and so the 'we' was found in the source and it stayed in Luke's narrative (so, for example, Barrett 1961: 22; Kümmel 1966: 131). Wedderburn develops this line. He suggests that the author of Acts knew someone who had been a companion of Paul at some stages and 'Luke' received information from him either in writing or orally. 'Yet because he felt himself to be writing in the name of this traveling-companion he chose the first person plural for those parts of the narrative where he knew that his source, a personal source, not so much a written document, in whose name he felt himself to be writing, had in fact been present' (2002: 95). Wedderburn suggests 'Luke' was in a pupil–teacher relationship with this person who provided the information, and he wants to respect that relationship by using the 'we' form because the mystery person was 'a key figure in the author's decision to write down this story' (2002: 97). This second

suggestion in all its variations is largely driven by the perceived incompatability between the Paul of Acts and that of Paul's own letters. If the 'we' includes the author as a companion of Paul, then it is incomprehensible that he could have got Paul, and some factual details, so wrong (Kümmel 1966: 127–30).

The third option is that the 'we' passages use a literary technique to give credibility to the narrative (so Bovon 2002: 8). Robbins (1978) argues this on the basis of contemporary Mediterranean literature. 'The first plural technique is simply a feature of the sea voyage genre in Mediterranean antiquity', he says (1978: 229). He also argues that Luke uses the device because he wants to explain how 'we' (Christians) got to Rome. 'This author feels a strong sense of union with the early Christian leaders about whom he writes' (1978: 241). Robbins gives examples of 'we' in Xenophon and others where they 'entered into the narrative as a participant even though later analysis can see that the style of narration does not comply with the rest of the document'. He concludes, 'Perhaps we should suggest that Luke participated in the sea voyages precisely in this way' (1978: 242).

As suggested above, there is another related possibility worth some consideration. Did the author want to cement his authority as an interpreter of Paul by using 'we' language? Was he saying to his audience: 'I am a reliable transmitter and interpreter of the traditions about Paul because I accompanied him on some of his journeys? I was there when Paul arrived in Rome; I was there when, in the narrative, Paul made one final statement to the Jews in Rome.' Whether Luke was a true eyewitness or not is not the point. It is the author's claim to authority, his claim for a hearing. In a sense, was it an ancient form of 'name-dropping'?

If I had to come down on one side, it would be ever-so-lightly to support the opinion that the 'we' includes the author who accompanied Paul on those travels indicated. But for other information – travel movements and so on – he was dependent on other sources. As Wedderburn admits, '[a]t first sight the evidence of this literary feature of the work points unmistakeably in the direction of an eyewitness account' (2002: 80). The main objection is the incompatibility of Acts' version of Paul (and Peter) with the evidence from Paul's own writings. This is quite a significant issue, but I would make just three brief comments. First, in terms of people's character and stance on issues, it is problematic whether we can really expect Paul's self-perception and someone else's perception of that 'self' to be the same. This is an argument that is sometimes used by the more conservative scholars who wish to downplay the discrepancies between Acts and the Pauline letters. Partly on these grounds, Bock, for example, thinks the differences between Acts and Paul are 'overdrawn' (1994: 17). It is often said that Luke has 'an agenda' in his narratives involving Paul. True, but Paul himself is not without an agenda when talking about events in his life. The other point is to suggest, as I will discuss later in more detail, that Luke, while being a companion of Paul, did not hold him as the hero many think, but rather saw himself at least as his equal, and so was in a position to modify, balance, and even lessen his influence on Theophilus, in the first place, but also on Christian communities and individuals who received Acts. Luke, if that is the author's name, had the authority to interpret Paul, just as he also did the traditions already in use concerning Jesus. Thirdly, concern (and obsession, in some cases) for history is in danger of elevating a Western scientific view to a greater level than is appropriate for an understanding

of Acts. The writer of Acts is more interested in the flow of his narrative than he is in the historical details of Paul's movements and behavior.

There is still one other passage in the New Testament that some early Christian writers believed referred to Luke, even though he is not mentioned by name. The verse is 2 Cor 8:18, and there Paul refers to a 'brother whose fame in the gospel is throughout all the churches' (οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ διὰ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν). A significant number of the Fathers identified this 'brother' as Luke (so Origen, Eusebius, Ephrem, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome, and *Pseudo-Ignatius*). Did these writers understand that Luke gave his work a public hearing in an oral performance (or in a series of oral performances) as an evangelist, and did he then edit it (or them) as a written text after feedback, as did Cicero and other orators of the time? If any of this is remotely near the case, then it is not a matter of Luke merely being a companion of Paul, but being someone who had status and authority in his own right, accepted and known throughout the churches, and who had a particularly understanding of the gospel that others then wrote down believing that they were faithfully recording the 'gospel according to Luke'.

Luke in the Early Christian Tradition

When we move from the canonical texts (which in some form probably date before the end of the first century) into the next two generations of Christian writings (say, 90–130 CE), we run into serious problems that stem mainly from the lack of data available from this period. But even in the later part of the second century, things do not improve that much. Bovon talks about 'the mysterious fate of the Gospel of Luke in the second century', and says that 'Luke, the historian and theologian, encountered curious circumstances in Christian antiquity. For a long period of time he appears to have been unknown to theologians and scholars.' The so-called Apostolic Fathers, and others later, 'were unaware of the Gospel of Luke'. Rather interestingly, on the other hand, 'the authors of apocryphal writings knew Luke well and used his Gospel' (Bovon 2003d: 295; compare also Bellinzoni 1998: 60). Gleaning through early Christians texts, mainly from the second and third centuries, Bovon lists the following as showing reasonably clear signs of familiarity with Luke's Gospel: the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, the *Gospel of the Nazarenes*, the *Gospel of Peter*, the fragments of Papyrus Egerton 2, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Traditions of Matthias*, Papyrus Cairensis 10735, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the *Questions of Bartholomew*, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, the longer ending of Mark's Gospel, the *Protevangelium of James*, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Diatessaron*, and the *Sibylline Oracles* (2005: 383–9).

There are faint signs that Ignatius (about 110 CE) knew material that we know as being in Luke's Gospel, but that does not mean he knew that Gospel, let alone its author as Luke. He wrote to Smyrna:

> For myself, I am convinced and believe that even after the resurrection he was in the flesh. Indeed, when he came to Peter and his friends, he said to them, 'Take hold of me, touch me and see that I am not a bodiless ghost'. And they at once touched him and were convinced, clutching his body and his very breath. For this reason they despised death

> itself, and proved its victors. Moreover, after the resurrection he ate and drank with them as a real human being, although in spirit he was united with the Father. (3.1–2)

This passage reflects words and ideas found in Luke 24:39 and in Acts 10:41.

Probably more interesting is the following statement attributed to Ignatius in the longer version of his letter to the Ephesians:

> It is good to teach, if he who speaks also acts. For he who shall both 'do and teach, the same shall be great in the kingdom.' Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, first did and then taught, as Luke testifies, 'whose praise is in the Gospel through all the Churches.'

In this passage, Luke is identified as the author, and the reference to his testimony is Acts 1:1 ('all that Jesus began to do and to teach'). The second point of interest is the common notion among the Church Fathers that 2 Cor 8:18 was a reference to Luke. The problem is that the longer rescension of this Ignatian letter is undoubtedly much later than the second century.

Polycarp, who dates from around 130 CE, cites what closely parallels Luke 6:20, 'blessed are the poor and those persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of God' (2.3). But it is certain that a number of Jesus' sayings and collections of such sayings existed from which Christian writers readily quoted, so there is no certainty that Polycarp knew the Third Gospel, nor, again, that its author was Luke.

The same can be said for Justin, who writes much closer to 150 CE. In the *Dialogue with Trypho,* he refers to a passage known to us as Luke 22:42–44, 'in the Memoirs which, as I have said, were drawn up by the apostles and their followers, [it is recorded] that sweat fell like drops of blood while he was praying, and saying, "If it be possible, let this cup pass"' (103.8). Justin does not help at all to identify the author.

Finally, from the early-second-century data, it could be that the secondary ending to Mark's Gospel either was aware of Luke or had access to the same source as Luke. The dating of that Markan version is very difficult to determine. The best that we can say of the second-century data before about 160 CE is that there are a few very faint signs that some material was known to Christian writers that today we might identify as coming from Luke's Gospel. Unfortunately, those early writers did not make that identification, and they give even less hints as to the name of the author.

Opinions vary as to when the term 'Gospel' was first associated with and attached to these writings. Hengel believes it began already with Mark, who uses the term in his opening sentence as a title of his text (Mark 1:1); Koester thinks its usage began with Marcion; while Stanton says it began with Matthew, even though it was not used as a title (Gregory 2003: 45). The earliest manuscript identifying the Third Gospel as being 'according to Luke' is the Papyrus Bodmer XIV (in P^{75}, which, it is significant to note, contains only chapters 3–9, 17, and 22), which has been dated between 175–220 CE. It would seem that in some circles, at least, these writings (and possibly others) were called the 'Memoirs of the Apostles' (Justin, *Dial*. *Tryph*. 100.1), so it is possible that the Gospels circulated at an earlier stage under different titles. This is the suggestion of Bovon, who thinks they might have been known as 'beginnings', 'narrative', 'life' 'memoirs' and so on. Bovon suggests these titles partly on the basis of the evidence of the Acts of Philip that existed under different

titles (1988: 20–22). Irenaeus, by the way, seems to refer to the Acts of the Apostles as 'The Testimony of Luke concerning the Apostles' (*Lucae de apostolis testificatio*, *A.H.* 3.31.3). Gregory's conclusion is the safest, but probably is over-cautious: it is now impossible to know whether what we call the Gospels previously existed with other titles than they now have (2003: 51).

Even if these writings were known as 'Gospels' comparatively early, their authors were not always identified. It was more common, even in later Christian writings, for writers to quote from 'the Gospel' rather than from one particular Gospel, let alone from one which they identified by name. Interestingly, Clement of Alexandria at one point uses the plural to refer to an incident known to us now only in Luke's Gospel: 'For Zechariah, John's father, is said in the *Gospels* (ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις) to have prophesied before his son' (*Strom.* 1.21). While, of course, Paul called his own oral proclamation 'the gospel' or even 'my gospel' (Rom 2:16; 16:25), there is a suggestion in *1 Clement* that his writings could also be referred to as 'the gospel'. The late-first-century Roman bishop writes, 'Take up the epistle of the blessed apostle Paul. What did he first write to you at the beginning of the gospel (τοῦ εὐαγγελίου)?' (47:1–3). It is clear that 'at the beginning of the gospel' refers to the beginning of 1 Corinthians because both Paul and Clement are referring to divisions within the Christian community at Corinth. Does Clement understand Paul's letter as being 'the gospel'? It would seem so. Is this then the first reference we know to 'the gospel' as a written form? Koester says no; Clement is referring to Paul's preaching (1990: 15). Maybe; but the absence of the pronoun (αὐτοῦ) might raise some doubt; and Clement seems to be saying that the gospel is something Paul *wrote* – the context indicates that Clement is referring to Paul's letter to the Corinthians – a writing, a letter, not an oral word.

In the *Didache*, there are also hints that the term 'gospel' is used of a written text ('as you find it in the gospel', 15.3.4); and the same usage appears in *2 Clem* 8:5 ('for the Lord says in the gospel'). In all of these cases, Koester argues on the basis of their contexts that they do not refer to written texts at all, but to the oral kerygma (1990: 15–18). For him, the term 'Gospel' as a written genre comes with Marcion. It might well be so; on the other hand, the 'memoirs of the apostles' (τά ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων, *1 Apol*. 66.3; 67.3), which Justin knows are also called 'gospels' (εὐαγγέλια), were not only read in the churches but were also then the basis for preaching, teaching, admonition, and instruction. He says, 'when the reader has stopped, the leader will speak and give an admonition and an invitation to imitate all these good things' (*1 Apol*. 67.3–4). This public reading followed by the preaching on the basis of the written texts meant there was a very strong link connecting the written tradition with the living voice. The 'Gospel' was then understood by some to be not just a voice but also a literary genre; but not by all – Justin seems not to prefer the term; he implies that *others* use it: ἅ εὐαγγελία καλεῖται (*1 Apol*. 66.3), and Trypho refers to them likewise, ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ εὐαγγελίῳ (*Dial. Trypho* 10.2). Recently, Kelhoffer (2004) has argued that there is 'compelling evidence' that the *Didache* and *2 Clem* 8, both from the first half of the second century, are referring to written Gospels.

Early in the third century, according to Origen's writings, there was still some debate as to what constituted 'The Gospel'. Some included the Old Testament and

other Christian writings besides the Gospels. Origen argued that in a sense they can all be called 'gospel', and so can the oral message of the angels, of Jesus, and of others (*Comm*. *John* 1.11–89). Paul did not write a Gospel, says Origen, but everything he said and wrote can be called 'gospel' (1.25). The same can be said of Peter's writings and of the other apostles (1.26). Origen clearly knows of Luke as the author of a Gospel, and he assumes that Luke also wrote Acts, as is clear from his *Commentary on John*: 'Now the gospel, and Luke in Acts …' (1.149); and elsewhere in the same commentary he talks about a Gospel passage and refers to 'Luke' as its author (6.123, 136); and he can also say, 'And Luke writes in Acts …' (1.150).

The *Apostolic Constitutions* (probably from the third or fourth century) advise those who stay at home to 'read the books of the Law, of the Kings, with the Prophets; sing the hymns of David; and peruse diligently the Gospel, which is the completion of the other' (1.5). This seems to use the term 'Gospel' generically and to exclude the Old Testament under its rubric. The *Apostolic Constitutions* also cite 'the Scriptures' and mean the Old Testament; they also sometimes mention the particular book (for example, Numbers, see 1.1.2; Proverbs, see 2.9), but they do not do likewise with the Christian Gospels. When the Gospels are quoted, they are always introduced by 'it is written in the Gospel' (1.1.2) or 'He says in the Gospel' (1.1.1) or with something similar. It is only when orders for the assembly are given that the Gospels are actually referred to by the names of their 'authors', those which 'Matthew and John have delivered to you, and those which the fellow-workers of Paul received and left to you, Luke and Mark' (2.7.57). Elsewhere in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Peter and the apostles say that they have passed on the 'very catholic doctrine', and 'we have sent it by our fellow-minister Clement … together with Barnabas, and Timothy our most dearly beloved son, and the genuine Mark, together with whom we recommend to you also Titus and Luke, and Jason and Lucius, and Sosipater' (6.3.18).

Ambrose calls each of the Gospels, 'the Book of the Gospel' which, then, Luke, Matthew, Mark, and John wrote or narrated (Prologue, *Exposition of the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke*). In other words, there is one Gospel only, divided into four books written by four writers (1.1).

In summary, Black's observation is right:

> There is little evidence for a direct literary dependence of the early church fathers upon the Gospels as we know them, in their canonical form ... the majority of patristic references or allusions to the Gospels appear to have originated from the memory of Gospel traditions that for years were transmitted orally, before and even after those traditions had crystallized into the literary forms with which we are familiar. (1994: 79)

In terms of Luke being the author of a Gospel, the fact is 'there is no evidence prior to Irenaeus (ca 175 CE) to demonstrate that anyone, Marcion, included, associated our third canonical Gospel with the name of Luke' (Gregory 2003: 53). Hengel believes that Irenaeus was 'amazingly well-informed' about the circumstances and chronological composition of gospels (2000: 39). But even Irenaeus might have linked the Gospel with Luke more from a reading of Paul's letters and Acts than on any other basis. In the extant writings of Papias, as cited by Eusebius, there is not a word about Luke, even though the other three evangelists are mentioned. Arguments

from silence are, of course, two-edged, but it could indicate that Papias knew no elders who had knowledge of Luke and his Gospel. The general silence regarding the author does not mean that the Gospel text itself was not known by earlier writers in some form. As I have indicated, there is evidence that writers such as Ignatius and Justin at least knew traditions common to this Gospel, if they did not actually know the Gospel in a form recognizable by us as 'the Gospel according to Luke'. The apostolic fathers and apologists 'were unaware of the Gospel of Luke' with the exception of Justin, while the apocryphal writings 'knew Luke well and used his gospel' (Bovon, 2003d: 295; for examples from apocryphal texts, see 295–6).

Clement of Alexandria, writing between 180 and 200 CE, speaks of the 'four Gospels that have been handed down to us' (*Strom*. 3.13.93), which is language that suggests the idea of four Gospels precedes Clement's own time. Like so many other Church Fathers, Clement will occasionally introduce a Gospel passage with 'as the Lord says in the Gospel', without indicating which Gospel (for example, *Strom*. 3.6.56). But it is clear that he knows the 'Gospel according to Luke' because he introduces the incident of Jesus eating broiled fish with, 'as Luke says' (*Pedag*. 2.1.15). He also refers to Paul's Areopagus speech, noting that it comes from 'Luke in the Acts of the Apostles' (*Strom*. 5.12.82). We can say with great confidence that by the last decades of the second century, both the Gospel and Acts were believed in many Christian circles to have been written by Luke and that those works were formally titled accordingly.

There is little doubt on the evidence of the available data that Matthew and John were by far the most favored Gospels in the second and third centuries. Of the pre-Constantine Gospel papyri known by 1998, fifteen include John, twelve Matthew, five Luke and only one has Mark (Hengel 2000: 42). It seems that Luke was not a great favorite amongst the Fathers. Extant are only the writings of three: Origen (thiry-nine homilies are extant), Cyril of Alexandria (156 homilies), and Ambrose (a ten-book *Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke*). By the fourth century, it would seem that some of Origen's homilies on Luke had already been lost; and his *Commentary on Luke* is no longer extant. There is interesting evidence that ignorance and uncertainty surrounded Acts, especially, from John Chrysostom, bishop of Antioch, in the fourth century. In the very first lines of the opening to his *Commentary on Acts*, he writes, 'to many people this book is so little known, both it and its author, that they are not even aware that there is such a book in existence'; and later, 'perhaps you do not hear the book read throughout the whole year'. Elsewhere, he refers to Acts as 'a strange new dish', which, while belonging to Holy Scripture, 'your ears are not accustomed to such a subject' (*Homily in Princ. Act*. 3.54). These are curious remarks, even if rhetorical, especially given that, around the same time as Chrysostom writes in Antioch, the tradition seems to have stabilized that Luke came from there.

On the other hand, in the early traditions, no other person except Luke has been identified as the author of the Gospel, although not every tradition thought that 'Luke' referred to the person of the same name mentioned in Colossians, Philemon, and 1 Timothy, that is, the 'beloved doctor' and companion of Paul. As noted earlier, Origen, for example, in his *Commentary* on Rom 16:21 (Latin text) is aware that 'some people say' the Lucius (*Loukios*) of that verse is the Luke of the Gospel.

As we will see again and again in the tradition, Luke is associated with Paul. This suggestion might strengthen the argument that Irenaeus associated the Gospel with Luke by finding a companion of Paul by that name, because that is what the Rom 16:21–Luke link seems to do as well. On the other hand, it also strengthens the argument that the author was someone called 'Luke', and it was a matter of finding an associate of Paul with that name.

Luke and Paul in the Tradition

When we examine the traditions about Luke, as we know them from the last quarter of the second century, the stand-out factor is his association with Paul – and the other apostles – and with 'Paul's gospel'; a second factor that interests me is the identification of him as an evangelist, not in the sense that he is a writer of a literary piece called a Gospel, but in the sense of being an oral presenter and carrier of the gospel.

The link between Luke and Paul is frequent in Irenaeus, who quotes large sections of Acts, knowing Luke as its author (*A.H.* 3.13.3; 4.15.1), and he also provides the first known reference to Luke as the writer of a Gospel. He writes:

> Matthew also published a gospel in writing among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel and founding the church in Rome. But after their death, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also transmitted to us in writing what Peter used to preach. And Luke, Paul's associate, also set down in a book the gospel that Paul used to preach. Later, John, the Lord's disciple – the one who lay on his lap – also set out the gospel while living at Ephesus in Asia Minor. (3.1.1)

Matthew seems to be able to stand by himself with no named authority behind him. Mark is the 'disciple and interpreter of Peter; Luke is 'Paul's associate'; John is 'the Lord's disciple'. Only Matthew and John (apostles in their own right) are explicitly identified as being responsible for 'a gospel'; it is only implied for Mark and Luke, who wrote down the gospel preached by the apostles, Peter and Paul. The Gospels' apostolic origins are absolutely crucial for Irenaeus, as will be shown.

In general, Irenaeus' outline of the Gospels' origins remains remarkably consistent (for all the Gospels, not just the Third) into the third and also into the fourth century. In the early third century, Origen writes (according to Eusebius):

> Concerning the four Gospels which alone are uncontroverted in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the Gospel according to Matthew, who was at one time a publican and afterwards an Apostle of Jesus Christ, was written first; and that he composed it in the Hebrew tongue and published it for the converts from Judaism. The second written was that according to Mark, who wrote it according to the instruction of Peter, who, in his General Epistle, acknowledged him as a son, saying, 'The church that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Mark my son.' And third, was that according to Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul, which he composed for the converts from the Gentiles. Last of all, that according to John … (Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.25.10)

Origen says he learned these things 'by tradition'. Clearly, the tradition must predate him and so goes back presumably into the middle of the second century.

Hippolytus, bishop of Rome in the third century, apparently believed Mark and Luke belonged to 'the seventy', presumably referring to Luke 10:1. In not uncommon fashion, he blended Gospel material, linking the seventy of Luke 10 with the 'many' disciples of John 6:66 in the same sentence. He wrote:

> These two belonged to the seventy disciples who were scattered by the offence of the word which Christ spoke, 'Except a man eat my flesh, and drink my blood, he is not worthy of me.' But the one being induced to return to the Lord by Peter's instrumentality, and the other by Paul's, they were honoured to preach that Gospel on account of which they also suffered martyrdom, the one being burned, and the other being crucified on an olive tree. (*On the End of the World*, 49)

Late in the fourth century, Jerome expresses a similar view of the origin of the Gospels in his *Preface to the Commentary on Matthew*:

> The first evangelist is Matthew, the publican, who was surnamed Levi. He published his Gospel in Judaea in the Hebrew language, chiefly for the sake of Jewish believers in Christ, who adhered in vain to the shadow of the law, although the substance of the Gospel had come. The second is Mark, the amanuensis of the Apostle Peter, and first bishop of the Church of Alexandria. He did not himself see our Lord and Savior, but he related the matter of his Master's preaching with more regard to minute detail than to historical sequence. The third is Luke, the physician, by birth a native of Antioch, in Syria, whose praise is in the Gospel. He was himself a disciple of the Apostle Paul, and composed his book in Achaia and Boeotia. He thoroughly investigates certain particulars and, as he himself confesses in the preface, describes what he had heard rather than what he had seen. The last is John, the Apostle and Evangelist, whom Jesus loved most, who, reclining on the Lord's bosom, drank the purest streams of doctrine, and was the only one thought worthy … (6.1036–37)

Similarly, Chrysostom refers to Luke as the author of Acts, who was 'Paul's companion, a man whose high qualities, sufficiently visible in many other instances, are specially shown in his firm adherence to his teacher, whom he constantly followed. Thus at a time when all had forsaken him … hear what he says of this disciple, "Only Luke is with me"'. He goes on to say that when Paul writes 'that he [Christ] appeared to Cephas and then to the twelve' (1 Cor 15:5) and, 'according to the gospel that you have received' (16:1), 'he means the Gospel of this Luke' (*Homily 1*, *Acts of the Apostles*). The first is a little strange since Luke does not use the name Cephas but Simon (Luke 24:34), nor does he mention any appearance specifically to 'the twelve'. The second statement implies that the Corinthians had received Luke's Gospel. Both also assume, of course, that Luke's Gospel was written before Paul's death.

Jerome writes in chapter seven of his *Lives of Illustrious Men*:

> Luke a physician of Antioch (*medicus Antiochensis*) as his writings indicate was not unskilled in the Greek language. An adherent of the apostle Paul, and companion of all his journeying, he wrote a Gospel, concerning which the same Paul says, 'We send with him a brother whose praise in the gospel is among all the churches' and to the Colossians 'Luke the beloved physician salutes you,' and to Timothy 'Luke only is with me.' He

> also wrote another excellent volume to which he prefixed the title *Acts of the Apostles*, a history which extends to the second year of Paul's sojourn at Rome, that is to the fourth year of Nero, from which we learn that the book was composed in that same city ... Some suppose that whenever Paul in his epistle says 'according to my gospel' he means the book of Luke and that Luke not only was taught the gospel history by the apostle Paul who was not with the Lord in the flesh, but also by other apostles. This he too at the beginning of his work declares, saying 'Even as they delivered unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word.' So he wrote the gospel as he had heard it, but composed the *Acts of the Apostles* as he himself had seen.

It is curious that while we might expect Acts to be linked with Paul, Luke's Gospel is also associated with his companionship with that apostle. It seems that this was not enough in itself to give Luke's Gospel apostolic status, and that is why Jerome adds that 'some suppose' that Luke learnt the gospel traditions not only from Paul but also from other apostles. It is also noticeable that certain details in the lives of these Evangelists, especially of Mark and Luke, were filled out over the centuries. Mark is now said to be the first bishop of Alexandria, and Luke is said to be a native Antiochean in Syria who wrote in Greece or in Rome. There is also some open sensitivity to the fact that Luke, by his own admission, was not an eyewitness of what he describes but relied on 'what he had heard'.

While there is no doubt that this tradition regarding the Evangelists continues very consistently, it is worth noting that Eusebius shows awareness of a variation in the order in which the Gospels were written. He reports that

> Clement gives the tradition of the earliest presbyters**,** as to the order of the Gospels, in the following manner: The Gospels containing the genealogies, he says, were written first. The Gospel according to Mark had this occasion. As Peter had preached the Word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had followed him for a long time and remembered his sayings, should write them out. And having composed the Gospel he gave it to those who had requested it. When Peter learned of this, he neither directly forbade nor encouraged it. But, last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the Gospel, being urged by his friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel. This is the account of Clement. (*H.E.* 6. 14.3)

It is interesting to note a few things here: The order of the Gospels' composition, with Matthew and Luke appearing first, then Mark and John; Mark was composed at the instigation of others, and then later receives Peter's approval; and there is no linking of Luke with Paul. I note again the authority that is given to the 'earliest presbyters'. Clement wrote around the turn into the third century, so we can assume the 'earliest presbyters' took him back into, say, the middle of the second century, possibly a little earlier. It is the brick-wall date that says, 'so far back but no further'.

Returning to Irenaeus: In the last quarter of the second century, he bends over backwards to highlight the apostolic links each Gospel writer had. Matthew seems to be separated from Peter and Paul – he writes to the Hebrews, the other apostles are in Rome. For those interested in the dating of the Gospels, Irenaeus says both Mark and Luke were written after 66 CE, that is, after the deaths of Paul and Peter. Other traditions imply that they were written while the apostles were still alive. Mark is

a disciple and interpreter of Peter, and Luke an associate of Paul, and then John is a disciple of the Lord himself, who even lay on his lap. Many modern scholars are prepared to accept that Mark might represent the preaching and teaching of Peter, but few would regard Luke's Gospel as reflecting the gospel preached and taught by Paul. Possibly, one should not push Irenaeus too hard on these points; he clearly has the agenda to link the Gospel writers, and therefore also their Gospels, with apostles. Even Irenaeus' order of Gospels might have been driven by apostolic concern. Matthew and John are seen as securely apostolic and they serve as 'apostolic protectors' for the two Gospels sandwiched between them of non-apostolic origin, Mark and Luke. Incidentally, that is precisely how Augustine understood the Gospel ordering (*De Conserv*. *Evang*. 1.3).

Eusebius cites Irenaeus as saying that he knew two works of Luke, the Gospel and Acts (*H.E.* 3.4.6–7). It is hard to go past the suggestion that Irenaeus says what he does about Luke largely on the basis of Acts and the Pauline letters. This is strengthened by the fact that Irenaeus identified Luke as belonging to the 'we' passages in Acts:

> But that this Luke was inseparable from Paul, and his fellow-labourer in the gospel, he himself clearly evinces, not as a matter of boasting, but as bound to do so by the truth itself. For he says that when Barnabas, and John who was called Mark, had parted company from Paul, and sailed to Cyprus, 'we came to Troas; … [Irenaeus continues, listing the 'we' passages in Acts] … As Luke was present at all these occurrences, he carefully noted them down in writing, so that he cannot be convicted of falsehood or boastfulness, because all these [particulars] proved both that he was senior to all those who now teach otherwise, and that he was not ignorant of the truth. That he was not merely a follower, but also a fellow-labourer of the apostles, but especially of Paul (cooperarius fuerit apostolorum maxime autem Pauli), Paul has himself declared also in the Epistles, saying: 'Demas hath forsaken me ... and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me.' From this he shows that he was always attached to and inseparable from him. And again he says, in the Epistle to the Colossians: 'Luke, the beloved physician, greets you.'

And then we come to the reason for all this detail, and so to the heart of Irenaeus' point about Luke:

> But surely if Luke, who always preached in company with Paul, and is called by him 'the beloved,' and with him performed the work of an evangelist, and was entrusted to hand down to us a Gospel, learned nothing different from him (Paul), as has been pointed out from his words, how can these men, who were never attached to Paul, boast that they have learned hidden and unspeakable mysteries? (*A.H.* 3.14.1)

The 'men' that Irenaeus refers to includes Marcion, the figure that provided Irenaeus with the need to link Luke so closely with Paul. Irenaeus writes:

> Marcion of Pontus succeeded him [Cerdo], and developed his doctrine. In so doing, he advanced the most daring blasphemy against Him who is proclaimed as God by the law and the prophets ... Besides this, he mutilates the Gospel which is according to Luke, removing all that is written respecting the generation of the Lord, and setting aside a great deal of the teaching of the Lord, in which the Lord is recorded as most dearly confessing

> that the Maker of this universe is His Father. He likewise persuaded his disciples that he himself was more worthy of credit than are those apostles who have handed down the Gospel to us, furnishing them not with the Gospel, but merely a fragment of it. In like manner, too, he dismembered the Epistles of Paul … (*A.H.* 1.27.2)

And, 'Wherefore also Marcion and his followers have betaken themselves to mutilating the Scriptures, not acknowledging some books at all; and, curtailing the Gospel according to Luke and the Epistles of Paul' (*A.H.* 3.12.12). Further, he says:

> But again, we allege the same against those who do not recognise Paul as an apostle: that they should either reject the other words of the Gospel which we have come to know through Luke alone, and not make use of them; or else, if they do receive all these, they must necessarily admit also that testimony concerning Paul, when he (Luke) tells us that the Lord spoke at first to him from heaven: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? I am Jesus Christ, whom thou persecutest' … Those, therefore, who do not accept of him [as a teacher], who was chosen by God for this purpose, that he might boldly bear His name, as being sent to the forementioned nations, do despise the election of God, and separate themselves from the company of the apostles. For neither can they contend that Paul was no apostle, when he was chosen for this purpose; nor can they prove Luke guilty of falsehood, when he proclaims the truth to us with all diligence. It may be, indeed, that it was with this view that God set forth very many Gospel truths, through Luke's instrumentality, which all should esteem it necessary to use, in order that all persons, following his subsequent testimony, which treats upon the acts and the doctrine of the apostles, and holding the unadulterated rule of truth, may be saved. His testimony, therefore, is true, and the doctrine of the apostles is open and stedfast, holding nothing in reserve; nor did they teach one set of doctrines in private, and another in public (*A.H.* 3.15.1)

A generation later, Origen also says that many heretics knew and used Luke: 'There are countless heresies that accept the Gospel according to Luke' (*Homilies on Luke* 16.5); and he argues, as Tertullian also did, on the basis of that Gospel that they are wrong in distinguishing the creator God from the Father of Jesus Christ. And again, 'All the heretics who accept the Gospel according to Luke and scorn what is written in it should blush' (*Homilies on Luke* 20.2). This might be one reason why Luke had a reasonably low profile among the early Church Fathers, and why Matthew and John were the favored. On the other hand, John too was heavily used by the heretics, so it cannot be that reason alone that accounts for the low status of Luke. Provenance might be a factor: John's Gospel quickly developed a tradition of belonging to Asia Minor, and many of the early Christian writers, like Ignatius, Papias, and Irenaeus, had close contact with churches in Asia Minor. Luke's Gospel did not have the same local attachment and prestige. As we will see, it was first associated to the general area of Achaea and 'the Greeks'; it is only in the considerably later tradition connecting the Gospel and its author to Alexandria that we finally see the link to a major church location. The earlier traditions linked Mark with Peter and Rome, John with Asia Minor and Ephesus in particular, and Matthew with a Jewish audience. Luke and his Gospel remained unanchored until Alexandria claimed him.

Irenaeus insists that Luke is more than a disciple or follower of Paul but is an actual witness to events and a participator in them. He is also an evangelist, a preacher in his own right, a fellow-laborer of the apostles, and one who was alongside Paul and inseparable from him. In contrast, the heretics 'were never attached to Paul'. That is the issue. After all, the heretics also accepted apostolicity and knew the importance of apostolic authority – they claimed to have secret knowledge that had been revealed to the apostles. What they did not have was evidence that their writings had been handed down from the apostles. They did not have direct 'hard copy' association with an apostle. In the case of the Gospel traditions, it was not enough for Luke to have only heard from Paul, because Paul too was not an eyewitness. That is why Luke was also linked with 'other apostles'. Irenaeus refers to Luke not only as the co-worker of Paul, but on a number of occasions also as 'the disciple and follower of the apostles' (*A.H.* 1.23.1; 3.10.1), along the same lines as he so often refers to John as 'the disciple of the Lord'.

Further evidence for Lukan authorship of the Gospel and also of Acts comes from the Muratorian Canon, a text that is notoriously difficult, and whose date is also quite uncertain, but fits somewhere between 180 CE and the fourth century. Once again, this text links Luke very closely with Paul.

> The third Gospel book, that according to Luke.
> This physician Luke after Christ's ascension,
> since Paul had taken him with him as a companion on his journey (reading: itineris sui socium),
> composed it in his own name (reading: nomine suo)
> according to (his) thinking. (reading: ex opinione)
> Yet neither did he himself see
> the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain it,
> so he begins to tell the story from the birth of John. (ll 2–8)
>
> But the acts of all the apostles were written in one volume. Luke compiled for 'most excellent Theophilus' what things were done in detail in his presence, as he plainly shows by omitting the death of Peter and also the departure of Paul from the city, when he departed for Spain. (ll 34–39)

Unfortunately, the text is very difficult to reconstruct, especially in the important lines 4–5. But it seems reasonably certain that the text wishes to convey the idea that Luke wrote off his own bat, and even though he was a companion of Paul, there is no suggestion that he wrote the Gospel at Paul's instigation or to reflect Paul's preaching, as in some other traditions. But once again, we can note the awareness that Luke did not personally witness the things he records in the Gospel.

By the time of Origen and probably well before him, the origins and number of Gospels, and their order, were cause for concern and in need of explanation. A century later, Eusebius still tries to explain how the Gospels came about and how they ended up as known to him in the order of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John (*H.E.* 3.24). Regarding Luke, Eusebius says Luke knew other hastily compiled accounts, but 'feeling it his duty to free us from doubts as to our attitude to the others, he furnished in his own gospel an authentic account'. It was an account he was able to

write – and to claim authenticity for it – because of 'his association and time with Paul and through his profitable conversations with the rest of the apostles' (*H.E.* 3.24.14–16). I wonder what Eusebius had in mind when he referred to the 'doubts as to our attitude to the others'. Probably no more than what Luke might imply – that they lacked something in regard to order, accuracy, and safety of words.

In the apocryphal Christian writings, Luke is linked with Paul, as might be expected, but the details and the strength of that link are inconsequential. Luke plays only a very minor, passing role in them, limited to his presence (with Titus) at the death of Paul in Rome, and to the suggestion that he came to Rome from Greece (*Martyrdom of Paul* 1, 5, 7). The link between Luke and Titus is also in the *Acts of Titus* (for example, 3:13). The best that one can say from the very limited appearances of Luke in this body of literature is that he was known to belong to a Pauline circle, with the hint that he had some authority from Paul to 'give the seal in the Lord' (*Martyrdom* 5, 7). This is all a little surprising if it were commonly known that Luke was a traveling companion of Paul. We might have expected him to appear as such in the apocryphal acts that feature Paul. In other apocryphal texts, Luke is mentioned in traditions about the passing of Mary, the mother of Jesus. In two texts, he appears to be listed among the disciples of Jesus gathered up by the holy Spirit to be present at Mary's death. He is listed between Andrew and Philip. Nothing is said of him, and certainly no link with Paul is suggested. In sum, Luke is a very marginal and insignificant figure in the apocryphal literature dealing with Paul and the apostles.

Luke is persistently and consistently linked with Paul by later Church Fathers. In fact, Luke becomes less his own man, less even than the co-worker with Paul that Irenaeus knew, and more the 'disciple of Paul'. Unlike Irenaeus, who says that Luke wrote after Paul's death, the later Fathers imply that he wrote his Gospel either at Paul's direction or even from Paul's dictation. According to pseudo-Athanasius, 'the gospel of Luke was dictated by the apostle Paul but written and published by the blessed apostle and physician Luke'. Curiously, the text continues, 'just as Peter the apostle also likewise dictated the Acts of the Apostles, but Luke himself wrote it down (PG 28: 432.52–433.21).

Late in the fourth century, Chromatius, bishop of Aquilaeia, wrote:

> Luke too did not see the Lord in the flesh, but because he was most educated in the law, by all means as one who was a companion of Paul in everything, he carefully wrote down the gospel in his own name, recounting from the very beginning everything in the order of things as he came to know in dealing with the apostles, as he testifies himself saying: 'as those who have been there all along and those who had been ministers of the message handed down to us' (Chromatius, 2).

In the opening to his *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, Chrysostom says,

> [T]he author of this Book, that is, the blessed Luke, was his (sc. Paul's) companion: a man, whose high qualities, sufficiently visible in many other instances, are especially shown in his firm adherence to his Teacher, whom he constantly followed. Thus at a time when all had forsaken him, one gone into Galatia, another into Dalmatia, hear what he says of this disciple: 'Only Luke is with me.' And giving the Corinthians a charge concerning him,

> he says, 'Whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the Churches.' Again, when he says, 'He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve,' and, 'according to the Gospel which ye received,' he means the Gospel of this Luke. So that there can be no mistake in attributing this work to him: and when I say, to him, I mean, to Christ.

Chrysostom is aware of questions that were asked of Acts and its author. Presumably, he knew traditions that held Luke to be with Paul in Rome at the latter's death under Nero. This begged the question as to why Acts does not then mention that event. Chrysostom's answer was interesting, not least because it suggests that unwritten traditions were believed to have been passed on from the evangelists:

> And why then did he not relate every thing, seeing he was with Paul to the end? We may answer, that what is here written, was sufficient for those who would attend, and that the sacred writers ever addressed themselves to the matter of immediate importance, whatever it might be at the time it was no object with them to be writers of books: in fact, there are many things which they have delivered by unwritten tradition. (*Homily 1*, *Acts of the Apostles*)

The link between Luke and Paul is generally very strong from Irenaeus onwards. It was important for Irenaeus that Luke was 'inseparable from Paul' and that he 'always preached in company with Paul' (3.14.1). It probably began with a desire to combat Marcion and other heretics, but it is also quite possible, if not likely, that the link was already known by then. Luke's authority seems to ride on the tails of Paul, with the result that he was seen, as he still is in many circles, as inferior to Paul, as a companion and almost as a junior. The tradition claims to be talking about the same 'Luke' that is mentioned in the New Testament, but in those writings, Luke is at least an equal and co-worker with Paul, if not in some sense his 'spiritual advisor'.

Traditions of Luke as Evangelist

Irenaeus refers to Luke as an 'evangelist', that is, as an oral transmitter of the tradition. He is the first of a number of early Christian writers to do so. The terminology used by Irenaeus is interesting: Luke 'performed the work of an evangelist and was entrusted to hand down to us a Gospel' (evangelizavit et creditus est referre nobis evangelium, *A.H.* 3.14.1). Two things might be noticed. The first is that Irenaeus uses language that reflects the authoritative transmission of the story. It suggests Irenaeus believed that Luke belonged to that small group responsible for the guarding, preserving, and transmission of the tradition. The second, more intriguing point is that Irenaeus seems to link Luke the oral evangelist with Luke the writer. He describes Luke as a transmitter of the tradition in both its oral and written forms. Writing a Gospel, Irenaeus implies, was, like the oral proclamation, something that was *entrusted* to someone. It carried a responsibility, a duty, an obligation.

What was the role of the evangelists (εὐαγγελισταί) among early Christians? In Eph 4:11, they are listed after 'apostles' and 'prophets' and that might suggest they were of some significance, status, and authority. Origen says of them:

> Furthermore, if God placed apostles, prophets and evangelists (εὐαγγελιστάς), and pastors and teachers in the church, when we examine what the task of the evangelist is, we see that it is not only to narrate in what way the Savior healed a man blind from birth, how he raised a dead man beginning to stink, or how he performed any of his incredible deeds … but hortatory and intended to strengthen belief in the things concerning Jesus (τῶν περὶ Ἰησοῦ). (*Comm. John* 1.17–18)

The evangelists narrated the gospel (of Luke, for example) and then gave exhortation on its basis. Presumably, Origen means they narrated it in oral form. Or did the evangelist also have some responsibility for the written form of the narrative? Did the 'evangelist' perform the gospel and then leave the audience with a written version of that performance? That is almost the implication in what Eusebius says about them. He wrote that many of the disciples of Jesus 'carried out the work of evangelists, ambituous to preach to those who had never yet heard the message of the faith and to give them the inspired gospels in writing' (*H.E.* 3.37.2). What does the final clause mean? It seems as though being an evangelist included giving people the gospel in writing. This is suggested elsewhere in Eusebius. For instance, he calls Pantaenus an evangelist, who went as far as India where 'he found that Matthew's gospel had arrived before him'. He ended up in Alexandria where 'both orally and in writing he revealed the treasures of the divine doctrine' (*H.E.* 5.10.3). There appears to be a link between evangelist and written Gospels. If there was such a link, was that also what Philip and Timothy did who are called 'evangelists' in the New Testament (Acts 21:8; Tim 4:5)? And is that also what a certain evangelist called 'Luke' did?

The tradition that Luke was an evangelist (εὐαγγελιστής) appears also with Origen and remained common in many traditions after him. It is always based on the understanding that 2 Cor 8:18 ('we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel') refers to Luke. More precisely, that verse says that the brother (ὁ ἀδελφός) had 'praise/recognition in the gospel through all the churches' (ὁ ἔπαινος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ διὰ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν). It is, by the way, another example of how closely Luke was linked with Paul, since in this passage it is Paul that speaks so highly of the renowned 'brother' who had been 'appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work which we are carrying on' (2 Cor 8:19). If indeed Paul was referring to Luke, then the 'brother' was certainly no lackey of Paul or a junior in the mission. He was 'appointed by the churches', not by Paul, and so had ascribed authority and status in the work of the gospel. By the second century, however, the passage was read differently. Luke could not stand alone; he had to have the authority and blessing of an apostle. Even when apostolic authority ceased to be an issue, the tradition remained that Luke's Gospel was praised by Paul and that gave it authority. For example, Eusebius quotes Origen as saying, 'Luke wrote for Gentile converts the gospel praised by Paul' (*H.E.* 6.25.6). Later, Jerome continues the tradition: 'he wrote a Gospel, concerning which the same Paul says, "We send with him a brother whose praise in the gospel is among all the churches"' (*De Vir. Illust.* 7), as does Ambrose (*Commentary* 1.11). Chrysostom knows that 'some say' the reference in 2 Cor 8 is to Luke (*Homily 18*, *2 Corinthians*), but he is also aware of a tradition that links the verse with Barnabas, and he decides that 'it seems to me that Barnabas is the person intimated', even

though in the same homily, and in various other places (for example, *Homily 10*, *Second Timothy*), he obviously accepts the tradition that the passage refers to Luke. Certainly by the fourth century (Origen's evidence pushes it earlier) we have a very consistent tradition that interpreted 2 Cor 8 to indicate that Luke and his Gospel have the praise of Paul in that chapter.

Why Luke?

Why was the name Luke associated with the Gospel that came to bear his name as author? Why not call it the Gospel of Paul, if the title is only a second-century addition, as some would suggest? Three giants in Lukan scholarship regard this as a matter of some importance. Fitzmyer is impressed by the argument that because Luke was a comparative unknown and not a prominent figure, the Gospel's association with his name suggests authenticity; otherwise, why is the Gospel so named? (1981: 41). Hengel says, 'Far too little attention has been paid to this basic question in 'critical' scholarship and nowhere has a satisfactory solution been offered' (Hengel 2000: 45). Bovon is non-plussed: 'Why anyone should happen upon the name Luke remains a riddle.' He reasons that a disciple of Paul was wanted, and Luke was the next most likely candidate after Timothy and Titus (2002: 10).

This is not only a modern problem. There is a fourth-century (possibly earlier) writing that depicts Adamantius (= Origen) being questioned by a Marcionite, Megathius, about the Gospels. He is asked to name their authors, which he duly does, but then is accused of forgery because there are no such people as Luke and Mark among the disciples of Jesus: 'Why did the disciples whose names are written in the gospel not write them, rather than those who were not disciples? Who then is Luke, or Mark? This convicts you of bringing forward names not written in Scripture.' And the pagan judge joins in: 'This does not seem to me to be right, for the disciples themselves ought to be trusted more.' The names of the twelve apostles are read out. Adamantius then plays his best card: 'The names of the twelve apostles have been read, but not the names of the seventy (-two).' Luke and Mark belong to that group, 'they preached the gospel together with Paul the apostle', and he argues from the Colossians letter that Paul knew both Mark and Luke. 'The proof in their case is clear.' Case closed, is the pagan judge's verdict (*Dialogue of Adamantius* 5).

There are a number of possibilities, but there can never be any certainty. The first and obvious possibility is that the common tradition is reliable and accurate: a person by the name of Luke wrote the Gospel, and he was the companion of Paul and was 'the beloved physician' of Col 4:14. Hengel (2000) and many others are prepared to accept this as the most likely. The association of the Gospel with Luke might seem strange to us because we know so little of this man, but it has to be possible that Christians of the first and second century knew much more about him than their extant writings suggest. A second possibility is that it was written by another person called Luke, and when the issue of apostolic authority and other debates about the Gospels and other Christian writings arose in the mid second century, it was convenient that there was also a Luke closely associated with Paul. Mount prefers this possibility. He believes that an otherwise unknown Luke is the author

and that Irenaeus is responsible for conflating that Luke with the companion of Paul by the same name (2002: 38). A third possibility, suggested by Bovon for example, is that we simply do not know who wrote the Gospel, and that in the debates that arose about the Christian Scriptures, the Gospel (and especially Acts) was linked to Paul, but because there are difficulties with Paul being the actual author (not least being the lack of reference to him as the 'I' in Acts), an associate of his had to be linked to the writings. Timothy and Titus had other writings associated with them; Luke was one who was faithful to Paul right to the end (at least so 2 Tim 4:11 was understood) and so he was the next in line.

One problem is that there are no traditions extant that enable us to go back before about 140 CE. Marcion, the mid-second-century 'heretic', is crucial to this tradition, but he is certainly not the solution; in fact, he clouds it. He understood the Third Gospel as being the most Pauline of the Gospels. Not that he linked Luke and Paul as companions and associates, but he linked Luke's Gospel (as Irenaeus calls it) with the thought of Paul, or better, he interpreted and adapted the Gospel of Luke through the lens of Paul. Marcion, according to Irenaeus, claimed to be Pauline. But, Irenaeus seems to argue, if you want Paul you also have to accept Luke, because he was 'inseparable from Paul and his fellow-laborer in the gospel … always attached to and inseparable from him' as the 'we' passages indicate (*A.H.* 3.14.1). If Luke was so attached to Paul, and if he says nothing about secret teachings, then 'how can these men, who were never attached to Paul, boast that they have learned hidden and unspeakable mysteries?' At Miletus, Paul says he had declared the *whole* counsel of God, and it is that which Luke has handed down to us (3.14.1–2). And then the punch-line: 'Now if any man set Luke aside, as one who did not know the truth, he will manifestly reject that gospel of which he claims to be a disciple', and Irenaeus then basically proceeds to list all the things that are unique to Luke's Gospel (3.14.3). The heretics cannot, then, pick and choose what parts of Luke they will accept and what they will not (3.14.4). The same argument applies logically, thinks Irenaeus, to the Ebionites who do not accept Paul as an apostle. If they accept Luke's writings, then they must also accept what he says about Paul, because Luke's 'testimony is true' (3.15). So much of Irenaeus' argument hinges on the close relation between Luke and Paul. Presumably, both sides accepted that close association, otherwise, Irenaeus' arguments would have carried little weight at all.

Tertullian says something similar in his *Against Marcion*:

> [T]hat Gospel of Luke which we are defending with all our might has stood its ground from its very first publication; whereas Marcion's Gospel is not known to most people ... The same authority of the apostolic churches will afford evidence to the other Gospels also, which we possess equally through their means, and according to their usage – I mean the Gospels of John and Matthew – whilst that which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter's whose interpreter Mark was. For even Luke's form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul. (2.5)

The two arguments seem to be that Luke's Gospel, as Tertullian knows it, and as it presumably was known by many others of his persuasion, predates that constructed by Marcion; and secondly, Luke is apostolic by his association with Paul, although again it is not simply the personal connection between them but more the thought

connection. Luke and Paul shared a common understanding of the gospel. The last sentence in the above quotation from Tertullian, however, does imply some uncertainty or difference of opinion on the matter.

In the end, on the basis of the extant data the traditional view that the author was Luke who was a fellow-worker with Paul has as much going for it as any other suggestion. Luke was known as an evangelist – that is, he knew and taught 'the things about Jesus'; and he was known to be an associate of Paul, and that provided a handy point in the debate with the heretics.

Luke the Doctor in the Fathers

As we have seen, in the New Testament there is just the single reference to any Luke who is a doctor, and that is in Col 4:14. There is nothing in Acts or in the Gospel to suggest that the author of those writings was known to be a doctor. The early Christian writers also make no fuss at all about Luke being a doctor, apart from those who link it to his ability to write in good Greek. Those who mention Luke by name make almost no mention of his profession as a doctor. Irenaeus never mentions it, apart from when directly quoting Col 4:14 (*A.H.* 3.14.1). Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen also do not mention it. The so-called *Anti-Marcion Prologues* do say that Luke was 'a doctor by profession', but the date of these is less than uncertain. Likewise, the Muratorian Canon, of uncertain date, introduces Luke as 'that physician' (iste medicus). It is only from the fourth century on that it becomes standard practice, when introducing Luke, to refer to his profession as doctor. So Eusebius, 'Luke, being by birth one of the people of Antioch, by profession a physician …' (τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἰατρός, *H.E.* 3.4). Jerome linked Luke's profession as a doctor with his ability in Greek (*Epistle* 20.4; 53.9; *De Vir. Illustr.* 7). For him Luke is not merely a doctor, but one 'very learned' in the profession. He writes, 'The ancient writers of the church say that the evangelist Luke was very learned in the art of medicine' (medicinae artis fuisse scientissimum, *Commentary on Isaiah* 3:6). Rather curiously, he does not cite Col 4:14, and unfortunately, he does not say who 'the ancient writers of the church' are. This stereotyping of Luke as doctor is consistent with legends in general in that they tend to elaborate more and more on the details of their characters. Chrysostom also understands 'Luke the beloved physician' mentioned in Colossians to refer to the Evangelist (*Homily 12*, *Colossians*). He writes, 'This (sc. the beloved physician) is the Evangelist ... It is probable that there were others called by this name.'

On the basis of the extant texts, we would have to conclude that the profession of Luke as doctor was irrelevant to the earlier Christian writers, even though they knew Col 4:14 and seem to have identified the Luke there mentioned with the author of the Gospel and Acts. It is in the fourth century that the stereotype developed and Luke was from then on consistently referred to as 'doctor'.

Luke among the Seventy

There is a late tradition about Luke that claims he was one of the Seventy mentioned in Luke 10:1. Probably the earliest reference to this tradition is in Hippolytus, if it is an authentic text of his, where both Mark and Luke are said to have been 'evangelists' who belonged to the Seventy (*On the End of the World* 49). The *Dialogues of Adamantius*, mentioned earlier, also know Luke as one of the Seventy, as does Epiphanius (*Panarion* 51.11). It was a tradition that survived for centuries as is indicated by Theophylact, Euthymius, and Nicephorus Callisti (Lardner 1788: 6.112).

This tradition almost definitely developed in reaction to the long-standing basic problem with Luke: He was not an eyewitness of Jesus, by his own admission, and he had status only through Paul, who likewise was not an eyewitness. This was seen as a significant problem when it came to reliable data on the 'things concerning Jesus'. By linking Luke with the Seventy that problem was immediately removed, and Luke became one who was under the immediate direction of the Lord, an apostle in his own right. Similar logic might have motivated those other later Christian writers who said that Luke was one of the disciples whom Jesus met on the road to Emmaeus. Theophylact was one such writer (Lardner 1788: 6.111). If Luke was one of those who met the living Jesus on the Emmaeus road, then that would give him apostolic and eyewitness authority.

John Wenham has argued that the tradition of Luke belonging to the Seventy has some authenticity. He argues that Luke is the only Gospel writer to have any interest in the Seventy because he was one of them (1991b: 6). On that basis, Luke's source then is 'for the most part his own recollections … he had *literally* "followed all things from a long time back" (Luke 1.3) and the account is firsthand' (1991b: 5). Wenham claims that late-third-century Christian writers 'widely held' that Luke was one of the Seventy. It is highly debatable as to whether at that stage the tradition was so widely held – Hippolytus is the only known source from this date. Wenham also believes that there is a good case for believing that Luke was one of the disciples going to Emmaeus, that his name was really Lucius the Cyrene (as in Acts 13:1) and that he was Paul's relative (1991b: 4). In addition, Wenham argues that 'the gospel' Paul mentions about the brother in 2 Cor 8 refers to a book and not to preaching or anything else (1991a: 234–236). By his own admission, this is all 'intelligent speculation that can neither or proved nor disproved but has … more to be said in its favor than against it' (1991b: 5). In order to handle the Muratorian Canon's claim that the writer of the third Gospel had not seen the Lord in the flesh, Wenham claims it was mistaken, a bad text with bad language technically and so is unreliable (1991b: 41–42). As for why the Gospel does not use 'we' language as in Acts, Wenham claims that author consistency cannot be relied on; that 'we' in Acts might indicate presence, but 'they' does not mean necessarily absence; that it was not appropriate in Gospel to include himself, and so on (1991b: 43). Again, he is big enough to acknowledge that he has not proved his case, but he believes it is a substantial one (1991b: 45). Not too many would agree with him. His speculation rests on data that are comparatively late, and Luke's inclusion by later tradition in the Seventy can be explained on better grounds.

The Provenance of Luke and his Gospel's Audience in Early Traditions

The questions from where Luke came and where he wrote his Gospel not surprisingly have received various answers already in ancient Christian traditions. Origen probably provides the earliest hint as to the audience of Luke's Gospel when he says that it 'has been made for those from the Gentiles' (εὐαγγέλιον τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν πεποιήκοτα, Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.25). From the third century on, the standard understanding of the Gospel's intended audience was that Luke wrote for Greeks. For example, the *Anti-Marcionite Prologue* for Luke (probably from around the third century) says that Luke wrote because

> it was of the greatest importance for him to expound with the greatest diligence the whole series of events in his narration for the Greek believers, so that they would not be led astray by the lure of Jewish fables, or, seduced by the fables of the heretics and stupid solicitations, fall away from the truth.

The reason for the idea that Luke wrote for Greeks lies largely in his commonly perceived ability in the Greek language. Jerome says explicitly that Luke 'was the most learned in the Greek language of all the evangelists' and 'not unskilled in the Greek language' (*De Vir. Illustr.* 3.7). So the argument was that a good Greek writer must be writing for Greeks. It is an understandable logic, but it is not very sound. There were, of course, many non-Greeks who wrote and communicated generally very fluently in Greek – Philo, Paul, and Josephus readily come to mind.

As for the provenance of the Gospel, the traditions suggest mainly Boeotia in Achaia. The *Anti-Marcionite Prologue* for Luke says that

> Luke was an Antiochene Syrian, a doctor by profession, a disciple of the apostles … He never had a wife, he never fathered children, and died at the age of eighty-four, full of the Holy Spirit, in Boetia. Therefore – although gospels had already been written – indeed by Matthew in Judaea but by Mark in Italy – moved by the Holy Spirit he wrote down this gospel in the parts of Achaia, signifying in the preface that the others were written before his … And indeed afterwards the same Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles.

Whether or not this is the earliest claim for Luke's origin or for the geographical location of his audience, it is certainly the line that remains consistent from the fourth century on. Eusebius thought Luke came from Antioch, or at least that he was an Antiochean by 'race' (τὸ μὲν γένος ὢν τῶν ἀπ' Ἀντιοχείας, *H.E.* 3.4). A Syriac text of uncertain date claims that Byzantium and Thrace received 'the apostles' ordination to the priesthood from Luke, the apostle, who himself built a church there, and ministered there in his office of Ruler and Guide which he held there'. The same text says Luke wrote 'from Macedonia', and adds that after writing The Acts of the Apostles, he 'placed them in the hand of Priscus (sic!) and Aquilus, his disciples; and they accompanied him up to the day of his death'.

There are, however, other traditions locating Luke's missionary work. Epiphanius says that after the death of Paul, Luke preached in Italy, Gaul (= Galatia?), Dalmatia, and Macedon (*Haer.* 51). Other traditions also locate Luke in Alexandria in Egypt. The *Apostolic Constitutions* claims to list the first bishops ordained by the apostles, and

they say that Avilius, the second bishop of Alexandria, was ordained by 'Luke who was also an evangelist' (7.4.46). In the eighth century, George, bishop of the Arabs, claimed that the apostles all 'delivered in almost all the churches under heaven to put water with the wine in the cup of the mysteries', and that Luke and Mark did so in Alexandria and Egypt respectively (Cowper, 1861). The thirteenth-century catalog of Ebedjesu said that Luke 'spoke and wrote in Greek in Alexandria'. Another late text, *The Book of the Bee*, written by a Syrian bishop probably in the thirteenth century, says 'Luke the physician and evangelist was first of all a disciple of Lazarus … and afterwards baptised by Philip in the city of Beroea. He was crowned with the sword by Horos, the governor of the emperor Tiberius, while he was preaching in Alexandria, and was buried there.'

This variation of place in the traditions regarding Luke is typical of the genre. Places claimed an apostle or an evangelist as 'their apostle', and told stories to support their case. Most of them, if not all of them, have very little historical value.

Luke: Jew or Gentile in Early Christian Writings?

This is a much more important matter, especially in the light of my proposal that the author of the Gospel was a Jewish priest who joined The Way. Did the early Christian writers say anything about Luke's 'ethnicity' (a concept totally unknown to them, of course)?

Irenaeus, Clement, and Origen are silent on whether Luke was a Jew or not, which suggests it was not an issue for them, but their insistence that Luke was a close co-worker of Paul and an evangelist would suggest more that they considered him to be a Jew, like Paul, than that they thought him a Gentile. If he were thought to be the latter, one might expect it to be stated, whereas if he were a Jew that would have less need to be said. Those few ancients who thought the Luke of the Gospel was the Lucius of Rom 16:21 must have assumed the author was a Jew, since that Lucius is said to have been a συγγενής of Paul.

Modern scholars often appeal to Col 4:14 as an indication that Luke was a Gentile since he is not included among those of the circumcision (ἐκ περιτομῆς). Ancient commentators, however, appear not to have noticed that or to have drawn the same conclusion from that passage.

On the general question, the later traditions vary as is to be expected. The writer of *Quaestiones et Responsiones* (probably written in the fifth century) says both Matthew and Luke were Hebrews (Lardner 1788: 6.111). The first clear suggestion that Luke might have been a non-Jew comes from Eusebius ('by birth an Antiochene', *H.E.* 3.4.6) and Jerome who says that Luke was 'by birth a Syrian from Antioch' (natione Syrus Antiochensis, *Pref. Comm. Matt.*). Jerome implies that Luke knew Hebrew – or at least knew words like hosanna, hallelujah and amen – but 'because he could not translate the proper meaning of the word [hosanna] thought it better to omit it than to put down what would raise a question in the reader's mind' (*Ep. ad Damasum* 20.4.4). Elsewhere, on the other hand, Jerome says that Luke was a proselyte and ignorant of Hebrew (*Liber Hebraicum Quaestionum in Genesim* 46).

So the traditions on this issue are contradictory. Some imply they thought Luke Jewish, others hint that he was a Gentile writing for Greeks, others that he was a native Syrian from Antioch. A pointer against the reliability of the latter is that Chrysostom, who obviously knew Antioch and its traditions, does not mention that Luke came from there, let alone laud the fact to his congregations. Of course, the traditions that claimed Luke was among the Seventy implies that he was a Palestinian Jew.

Luke the Author of Other Writings

There are two other writings that were associated with Luke by a few of the Church Fathers. The first is the canonical writing, *Hebrews*, and the other is a non-canonical text featuring a dialogue between Jason and Papiscus. Luke's link with Hebrews seems to be largely based on two things: the stereotypical linking of Luke with Paul; and his style and ability in the Greek language. Paul was commonly thought to be the writer of Hebrews, but he wrote in Hebrew; Luke, because of his ability in Greek, was thought to have translated it into Greek. These two factors are clearly evident in Eusebius, who reports on Clement of Alexandria's opinions, and says,

> [Clement] has given in the Hypotyposes abridged accounts of all canonical Scripture, not omitting the disputed books … He says that the Epistle to the Hebrews is the work of Paul, and that it was written to the Hebrews in the Hebrew language; but that Luke translated it carefully and published it for the Greeks, and hence the same style of expression is found in this epistle and in the Acts … (*H.E.* 6.14)

A similar understanding is found in Clement's *Adumbr. in 1 Petr*.: 'Luke also is recognized to have described with his pen the Acts of the Apostles and to have translated Paul's letter to the Hebrews' (cited in Cadbury, 1922a: 221).

Clement of Alexandria is an early-third-century writer, so his comment reflects a reasonably early tradition of Luke as translator of Hebrews. But Eusebius is aware of another 'early' opinion which seems to let Luke stand alone as the author of Hebrews. He quotes Origen, who says on the issue: 'But who wrote the Epistle in truth, God knows. Yet the account that has reached us, some saying that Clement, bishop of Rome, wrote the Epistle, and others, that it was Luke, the one who wrote the Gospel and the Acts' (*H.E.* 6.25.11–14). Once again, Origen's words suggest he knows a tradition from earlier than his own time. Origen's own opinion is that Paul wrote the epistle, but he could not affirm this because he was not an eye witness and could only report what had been handed down. And what was that? He says that the 'ancients handed it down as Paul's'. The use of the term 'the ancients' probably indicates that the tradition Origen knew went back into the second century. Origen also gives support to the idea that Paul dictated the epistle to Luke who actually wrote it, putting it in his more precise, less 'rude' speech.

As to the other writing said to have been written by Luke, the seventh-century Maximus says that Clement of Alexandria, in Book 8 of his *Hypotyposes* claimed that Luke was the author of the *Dialogue between Jason and Papiscus* (Stather Hunt 1951: 246 n. 1). This text, attributed also to the second-century Aristio, deals with a dialogue between a Jew and a Christian and is comparable with the better-known

Dialogue of Justin and Trypho. Because Luke is the one 'apostolic' narrative writer who deals with Jew–Gentile relations in any detail, if 'apostolic' authority was sought for the Dialogue, he was a good candidate. While undoubtedly having almost no basis in fact, it indicates how some early Christians thought and how they could use data to draw conclusions which we moderns would not accept.

The Martyrdom of Luke

Any details as to the fate of Luke are very sparse and very late. One text of Hippolytus claims Luke was crucified on an olive tree at Elaea in Peloponnesus near Achaia (*On the End of the World* 49), and other writers like Gregory Nazianzen and Paulinus also say he suffered a martyr's death. Jerome says that he died aged 84, but there is no hint of his martyrdom (*De Vir. Illustr*. 7), and what is said about his death is not in the oldest manuscripts of Jerome's text. Traditions from the fifth century onwards claim that the bones of Luke were translated from Patras in Achaia in 357 by order of the Emperor Constantius, and deposited in the Church of the Apostles at Constantinople, together with those of Andrew and Timothy. On the occasion of this translation some distribution was made of the relics of Luke; Gaudentius procured a part for his church at Brescia. Paulinus possessed a portion in St Felix's Church at Nola, and with a part enriched a church which he built at Fondi. When the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople was repaired by an order of Justinian, the masons found three wooden chests or coffins in which, as the inscriptions proved, the bodies of Luke, Andrew, and Timothy were interred.

There is a *Bohairic Fragment of the Martyrdom of St Luke*, published by Stephen Gaselee (1908) which links Luke with Proconnesus, an island in the eastern part of the Propontis. The fragment reads:

> All the multitude answered in one voice 'Of what sort is this name, Jesus, and did He rise from the dead?' And when they spoke the name of Jesus before the gods, all the idols fell: they were shattered like pots. And when the priests saw that their gods were destroyed, they were exceeding wroth in great madness, and they rent their garments, they plucked off the hair of their head; and they went to Nero, king over Rome: They cried out, saying, 'O, what are the magic arts of this man, Jesus ?' And the king answered, he said unto them, 'Every man that believed on this name in this country have I slain, save one, Luke; he has escaped out of my hands.' The multitudes answered, saying, 'Lo and behold, that man teaches in our country in this name, Jesus, and behold he is here in the city of Proconnesus; many miracles has he done among the sick in divers manners.' And the king was exceeding wroth and gnashed his teeth. . .

The Commemorations for Baba 2 in the Synaxarium of the Coptic Orthodox Church say that Luke, one of the Seventy, was martyred by being beheaded in Rome under Nero:

> When St. Luke came before Nero the Emperor, the Emperor asked him, 'How long will you lead the people astray?' St. Luke replied, 'I am not a magician, but I am an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God.' The Emperor commanded his men to cut off his right hand saying, 'Cut off this hand which wrote the books.' The saint replied

> to him, 'We do not fear death, nor the departure from this world, and to realize the power of my Master.' He took up his severed hand and made it reattach to its proper place, then he separated it. Those who were present marvelled and the head of the Emperor's cabinet and his wife believed as well as many others and it was said that they numbered 276. The Emperor wrote their decree and ordered that their heads be cut off together with that of the Apostle St. Luke; thus their martyrdom was completed.
>
> They placed the body of the saint in a hair sack and cast it in the sea. By God's will, the waves of the sea brought it to an island. A believer found it, took it and buried it with great honor. This saint wrote the Gospel bearing his name and the 'Acts of the Apostles' addressing his words to his disciple Theophilus who was a Gentile.

In very recent years, it is claimed that the bones of Luke have been discovered in Padua.

The Fathers and Luke's Priestly Interests

It is my intention to construct the author known as Luke as a priestly elder. Is there any suggestion of this in the early Christian writers? Do any of them hint that Luke either was a priest or at least that he had priestly interests? The evidence is very slight, but there are some hints in that direction in Irenaeus, Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine, and that evidence hinges very much on the symbolic link of Luke and his Gospel with a calf and so with priestly sacrifices.

Irenaeus argues that there must only be four Gospels, and he does so by combining the cherubim of Ezekiel and the four living creatures of Revelation: the lion, calf, man, and eagle. He then associates the four evangelists with these symbolic figures. He writes:

> And therefore the Gospels are in accord with these things, among which Christ Jesus is seated. For that according to John relates His original, effectual, and glorious generation from the Father ... But that according to Luke, taking up [His] priestly character, commenced with Zechariah the priest offering sacrifice to God. For now was made ready the fatted calf, about to be immolated for the finding again of the younger son. Matthew, again, relates His generation as a man … for which reason it is, too, that [the character of] a humble and meek man is kept up through the whole Gospel. Mark, on the other hand, commences with the prophetical spirit coming down from on high to men, saying, 'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is written in Esaias the prophet,' – pointing to the winged aspect of the Gospel; and on this account he made a compendious and cursory narrative, for such is the prophetical character. (*A.H.* 3.11.8)

This symbolic association is determined by the way the Gospels begin. Irenaeus implies, then, that the way the Gospel begins determines its whole character – a point worth considering further. If Luke begins with a priest and God's communication with him, then by Irenaeus' argument the character of the whole Gospel is priestly.

Jerome and Ambrose both pick up on the calf–Luke symbolism. Like Irenaeus, they both note that the Gospel begins with a priest, but rather than linking the symbol to Luke 15, the calf is linked to Jesus. Ambrose says that those who think the Gospels can be represented by the animals depicted in Rev 4:6–11,

> wish this book [Gospel according to Luke] to be represented in the form of a calf; for the calf is the priestly victim. And this Book of the Gospel well befits a calf because it begins with priests and ends with the Calf, who, taking upon himself the sins of the world, was sacrificed for the life of the whole world; so he was a priestly calf. For the same is both calf and priest. (Prologue, *Exposition of the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke* 7)

The fourth Father to draw attention to the Luke–calf symbolism is Augustine. He takes the matter further and highlights Luke's interest in priestly matters. He even says it was Luke's aim to deal with priestly things, and that interest distinguishes Luke from the other evangelists:

> Again, that Luke is intended under the figure of the calf, in reference to the pre-eminent sacrifice made by the priest, has been doubted by neither of the two [sets of interpreters]. For in that Gospel the narrator's account commences with Zechariah the priest. In it mention is also made of the relationship between Mary and Elisabeth. In it, too, it is recorded that the ceremonies proper to the earliest priestly service were attended to in the case of the infant Christ; and a careful examination brings a variety of other matters under our notice in this Gospel, by which it is made apparent that Luke's object was to deal with the part of the priest. (*De Consens. Evang.* 1.6.9; compare also *De Consens. Evang.* 4.10.11; *Tractatus in Joannis Evangelium* 36.5)

Elsewhere, Augustine repeats this understanding of Luke as being interested in priestly matters: 'Luke, however, appears to be more occupied with the priestly lineage and character of the Lord' (Lucas autem circa sacerdotalem domini stirpem atque personam magis occupatus apparet, *De Consens. Evang*. 1.2.4). In his *Harmony of the Gospels*, Augustine highlights the priestly character of Christ in Luke's Gospel: 'Whereas, then, Matthew had in view the kingly character, and Luke the priestly, they have at the same time both set forth preeminently the humanity of Christ: for it was according to His humanity that Christ was made both King and Priest.' He suggests that Luke's 'object contemplated the priestly office of Christ' (3.6).

There are some indications, then, that some Church Fathers, Augustine especially, noted the priestly interests of Luke. They suggest that the way the Gospel begins reveals its character. Luke begins with a priest, Zechariah, and so the whole Gospel needs to be read as having priestly concerns. Those concerns were found in Luke 15 with the killing of the fatted calf, and in Jesus' own death. We might find that a 'stretch', if for no other reason than that Luke does not seem to interpret Jesus' death in sacrifical terms at all; but if the principle is that the beginning determines the reading of the whole, then it is understandable. I will discuss later the importance of the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel.

Summary of the Tradition

We are faced with the problem of not having enough data to be certain about almost anything concerning the Christian movement in the period 70–150 CE. What happened to the Third Gospel and to thoughts on its author between its first appearances and the middle of the second century remains a mystery. There are only a few very faint signs that the 'Gospel according to Luke', as it was known and titled

by about 170 CE, was known in some form or another by earlier writers such as Ignatius, Polycarp, and Justin. But there is no sign at all that they thought of Luke as its author. The silence regarding Luke in the extant Papias writings (which mention Matthew, Mark, and John) obviously does not help. The opinion of Christian writers from the late second century regarding the authorship of the Third Gospel begins with Irenaeus and is very consistent: Luke is that author, but there is also the suspiciously consistent rider that Luke was a companion and follower of Paul and a disciple of the other apostles as well. This almost always seems to be driven by the concern writers have with the heretics, and especially with Marcion and his use of Luke and of Paul. This agenda makes it difficult to be very certain about the authenticity and reliability of their labeling of the Gospel, 'according to Luke'. On the other hand, the claim beginning with Irenaeus, that Luke is the name of the author, does not appear to have been under any kind of debate on either side of the doctrinal divide. It seems to have been accepted as a given. The question why assign the Gospel to Luke, a comparative unknown, at first seems to favor its authenticity, but again if the agenda is set by concern with the heretics, then it is not so surprising that such an assignment be made. Luke was known to be linked with Paul (or in some cases, it seems Paul was linked with Luke and his Gospel), and this association gave him the necessary apostolic authority.

Chapter Eight

Luke among the Scholars

There are a number of issues regarding the author of the Gospel in scholarship: Was the author Luke, as the tradition generally maintained? If so, was that Luke a doctor, and can that be determined in part from his vocabulary and style? And was the author a Jew or a Gentile? Above all, the most discussed issue has been the historical reliability of Acts in particular, and the status of Luke as an historian in general.

Was the Author Luke?

There have been – and are – some scholars who do not give too much credibility to the tradition that Luke, the companion of Paul, was the author. For example, Cadbury is aware that later traditions were uncertain about the author – some identified him with the Lucius of Acts 13:1 or of Rom 16:21, or with the companion of Clopas (Luke 24:13), or with the unnamed brother praised in 2 Cor 8:18 (1927: 356). One might also add the traditions that Luke belonged to the Seventy. Referring to Lukan authorship, Cadbury concludes that there 'is much about the tradition and the circumstances of its origin to lead us to suspect that it was derived solely from the New Testament text' (1927: 356). According to Talbert, most New Testament commentators now 'privilege internal evidence, and so speak of an anonymous author' (2002: 1). Others, like Mount, modify that position. He believes that 'the "I" of Luke 1:1–4 is not the "we" of Acts' (2002: 109), and that it is probable that the 'I' of the Gospel was an unknown Luke whose name provided a handle for Irenaeus to link him with the Luke of the Pauline letters. The author's name was Luke, but it is not the Luke of the tradition.

Others, however, are quite convinced that Luke, the fellow-worker and companion of Paul, was in fact the author, and that the tradition therefore is reliable and credible. Significant and reputable Luke-Acts scholars such as Hengel, Fitzmyer, and Marshall would belong to that group. Hengel argues that the titles of Gospels were completely uniform in the second century, and he believes that the superscriptions 'have been completely neglected in recent scholarship' (2000: 48). He is very critical of those who refuse to accept that the titles were very old and not late-second-century additions (2000: 55). Fitzmyer concludes that most of the modern arguments 'do not militate against the traditional identification of the author of the Third Gospel and Acts with Luke, the Syrian from Antioch, who had been a sometime collaborator of the Apostle Paul' (1981: 51; compare also 53). And there are many others. Thornton (1991) thinks there are only two viable possibilities: Either Luke, the fellow-worker and traveling companion of Paul, is the author, or someone wrote under his name. Nolland believes there are no good counter-arguments, so it is best to read the

tradition as the preservation of reliable memory (1989: 1. xxxvii). Riley joins in, saying that there is 'overwhelming evidence to support the traditional ascription of authorship' (1993: vii). Eckey is another recent scholar who is convinced that there is enough evidence to support the traditional theory that Luke, the doctor and companion of Paul, was the author (2004: 49). For Riley and Eckey, as for many others, much hinges on three factors: The tradition that almost unanimously ascribes the Gospel and Acts to 'Luke'; the 'we' passages in Acts suggest the author is an eyewitness and a companion of Paul; and the medical language and interest found in both writings fit the language and interest of a physician, and Luke held that profession, as Col 4:14 states.

But each of these arguments can be, and has been, questioned. There is no linking of Luke with the Gospel and Acts known to us before Irenaeus (unless one accepts the longer version of Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians as genuine), and he has a clear agenda related to apostolic authority and to the heretics. The 'we' passages might be a rhetorical device, and 'Luke' is not mentioned anyway; and the medical language issue would probably not be raised at all if it were not for Col 4:14, and the same language argument could be made for any number of professions.

Moulton, Creed, Hengel, and Fitzmyer ask the obvious question: If Luke is *not* the author, why would a Gospel be ascribed to him? They argue that since Luke was not a prominent figure in the apostolic age, it is hard to understand why Luke-Acts should be known under his name unless he was in fact the author. In fact, says Fitzmyer, 'That his name was really Luke may be regarded as certain' (1981: 41). A tradition would not develop over such an obscure figure unless it was authentic, claims Moulton (1917: 84). But that too can be countered. In the second-century, the Gospels had to be linked with apostolic authority. Matthew and John stood authentically as apostolic in their own right; Mark had links with Peter. That leaves Luke. The link between the Gospel and Acts was known; the latter focuses on Paul, so the writer must have known Paul, the 'we' passages suggest a companion of Paul who accompanied Paul to Rome, where he met his death. Who was a faithful companion of Paul? Luke, on the basis of Col 4:14 and 2 Tim 4:11.

Some scholars will do little more than acknowledge that there has been 'fierce debate' about whether or not 'Luke' is to be identified with the Luke mentioned in Phlm 24, Col 4:14, and 2 Tim 4:11, with the debate centering largely on the differences between Acts and Paul's own writings. And they leave it at that, refusing to come down on one side or the other. Tannehill notes that it is 'hotly debated whether the attribution of this Gospel to Luke is accurate information or a secondary development resulting from the early church's desire to attribute the Gospels either to apostles or followers of apostles' (1996: 20). He recognizes that this cannot be answered with any certainty, but goes on to give the standard arguments based on Phlm 24 and Col 4:14, 2 Tim 4:11, the Muratorian Canon, Irenaeus, and the Anti-Marcionite Prologues all of which make the identification of Luke as author (1996: 21). But, says Tannehill, 'doubts can be raised about this testimony' (1996: 21).

There are quite a few others, however, who support the traditional view even though they acknowledge that there cannot be anything like certainty on the matter. Typical is Maddox, who says, '[w]e do not know who "Luke" is' (1982: 6), but, like many others, he finally sides with the tradition, and does so on the basis of the 'we' passages. In the

end, 'it seems best to conclude that Luke had been from time to time in his youth a relatively junior member' of Paul's traveling companions (1982: 7). I note yet again, in passing, this belief in the comparatively low status of Luke as a 'junior'.

In my opinion, the argument that the tradition is reliable and authentic is as strong as any other. As Hengel argues, it is not likely that the Gospel circulated anonymously. Secondly, the tradition is very solid and consistent; thirdly, the earliest traditions that are available to us make that identification; and finally, it is possible that Luke was a much better known authority than the brief references in the New Testament would lead us to believe.

Was the Author a Medical Doctor?

More interest has been shown in the matter of Luke's profession as a doctor. This opinion is, of course, almost totally based on Col 4:14 where Paul calls Luke 'the beloved doctor'; and I doubt very much whether the matter of medical language and terminology in the Gospel and Acts would have been raised at all without the presupposition that the author was Luke, the companion of Paul.

The view that the Luke and Acts reveal a medical man as their author was given impetus by Hobart, who in 1882 published a book in which he examined the vocabulary and style of the Gospel and concluded that the tradition was confirmed. He examined some 400 terms in Luke-Acts and concluded that the author used a vocabulary that was typical of, if not in some cases reserved for, a medical doctor.

A number of prominent English scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century (including Moulton, Plummer, Ramsay, Hawkins, Moffatt, and Knowlings) supported Hobart's claims and often accused other scholars of not even bothering to read his book before making a judgment. For example, Moulton believed that 'the cumulative effect of the argument is very strong' (1917: 83–4), and claimed that there was 'an army of critics who never read him' (1917: 83). But some German scholars did read and support Hobart, notably von Harnack and Theodor Zahn. They agreed that Hobart had shown that Luke's language reveals his scientific and medical profession and background (Harnack 1911: 14 n. 2). They were convinced by the arguments, for example, that Acts 28:10 suggests the author was included among the healers who were showered with honors on the island of Melite (Harnack 1911: 15); and that Luke 4:23, 'Physician, heal thyself', is known only to Luke, and is a saying that a physician would have known rather than Jesus himself (1911: 17). Harnack also believed that Paul was an invalid who needed a doctor to go with him on his travels, and that doctor was Luke (1911: 148).

Hobart's work and conclusions were countered first by Cadbury. In *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (1920), Cadbury showed that Hobart's arguments based on terminology and language are not convincing because they can be found also in non-medical writers. He concludes, 'The style of Luke bears no more evidence of medical training and interest than does the language of other writers who were not physicians' (1920: 50). By the 1970s, probably most scholars, but by no means all, agreed with Conzelmann that 'the attempt to prove that the author was a physician have ended' (1976: 310 n. 2).

Alexander confirms Cadbury's arguments, rejects Hobart's claims and refutes his evidence. The major argument against Hobart is that while he illustrates that medical writers did use the same terminology as Luke and vice versa, such terminology was not limited to medical writers and their texts. By similar argument and evidence, Luke could be constructed to belong to a wide variety and number of professions. As Cadbury says, on the basis of vocabulary, Luke could be as easily constructed as a lawyer or even as a mariner (Cadbury, 1927: 220). To illustrate the point of the criticism, I will focus very briefly on just two examples: Such terms as ὑπηρέται, αὐτόπται might indeed have been used by medical men (Hobart 1882: 88, 89), but they carry no medical overtones at all in Luke's preface. In 1:9, Luke uses the term θυμιᾶσαι, 'to burn incense', which Hobart says was a medical term for fumigating with herbs or spices (1882: 90); but surely it carries no such connotations in Luke (and was used in the LXX for priestly sacrifices, for example in Exod 30:7–8). And so on.

But for all the arguments of Cadbury and Alexander that have convinced many, the issue does not go away altogether. In recent years, Parsons (2005) examines the healing of the lame man in Acts 3 and highlights Luke's physiognomic terminology, but distances himself slightly from Hobart's theory. Annette Weissenrieder has examined the way Luke constructs illness in his Gospel and has concluded: '[T]he author of Luke-Acts had a particular interest in images of illness and healing, which were plausible within the ancient medical context, and far exceed word analogies' (2003: 365). She compares Luke's interest and knowledge of illness and medical terms with that of Philo and concludes: 'whether or not they [Luke and Philo] may therefore be considered ancient physicians remains uncertain' (2003: 366).

The evidence or basis for the tradition that Luke was a doctor is very slight indeed. Col 4:14 is possibly the only known reference before the fourth century to any Luke associated with Paul who is a doctor (ἰατρός), unless the Muratorian Canon and the Anti-Marcionite Prologues are dated earlier. If the Colossians statement about Luke did not exist, I very much doubt whether anyone would have suggested that Luke-Acts was written by a medical man. Even if one accepts at face value the evidence of Col 4:14 that Luke was a doctor, that does not rule out the possibility that Luke was a priest. The link between the priest and medical conditions is fairly obvious, at least in Jewish circles, since the priest was the one who ruled on purity matters. Well known is the case of the healed leper whom Jesus sends off to the priest to have his health condition and purity status ratified (Luke 5:12–16). The cleansing ritual the priest is to conduct over lepers (Lev 14:1–9) had implicit purifying powers, if not in itself the power to heal. It is true, however, that the evidence for priests as healers is slight.

Was Luke a Jew or a Gentile?

The matter of Luke's 'ethnic origins' has a somewhat curious history in scholarship. In the eighteenth century, while the matter was debated, Lardner thought Luke was a Jew by birth, and that the matter was so clear-cut; he was surprised that there was any debate at all (1788: 6. 137). In modern scholarship, Sterling claims that the

opinio communis is that the author of Acts is either a Hellenistic Jew or a god-fearer (1999: 201). I doubt that is the common opinion; it seems to be quite inconsistent with the claim of Koet that the 'communis opinio is that the theology of Luke-Acts is clearly Gentile Christian and that Luke-Acts has been written for a predominantly Gentile audience' (1989: 22). Could one be a Hellenistic Jew or god-fearer, yet have a Gentile Christian theology? I would suggest that there is no *communis opinio*! This is the conclusion one would come to after reading Bovon's comments on the issue. On the one hand, he says, for 'most exegetes, Luke is a Gentile trying to legitimate a Gentile Christianity that is free from the law, yet related to scripture'. On the other hand, partly in response to Jervell's work, 'many interpreters today (1991) think that Luke himself was a Jew and that his main interest was Israel rather than the Gentile mission' (2003b: 29).

There is some terminology that needs comment. In the first place, the dichotomy made between 'Jew' and 'Christian' is very often not helpful, if it is not indeed misleading or downright false. When Mount says that Luke 'writes self-consciously as a Christian, not a Jew' (2002: 170), or when Knight says 'the readers were Christian and not Jewish' (1998: 37), do they mean that Luke or his audience could not have been Jewish, or that no 'Jew' could be a 'Christian'? Presumably not; so the dichotomy is misleading. Similar is the very common distinction made between 'Jewish' and 'Hellenistic'. It is well known, also by those who make the dichotomy, that many, in fact probably, most Jews were Hellenized in the first centuries of the Common Era. Brown says that Luke's 'ability in Greek has caused many to posit that the evangelist was a Gentile convert to Christianity' (1997: 268) and he thinks it a 'reasonable possibility' (1997: 322). I find that argument to carry little weight. Fluency and ability in Greek was not reserved for Gentiles. If one argues this way of Luke, why not also of Paul?

The 'ethnic' origin of the author is an important question in the light of my interests in reading Luke as a Jewish priest, and in my suggestion that the writer of Luke-Acts required *authority* to write, either one which he claimed for himself and possibly was in dispute, or one which was ascribed to him by others in his community. What authority would a Gentile have, in the years between 70 and 90 CE, to interpret the traditions of Israel in they way that Luke does? What authority would a god-fearer of that time have to interpret and to transmit the Jesus traditions? What authority would a Jew have to interpret Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles? None of these is a rhetorical question.

I am not sure how many exceptions one needs to find before the claim that it is the *communis opinio* that Luke was a Hellenistic Jew or a god-fearer collapses. But in the history of scholarship, exceptions there certainly are, and it is not at all difficult to line them up from German, British and American scholarship over the decades. Some claim that Luke was a Gentile, no more, no less. For example, von Campenhausen has no doubt that 'Luke is a Gentile Christian of the second generation' (1972: 37). Schmithals says that Luke was 'zweifelos ein Heidenchrist, und er schreibt für Heidenchristen' (1980: 9). Kümmel is equally forthright on the matter, 'only one thing can be said with certainty about its author – he was a Gentile Christian' (1966: 104–5). Dahl, aware of Luke's immersion in the Jewish Scriptures, still can say that Luke writes biblical history 'as a Gentile Christian of Hellenistic

culture and in Roman times' (1976: 152). The author's obvious immersion in the Jewish Scriptures is not something that appears to concern Barrett either: 'Luke himself was (it appears) a Gentile; but no New Testament writer is more clearly aware of the importance of the Old Testament, and of the Jews' religion' (1961: 15). On the change from a classical-like 'Greek' in the preface to a more Semitic style in Luke 1:5, Barrett asks, 'is this because Luke was translating a Semitic document, or because he was writing in a style (based on the LXX) suitable to his quasi-Old Testament subject? Debate on this question continues' (1961: 16). If Luke was 'translating a Semitic document', and that is by no means proven, it seems to me more reasonable to assume he was a Jew rather than a Gentile.

According to Maddox, 'Traditionally Luke has been viewed a Gentile Christian' and his audience predominantly Gentile (1982: 32) and, despite Jervell's attractive alternative, Maddox agrees with this. Saldarini says that 'the author of Luke-Acts is most probably a gentile', but, as many other writers do, 'probably' is forgotten, and Saldarini continues as though the author *were* a Gentile: 'the author is not himself an ethnic Jew' (1992: 39), 'the gentile author' (1992: 40). In Knight's opinion, 'Luke was probably a Gentile' (1998: 10). J.P. Meier says:

> In my opinion, Luke, an educated Gentile Christian, composed his two-volume work probably in Greece or Asia Minor, or possibly in Rome, where his evangelical epic concludes. At any rate, he is certainly aiming his ambitious literary creation at a cultured Greco-Roman audience, embodied in the 'most excellent Theophilus' of Luke 1:3 and Acts 1:1. (1991: 385)

Fitzmyer also regards Luke as a Gentile Christian but one who was a Semitic, a native of Antioch (1981: 42). Walker believes that Luke was 'probably a Gentile' (1996: 85), but he too then goes on as if he was a Gentile in fact. Summarizing Luke's attitude to Jerusalem, he says, 'Much of this had been caused by his own status as a Gentile' (1996: 112). In any case, these are very significant outsiders to Sterling's *communis opinio*! Earlier scholars implied Luke's Gentile origins by calling him 'in all probability an Asiatic Greek' (Hobart 1882: xxxi) or, as Harnack does, 'the Greek physician of Antioch', by which he means either a Gentile or possibly a god-fearer (Harnack 1911: 145–6).

Bock discusses the question and apparently does not agree with Sterling about the *communis opinio* because he asks, 'Was Luke a Gentile (so most), or was he more particularly a non-Jewish Semite (Fitzmyer) or even a Hellenistic Jew (Ellis)?' (1994: 17). I am intrigued by his use of 'even'; it suggests that Bock is surprised that Ellis should consider the possibility that Luke is a Hellenistic Jew. Coincidentally, Nolland uses the same word in discussing the same point: 'Luke has *even* (italics mine), on occasion, been claimed as a Jew or as a former God-fearer' (Nolland 1989: 1. xxxvi). Bock goes on to say, 'This racial background is significant because it makes Luke the only non-Jewish author of the New Testament. His presence gives a pluralistic perspective to the ministry of Jesus and explains why Gentile issues are so central for him' (1994: 18). The use of words such as 'racial' and 'pluralistic' smack of being anachronistic; but it is more curious that Bock can make such a definite statement that 'Luke is the only non-Jewish author of the New Testament', given that

on the very same page he has acknowledged that certainty about Luke's ethnicity is difficult (1994: 18).

Bock and others come to the conclusion that Luke was a Gentile on the basis of Col 4. The argument goes something like this: In Col 4:11, Paul refers to Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus Justus as 'the only men of the circumcision among my fellow-workers' (one might note their Greek and Latin names), and they send greetings to Colossae. He then goes on to mention others who send greetings as well: Epaphras, Luke, and Demas (4:12, 14). This implies that Luke did not belong to the first group, namely, the 'men of the circumcision', and therefore he cannot be a Jew but must be either a Gentile or a proselyte / god-fearer. But this is not the only possible understanding of this passage. Selwyn, for example, argues that Paul would not call himself 'of the circumcision', yet no one would deny that he was circumcised and therefore a Jew; neither would he put his friend Luke in that category (1901: 38 n. 1). Those men 'of the circumcision' more than likely refers to those Jewish Christians who were ritually strict compared to the ritually lax Paul; it does not infer that those not 'of the circumcision' were not Jews.

It is possible that the idea Luke was a Gentile flows from his perceived association with Paul. Paul was interested in Gentiles; Acts could be read as having an interest in Gentiles, and so the conclusion is made that Luke was a Gentile.

The middle path is to think of Luke as god-fearer, a category which Luke-Acts alone uses, and which has caused some debate over the years (see Kraabel 1981). A very good example is provided by Bovon. He apparently believes Luke to be Gentile, but he notices the obvious 'Jewish' things about him, and explains that by putting Luke in the god-fearer category. He claims, then, that the language of the preface

> indicates that the author's roots are in one of the higher strata of society, and that the author had a good education encompassing Greek rhetoric as well as Jewish methods of exegesis. Luke was most likely a Greek by birth, who turned to Judaism early in life; he belongs to that circle of sympathizers whom one designates 'God-fearers'. In this environment, he heard the message of the gospel and became a Christian. (2002: 8)

Elsewhere, Bovon says that Luke is a Hellenist Christian à la Stephen (Bovon 1997: 390).

Hengel is not as clear, but seems to follow the same line. He thinks 'it is probable' that Luke is the doctor of tradition on the basis of Col 4:14, and that he is a 'former godfearer ... the Greek Luke' (2000: 101, 103).

I must express surprise when scholars claim Luke was a Gentile on the basis of his ability in Greek. Caird, for example, includes Luke's 'command of Greek' as one of the 'indications that he was a Gentile' (1963: 15). Being a writer of good Greek does not need to imply he was a Greek and a Gentile. Paul also wrote good Greek, and he shows even more signs of knowing his way around Greek rhetoric than Luke does. Yet Paul is obviously, and proudly, a Jew. Josephus too, obviously a Jew, could write comfortably in Greek, even though he felt some discomfort speaking the language.

So, if the *communis opinio* includes those who believe that Luke was not just a god-fearer, but a Hellenistic Jew, as Sterling claims, then who holds that view? They do not line up as quickly as those of the other, Gentile, persuasion. One would be Denova, who says, 'we appear to have a Jewish author presenting arguments that will persuade other Jews that the prophets have been "fulfilled"' and so the concept 'Gentile Christianity' does not exist in Luke-Acts and would have made no sense to Luke (1997: 40). Among the earlier scholars of the last century or so, Selwyn claimed, 'St. Luke was a Jew, and … there is no ground for any other supposition' (1901: xxiii). He argues, for example, that the reference in Acts 27:9 to the day of atonement suggests the author a Jew because, '[n]one but a Jew would use this expression' (1901: 37 n. 1). Of more recent scholars, there are a number who insist that Luke does not give up on Israel; to the contrary, Israel is the center of his concern, and the Gentiles are included but only by being tied to the historical Israel. Leading this line of argument is Jacob Jervell, as is clearly illustrated in his collection of essays in *Luke and the People of God* (1979). Esler (1987) and Brawley (1987) would be sympathetic to this understanding. While none of them explicitly identify Luke as a Jew, they would imply as much.

In my view, the writer of the Third Gospel was a Jew. I have two main reasons for this. The first is his obvious knowledge of the Scriptures. He feels totally at home in them; more than that, he feels so at ease that he can interpret them, allude to them, cite them, string phrases together from them, and construct the significance of his Lord Jesus on their basis. He constantly weaves scriptural words, ideas, and episodes into his writing. And his interpretive methods are consistent with known contemporary Jewish methods, and that includes the rather sophisticated *gezerah shevah* technique, as it was later known. Luke also combines various characters from the Scriptures into his interpretation of Jesus. Elements from the character and lives of of Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and David are all interwoven in a fashion not uncommon in Jewish rewriting and interpretation of their Bible. There are also times when Luke assumes his audience is reasonably familiar and at ease in the Scriptures. As just one example: In Luke 4:22–29, the writer presupposes that his audience is familiar with the episode of Elijah's visit to Zarephath and Elisha's healing of Naaman.

My second reason for thinking Luke was Jewish hangs on his authority. In a comparatively small Christian community (not just a local one but also in the widespread community) in the first century of the Era, the authority of a writer was quite significant, especially when dealing with the foundational myths of the Christians and their interpretation. Understandably, a Jewish teacher would have had his authority more easily accepted than a Gentile teacher.

Theophilus

Another important question concerns the named addressee in Luke and Acts: Theophilus. Who was this? The suggestion that the name might not indicate a specific individual but instead could refer to any 'lover of God' is an ancient one (Origen, *Homily 1*, *Luke* 6; Ambrose, *Expos*. *Gos*. *Luke* 1.12), and it still finds the occasional advocate in recent years. Kurth, for example, argues that Theophilus represents a

disposition for the implied reader, namely, the interested audience (Kurth 2000: 224). She thinks there is no concrete person addressed, but that the name is a metaphor for anyone who is a lover of God. Acts 10:35 is the key, for Kurth: the implied reader is anyone who loves God and evidences this by their god-fearing. Luke emphasizes no less than Matthew the doing of Torah (2000: 224). All those described as devout and righteous represent the ideal, exemplary believer who lives according to faith and who is saved by doing what is right (2000: 225). While I have much sympathy with her emphasis on Luke's concern for righteous living, there are other, broader concerns in the Gospel and in Acts that can not limit its target audience to the god-fearers.

Shellard flirts with the notion that Theophilus, 'if he existed at all', might mean any lover of God (2002: 51 n. 69). She believes that '[Luke's] Gospel is inclusive … and he does not want to shut anyone out' (2002: 41). This is a common idea which, in my opinion, is a modern one. But by modern standards, Luke is not inclusive; he does not want to include everybody. The first Christian communities – Luke's included – were in the main minority groups within their social and political and religious worlds; they were marginal and fringe groups, and in some cases and at some times, they were also oppressed and suppressed groups. Luke writes to encourage those under pressure to sustain their witness. In Luke-Acts there are many episodes in which the heroes are in court and on trial; in many cases they are dramatically vindicated by a divine action. Such episodes served in part to encourage struggling, court-appearing Christians to be faithful. It is very difficult for such groups to be 'inclusive' because that inevitably involves compromise, and small groups struggling to establish and maintain their identity can ill-afford to compromise without jeopardizing their very existence. In the Christians' relations with the local Jewish synagogues, being 'inclusive' would have raised very serious questions – they might as well have stayed within their synagogues. Self-definition had to be determined and boundaries had to be drawn, and these very often contradict inclusive ideals.

The majority of scholars think the name Theophilus refers to an individual. It was a common name, and not an unexpected one in such a context; and addressing the recipient by name was also common in the literary style of the time. The name is Greek, but that should not mislead us into thinking that he therefore must have been a Gentile. Evans notes that the name Theophilus 'is attested from the third century BC onwards, particularly for Jews in the Diaspora' (1990: 134). I am surprised, then, that some scholars still argue along language lines that Theophilus was a Gentile, despite the fact that they are aware that very many Jews took on Greek and Roman names and that they Graecized or Latinized traditional Hebrew names. The use of θεοφιλής, the adjective, is very common in Philo (over eighty times) and Josephus (about twenty times) and that would suggest such an attribute was admired among some, if not most, Jews.

Many scholars concentrate not so much on the name but on the adjective used in the address, 'excellent Theophilus' (1:3). The use of the word 'excellent' (κρατίστε), the argument goes, suggests someone of rank and social status and importance, and so Theophilus must have been a Roman official; he might have been a patron of the author, or even his publisher. He 'could very well have come from the highest circles of the Roman aristocracy (compare Acts 23:16; 24:3; 26:25). He was certainly not an ordinary man. It is his rank in society that requires the preface, which is extremely

strange for the early church' (Hengel 2000: 102). Similarly, Meier (1991: 419 n. 51) says that 'the address *kratiste* in Luke 1:4 is an indication that Theophilus – be he real or fictional – is to be conceived of as socially respected and probably well off, and possibly a Roman official'. Garrison thinks likewise: Theophilus was 'a Gentile, loyal to the Roman Empire and familiar with the Gospel of Mark' (2004: 97). And many more agree. Hengel and Streeter extend the mystery of Theophilus even further. According to them, he was a prominent Roman whose name had to be kept secret. 'Theophilus was perhaps an alias' (Hengel 2000: 102). Streeter thought that Theophilus was possibly Flavius Clemens in Rome (1924: 559).

There are a number of quite significant implications that flow from who Theophilus is understood to be. It affects how he is seen to relate to the writer and to the Gospel text and to the Gospel itself. The address 'excellent' (κράτιστε) is often taken to infer that Luke was socially inferior to Theophilus. I suspect that is partly because Luke is generally regarded as dependent and inferior. As a writer, he is dependent on other texts and sources (Mark and Q); as a theologian, he is dependent on Paul (something that most scholars argue he does not do very well); he was not an apostle, not an eyewitness. Maybe it is not surprisingly that he is also seen as being socially inferior to Theophilus. Alexander at least modifies this view by showing examples where the addressee is not the socially superior, and so concludes that 'there is a degree of possibility that this [Theophilus' social superiority] was the case, but without further research we cannot be certain' (1993: 190). Kümmel also acknowledges that *kratiste* was also 'used as a polite form of address' (1966: 91). I would like to rescue Luke from being portrayed as socially inferior to Theophilus, and to see him much more like Hengel saw the author of the Fourth Gospel, as a dominant, powerful, authoritative, influential leader and teacher within his community. I propose that Luke was Theophilus' superior, his teacher, and his elder. The use of κράτιστε need not indicate that the one so-addressed is superior to the writer. It is true that there is no clear evidence of one Christian addressing another with an honorific title before the third century, but, as Maddox suggests, that might simply be because we have such limited Christian literature, especially in like genre to Luke-Acts (1982: 13). Origen, in the third century, addresses his student, Gregory, as 'my most excellent sir and venerable son' (κύριέ μου σπουδαιότατε καὶ αἰδεσιμώτατε ὑιέ, *A Letter to Gregory* 1), then writes to him out of 'fatherly advice' (3), and clearly regards him, at best as an equal, but more likely and more obviously as one subject to his authority and advice. I suggest that Luke had a similar relationship with Theophilus. He was his father and teacher in the faith.

If Theophilus has any parallel in Luke-Acts, it might be with Apollos, who, according to Acts 18, came to Ephesus from Alexandria. He was eloquent, skilled in the Scriptures and in transmitting 'the things about Jesus' (18:35). Given that Luke's writings are saturated with allusions to and citations from the Jewish Scriptures, one might assume that Theophilus too was very familiar with them, if not skilled in them. Both Theophilus and Apollos were Christian, both have Greek names but probably both came out of the synagogue, both were of some status within their communities, but in Luke's opinion, while they had already been instructed and were involved in 'speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus' (Acts 18:25), both were, in their own ways, in need of even more accurate teaching in the 'way of God'

(18:26) and of a 'safe' reading of the tradition (Luke 1:4). It is possible that Prisca and Aquila instructed Apollos in the more accurate 'reading' and transmission of the tradition of the 'things about Jesus', just as Luke was doing for Theophilus. Prisca and Aquila probably belonged to that category of Christians who, like Luke himself, were 'owners' or guardians of the tradition, and so had the authority to teach and therefore also to interpret and expound the way of God. Like Theophilus, Apollos – probably already in Alexandria, but that is not certain – knew things about Jesus, and that implies he had access to, and knowledge of, some 'gospel' source.

It is interesting, by the way, that there is no name given to the *author* in the text of Luke-Acts, yet scholars, following Irenaeus, search other New Testament texts for a companion of Paul who might fit the bill as author, and so arrive at the Luke of Col 4:14, Phlm 24, and the like. On the other hand, there *is* the name Theophilus in the text, but almost no one links that name with people of that same name in other texts. Why not search for Theophiluses? Some versions of the *Acts of Paul* mention a Theophilus who was one of the elders/presbyters of the church in Corinth who wrote a letter to Paul, 'their brother'. A few nineteenth-century scholars proposed that the Theophilus addressed is the mid-late-second-century bishop of Antioch of the same name, who wrote the extant *ad Autolycum*. Fitzmyer notes the tradition in the *Ps-Clementine Recognitions* (10.71) that Theophilus was a real person from Antioch who eventually became bishop of that city. 'This is undoubtedly a worthless legend of later date', he claims (1981: 299). It almost certainly is, but it is typical of how names were used in the traditions, and it should make us wary of how Luke's name was also used in the traditions about authorship of the Third Gospel. Fitzmyer and others are not nearly so quick to dismiss those traditions. Why is the Theophilus tradition (and a similar tradition that Zacchaeus was bishop of Caesarea) any more worthless than traditions about Luke being the author of the Gospel which Fitzmyer seems happy to accept as being authentic? It seems that not all traditions are treated in the same way, sometimes because certain assumptions are made. Theophilus was the name of a bishop of Antioch around 180 CE – was he named after the recipient of Luke-Acts? Indeed, can we even be so sure that the prefaces to Luke and Acts (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1–2) were not written in his time and addressed to him?

In recent years, Anderson (1997) has proposed that the recipient of the Gospel and Acts was Theophilus who had been the high priest from 37 to 41 CE. He thinks Luke wrote to the former high priest in the hope that he might use his influence to stop opposition to Jews in the Diaspora and to unite a divided Israel. Anderson suggests that Luke-Acts was meant for a former high priest to read in order to explain irenically why and how the Christians have come into existence.

There is, however, little that is irenic about Luke-Acts' depiction of the high priests or chief priests – they are the ones who wish to do away with Jesus and the apostles and they cannot bear the speech of Stephen which is a response to a question from the high priest. If Luke wants Theophilus to do the right thing, he presumably would have been kinder to his predecessors. Anderson sees the problem, but thinks there is no personal attack on the high priest (Theophilus), and that Luke is all about forgiveness and reconciliation anyway, as Jesus utters words of forgiveness for his executioners, including the high priest. It is 'part of his irenical presentation to Theophilus'. Anderson assumes that Theophilus is not Christian, and that Luke does

not write to him with the hope that he might join them. This does not seem likely, to me. In addition, most of the arguments that Anderson puts forward would fit any Jewish Theophilus – he would not need to be a priest, let alone a high priest.

But the theory interests me because I propose that the author 'Luke' was himself a priest. I would not rule out the possibility that Theophilus was also a priest. If that were the case – and I acknowledge the sheer speculation on this point – then it would mean that a priest was writing to a priest. How would Luke-Acts then read? It raises again the issue of how little we really know!

Theophilus and Luke's Audience: Jew or Gentile?

The majority of scholars favor the opinion that Theophilus and the general addressees of Luke-Acts were Gentiles. Esler, who disagrees with this position, acknowledges, 'It is, admittedly, no light matter to reject the virtually unanimous belief among New Testament scholars that the Christians for whom Luke wrote were predominantly Gentile' (1987: 31). Fitzmyer says Theophilus is a Gentile Christian (1981: 59), and he thinks the audience was predominantly Gentile Christian in a predominantly Gentile setting (1981: 57–9). Von Campenhausen believes that because the address is to Theophilus it is meant for the 'heathen public' (1972: 124). In recent years, Mount strongly implies that Theophilus was a Gentile and that Luke wrote 'in hopes of increasing the credibility of his work for a Graeco-Roman audience' (2002: 171). The author, says Mount, intends to present to Theophilus an account 'that separates Christianity from Judaism and establishes Christianity as a respectable religion in the Graeco-Roman world' (2002: 173). Gaventa thinks that 'numerous small details suggest that they are Gentiles or at least that Luke has particular concern for Gentile believers in his audience'. The 'small details' include the use of the name Judea to refer to the whole of Palestine (Luke 1:5; 4:44; Acts 2:9; 10:37) and 'the information about Pharisees and Sadducees provided in Acts 23:8 would be superfluous for Jewish readers' (2003: 50).

There are two reasons for thinking that Theophilus (and, by extension, the wider audience) was a Jew. The first is suggested by the interest in the Scriptures. As will be discussed in more detail later, Luke is thoroughly immersed in the Scriptures, and it could be argued, as Goulder does, that his Gospel is a *midrash* or an interpretation of those Scriptures. Even if one does not want to go that far, there can be no argument that Luke has seen Jesus as the fulfillment of the Scriptures and of God's plan for Israel and the nations as revealed in those sacred texts. It is theoretically possible that a Gentile by the year 80 CE (assuming the Gospel to have been written around then) might have acquired such a depth of scriptural knowledge so as to understand what Luke was getting at; but I think it is more reasonable that a Jewish reader could be assumed to have such a background, and so Christian Jews are the more likely intended audience. Barrett rules out the possibility that Theophilus was a Roman official (and that Acts is an apologetic writing) on the grounds that '[n]o Roman official would ever have filtered out so much of what to him would be theological and ecclesiastical rubbish in order to reach so tiny a grain of relevant apology' (1961:

63). Maddox also thinks Luke's allusions to the Jewish Scriptures would have passed over anyone not deeply trained in them (1982: 14).

More importantly, Luke has a great interest in the Christ, the Messiah of Israel. In both his books, he claims repeatedly that the Christ of the Scriptures is Jesus. Jesus will 'have the throne of his father, David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end' (Luke 1:32–33); the angels announce that the savior, 'born today in the city of David, is Christ, the Lord' (Luke 2:11); and the Scriptures are to be interpreted as concerning Jesus, the suffering Christ (Luke 24:27). In Acts, the same lines are followed (Acts 2:36; 3:18, for example). This issue is much more likely to have been important and significant to Jews than to Gentiles. In later Christian apologetic writings, in particular, the interest in Jesus as the Christ is an issue that was not deemed to be relevant to Gentiles. This is the case in Justin's *Apologies* (compare these with his dialogue with the Jew, Trypho), and Theophilus of Antioch, in his letter to Autoclyes, when he talks about the name Christian he says it is because they are anointed by God; he says nothing about 'the Christ' let alone about Jesus (1.12). But there is no need to look outside of Luke's own writings to see the same point. In Acts, when the apostles proclaim the gospel to Jews, it almost always includes the Messiahship of Jesus (Acts 2:36; 3:18–21; 5:42; 8:5; 9:22; 17:3, and others); but when they proclaim it to the Gentiles, Jesus hardly gets a mention, let alone that he is the Christ. At Lystra, Jesus is not mentioned (Acts 14:15–17). The jailer at Philippi is told to 'believe in the Lord Jesus' in order to be saved (16:31) but there is no reference to the Christ. In Acts 17, where Paul speaks on the Areopagus, Jesus is not mentioned at all. Talk of the resurrection disenchants the audience, but it is the basic issue of resurrection that does so, not the oblique reference to the resurrection of Jesus. In the riot at Ephesus in Acts 19, there is no mention of Jesus by either side. For later apologists, too, when the issue of resurrection is discussed it is the resurrection of mortals not that of Jesus alone. In short, the debate over the messiahship of Jesus was internal to the Jewish communities and had little relevance for Gentile Christians. But for Luke, in both the Gospel and in Acts, the messiahship of Jesus is central to the tradition and to the faith. It was at the center of his scriptural hermeneutics, as is clearly illustrated when the death of Jesus is interpreted. 'Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things…?' asks Jesus on the Emmaeus road. Not to know that is to be 'foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken' (Luke 24:25–26; compare also 24:44–46). The death of the Messiah was of much deeper concern to Jews than to Gentiles. If the Gospels reveal as much about the communities for whom they were written as they do events in the life of Jesus, then the question of the Messiah's suffering and its relation to the Scriptures might well have been crucial in very early Christian communities of which a significant proportion, if not the large majority, were Jews. Luke, their elder and their teacher, coming from a priestly background, was highly important, influential, and authoritative in responding to these issues.

I agree with Esler that Luke cannot be written for pagans because far too much knowledge is assumed. 'Luke plunges his readers into the atmosphere of Judaism and the Old Testament at the very beginning of his Gospel and leaves them there until the end of Acts. He often alludes to the Greek Old Testament in a way which would have been opaque, even unintelligible, to someone unfamiliar with its language and

contents' (1987: 25). I would go even further than pointing to the allusions – Luke's choice of vocabulary in his narrative to describe people's reactions is so typically 'Jewish'. People respond by 'praising God' or 'blessing God' and so on, language that is rarely found in the narratives of the pagans. James Sanders explains how a Gentile convert could understand all these allusions by claiming, 'The answer is that new converts are usually enthusiasts. Upon conversion, first-century Christians apparently became quickly and intimately acquainted with their only Scripture, the First Testament, in Hebrew or in Greek' (1993: 19). I find that unconvincing. It is not likely that a Gentile Christian of around 80 CE (and so most likely a first-generation Christian; at best, of the second generation), coming 'cold' both to the Scriptures and to the Christian version of Jesus, would have the depth in the Scriptures that Luke sometimes assumes of his audience. They would frequently have had to ask the Jews in their Christian community as to what Luke was meaning.

Esler looks at the major arguments for positing a Gentile audience and then demonstrates their patent weaknesses. One argument is that Luke writes in ('good') Greek, uses Greek style in his prefaces, appears to be writing outside of Palestine and as a non-Palestinian, and so must be a Gentile or writing for a Gentile audience. But the same argument, he says, could be made of Philo of Alexandria (Esler 1987: 32). A second argument is concerned with Luke's omission of characteristically Jewish emphases and issues, such as purity and the Law, from his sources. Esler argues that 'far from indicating a predominantly Gentile community behind Luke, his presentation of table-fellowship and the law provides some of the most convincing evidence available of his local congregation having been composed of a mixture of Jews and of one-time Gentile synagogue-attenders' (1987: 32). A third argument, says Esler, is Luke's 'manifest desire to relate the salvation offered in the Gospel to non-Jews' (1987: 32). For Esler, the audience is a mixture, with the Gentiles coming mainly from the god-fearer category, and Luke wanted to 'legitimate the very same balance and unity in his own local community' (1987: 33). It is a line that is now increasingly held. Koet, for example, says, 'it is difficult to see how the stress on Paul's mission as being in accordance with the Prophets and as being law-abiding can be of importance for a community where an understanding of Judaism is not essential … The most plausible possibility is that Luke-Acts is directed to a community made up of both Jewish and Gentile Christians' (1989: 94–5).

Pushing the issue a little further, given that the audience is a mixture, who dominated? Who had authority and control? If Gentiles dominated, did they need the Cornelius episode (told twice) and the ending of Acts? If Jews dominated, did they need to hear those episodes? I suggest the audience was dominated by the Jewish element and it needed to hear that the gospel includes Gentiles among the renewed Israel, as indeed the prophets had known. If the audience consists predominantly of god-fearers, then why do the *Gentiles* receive such attention? Why not simply refer to 'god-fearers' since Luke knew that vocabulary? Or were Gentiles as much a concern for the god-fearers as they were for 'the Jews'? Sometimes, the newly converted make it very difficult for those wanting to join the group! It is also worth observing that even the 'great missionary to the Gentiles' has little success among the Gentiles, according to Acts (Strelan 1996). Whatever 'success' Paul has is among Jews and a handful of god-fearers, rather than among out-and-out Gentiles. Esler agrees: 'Luke

portrays Christian evangelism as having been successful almost entirely among Jews and God-fearers attending synagogues' (1987: 38). He even goes further, 'There is not a single example in Acts of the conversion of a Gentile who has definitely been an idolater previously' (1987: 42). I am not sure who Esler thinks the jailer at Philippi was (Acts 16:25–30) because he 'was not previously a god-fearer it seems' (1987: 41), but his point still stands. What Peter learns in Cornelius' house is not as universalistic as it is sometimes made to appear. Peter recognizes that God does not have favorites, it is true, but there is the rider: 'but that anyone in any race who fears him (ὁ φοβοῦμενος αὐτόν) and acts justly is acceptable to him' (10:34–35). As Esler rightly says, 'this means that it is not just any Gentile who is worthy to receive the Gospel, but only someone like Cornelius', as Acts 15:17 also says (1987: 38). Luke's narrative gives us a clue as to his audience's composition – there are very few who were Gentiles not already associated with the synagogue. This contrasts with the evidence from Paul's letter that some were idolaters previous to their joining the Christian community (for example, 1 Thess 1:9). One again, Luke is not interested in 'historical facts' but in the agenda he has for his own audience which had very few, if any, Gentiles in it.

In much of the debate over the composition of Luke's intended audiences, I suspect the traditional link between Luke and Paul dominates the thinking of those who believe Luke – and therefore also his audience – were Gentile. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, Luke is interested in Paul and his mission, therefore Luke is possibly Gentile himself and his audience is Gentile. Once Luke is cut from Paul's apron strings, he and his audience take on a different complexion.

It would seem that if you have a text like Luke-Acts in which you get both pro and anti Jewish lines that the writer is more likely to be Jewish. It is then a matter of an insider speaking to an insider and being critical of one's own. Tuckett (2001: 296) acknowledges the difference it makes, but says that it is not so clear cut because sometimes Luke shows a lack of knowledge of Jewish things (2:22–24; 3:2; Acts 18:18; 21:24–26). So he puts Luke in the god-fearer category (2001: 297). But what status/authority would a god-fearer have? Would he be in a position to write like he does as interpreter of Scripture, of Israel, and as interpreter of Jesus traditions? In many religious communities, there are those who claim to be the 'originals', those born and bred in the faith, and they are distinct from the newcomers and from those who share some interest without being committed, full members of the community. It is clear from Jewish inscriptions, from Philo and Josephus, that Jews generally also made such distinctions. The very use of labels such as 'god-fearers' and 'proselytes' suggests the distinctions were significant. In Luke-Acts, the author too knows and makes such distinctions. Now, while very few communities will reject gifts and offers of money for certain community projects such as the erection of a synagogue, few will take too kindly to such people pronouncing on the ancient traditions. Either we see Luke as an out-and-out Gentile, or he is a Jew of good and long standing. Otherwise, I cannot see how he had the authority to write in the way that he does. I suggest Luke is a priest, largely on the basis of the question of his authority. Who had the authority not only to record and write, but also to interpret the traditions of Israel, of Jesus, and of Paul? It seems that priests fitted the criteria as well as, if not better than, anyone.

The Provenance of Luke and His Writings

On this issue, one guess is as good as another, and so there is little point devoting much time and space to it. That is not to belittle the importance of the matter! Modern scholars have various opinions and suggestions. Conzelmann states categorically that Luke 'does not write in Palestine', and favors the Aegean region and Rome, with the two not being mutually exclusive (1976: 301–2). It is a view that is almost unaninimously supported by scholars. Heil, for example, believes that the gaps in Luke's knowledge of Palestine rule that region out both as the provenance of the Gospel and as where the author grew up (2003: 23). He prefers Ephesus as the city from which Luke-Acts was written (2003: 24–5). Kümmel lists Rome, Caesarea, Achaea and Decapolis as possible provenances for the Gospel (1966: 106). Carson, Moo & Morris (1992) confess to ignorance, but in the end they lean towards Achaia and Rome, and almost dismiss Antioch. William Manson (1930) gives some credibility to Luke himself being Antiochean, but says the Gospel was written elsewhere and for elsewhere.

Hengel believes that Acts 28 'proves' that Luke had links with Rome and was known there. The audience knows what happened in Rome after that (2000: 40). If Rome is the provenance for Luke-Acts, and if they were written in the 75–85 CE period, as Hengel suggests (along with others), then it is a little surprising that Clement, the bishop of Rome around 90 CE shows no signs of knowing these writings, or of knowing Luke, for that matter. And if both Mark and Luke have the same provenance, and are written in very close time proximity as well, then the question as to why Luke should write 'another' Gospel becomes even more pressing and significant. As Brown asks, 'If Mark was written in Rome, would another Gospel have been needed there?' (1997: 270). One would think that would only have happened if Luke was not satisfied with Mark's Gospel – a suggestion Hengel dismisses (2000: 114).

In the last thirty years or so, there has been some impetus given to the theory that Luke came from Philippi. Goulder, for example, suggests Luke was an *episkopos* of the church at Philippi ('or another of the major Greek churches', 1974: 453). It is an argument developed largely around the familiarity that the author of Acts seems to have with Philippi, and especially on the basis of the 'we' passages in Acts. These passages center on Macedonia and Philippi (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5). An argument on the same basis has been put forward suggesting Luke came from Antioch because in the 'Western' text of Acts 11:28, the 'we' appears in an Antiochean context. William Ramsay proposed the Philippi theory already at the end of the nineteenth century, and in recent years, Pilhofer (1995) has constructed a quite substantial theory. Like Ramsay, Pilhofer believes Luke is 'the man from Macedonia' (Acts 16:6–10) and so the author makes a Hitchcock-like cameo appearance in the narrative at that point. Ramsay argues that the peculiar zig-zagging and the prevention by spirits in 16:6–8, and the unique command via ὅραμα to go in a totally new direction all indicate that the move, not just to Europe but to Macedonia specifically, is highly significant and important (in Pilhofer, 1995: 153–4). Pilhofer concludes, on the basis of the material that immediately follows Acts 16:10, that the author of Acts was not only the man from Macedonia but in fact was an inhabitant of Philippi (1995: 157), and as a

member of the Christian community there, he had a special interest in its traditions (1995: 205). He is not so interested in the Christian communities in Asia Minor, but Philippi lies close to his heart as the first congregation in Macedonia (1995: 158). Pilhofer is right, that if his theory is correct, then not only do we have the most significant Philippian Christian of his generation, but the most significant overall, and he brings a very personal and localized coloring to the foundations of the church in Philippi which otherwise would be lost to us (1995: 249). No doubt about any of that! The doubt lies more in proving the theory itself. I suspect one could make an equally good case for the argument that the author was an Ephesian, for example, or an Antiochean, as the early tradition believed.

Bovon also thinks that Luke 'may have been a Macedonian' (2002: 8), or '[p]robably he was a Macedonian' (2002: 9). If I were to suggest that there is a dominant theory in recent scholarship of the author's origins, it would be that Philippi is the origin of the writer of the 'we' passages, who probably most scholars would now say is also the writer of the rest of Acts. Of course, those who reject this view will be expected to reject the 'Luke is from Philippi' view as well, as indeed is the case with Haenchen who says Luke, the author, is not included in the 'we' passages – those passages come from his source. He accepts the Dibelius view that the use of 'we' in those passages is a literary form. Haenchen also rejects the idea that Luke is the 'man from Macedonia' and that he was bishop of the church in Philippi (1976: 272).

It is also worth noting that Alexander has claimed that for Luke's hero, Syria and Phoenicia are home ground, while the Aegean is unexplored territory. The only 'barbarians' in Acts are in the West (28:2), and the Athenians are described as 'superstitious' (17:22) and Athens full of idols (17:16). Where Luke sees synagogues, the Hellenistic novelists see temples (1995: 38–9). These are interesting observations, and they hardly indicate that Luke was a native Greek, comfortable with the Greek world. If anything, they would suggest that Acts is written from the perspective of an outsider to the West, and that its author saw Greek culture, especially its religious culture, as foreign, strange, and limited. Along with this, we might also observe with Marshall that 'Luke shows a particular interest in Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee and Peraea from 4 BC until his disposition by Caligula in AD 39' (1978: 133–4). These factors add to the suggestion that Luke is Jewish rather than Gentile, and they might locate him more towards Palestine than many have done.

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Chapter Nine

Luke the Priest

It is now time to turn to the primary purpose of this book, namely to construct the author of the Third Gospel as a priest. My basic interest is in the authority of the author of the Gospel. I begin from the premise that not everyone had the authority to write and to interpret the traditions about Jesus and Paul. The other Evangelists most likely were ascribed such authority to do so by a Christian community or communities, as the later traditions suggest. I believe Luke, however, had such authority as a Jewish priest, now obviously Christian. To support this construction, I will ask and respond to questions like: Are there signs in Luke (and Acts) of an interest in priests and in priestly things? Are there indications of positive portrayals of priests? Or are there indications of intra-priestly conflict – is the writer somewhat like the priests at Qumran who were dissatisfied with the priesthood in Jerusalem, especially at its higher levels? But the more obvious matter is the role and status of priests towards the end of the first century, after the destruction of Jerusalem's Temple.

The Authority and Status of Jewish Priests of the Second Temple Period and Beyond

There is, perhaps surprisingly, little published scholarship in New Testament studies on the role and status of priests in the first century of Christian history, especially after the destruction of the Temple – and so also of its cult – in the war of 66–70 CE. This is surprising when it is remembered that, while the Temple stood, priests obviously played vital and significant roles. What happened to the priests when their Temple was no longer operating? What happened to the priestly community at Qumran after its destruction in the Jewish war? Are there any indications that some priests were attracted to Jesus and to the movement that followed after him? If a priest did join the movement, what status and authority would he have had? If his Christian community was largely Gentile, would that have made his standing any different to what it might have been in a predominantly Jewish Christian community?

Schwartz notices the scholarly silence and the comparative silence of the Gospels themselves when it comes to the role of the priests. He observes that 'the priests are missing from the picture of religious leadership in the Gospels' picture of first-century Judaism. Priests serve as political leaders, but hardly as religious or theological authorities' (1992: 99). It is true that it is nearly always the chief or high priests that are even mentioned in the Gospels; Luke is the only Gospel to name an individual 'common priest' (Zechariah in 1:5). Schwartz goes on to say that New Testament scholars have drawn the conclusion that priests simply were not important as religious leaders, 'at least not in the horizons of Jesus and his disciples'. But, he

continues, 'that would be very surprising, in light of the very numerous references in literature of the Second Temple period, to the priests' important role with regard to the Torah … not only with regard to cult' (1992: 99).

With the destruction of the Temple, it is feasible to imagine that the authority and status of the priests underwent a transition, if it was not actually under some threat. Their link with the Temple gave them an assumed authority as keepers and guardians of the covenant. Without the Temple, such status was threatened, and with the Christian movement arising as well, the question of who had authority within any Jewish community was very much a live and volatile one. In any case, the Jesus movement, and to possibly a lesser degree the movement known through the Qumran texts, elevated the question of authority, especially interpretative authority, to the fore. Both movements certainly claimed interpretative authority that was distinctive from and in conflict with the authority of the Jerusalem priestly hierarchy. Questions over authority were always going to arise when issues of how to interpret the Torah were raised and when a community, such as a Christian one, set up its own judicial, halakhic system. It is very clear from the Gospels, and probably especially from Luke-Acts, that Christians did set up their own distinctive judicial systems, with 'the apostles and the elders' as the authoritative judges on such matters (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23).

The importance of priests was by no means limited to their roles in association with Temple sacrifices and the Temple cult in general. It does not follow that once the Temple was gone, priests were without a job! Another possibility that might account for the silence or lack of interest in post-Temple priests is an underlying rejection of the sacrificial system which some Christians see as inherent in Judaism, and that system is believed to have come to an end with the coming of the Christ. For whatever reason, the fact is that little is discussed in New Testament scholarship in regard to the priests after 70 CE, the very time in which the Gospel of Luke was probably written. It is understandable that the chief priests and the high priests would have lost from the Temple's destruction, but the many, many thousands of priests who 'only' did Temple service at the most for one week in twenty-four, would have lost comparatively little. In terms of being attracted to the Christian movement, it is not likely that the chief priests and those belonging to the wealthy, aristocratic, ruling priestly families would feel comfortable in a group whose hero had been condemned by them or their fathers; conversely, the 'ordinary priests' might well have been attracted to a movement that promised more egalitarian structures and a more equal distribution of wealth, let alone a movement that was 'radical' in the sense of returning to the roots of Israel's covenant. It is often attractive to some people if a leader arises who promises to get back to basics, to cut through a powerful hierarchical structure, to challenge the controllers of traditions, and to teach and model 'how things are meant to be'.

A glance through the Talmud will quickly remove any idea that the priests disappeared or 'had nothing to do of any consequence'. The loyalty of the priests was to the Torah and to its spirit and ideas. They tried to solve contradictions and to develop a system of laws that was both faithful to the Torah and could be practiced by the people. The result was 'priestly halakha'. They claimed that they had biblical and therefore divine authority to do so (Deut 21:5; 33:10; 2 Chron 17:8–9). Their teaching role continued, as did their duties in the regular worship of their communities. On

the basis of Lev 27:12, it was the duty of priests to sit on some courts (*M. Sanh*. 1.3), and Philo says there were priests well-versed in scriptural learning, who were responsible in the synagogue worship for the reading and interpretation of Torah (Eusebius, *Praep*. *Evang*. 8.7.12–13). E.P. Sanders notes a fourth-century inscription in a Sardis synagogue that refers to someone as a 'priest and teacher of wisdom', and notes it as 'a small bit of evidence that priests retained their identities and teaching role' (1990: 343 n. 33). A synagogue on Ophel reveals an inscription referring to 'Theodotus, son of Vettenos, priest and ruler of the synagogue' (Jeremias 1969: 66). Priests did not just disappear. They maintained their status, they knew their family histories, and they identified themselves as priests.

Generally speaking, the internal development of Israel after the exile essentially was determined by priests and scribes, with the priests being dominant well into the Hellenistic period (Schuerer 1973: 2.238). According to Schuerer,

> They organized the new community; it was from them that the Torah emanated; in their hands was the leadership of the community, not only in spiritual but also in material affairs. Whereas, however, they were originally themselves the expert interpreters of the Torah, gradually an independent order of Torah scholars and teachers came into being alongside of them. This must not, however, be understood to imply that the priests lost all their influence. (1973: 2.239)

Since they were rarely professionals in the sense of making a living from the priesthood, many of them were involved in other businesses. R. Eleazar b. Zadoq, for example, was a priest, scribe, and merchant in oil; Phanni was a stone mason, Eliazar b. Azariah was a cattle-breeder, another priest was a butcher, and a large number were scribes (Jeremias 1969: 206–7, 234). Understandably, many of them insisted that the tithings and other traditional offerings due to them were continued! This appears to have been commonly an issue. Philo, for example, says that priests would have had plenty if everyone paid their dues, but in reality, many were reduced to poverty because many of the people were indifferent and did not pay up. Some withheld their dues because they believed the priests were not living up to their calling (*Spec*. *Leg*. 1.153–155). It is also important to remember that the behavior of the high priests and priestly leaders in Jerusalem was not always indicative of that of the common priests. We know from Josephus that relations between the common priests and the priestly leaders were sometimes far from harmonious. Ananias, Caiaphas' father-in-law, forcibly took the tithes that were rightfully meant for the priests, beat those who refused to hand them over, and caused the deaths, by starvation, of some older priests who depended on those tithes for their living (*Ant*. 20.9.2). Luke mentions Annas and Caiaphas as holding the high-priesthood when 'the word of God came to John' (3:2). A priestly author of the Gospel and a priest in the audience might see some irony in the word of God coming to the son of a village priest and not to the high priests of Jerusalem. In the Gospels, including in Luke, it is the chief priests and rulers of the people, not the common priests, who receive the criticism and who are seen to be in opposition and conflict with Jesus.

The important point is that priests played far wider, and even more important, roles than taking responsibility for the daily sacrifices in the Temple. For the great majority of them, the latter demanded very little of their time. Many priests were

literate, and we have a number of examples of priests as writers (compare Luke 1:63!). As such, they were in a position to control tradition and to determine proper and acceptable behavior.

It is easy to get the impression that the priests were a small, elite group who lived in Jerusalem and who controlled the Temple and all its activities. It is also easy to think that they are the ones, along with the Romans, responsible for the death of Jesus. But none of this finds evidence in the Gospels. It is the high priests who formed the small, elite, family-inherited power-group in Jerusalem. It is with the 'chief priests and the scribes' that, according to Luke, Judas negotiates the price for Jesus' betrayal (Luke 22:4), and it is the 'chief priests and officers of the temple and elders' who themselves come to arrest Jesus (22:52). Similarly, it is the 'chief priests and scribes' who vehemently accuse Jesus before Herod (23:10). And 'the chief priests and the rulers of the people' bring Jesus to Pilate for trial (23:13). If Luke has any animosity towards priests, it is towards the ruling priests in Jerusalem, not towards priests in general. In that regard, he would not have been alone among priests!

The vast majority of priests did not live in Jerusalem, let alone were they the chief decision-makers in Israel. According to Josephus, there were some 20,000 priests (*C. Apion* 2.108), compared to about 6,000 Pharisees and 4,000 Essenes (*War* 17.42; 18.21). Obviously, then the priests did not constitute a tiny, unified elite. Nor were they all members of one political or religious sect or party; rather, priests and Levites 'constituted a number of kinship groups not solely affiliated with any particular sects or parties' (Flannery-Dailey 2004: 147). Josephus was a priest, and proud of it, yet he could in turn belong to the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes (*Vita* 10). And as already mentioned, there is evidence that the regular, common priests had good reasons to be disgruntled with their treatment at the hands of the ruling priests of Jerusalem. Such priests might well have been attracted to the Jesus movement. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, many priests moved away from Judea, some north into Galilee where they continued to live in priestly communities as they had previously done. It is known from a 1962 discovery in an excavated synagogue of Caesarea that Nazareth was the home of the priestly division called Happizzez (see 1 Chron 24:15).

Among the rabbis, there was some debate as to the relation between the written and the oral Torah. On the one side, R. Johanan said: 'God made a covenant with Israel only for the sake of that which was transmitted orally, as it says, for by the mouth of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel' (*Git*. 60b). On the other side were a number of priests, in particular, who insisted only on the written Torah. In fact it would seem that the priests were not keepers or transmitters of the oral tradition at all, but only of the written. The priestly aristocracy controlled the Temple library and the sacred texts. They were literate elites whose authority was threatened by the oral tradition. Groups like the Pharisees, in contrast, were largely composed of the lay classes. They invested authority in the teacher and in the oral tradition. It is striking, for example, that the chain of oral tradition laid out in *Mishnah Aboth* includes no priests. If Luke is a priest, it would be understandable that he then prefers to write the tradition about Jesus rather than to transmit it only in oral form. It would also be consistent if Luke depicts the Pharisees in negative, rather than positive, terms especially in matters of halakhic dispute. And so he does. It is

a Pharisee who has problems with Jesus' acceptance of a sinner-woman's anointing (7:39), with Jesus not washing before eating (11:38), who 'exalted himself' and so went home 'unjustified' (18:10–14). It is Pharisees who accuse Jesus of blasphemy by forgiving sins (5:21); who complain about his commensality practice (5:30) and his Sabbath observances (6:2). These incidents suggest a difference in halakhic interpretation between Jesus (and Luke) and some Pharisees. Jesus accuses them of hypocrisy, of pride, of neglecting 'justice and the love of God' (11:39–43), and of being 'lovers of money' (16:14). His disciples are warned first of all against the 'leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy' (12:1). Overall, Luke can comment that 'the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves' (7:30). It is not a judgment made on priests in Luke. For all that, the Pharisees play no role in the arrest, trial and execution of Jesus – indeed, they even warn Jesus of Herod's plot to kill him (13:31). Pharisees and Jesus (and Luke) had this in common – they both rejected the aristocratic priesthood of Jerusalem.

Luke's attitude towards the Pharisees on matters of halakha is very similar to that of Josephus. Josephus proudly claims that interpretation of Torah belongs to the priests, and he is very reticent to give any credibility to the claims of the Pharisees to be authoritative interpreters. He implies this when he describes Simon, 'of the sect of the Pharisees, which are *supposed* (δοκοῦσιν) to excel others in the accurate knowledge of the laws of their country' (*Vita* 191). Again, in *War*, he cannot help himself: 'they appear more religious than others, and seem to interpret the laws more accurately' (1.5.2). Josephus clearly prefers, and gives more attention to, the Essenes (Mason 1988: 661). So both Luke and Josephus reject Pharisaic interpretations and paint negative pictures of that group. It might be because both writers were priests and wanted to oppose any threat that the Pharisees represented with their insistence on and preference for the oral traditions.

Because I understand Luke as a priest, what especially interests me is the role of priests in preserving the tradition, interpreting the tradition, and in teaching in general. Fraade claims that 'the extant sources, right up to and shortly after the destruction of the Temple, continue to associate the overall authority to preserve, interpret, teach, and legally apply sacred Scriptures with the priesthood' (1990: 421). These roles were not unique to Jewish priests. As Marincola, speaking of the Roman world, says, 'there are rather a large number of places where priests play a role as preservers of traditions' (1997: 108). But among Jews, the role of priests as both guardians and teachers of Torah is very clearly indicated in a number of Jewish writings of the period, and it had its basis in the command of Yahweh given to Moses and Aaron. According to Deuteronomy, Moses wrote down the Torah and entrusted it to 'the priests the sons of Levi … and to all the elders of Israel', telling them to read it 'before all Israel in their hearing' during the feast of booths (31:9) and 'they shall teach Jacob thy ordinances and Israel thy law (33:10). Aaron is instructed 'to teach the people of Israel all the statutes' (Lev 10:10), and priestly interpretation of the Law is to be obeyed without question or else face the death penalty (Deut 17:9–12).

The Chronicler, who has some similarities with Luke, shows a particular interest in priests, and probably reveals his priestly background when he says: 'For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without Torah' (2 Chron 15:3). This implies that the presence of the true God, a teaching

priest, and Torah went hand in hand. It could also be taken to imply that Torah requires a teaching priest. Torah originally meant 'instruction', and oral instruction at that, but it is clear from the literature of the Second Temple period that the oral Torah/instruction had been transformed into the written. The shift is already seen 1 Chron 16:40 which refers to 'all that is written in the Torah of Yahweh which he commanded Israel'. The same book shows priests as teachers and instructors in the written Torah: 'and they taught in Judah, having with them the scroll of the Torah of Yahweh, and they went about through all the cities of Judah and taught the people' (2 Chron 17:9). Another canonical text, Malachi, reveals the same: 'the lips of the priest guard knowledge and the Torah should be sought from his mouth' (2:7). The Lord reminds Israel through Ezekiel that the priests 'shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the clean and the unclean. In controversy, they shall act as judges …' (Ezek 44: 23–24; compare Haggai 2:11–12). Aaron and his descendants were given authority by the Lord 'to teach Jacob the testimonies and to enlighten Israel with his law' (*Sir* 45:17; compare also *T. Levi* 13:1–2, *Aristeas*). Ezra, the 'chief priest and reader', read the Law to Israel, and it was some Levites who 'taught the law of the Lord, at the same time explaining what was read' (*1 Esd* 9:48). And Josephus writes to Epaphroditus that Moses gave to the priests 'the main care of the law and of the other parts of the people's conduct committed to them, for they were the priests who were ordained to be the inspectors of all, and the judges in doubtful cases …' (*C. Apion* 2.187; see also *C. Apion* 2.21–23; *War* 3.8.3). Eusebius cites Philo as saying that it is the practice on the Sabbath

> to assemble together in the same place, and sitting down with one another, to listen to the laws with order and reverence … And then some priest who is present, or some one of the elders, reads the sacred laws to them, and interprets each of them separately till eventide, and then when separate they depart, having gained some skill in the sacred laws, and having made great advances towards piety. (*Hypothetica* 712–713)

Jesus ben Sirach of Jerusalem is one such priest, and it is Jesus' wisdom and teaching (that came from a devotion to 'the reading of the law and the prophets and the other books of our fathers') that is translated from Hebrew for contemporaries (*Prologue* 1–26). Stadelmann argues that ben Sira was a priestly scribe who had a remarkably positive attitude to the poor and was a lawyer for the oppressed and those unjustly dealt with (1980: 271). Ben Sira's interests indicate his very close relation to the priesthood (272). It is worth noting that another priestly text, *1 Enoch*, also has a deep concern for the poor and a strong word of judgment on the rich (*1 Enoch* 92–105). Some have pointed to the close similarities between Luke 12:16–21 and *1 Enoch* 97: 8–10, for example (Esler 1987: 189). It should not surprise that priests show such concerns in their writings since they were often responsible for legal judgments in their communities (many of which undoubtedly had to do with money) and for 'righteous living' among them.

Ben Sirach saw the duty to the poor on the one hand and the duty to the study of scripture on the other. For him, the Scriptures are the source of revelation (Stadelmann 1980: 271). In *Sir* 45.6–22, the Aaronic priesthood is idealized and highly honored.

Aaron is the exalted priest with whom God made an everlasting covenant, clothed with garments that only the priest can wear. It is the priest who sacrifices for the atonement of Israel, and who has the authority from God to judge, to teach, and 'to enlighten Israel with his Law'. Clearly, as Stadelmann says, the priest is not only responsible for the cult, but he is privileged in matters of Torah: he is an expert, a teacher, and authoritative in his pronouncements (1980: 277). It is not difficult to see Luke as having similar interests and concerns. I suggest that is, in part, because like ben Sirach, he is a writing, teaching priest. The 'my son' language in Sirach strongly hints at the teacher–disciple relationship, a relationship I suggest that also existed between Luke and Theophilus.

Overall, there is much about Second Temple priests, their status and their roles that fit well the character of the author of the Third Gospel. He can readily be constructed to be one of them. It is a construction that finds extra support from an examination of priests in the Qumran texts.

Priests in the Qumran Texts

The priests who governed the community at Qumran were a distinct, separate group who had broken with the priesthood in Jerusalem responsible for the Temple and its cultus (1QS 9.3–4; CD 6.11–15). But this was regarded as temporary until the Temple cult was restored and renewed (1QM and 11QT). While obviously removed from the sacrificial cult of the Temple, and not opposed to it as such, these priests continued as priests at Qumran and elsewhere, in their local communities. It is a reminder that priests could continue to function and to maintain their priestly status and office without the Temple – a point that Garcia Martinez stresses (1999).

There are four primary functions of the priests apparent in the Qumran texts: teaching, interpreting Scripture, judging, and blessing. These are all functions that are of interest to Luke to such a degree that Jesus himself is portrayed as performing many of these roles.

From the Qumran texts, it would seem that the priests and the Levites held the highest positions in the community, especially in teaching and instruction in matters of *mishpatim* and of Torah. The Teacher of Righteousness himself was a priest who had the role of both prophet and interpreter (4Q171 3.14). He was 'The Priest whom God has placed within the community to foretell the fulfillment of all the words of his servants the prophets' (1QpHab 2.8–9) and to whom 'God has made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets (1QpHab 7.5–6). Byrskog says, 'The didactic assessment of the Righteousness Teacher might relate to the depiction of him as priest' (1994: 50).

Closely related to the Teacher of Righteousness was the Maskil ('the wise one', 'the enlightened one' = the teacher), who had the responsibility and duty 'to enlighten and to teach all the sons of light' (1QS 3.13), and to instruct them in the mysteries of wonder and truth (1QS 9.12–20). The 'I' who speaks in the Thanksgiving Hymns is probably the Teacher of Righteousness and he calls himself a 'maskil' (4Q427 H(a)3 ii 5, 12 and 1QH(a) 20.11–13). Very similar language is explicitly used of the

Teacher of Righteousness elsewhere (1QpHab 7.4–8). The Maskil is also the one offering the blessings of 1QSb.

Another leader, the Paqid ('inspector'), also had a teaching role. He was 'the priest who governs over the many' (4Q266 11.8) and 'the man appointed at the head of the many' (1QS 6.14) who tested new candidates. According to the regulations of the Damascus Document, 'the priest who shall govern at the head of the many shall be between thirty and sixty years old, learned in the Book of Hagy and in all the regulations of the Torah to expound them according to their regulations' (CD 14.6–8). 1QS 5.8–9 claims that the sons of Zadok had the Torah revealed to them, and members are to comply with their teaching because 'they interpret his will'.

Finally, there was also the Mebaqqer, who 'must teach the general membership about the works of God, instruct them in his mighty miracles, relate to them the future events coming to the world with their interpretations, he should care for them as a father does his children …' (CD13.7–9). It is clear that the priests in the Community were the sole authoritive teachers. If Luke had been a member of that community, he might have held the office of Mebaqqer!

The priests were also responsible for decisions about membership, property, Torah, and halakhic judgments in general. According to the Damascus Document, 'a priest knowledgeable in the Book of Meditation should always be present; by his command all shall be ruled', but if a priest is not qualified, then a qualified Levite shall take over, except in the matter of skin diseases because only a priest can instruct in those matters, even if he is ignorant (CD 13.2–7). The Urim and Thummim, used in oracular judgments in Israel, had been given to Levi (4Q175 17–18). It seems that the casting of lots by the priests was a common way for decisions to be made in priestly communities and by priests in their judgments among the people (4Q164; 4QpIsad); 1QS 6.18–19, 21 refers to the use of casting lots for membership within the community. This lot-casting clearly is done on the authority of the priests who were responsible not only for determining membership but also for 'every affair involving the law, property and judgment' (1QS 5.3). Likewise, 1QS 9.7 says: 'Only the sons of Aaron will have authority in the matter of judgment and of goods, and by their authority will come out the lot for all decisions regarding the men of the community and the goods of the men of holiness who walk in perfection.'

The practice of casting lots was also used to determine when a particular priestly group would be responsible for Temple service. This practice is of interest because in Acts 1:26 the apostle to replace Judas is chosen precisely by this means. The Talmud describes the custom in relation to Temple service:

> They stood in a circle; and the officer, coming, snatches off a cap from the head of this or that man. From him the lot begins to be reckoned, every one lifting up his finger at each number. The officer also says, 'In whoever the number ends, he obtains this or that office by lot.' And he declares the number; i.e., there is, it may be, the number one hundred, or threescore, according to the multitude of the priests standing around. He begins to reckon from the person whose cap he snatched off, and counts until the whole number is run out. Now, wherever the number terminates, he obtains that office about which the lot was concerned. And so it is in all the lots. (Gloss, *Yoma* fol. 22.1)

According to the Acts of the Apostles, lots were cast to decide whether Matthias or Joseph Justus should replace Judas among the Twelve (Acts 1:26). Fitzmyer notes that this parallels the practice in determining priestly functions (1 Chron 24:5; 26:13–14; Neh 10:34), but he thinks it more closely resembles the general practice at Qumran of casting lots for admission of members into groups (1976: 250). If that is the case, then we might validly see some links and parallels between priestly functions at Qumran and those of the early Christian community in Jerusalem according to Luke. Fitzmyer, however, prefers to note the differences rather than the similarities.

As might be expected, the priests were also the arbiters, and the sole arbiters, in matters of purity. According to Ezek 44:23–24, 'they shall teach my people to distinguish between the sacred and the profane and to differentiate the clean and the unclean … and in a dispute they shall stand to judge, they shall judge according to my judgments'. The Qumran documents make it obvious that priests had this duty (11QT 57.11–15; 1QS 8.1; CD 10.4–10; 4Q159 2–4; 1QSa 1.24). Luke also knows of this duty, as the leper is told to show himself to the priest (Luke 5:14). One might also see the Jerusalem Council's decrees in Acts 15 as the decrees of the priests of the renewed Israel. That Council was the authoritative arbiter on halakhic matters among Christians.

The priests also held the responsibility of pronouncing the blessings (1QSb 3.28). Again, others can bless and sing the Berakhot, but the blessing of God on the people was a priestly function. Often, the blessing was threefold. For example, 'And the Priests shall bless all the men of the lot of God … saying, "May he bless you with all good … May he lighten your heart … May he raise his merciful face …"' (1QS 2.1). At meals, priests presided and they uttered the benediction (1QS 6.4–5; 1QSa 2.17–20). The texts found at Qumran include blessings that the leader of the Community, called the Instructor, was to recite when Israel was assembled (1QSb; 1QS28b). It is tempting to interpret Luke's ascending Jesus, with his hands raised in blessing, as the actions of a priest, and to think that Luke held Jesus to be the heavenly priest who blesses Israel.

These four functions of the priests according to the Dead Sea Scrolls – teaching, interpreting Scripture, judging, and blessing – parallel closely the role and status that the author of the Third Gospel claims for Jesus, and in so doing was also claiming for himself.

Priests in Luke-Acts

In examining the narrative of Luke-Acts for its attitudes towards priests, it is important to distinguish between priests. There were chief priests or high priests who controlled the Temple and who ruled from Jerusalem; and there were thousands of regular, ordinary priests who lived in their villages and towns, and who performed Temple service only very rarely in a year. They taught Torah in their communities and synagogues, they made judgments on legal matters, and they collected the tithes and so on. This distinction is clear in Acts: 'A large crowd' of ordinary priests are said to join the Jesus movement (Acts 6:7), but it is the high priests and Sadducees who consistently oppose the apostles. In addition to the priests, there were also

Levites, who also had particular roles and functions, especially in relation to the Temple. Barnabas, the apostle and companion of Paul, is identified by Luke as a Levite (Acts 4:36).

The priests in Luke-Acts who do not receive favorable press are the chief priests and the Sadducees. Generally speaking, the chief priests were Sadducees. In Acts 4, the 'priests and the captain of the Temple (στρατηγὸς τοῦ ἱεροῦ) and the Sadducees' are annoyed that Peter and John 'were teaching the people', and thus usurping the priestly role, 'and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead' (Acts 4:1–2). The high priestly family take over, along with the elders, and they threaten the apostles, but are afraid to punish them 'because of the people' (4:21). As the apostles persist, 'the high priest [and] the party (αἵρεσις) of the Sadducees' have them arrested and imprisoned (5:17–18), and again they question them. So enraged are they with the apostles' response that they want them killed (5:33), but the advice of the Pharisee, Gamaliel, calms them (5:34–40). Josephus says that the Sadducees were the hardliners when it came to penalties and the punishment of offenders (*Ant.* 20.9.1). Stephen is executed by the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:58), and Paul obtains letters from the high priest to track down Christians in the synagogues of Damascus (9:2). Priests disappear from the narrative once it takes its heroes outside of Jerusalem (if anything, the 'rulers' [οἱ ἄρχοντες] are blamed for things; for example, 13:27). When Paul returns to Jerusalem, there is no mention of priests of any kind being involved in his arrest (21:30), but the Roman tribune calls the Sanhedrin together (22:30). During the hearing, the high priest Ananias orders that Paul be struck in the mouth (23:2), and Paul implicitly apologizes for addressing the high priest in an inappropriate manner (23:5). He then proceeds to split the Sanhedrin down party lines by referring to the resurrection (23:6). Like Gamaliel, other Pharisees declare Paul innocent (23:9). There are some Jews who go to the chief priests and elders and threaten under vow to have Paul killed (23:14), but there is no recorded response from the chief priests and elders. Only later does Ananias, the high priest, come with some elders and a spokesman to bring his case against Paul to Felix (24:1). Again, when Festus is in Jerusalem, 'the chief priests and the principal men (οἱ πρῶτοι) of the Jews' inform against Paul (25:2).

Overall, the opposition to the apostles is from the chief priests, the elders, and Sadducees. While it is persistent throughout Luke's narrative, their opposition is somewhat muted. In the end, it is not the opposing plans and scheming of the rulers, but the plan of God that interests Luke and that brings about the final destination and destiny of Paul. There is certainly no indication that the run-of-the-mill priests opposed the apostles.

On the positive side, as noted, there is one statement in Acts indicating that some priests associated with the Jesus movement. Luke says, 'a great crowd of the priests were obedient to the faith' (πολύς τε ὄχλος τῶν ἱερέων ὑπήκουν τῇ πίστει, Acts 6:7). The context suggests these were priests in Jerusalem. I take this as an indication that Luke had some sympathy for the common priests, and it might suggest that he himself belonged to that group. It is probably not coincidental that having made this statement, Luke immediately continues with the Stephen cycle in his narrative. We are probably supposed to think of Stephen as being one of those priests. In what follows in Acts 6–7, there is nothing that would gainsay that suggestion, and a few

things that might support it. Stephen, like the priests of Israel, obviously knows the tradition and can recall and relate it; but not only does he retell it, he interprets it. He is not reprimanded by his superiors in the Sanhedrin (which included priests) for doing something he had no authority to do. He was a legitimate controller and 'owner' of the tradition. In that way, then, Stephen is like the writers of *Jubilees* and of the *Testament of Levi*, both most likely priests. He is also not dissimilar to Josephus, another priest.

In addition to Stephen, Luke presents Joseph Barnabas in a very favorable light as a fellow-worker and companion of Paul (the identification that was later given of Luke himself in the tradition). Luke identifies him as a Levite (Acts 4:36), one of the priestly groups in Israel. It would seem that this Levite, although coming from Cyprus, had close links with Jerusalem (4:31) and also had very close dealings with the apostles there. It is the apostles who give him his second name (4:31), and it is to the apostles in Jerusalem that Barnabas brings Paul after his Damascus experience (9:27). When Greek-speakers had success in Antioch, it is Barnabas whom the Jerusalem church sends there (11:22), and it is Barnabas who went to Tarsus to find Paul and bring him to Antioch (11:25–26). Barnabas and Paul then engage in teaching at Antioch (11:26). When Judea needed financial relief because of a famine, Barnabas is one of those in charge of the relief effort (11:30). It was a job that a Levite was trained and authorized to do. Luke places Barnabas at the very head of the list of prophets and teachers at Antioch (Acts 13:1); such roles were commonly given to Levites in the Second Temple period. After many and various missions with Paul, during which they were inseparable, according to Luke's narrative, in the end Paul and Barnabas fall out and go their separate ways (15:39). There is no negative judgment on Barnabas for this in the narrative. Barnabas is not portrayed by Luke as inferior to Paul – if anything, he appears in Acts as Paul's senior and mentor. I suggest Luke saw Barnabas almost as a reflection of himself. He is almost pointed in his association of priestly figures with his central characters – John with Jesus, Barnabas with Paul. In addition, Zechariah, Simeon, and Stephen are all righteous men, possibly all belonging to priestly groups, all involved in interpreting the plans of God for Israel and all important characters in Luke's narrative.

In the Gospel, too, it is not the priests or the Levites who provide the opposition and seek to get rid of Jesus but the 'chief priests and scribes' (Luke 19:47; 20:1, 19; 22:2; 22:66; 23:10) or the 'chief priests and the rulers of the people' (23:13). It is opposition that comes when Jesus is teaching in the Temple, as it is in the case of Peter and John in Acts. The opposition from the chief priests is totally reserved for the passion narrative. Prior to that, the opposition comes largely from the Pharisees and lawyers, the scribes (5:17; 6:7; 14:1; 15:2; for example), sometimes from 'the crowds' or 'the people' (11:15), but there is never a mention of a priest opposing Jesus. The parable of the Good Samaritan, which uses a priest and a Levite in its telling as counters to the Samaritan who acted as a neighbor to the victim, is the only passage in which Jesus casts the ordinary priest in a bad light (10:29–37). The point of Jesus (and of Luke) appears to be that priestly purity issues do not override the concern and care for one's neighbor.

But what does Luke think or know of the ordinary, individual priest? There are only two specifically mentioned as common priests – Zechariah, and a fictituous

actor in the Good Samaritan parable. But John the Baptist should be included by implication at least. Statistically, that is very little on whch to build a case that Luke is interested in individual priests! But the significance of Zechariah and John in the narrative is considerable. After all, the Gospel narrative begins with a priest and in a predominantly priestly world. Luke is not unaware of the significance that names have. When he introduced his narrative with a named priest, there might well have been some in his audience (especially those who were priests) who knew that Zechariah means 'Yahweh remembers'. Of course, this name is significant in the case of the priest and his barren wife, but it also introduces the broader motif of 'God remembers' for Luke, and the encouragement for his community, particularly those from a Jewish background who might have thought that God had abandoned Israel – the Temple is destroyed, the majority of fellow-Jews do not accept the Jesus movement as valid, Gentiles seem to be increasingly joining the movement with the result that observance of traditional dietary and other laws came under increasing strain. Priests belonging to the Jesus people might especially have felt forgotten by God. But they, in particular, might have derived comfort from hearing of one of their class being directly involved in the Jesus narrative. Yahweh remembers a priest; he remembers us.

The few details that are given about Zechariah as priest fit what we know about priests: They took their time of service according to lots and according to courses (the course of Abijah mentioned in Luke 1:5 is also listed in 4Q328, 329, and 329a), they did not all live in Jerusalem, they were expected to marry within the priestly families, and they burnt incense (Luke 1:5–9). Luke portrays Zechariah and his wife very favorably – they are both 'righteous before God, walking blameless in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord' (Luke 1:6). A priest and his wife could not ask for a better reference! Righteous people are the models Luke holds up to his audience, as is epitomized at the crucifixion of Jesus (Luke 23:47). So it is not just the narrative that begins with a priest, but the gospel itself begins with God's actions and promises to a priest. Zechariah and Elizabeth are obedient to the angel's command when the child is to be named, despite protests from their kin (1:60–62). When the child is correctly named, Zechariah's tongue is released, and the first thing he does is to 'bless God' (1:64) – a further indication of his righteous character, as is his prophetic and inspired song (1:68–79). Luke has no problems with a priest and his wife from the hill country of Judea both being 'filled with the holy Spirit' (1:41, 67). Divine revelation and inspiration was a sign of valid authority. Zechariah and John stand as true priests in contradistinction to those who 'kill the prophets and apostles'and the priest Zechariah who 'perished between the altar and the sanctuary' (11:45–51).

John the Baptist is the child of priestly parents. He and Jesus are not just blood-relatives, but both are related in their roles in God's plans for Israel. Both have priestly ancestry, both preach 'good news to the people' (Luke 3:18; 4:43). In one of the few narrator's asides in the Gospel, 'the Pharisees and the lawyers' are said to have 'rejected the purposes of God for themselves', and the reason for that judgment by the narrator is that they had not been baptized by John (7:30). The rejection of John and the rejection of Jesus go hand in hand. In Acts, the replacement for Judas must have been 'with us … beginning from the baptism of John' (Acts 1:21–22).

This intertwining of John and Jesus is something one might expect of a priestly author. He links Jesus closely with priesthood; it would certainly be encouraging for any priest in the audience who possibly had doubts or needed reassurance about belonging to The Way.

The link between John and priesthood is demonstrated in Luke in literary ways as well. Brodie suggests Luke imitates the priestly Chronicler. He notes the parallels between 1 Chron 15–16 and Luke 1:57–80. The Chronicler emphasizes that it is the priests and Levites who prepare the way for the ark to be brought into Jerusalem; Luke says another priestly family, namely that of John, prepares the way for the Lord (2004: 526–7).

From a narrative viewpoint, the audience is already aware that Jesus has close priestly links, he belongs to the temple which he calls his Father's house, he is an interpreter of the Scriptures, and he resists the testings of Satan by citing the Scriptures. So when Jesus comes to his home town of Nazareth, he appears in the synagogue and 'stood up to read' the Scriptures. Talmudic law prescribes that the honor of being first called upon for the reading of the Torah should belong to the priest (*Tefillah* 14.15; *Sot*. 38b; *Git*. 5.8).

The other reference to an individual priest in the Gospel comes in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). The story is an attack on Levitical and priestly purity codes. Mann (1916) argues that the Pharisees would have agreed with Jesus that it was obligatory even for a high priest to contract impurity and bury a dead body found lying uncared for and unburied. As Josephus says it was the duty ordained by Moses to 'do in common to all men, as to afford fire and water and food to such as want it; to show them the roads; nor to let anyone lie unburied' (*C. Apion* 2.211). The Sadducees, however, rejected this and insisted on ritual puity on the basis of the written Law (Lev 21:11). So the parable certainly touched on very important, if not divisive, issues of purity interpretation.

The priest in that parable travels down (κατέβαινεν) from Jerusalem to Jericho (10:31). The mention of Jericho might indicate Luke's awareness that Jericho, while not a priestly city according to the distribution in the Scriptures, had been taken over by the Temple and its priesthood, probably in the time of the Hasmoneans around 130 BCE. The Babylonian Talmud suggests there was a large colony of priests there who occupied themselves with agriculture as farmers. Priests from Jericho regularly (probably weekly) supplied the Temple in Jerusalem with priests to be on duty (possibly even as many as half of them) and with supplies of food and water. The multiplicity of baths found in Jericho also suggests priestly inhabitants and an understandable concern for ritual purity (Schwartz 1988). It might also have been a purification point for pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Under Herod, priestly control of Jericho was not so great and tension existed for a period, but the priests perservered and continued to set the tone for Jericho (Schwartz 1998: 48). The trunks of the sycamores in Jericho were dedicated to the Temple in Herodian period. The 'bellicose priests' (*ba'ale zero'ot*), often spoken of in the Talmud, were at Jericho, where the owners of sycamore-trees were obliged to consecrate them to the Lord in order to save them from the rapacity of the priests (*Pes*. 57a).

If Jericho was a priestly town, then the story of Zacchaeus, who is located in Jericho (19:1–2), takes on added significance. Once again, the significance of the

name is worth noting. Zacchaeus means 'pure', yet from a priestly standpoint, he obviously has not lived up to his name, and the murmurers (usually in the Gospel those who claim to be interpreters of halakhic issues) complain that Jesus is a 'guest of a man who is a sinner' (19:7). Jesus pronounces that sinner to be righteous and a 'son of Abraham' (19:9). This is behavior that fitted well the status of a priest as Torah interpreter and judge.

There is one other priestly character in Luke's Gospel. During the arrest of Jesus, someone in the crowd cuts of the right ear of a 'servant of the high priest' (δοῦλος τοῦ ἀρχιερέως). It is possible that this refers to an 'apprentice' priest rather than to a slave working in the high priest's household or court. Jesus calls on the violence to stop and heals the man's ear with his touch (Luke 22:49–51). The healing is not mentioned in the other Gospels. By healing the priest, Luke might be indicating that the priesthood is not in itself contrary to the Way of Jesus and so it must not be attacked with violence. Given the importance of hearing the word in Luke's Gospel, the healing of the priest's ear could be a sign that priests too are not to be prevented from hearing the word.

Overall, there are some signs that the writer of Luke-Acts has an interest in priestly people. He is generally sympathetic to those priests who were disenchanted with the high priestly bureaucracy in Jerusalem and who looked to God as their only hope for renewal and reform. There is also much that the writer has in common with priests who wrote and read the Community texts known from Qumran. If a priest were part of the audience of Luke-Acts, my guess is that he would have taken heart and assurance and have felt included among the holy ones who live according to The Way.

Priestly Interests in Luke-Acts

If priests were involved in such matters as Scripture interpretation, teaching, blessing, and judging, then we might expect Luke to show interest in them.

I have already suggested that Luke's writing style follows that of the school context, and that the relationship between Luke and Theophilus might well be one of teacher and disciple. Many scholars have noticed the teaching role that Luke adopts, and it is quite common for them to talk of Luke as a teacher. I have already noted Alexander's preference to locate Luke's writing in the genre of that which might come out of an educational or instructional setting. In his preface, Luke talks about offering some certainty to the words in which Theophilus has been instructed (1:4), and that would suggest either that Luke has been the instructor and he is now giving Theophilus a written version of that instruction, or that Luke provides a written form of the traditions and narratives that Theophilus has learnt through some other instructor. Probably, the former is the case. Instruction was commonly by recitation and repetition of what the teacher says. Luke intends Theophilus to repeat and recite his words because they are the 'safe' words, and he now has them in the safety of written form. Stenschke believes the shape and content of Luke-Acts 'indicate that Luke himself had a catechetical intention', and that, like Paul, 'Luke is also a doctor gentium'. In Stenschke's opinion, Luke was convinced that 'Gentiles need instruction to enable them to become Jesus' disciples and wayfarers' (1999: 343).

I agree with the instructional factor, but I am not convinced that we need to think only of Gentiles as the ones being instructed. Schuermann is another who sees Luke as teacher: Luke sees himself as a teacher who, according to Luke 1:1-4, is bound to the tradition (1978:153). Schmithals agrees: he could be seen as a teacher of a catechumen-school and his double-work as a handbook for community (1980: 9). As I suggested almost at the beginning of this book, Luke is very much like the Teacher of Righteousness who was the forefather of the Qumran community.

If Luke was a teacher, we might expect that he portray Jesus as such, and that is precisely the case. Luke quite often refers to Jesus as 'Teacher' (ὁ διδάσκαλος), or his characters address Jesus as such (7:40; 9:38; 10:25; 11:45; 12:13; 18:18; 19:39; 20:21, 28, 39; 21:7; 22:11). Occasionally, the exclusively Lukan term ἐπιστάτα is used (5:5; 8:24, 45; 9:39, 49; 17:13); often, its parallel in the Synoptic Gospels is διδάσκαλος (for example, Luke 8:24 // Mark 8:38). It is a term that is used almost exclusively by the disciples (Peter and John especially; once it is used by a group of ten lepers). As a teacher, Jesus is a carrier and transmitter of the tradition just as Luke himself is. The authority that the teaching Jesus has in the Gospel is an authority that the teaching author claimed for himself. It is also quite possible that the emphasis on Jesus as teacher fits in with Luke's eschatology which might have included the expectation that God would himself teach Israel. Jesus has his authority to teach from God himself; the Voice at his baptism (Luke 3:22) and on the mountain (9:35) authorizes him to be the Teacher in Israel. It also fits the pattern of the teaching priests in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah who went around Israel teaching and instructing the people in Torah and thus renewing Israel by returning to the written text and, by implication, abandoning the oral traditions, or at least relegating their status and authority. Luke believes that Jesus is part of God's renewing of Israel, and teaching is crucial to that role. But not only is Jesus the agent in God's plan; Luke himself is God's teaching agent.

The primary interest in teaching is continued – possibly even increased – in the Acts. That book begins with a reference to 'all the things that Jesus began to do and to teach' (1:1), a phrase used of Ezra the priest (καὶ ποιεῖν καὶ διδάσκειν, Ezra 7:10). It continues with the community 'continuing in the teaching of the apostles' (2:42), with the Temple authorities showing annoyance because the apostles were 'teaching the people' (4:2), and banning them from 'teaching at all in the name of Jesus' (4:18). That does not stop the apostles from teaching in the Temple at daybreak (5:21, 25) with the same reaction from the high priest who accuses them of 'filling Jerusalem with your teaching' (5:28). But they continue in the Temple and in 'the house' (κατ' οἶκον), teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ' (5:42). Barnabas and Saul spend a year in Antioch and 'taught a large crowd' in that time (11:26; compare also 15:35), and 13:1 lists both of them, along with others, as 'prophets and teachers'. Paul himself spends eighteen months in Corinth 'teaching the word of God' there (18:11), and he summarizes his work among the Ephesian elders as one of teaching both publicly and privately (20:20). Finally, it is Paul's teaching in Jerusalem (21:28) that leads eventually to his imprisonment in Rome where the Acts narrative ends with Paul 'teaching the things about the Lord Jesus Christ' (διδάσκων τὰ περὶ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Peter and the other apostles, along with Barnabas and Paul are the new teachers of Israel, the new Ezras, the new priests.

I have already demonstrated that one of the most important, if not unique, features of Jewish synagogues and assemblies (carried on in Christian assemblies) was the public recitation and exposition or interpretation of the Scriptures. Along with the priestly blessings, the recitation and exposition of Torah was at the very heart of such assemblies and their worship. It replaced the centrality of the sacrificial cult of the Temple period. So who had authority over these activities? Who controlled them? Priests again are likely candidates. There is very good evidence that priests were dominant figures in the synagogues of Israel and elsewhere, especially after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE (E.P. Sanders 1992: 170–182; see also *Mishnah Tamid* 5.1). If there were a Christian assembly somewhere and the issue of who controlled the reading and interpretation of the Scriptures arose, I could easily imagine that a Jewish priest, now obviously Christian, would take on that role, having that assumed status. That could well be the case whether the assembly was predominantly Jewish or predominantly Gentile.

Since priests were concerned about the right interpretation of Torah, Luke is likely to be one of them because in both his writings he shows a great interest in and concern for the Scriptures and their interpretation. Once again, he constructs Jesus in his own image to some degree; or, at least, Luke sees himself as continuing in the tradition of Jesus as an interpreter. More than that, there are hints he believes he has been authorized to continue the tradition of Jesus (and in Acts, also of Paul). In the Gospel, Jesus is strongly depicted as a Scripture interpreter (already from the age of 12), and almost the last thing that Jesus does with his disciples is to interpret the Scriptures to them and to give them authority, responsibility and the duty to do likewise (24:44–49). The giving of the promised holy Spirit is not divorced from the authority to interpret Scripture. In fact, Luke (and most Jews) could not have conceived of any scriptural interpreter that was not holy Spirit inspired. In the Gospel, it is Jesus; in Acts, it is Peter and Paul, Stephen and others who are all Spirit-inspired characters, and who are all interpreters of Scripture. Acts ends, as a narrative, with Paul in Rome arguing scriptural interpretation with other Jews, and interpreting Isaiah as prophesying that 'the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles' (Acts 28:25–28). The holy Spirit had spoken through Isaiah, and by clear implication, Luke claims that the same holy Spirit has spoken again through the current 'prophets' of God (28:25–28).

So Luke shows strong interest in teaching and in scriptural interpretation, two common roles of priests in Israel. What about some of the other traditional roles of priests? They also had the role and status in Israel as judges and as givers of blessing. The role of judge is not obviously apparent in the Gospel or Acts, but it is there in the case of Jesus in the Gospel and of Peter and Paul in Acts. Luke's central characters make judgments and pronouncements on halakhic issues. Priests acted as judges who decided on the cleanliness or otherwise of a person (Luke 5:14); Jesus pronounces the Satan-bound, unnamed woman 'a daughter of Abraham' (13:16), and later also Zacchaeus a 'son of Abraham' (19:9) – judgments that a priest would make. At Qumran, it was the leading priests that determined membership within the community and expulsion from it. The words of Jesus to his disciples: 'He who hears you, hears me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me' (10:16) is Luke's own claim to his own audiences. Luke has the authority to make judgments and he

does so with the authority of Jesus. To reject Luke is to reject Jesus and his Sender. On the issues of fasting (5:33–39), the Sabbath (6:1–5), forgiveness (7:40–50), the neighbor (10:29–37); extortion and arrogance (11:39–44); hypocrisy (12:1–3); the amassing of wealth (12:22–30); commensality (15:1–2); and of taxes, resurrection, remarriage, and David's son (20:20–44), on all of these Jesus pronounces a judgment. They are issues that many Jews would have brought to their local priest for advice and a judgment. As Philo says:

> When, therefore, he does not clearly comprehend a case by reason of the perplexed and unintelligible character of the circumstances which throw uncertainty and darkness around it, he ought to decline giving a decision, and to send the matter before judges who will understand it more accurately. And who can these judges be but the priests, and the ruler and governor of the priests? For the genuine, sincere worshippers of God are by care and diligence rendered acute in their intellects, inasmuch as they are not indifferent even to slight errors, because of the exceeding excellence of the Monarch whom they serve in every point. (*Spec*. *Leg*. 4.190–191)

The issues discussed and the conclusions drawn at the Apostolic Council of Acts 15 are all to do with matters of purity, the concern largely of priests, and it is the Council who makes the pronouncements on such matters. Brooke notes that the concerns of that Council and those discussed in 4QMMT are very similar (1995: 86).

It is sometimes forgotten that, as Brooke says, 'it is matters of behavior, daily living, halakhah which are at the root of the distinctiveness of the various groups and subgroups of the time' (1995: 78). He notes that the three issues that stand out at Qumran are the calendar, purity, and marriage (78). I might also add another: the issue of wealth – it was often seen to be a barrier to godly living, as one of the 'traps of Belial' (for example, CD 4.15). This is important to me who wants to see the priestly interests of Luke-Acts, because it is easily forgotten that Luke is as interested (possibly, more interested) in the halakha that Jesus provides as he is in the historical 'facts' about the life of Jesus. Luke is not just concerned with being accurate as a historian; he is concerned that the teaching of Jesus is accurately passed on to and by Theophilus, and that in turn all who hear the Gospel will lead godly and righteous lives in the end of days. Luke knows some Christians called themselves 'the Way', if it is not a term he himself used for the Jesus movement (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14), that is, they (and Luke) believed that their righteous living prepared the way for the Lord and would usher in the new age. His model characters are said to be righteous (δικαίοι) and so are depicted as being observers of Torah. That is true especially of Jesus who is declared to be 'righteous' at his crucifixion. Luke's Jesus is very concerned about living according to the will of God. That is mainly the reason why a/the 'holy Spirit' plays such an important role in Luke-Acts. Modern Christians can too easily read this in Trinitarian terms rather than understand the holy Spirit to be that Spirit from God which creates holiness within Israel. With holiness comes the expectation of the messiah and other eschatological hopes. The spirit of holiness inspires righteous men and women to prophesy, to perform mighty deeds and words, and to live God-pleasing lives as they wait for the 'times of refreshing' and the sending of 'the Christ appointed for you, Jesus' (Acts 3:19–20).

Associated with this Spirit that gives and creates holiness is repentance, and that basically means repentance from sin. Sin and its removal are obviously very priestly concerns, and we would expect to find a priestly writer vitally interested in them. Luke is indeed very interested. It is an interest that he shares with the priestly writers of the Qumran texts. The fundamental purpose for the existence of priestly communities at Qumran and elsewhere was that the community would live according to the requirements of Torah, and by doing so would prepare the way of the Lord in the end of days, and the Lord would give his holy Spirit to inspire such holy living. They were very conscious that Israel in her history had turned away and been faithless, but they believed that 'God had raised up a teacher of righteousness to guide them in the way of his heart' (CD 1.3, 11). The Hodayot constantly express trust and hope in a God 'who forgives those who turn from sin' (1QH 6.23) and who has 'cleansed the perverse spirit from great transgression, that he might take his stand with the host of the holy ones, and enter together with the congregation of the sons of heaven' (1QH 11.21).

A good case could be made for holding that repentance and forgiveness are at the very heart of the gospel in Luke-Acts. In vocabulary terms alone this is evident. Nave points out that μετάνοια and its verbal cognates are predominant in Luke-Acts within the New Testament. They are rarely used in Paul (4 times only – Rom 2:4; 2 Cor 7:9, 10; 12:21) but some twenty-five times in Luke-Acts (2002: 3). In Luke's Gospel, Gabriel tells Zechariah, the priest, that his son, John the Baptist, will 'turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God … to make ready for the Lord a people prepared' (1:16–17). And the father himself 'predicts' that John will 'go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God' (1:76–78). John duly preaches a 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (3:3), calling for people to 'bear fruits that befit repentance' (3:8). Both John and Jesus teach guidelines for fruit-bearing lives and announce the blessings that come with such living.

A very clear illustration of Luke's interest in repentance is seen in 5:32, where Jesus says, 'I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance'. The phrase 'to repentance' (εἰς μετάνοιαν) does not appear in the Markan parallel (Mark 2:17). Nave says that Luke is 'concerned with emphasizing the required change in thinking and living that will enable diverse individuals to receive the salvation of God and to live together as a community of God's people' (2002: 146). Jesus pronounces forgiveness of sins to the paralysed man (αφέωνταί σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι σου, 5:20) and to the sinful woman (ἀφέωνταί σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι, 7:48), much to the amazement and anger of others. He also warns that 'unless you repent' people will share the fate of the eighteen who perished when a tower fell on them (13:5), a statement followed immediately in the narrative by the parable of a non-productive tree which will be given a chance, but eventually will be cut down if it does not bear fruit (13:6–9). From the cross, Jesus prays for his executors' forgiveness and promises paradise to a criminal (23:34, 40–43). Finally, and significantly, the Gospel comes to a close with the risen Jesus explaining to his disciples from the Scriptures that 'repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations' (24:47).

The same message is clear also in Acts. In his Pentecost sermon in Jerusalem, Peter urges his Jewish audience who are living in 'this crooked generation' (2:40) to

'repent and be baptized … for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38). Again, he urges them to 'repent and turn again that your sins may be blotted out' (3:19). Before the Council, Peter declares that God exalted Jesus 'as leader and savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins' (5:31). In preaching to the God-fearing Cornelius, Peter claims that the prophets bear witness 'that every one who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins' (10:43). The result of Cornelius' acceptance of the gospel is that the apostles in Jerusalem 'glorify God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life"' (11:18). Paul's message is the same to the Jews in his audiences (13:38) and also to the Gentiles (17:30). In his farewell discourse with the elders of Ephesus, he claims to have testified to both Jews and Gentiles 'of repentance to God' (20:21).

It seems reasonable to suggest that a priest, involved as he was in the Temple cult and its sin offerings, in purity laws, in teaching the people to live according to the laws and commandments of God, would be attracted to – and therefore would highlight – the aspect of repentance and forgiveness as understood in the gospel.

Likewise, a priest would show interest in righteous living, and it would be expected of him that he modeled such a lifestyle and that he taught his community what righteous living implied. Luke obviously has this interest. He has Peter say that 'in every nation any one who fears God and does what is righteous (ἐργαζόμενος δικαιοσύνην) is acceptable to God' (Acts 10:35). In the Gospel, the righteous are marked by 'walking blameless in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord' (1:6), by repentance and humility (18:9–14), by awaiting the 'consolation of Israel' (2:25) and 'the kingdom of God' (23:50), by the committal of one's soul into the hands of the Father at death (23:47), and by participation in the resurrection (14:14). Righteous living also includes the acceptance of the blind, lame, the deaf, and the poor into the community of the righteous (7:22).

While the term 'righteous' is not used directly, it is a term that would also cover another essential aspect of anyone who belongs to The Way, namely hearing and doing the word of God. As is often the case in Lukan story-telling, the narrative includes pairs of episodes that make a point; often these pairs consist of a male and a female actor. So a Samaritan man is praised for 'doing mercy' (10:36–37) while in the next episode Mary is praised for her hearing of the word (10:42). Another Mary hears and trusts the word spoken to her by the angel and 'ponders them in her heart' (2:19). The Teacher warns the audience to 'take care how you hear' (8:18). In fact, a biological relationship with the Teacher is rejected in preference for those who 'hear the word of God and do it' (8:21). The seed that falls on the good ground indicates those who hear the word, keep it and bear fruit (8:15). And Luke wants his audience to hear the voice of God saying to them, as it said to the leading apostles, Peter, James, and John, Jesus is 'my Son, the chosen one. Listen to him' (9:35). In all of this, Luke is saying to Theophilus and to all audiences who hear his Gospel: If you hear what I am teaching you and do what you are taught, then – and only then – can you claim to belong to his family. The teaching voice of Jesus is heard and continued in the teaching voice of the Gospel. Once again, we are faced with the authoritative claims of Luke.

As for pronouncing blessings, it would seem that in the synagogues only the priests could perform that function. According to Schuerer, 'If there was no priest

in the congregation, the blessing was not given. Instead, the words of benediction were recited by the *hazzan*' (1973: 2.453–4). Giving blessing and being blessed are constant motifs in Luke-Acts, as God is blessed by people in response to his actions (Luke 1:64, 68; 2:28) or as blessings are pronounced on people (1:42; 2:34; 11:27, 28), or as people see themselves as blessed (1:48). The motif of blessing is dominant in the birth narratives particularly. Once again, if the opening to the Gospel is meant to give the audience the theme of the whole Gospel, then we could rightly claim that the Gospel is about God's blessing of Israel. The blessing by God was at the very heart of being Israel, of being the people of God, and it was the priests who pronounced that blessing as God's mediators. Ultimately for Luke, the risen, ascended Lord Jesus is the great priest, the great conveyor of God's blessing on Israel. This priestly, blessing Jesus is remembered as the narrative is told and heard; he is present with his blessing through the telling. In other words, Luke's Gospel becomes the conveyor of God's blessing through its writing and performance. It is said of Mary, 'blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord' (1:45). Luke is saying this to be true not only of Mary but of all in his audiences like her who hear the word, believe, and produce fruit with patience (Luke 8:15). As a priestly author, he himself pronounces God's blessings on such people.

Where there is God's blessing, there is great joy. In all the scholarly concerns and perceived problems of Luke-Acts (and other New Testament writings, for that matter), it is easy to overlook the general thrust of the gospel as Luke interprets it: God blesses and brings great joy. The angel promises Zechariah 'joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth' (1:14); the response of Elizabeth and Mary is joy (1:47); even *in utero* John leaps for joy (1:44); Elizabeth, her neighbors and kin rejoice because 'the Lord had shown great mercy (1:58); the angel announces 'news of a great joy' (2:10), the seventy return in joy, and Jesus himself 'rejoiced in the holy Spirit' (10:17, 21); the disciples see the living Jesus and are overcome with joy (24:41), and later they are blessed by the ascended Jesus and return to Jerusalem 'with a great joy' (24:52). It is matched by the joy of the angels over one repentant sinner (15:7, 10). In Acts, the baptized eunuch goes on his way rejoicing (8:39); likewise, the baptized Philippian jailer 'rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God' (16:34).

Joy was the hallmark of Jewish festivals and of Sabbath worship generally. In a sense, it was also what characterized the gathered and renewed Israel of the last days. When David was about to become king of all Israel, 'there was joy in Israel' (1 Chron 12:40), and when the exiled returned and the Temple was rededicated, there was great joy (Ezra 6:16; Neh 12:43). The priestly communities of the Qumran scrolls had liturgies marked by the blessing of the name of God and blessing of the community. The seventh and central Sabbath song is replete with exhortations for the congregation to rejoice 'with a song of rejoicing … make melody in the joy of God, and rejoice among the holy ones through wondrous melodies, in everlasting joy' (4Q403 1.37–40). Joy was something closely related to Israel's worship of God, it reflected the worship of the angels and the joy of being in the presence of God. The worship of Israel was totally under the control of the priests, at least in the Temple itself, but elsewhere as well. So it was natural for a priest to talk in terms of joy.

There are other things of priestly interest and concern that are found in the Gospel. Among the very first indications of priestly interests are the genealogies of both John and Jesus. If these figures were to have any credibility and any authority as teachers and as interpreters of Torah for Israel, then they had to have the right family heritage. Being of priestly stock was a very significant advantage in this regard. Authority and family descent were very closely linked. By depicting John as the direct son of two priestly families, Luke rules out any objections to John on the grounds of descent. Being an insider with valid family descent allowed John to say to those who came to him in the wilderness claiming physical descent from Abraham, 'God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham' (Luke 3:8). By linking Jesus implicitly to priestly families, but explicitly to Adam and to God, Luke claims the supreme authority for Jesus. He is God's son by family descent (3:23–38), and the audience is to listen to him, as the Chosen Son who has the approval and authority of God, even more than they listen to the prophetic authority of Moses and Elijah (9:28–35).

In addition, it is only Luke who includes in his narrative the circumcision of John (1:59) and of Jesus (2:21), as well as the subsequent purification of Jesus in the Temple (2:22–24). A priest would naturally be interested to see that the one he believed to be 'the consolation of Israel' was purified before the Lord with the appropriate offerings 'as it is written in the law of the Lord' (2:23). In fact, he is careful to tell his audience that their Messiah had parents who 'performed everything according to the law of the Lord' (2:39).

In the Temple, the Spirit-filled and Spirit-directed Simeon is there waiting. Was he a priest? Fitzmyer says no (1981: 429), but it is tempting to read him as such. He blesses God, as did Zechariah the priest before him in the narrative (1:68) and as priests were expected to do, and he blesses Joseph and Mary (but not the child, it might be noted, 2:34). Anna, although in the temple 'worshipping with fasting and prayer day and night' (2:37) is not a priest and so does not pronounce a blessing. If Simeon was a priest, then we might note again the high opinion Luke has of him as a righteous and devout man (2:25). According to 4Q521, 'the Lord seeks the pious and calls the righteous by name'. Simeon is called by name in the narrative. He is also one who receives revelations from the holy Spirit (2:26), and is inspired by the holy Spirit (2:27) – characteristics of Jesus himself in Luke's Gospel. Holiness, revelation and inspiration were all priestly concerns.

Is there anything in his name? Simeon was one of the sons of Jacob and so the patriarch of one of Israel's tribes. In the Gospel's opening chapters, Luke identifies some of his characters by tribe, especially those with priestly links: Zechariah is a priest of the division of Abijah, the eighth priestly division. Elizabeth is 'a daughter of Aaron' (1:5) and so obviously of the best priestly stock, and Zechariah indicates his 'righteous' (δίκαιος) status by having married a woman of a priestly family. Mary is said to be a kinswoman of Elizabeth (1:36) and so possibly, but not necessarily, of a priestly family; and Anna is identified as belonging to the tribe of Asher (2:36).

Is the audience to think of Simeon in tribal terms, if not also in priestly ones? As brothers, Simeon and Levi were closely linked. The tribe of Simeon gave land to the Levites (as did others) including cities in the hill country of Judea (Josh 21:9–16) from where Zechariah and Elizabeth came (Luke 1:39, 65). Those in Luke's audience who heard the name 'Simeon' might have remembered the patriarch who

slaughtered the Shechemites after they had been tricked into being circumcised (Gen 34). Is the marveling by Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:33) because this Simeon makes the circumcised one 'a light for revelation to the gentiles' (2:32) – in contradistinction to his ancestor who could not accept that his sister marry a Gentile?

The Gospel begins with the people (ὁ λαός, an important 'character' in the Gospel) waiting for Zechariah to bless them and 'wondering at the time he was taking in the Temple' (1:21) and ends with the disciples 'continually in the Temple' blessing God as they wait (24:52–53); Acts begins with the disciples waiting in Jerusalem for the 'promise of the Father' (1:4) to send his blessing, the holy Spirit. Blessing was especially a ritual action that took place within the worship of Israel. I believe that 'the ascension', symbolizing Jesus' status as heavenly Lord, was central to early Christian faith but also central to early Christian worship. When Christians worshipped they expected the living heavenly Lord to be among them and with them, and above all to bless them. As Lord, his primary function was to bless – that is what God does to God's people, and God's blessing is the empowering of the people. Luke's Gospel ends with Jesus blessing the disciples (24:51), and in that very ritual action he is carried up into heaven. Blessing and heaven belong together. The result of Jesus' blessing is great joy and the blessing of God (24:52–53). A similar line can be traced in Acts which begins with the ascension. Jesus empowers his disciples to be his witnesses (1:8); that is, he blesses them. He is taken up while they are watching, and an angel appears. Heaven and earth are one – and that really is the very point of worship, as Israel knew when it went up to the Temple, and as the priestly community at Qumran knew – they believed they were with the angels when they conducted their Sabbath sacrifices and other liturgies.

Another aspect of Luke-Acts that indicates priestly interest and concern is their understanding of Jerusalem and the Temple. Once again, the parallels between the Christian writings (which I suggest are from a priest) and those found at Qumran are close, if not strikingly so. Luke-Acts interests are also those of 4QMMT on the issue of the place of Jerusalem, the role of the Temple, and the issue of who may worship there (Brooke 1995: 83). Jerusalem in fact is mentioned some sixty times in Acts, so it is still an important center despite the movement to Rome. There is something similar in the earlier priestly communities who owned, composed, and copied the texts found at Qumran. Clearly, they had left Jerusalem and the temple, but they had not abandoned any hope for it. On the contrary, in 4QMMT, 'Jerusalem is the camp of holiness and is the place which he has chosen from among all the tribes of Israel. For Jerusalem is the capital of the camps of Israel' (Brooke 1995: 60–62). For Luke, too, Jerusalem never ceases to be the center of the world, the center from which God acts to bring in the end of ages. As Brawley says, Jerusalem is for Luke the 'eschatological center of the Kingdom of God' (1987: 132). And with Jerusalem is the Temple. The Temple, for Luke, is the place of prayer *par excellence*, but also the place *par excellence* of teaching and of proclamation (1987: 120). There is no rejection of the Temple as the place for visions from God and for prophecy, as is obvious from the very beginning of his Gospel where the angel appears to Zechariah in the Temple, and from the prophecies of Simeon and Anna declared in the Temple. In addition, Paul's commission is confirmed by a vision in the Temple. Even in the passage that might seem to attack the Temple, namely in Stephen's trial (Acts 7),

Brawley rightly observes that Stephen certainly attacks the high priesthood, but he does not attack the Temple – the charges that he did, Luke says, come from *false* witnesses (Acts 6:13; Brawley 1987: 122). There is no doubt that Jerusalem remains, for Luke, the *axis mundi* – the pivotal point often associated with a stone in Jewish tradition (Brawley 1987: 128). All this would make good sense of any priest who joined the Christian movement.

Those who claim Acts wishes to move the center from Jerusalem to Rome miss the point. Streeter was one who so thought. In his opinion, there is the 'unuttered implication that the capital of Christianity has transferred from Jerusalem to Rome' (1924: 531). But it is *from* Jerusalem that Rome is reached. Paul receives the confirmation of his commission to go to the Gentiles while he is in a trance in the Temple of Jerusalem (Acts 22:17–21), and the Lord encourages him later in a dream, 'As you testified to things concerning me to Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also to Rome' (23:11). Rome represents the 'end of the earth' (1:8), and so the word of the Lord had gone out from Jerusalem to the end of the earth, as in the prophetic eschatological hope. Borgen says, 'Rome and her Jewish colony represent in Acts 28:16–31, "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1.8) because that city is the one place in the extreme West which stands out and is well known' (1997: 28). Part of the prophetic hope was that Gentiles would come to Jerusalem and worship the true God. The expectation then was that the scattered of Israel together with some Gentiles would gather in Jerusalem. Luke's crucifixion scene has a Roman acknowledging Jesus as 'a righteous man' in Jerusalem – the hope has begun to be realized. Paul is charged with bringing 'Greeks into the temple' (Acts 21:28), an action that triggers his move to Rome. It is a charge that the narrator implies is inaccurate ('they thought', ἐνόμιζον, 21:29), but which Paul makes no attempt to defuse. To the contrary, in his defense, he says that God appeared to him in a vision in the Temple that he should go to the Gentiles (22:21), implying that Gentiles and Temple do mix. The eschaton is at hand; the Gentiles are coming to the Temple. So it is not the end of Jerusalem at all.

A final aspect of Luke-Acts that indicates a priestly background might be possible for the author is the significance of angels as mediators and as indicators of the activity of God in the world. The link between priests and angels is especially significant at Qumran in the worship of the priestly community. While angel-like figures were certainly not unknown in the pagan world, they play far more significant roles in Jewish thinking. A Gentile would certainly have made sense of the angel's appearance and communication with Zechariah in the Temple, but would not have understood the import anywhere nearly as clearly as a Jewish audience would have. The latter would realize what Luke was up to by introducing angels in the birth narrative – they were there to announce that God was in action in a very significant way. Priestly writers knew about angels, just as they knew about the heavenly world and the divinely commanded calendar, especially if *1 Enoch* is any indication. Of course, Matthew also knows about 'the angel of the Lord' at significant moments in the narrative of Jesus' birth and resurrection (1:20; 2:13, 19; 28:2). But in Luke, the angel reveals his name ('I am Gabriel', 1:19), and the angel appears in the Temple, the work-place of the priests. Curiously, Luke does not use the term 'angel' in the Easter narrative (24:1–9); in fact, the phrase, 'behold, two men' (ἰδοῦ ἄνδρες

δυο) echoes precisely the phrase used in the transfiguration (9:30), and given Luke's interest in 'Moses and the prophets', it is possible the audience is meant to imagine it is Moses and Elijah who appeared at the tomb, not 'angels' in the normal sense of that term. In Acts, angels appear again at significant moments in the narrative. First, they announce the *parousia* of the ascended Jesus (1:11), and elsewhere they act predominantly as saviors and rescuers of Israel's new leaders (5:19; 12:7).

So there are many things in Luke's writing that suggests he had an interest in priestly matters. His positive attitude towards the Law of Moses, his concern that his audience hear and do the words of the righteous Teacher, his interest in the Temple and in Jerusalem, and the conclusions to both his writings which imply the blessing of God, all point strongly to a writer – and possibly also an audience – who had very close relations with priests.

There is one other area that deserves closer attention in this regard and that is Luke's use of hymns in the opening chapters of his Gospel. Who had the authority in a Christian community to write or to reproduce such hymns?

Luke, Hymns, and Worship

One of the striking features of Luke's writing is the use of songs or hymns in the opening of his Gospel, particularly (but not only – singing also features in Acts 4:24–30 and 16:25). This feature is unique in the Gospels. Both the Gospel and Acts have strong worship elements in their openings. The Gospel begins with a priest on duty in the Temple with people praying and waiting. I have already suggested that the ascension of Jesus into the heavenly realms in the beginning of Acts has worship indicators in the narrative. The Qumran texts show how important and essential hymn-singing and writing were to that community of priests. In addition, it is clear that Psalms was a favorite book of Luke as it was also of the priests at Qumran. If we subscribe to the idea that the opening of a book provides the key for its interpretation, then using worship as a key for interpreting Luke-Acts ought to be considered more seriously and thoroughly. My point for now is to argue that if Luke shows an interest and ease in the use of hymns and songs fitting for worship, then it adds another brick in my construction of him as a priest.

In Israel, the Levites in particular were assigned the responsibility for the music and songs of Israel's liturgies. These songs not only expressed Israel's relationship with Yahweh, but they also helped to control the expression of that faith and provided a medium whereby the faith could be taught and learned. Once again, priests controlled the tradition and its transmission. Luke includes two lengthy songs in his opening episodes of his narrative, and both of those songs come from priestly figures. They are not merely part of the birth narratives of John and Jesus but they also summarize and interpret these two central figures in the narrative. In a sense, they are also blessings – songs that empower the two children to become what they in fact became. They also serve to outline the plot of the narrative that follows. Song and narrative are inextricably linked. Songs are known to be useful in the education process and for memory. Did Luke's audience already know the songs in Luke 1–2 and used them in their worship? If so, by including them in the beginning of the

Gospel, Luke reminded his audience of them and of their significance. If not, the audience immediately would have picked up on the change is style and metre and sound and recognized what Luke was doing – their teacher-priest was singing to them through the voices of his characters in a manner with which they were familiar from their worship experiences.

Luke is not writing with the cold 'objectivity' of a modern historian interested in the facts, let alone with the systematic thought of a modern theologian. If Luke writes around 75–85 CE, as most would suggest, then we are talking about only forty or fifty years after the death of Jesus – that is, in living memory. The Christian community was small, marginalized from both the synagogue and from the pagan cults. Unlike a century later, there was very little access to public officials except when in some local court. Some suppose Luke writes an apology to a Roman official; others that he wants to offer proof from the Scriptures. I prefer the accent that Minear gives:

> Here I may issue a warning against use of the word *proof* in this connection. The concept of proof is not characteristically biblical; even less is it Lucan. Proof suggests an appeal to external evidence as a means of appealing to reason of an unbeliever. It suggests a debating forum or a propaganda leaflet. A term more congenial to the Lucan mood would be witness, or testimony. Even these words must be interpreted in a context of joy, penitence, humility and fear – that is, in a situation of communal exultation over long-awaited salvation. In this situation, testimony takes on its most intimate, informal, internal, and evocative character, as an element in the divine–human encounter and in the movement of the Spirit. The scenes in Luke-Acts exert their own 'atmospheric pressures' under which the testimonies spring from and seek to elicit shouts of joy and hymns of praise on the part of a devout community, which knows itself dependent on God's saving power. The term proof is alien to that milieu. (1976: 119)

I might suggest that 'shouts of joy and hymns of praise' do not fit the cold, matter-of-fact, objective historian who is interested in proof. Some might even find the theologian lacking in that department! Luke-Acts come from joy, a joy that comes from seeing the salvation of God that has been prepared for all peoples, and a joy that was celebrated in the communities' worship. The songs set the agenda for Luke-Acts. I might draw attention to the song that appears early in Acts (4:24–30) and which has parallels with the songs of the Gospel. It is the song of the underdog who knows that despite the apparent evidence and despite the human calculations, God is on their side. I might also draw attention to the implicit claim of Acts that if it is the work of God, it cannot be opposed. Paul might end up in prison in Rome, but everyone in the audience already knows what happens when the heroes of God are imprisoned. Nothing can stop the word of God. Luke does not write from the position of political and social comfort. Prison, social disturbances, and suffering socially, economically or physically for the sake of the name were common experiences. Esler (1987) rightly criticizes Conzelmann's implication that Luke is an armchair theologian who ponders over religious questions and then gives his advice on political and social issues. Instead, he is 'a figure embedded in the life of his community at all its levels, religious, social, political and economic', he does not write for theologizing sake, but because he 'fervently believes that the gospel, properly interpreted and presented, is a message of salvation for his fellow-Christians across the whole range of their

troubled existence' (1987: 1–2). When communities, and individuals, suffer such things, very often it is the songs that keep them going. They sing songs of hope in God's salvation in the face of the harsh realities they suffer. This hope and the songs that it inspired were at the heart of the Christian community's worship. Luke-Acts come from worship, if they were not also meant to be read or sung in worship.

The issue of the hymns' origins has interested scholars concerned about the Gospel sources. Many think they are not Lukan originals and that he accessed them from his sources. Fitzmyer says, 'It is hardly likely that Luke composed the Magnificat himself, since it fits so loosely into the present context' (1981: 359). Rather, he inherited it from an earlier Jewish Christian tradition, but maybe added a few lines of his own, like v 48 (359). Raymond Brown thought that the canticles come from a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian community in an area influenced by Jerusalem Christianity and from among the Anawim in particular (1979: 350–55). Farris (1985) also thinks the songs come out of a Jewish-Christian circle and are examples of how Jews brought their inheritance of praise with them on becoming Christian. Both Brown and Farris would argue that the songs are consonant with Luke's theology.

Earlier scholars thought that they are authentically Lukan in origin. Harnack, for example, believed both the Benedictus and the Magnificat are 'the works of St. Luke himself' (1911: 215), arguing that the language and style that are typically Lukan. Cadbury too thought the canticles are 'mainly the evangelist's own composition' (1927: 193).

More recently, Minear, in part on the basis of the linguistic research of Plummer and Morgenthaler, has shown that these hymns are clearly Lukan in their language and style. He argues that they are neither from an untouched pre-Lukan tradition nor are they simply Lukan compositions (1976: 112). He also corrects Conzelmann's claim that the birth stories, let alone the hymns, are irrelevant to Luke's purpose (1976: 120).

In any case, the question remains as to why Luke begins his Gospel with a string of substantial hymns. Because I am interested in the authority of the author, then if Luke did write them himself, how does that relate to his authority? If he did not write them himself, the question of the relation between hymns and authority still remains. What authority and status did hymns have? If the hymns are pre-Lukan or come a from a Jewish-Christian community, then who gave him the authority to use them, let alone to redact them to fit his style and agenda? One again, it cannot be assumed that such hymns were 'in the public domain' and therefore anyone could use them in whatever way they willed. The matter of authority to recite the hymns might be raised in the same way as the question of the authority to relate a story was raised. Modern Westerners sometimes have bad reputations in some cultures because they assume the right to access knowledge and to cultural artefacts, and they assume the right to share those cultural items with the world. More seriously, Westerners are often guilty of cultural appropriation because they assume that if they have access to the song (for example) of another culture they have the right to use it for their own benefit. Only in recent years have anthropological and sociological researchers been required to gain 'ethical clearance' for their research and for the publication of their results. In many cultures, songs, like stories, often 'belong' to

certain people and cannot be used or performed without permission of the 'owner'. This is especially the case with songs that are used in a ritual context. In some cultures, songs too belong to the group and are not to be performed without the permission of the 'owners'. They might well have their origin with an individual (who often receives them through a dream or some other form of inspiration), but they quickly become the property of the wider community. There is a sense of this in 1 Cor 14:26 where Paul writes that 'when you come together, each one has a psalm' (ἕκαστος ψαλμὸν ἔχει). In a sense, traditional songs had a kind of copyright on them. In Jewish tradition, we know that the Levites, in particular, were given authority over the music generally in Temple worship, including over the singing. They had control, if not ownership, of the songs.

Songs play a very important role in cultic and ritual actions in many societies, and they did so also in ancient Israel and among early Christian communities. Above all, they evoked harmony and unison. By using hymns in his opening to the Gospel, Luke says to his audience that the gospel (and his Gospel) is in harmony with the Presence. When Paul refers to what went on when Christians 'come together' (συνέρχησθε, 1 Cor 14:26), the first on his list are psalms. Through the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifices, found among the texts of Qumran, the priests were in harmony and unison with the angels in their worship. The Jewish Scriptures describe the role of the priests and Levites in the dedication of Solomon's Temple with the suggestion that they, too, were caught up in the divine Presence:

> The Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets: It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord: and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, 'For He is good, for His mercy endureth forever': that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God. (*2 Chron 5:12–14*)

It is worth looking at the collection of hymns that are found in the Qumran texts. The document known as 1QH is of particular interest. It seems that some of the hymns in that manuscript are the composition of the leader of the community, and while private in their language, are meant to be sung and used by the wider community. Most scholars, who see some hymns as those of a leader vis-à-vis community hymns, agree that the hymns of the leader are 1QHa 10.3–19; 12.5–13.4; 13.5–19; 13.20–15.5; 15.6–25; 16.4–17.37 (Newsom 2004: 288). Some scholars hold the Teacher of Righteousness to be the creator of these songs, but Newsom suggests that they might come from a Mebaqqer. In any case, she says that 'these Hodayot articulate a leadership myth that was appropriated by the current leader in much the same fashion that the ordinary member identified with the "I" of the so-called Hodayot of the community' (2004: 288). She is willing to accept that there might be a historical Teacher of Righteousness behind them, but as they stand, they were recited and sung and shaped the ethos of a number of communities over time (2004: 290). I suggest

something very similar indeed happened with the Lukan hymns of Zechariah and of Elizabeth and Mary.

What do such songs reveal about the relation between the leader and his community? What political function do they serve within the communities who use them? According to Newsom, 'these Hodayot are not simply compositions about a leader, whether historical or contemporary. They are themselves *acts* of leadership, verbal attempts to articulate a community through the self-presentation of the persona of the leader' (2004: 299). The Hodayot are, then, not simply acts of prayer but they are also rhetorical acts. What the leader prays is meant to be heard by the community (2004: 345). They are acts of leadership in themselves. 'Whoever wrote them, whoever recited them, in whatever social contexts they were heard – these compositions offer glimpses of the ways in which the discourse of leadership functioned in the life of the Yahad' (2004: 346).

The question for me who sees Luke as the priestly leader of his community is whether or not the songs in the birth narratives serve, in part, to 'articulate a community'. By including the hymns, whether composed by Luke or not, the author wants to shape his community by defining its boundaries. He wants to insist that The Way is a continuation, if not fulfillment, of God's plan for Israel and the nations. The gospel sets new boundaries as the mighty are brought down and the poor and humble are exalted.

If the Gospel was written for worshipping communities, then once again the question can be asked as to who had the authority to write them or to use them for such purposes. Again, it seems reasonable to propose that the person with the status, knowledge, and authority to do such would be a priest. A priest was in a good position to access the songs, if not to compose them himself; he was one who could use them to educate his audiences of the mighty works of God which he and they believed had been done through and in Jesus, the Christ and Lord of the community. The educative and paraenetic use of hymns among Christians is illustrated in two related deutero-Pauline passages, Col 3:16 and Eph 5:18–20. In both passages, Christians are encouraged to 'teach and admonish one another' and to 'address one another' by singing 'hymns and psalms and spiritual songs'. Luke uses songs for very similar purposes in his opening chapters. He teaches through them and he encourages his audiences to hear his version of the gospel of the things concerning Jesus as a song of praise to God and to his Lord and Christ.

Chapter Ten

Luke as Authoritative Interpreter of Scripture

Luke writes not as an editor simply regurgitating a tradition that he has learned or received from elsewhere, but as an authoritative teacher with a clear agenda including that of controlling how the Scriptures and other traditions, both Jewish and Christian, are to be interpreted. I wish to stress this point. Luke is no passive, meek, unknown, insignificant transmitter of tradition. Nor is he only a polished writer of good, imaginative, palatable narrative; he is that, but he is also one who writes with an edge, one who writes to direct his audience to a certain way of thinking – Luke's way of thinking – and so he is one who writes to control the interpretation of the tradition in his community and who seeks to have that control passed on through Theophilus. Anyone who claims to understand the plan and will of God for Israel and the nations, and who claims a new interpretation of the Scriptures, and to be writing an accurate, orderly, balanced narrative of Jesus is making a significant claim to authority! They were Luke's claims, but they are implicitly made rather than explicitly, and that suggests he writes with an authority that Theophilus and other audiences accepted. Unlike Paul, Luke does not take pains to argue and to establish his authority to write as he does.

Jervell says that Luke is 'above all … an exegete, an interpreter of Scriptures' (1992: 30). For Jews, the Scriptures were authoritative; they were recited, memorized, and discussed every Sabbath whenever Jews met in assembly. In some circles, such activities happened on an even more regular basis than just on the Sabbath. In Luke-Acts, there is no doubt that the interpretation of the Scriptures is at the very heart of what Luke is about and that undoubtedly reflects the context in which he writes. The shibboleth of Christian interpretation was that the Scriptures tell of the Christ and that Christ is Jesus. But there was more to Christian interpretation than that. Christians, especially those who were Jews, wanted to avoid any suggestion that they were in any sense heretical or even sectarian, let alone that they were 'inventing a new god' or 'starting up a new religion'. All the New Testament writers, at least, insist that the God of their Jewish ancestors is 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'; they insist that their understanding of Jesus comes from the Scriptures; and they interpret Jesus through those Scriptures and those Scriptures in turn through their experience and knowledge of Jesus. Luke is no exception in any of this. In fact, he is archetypical of this use of the Scriptures. His leading characters, Jesus, Peter, and Paul, as well as the more minor characters such as Stephen and Philip, all have this in common that they are interpreters of the Scriptures. In addition, either the narrator or the main actors explain events that have taken place in the narrative as being 'as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet' (Luke 3:4), or simply, 'as it is

written' (4:4, 8, 10; 7:27; 18:31; 19:46; 21:22; 22:37; 24:44, 46). And Luke puts into their mouths a consistent interpretation of those Scriptures, of the prophetic writings of Psalms and Isaiah most notably. They all speak of the Christ, and that Christ is Jesus. Simply put, for Luke 'the things concerning Jesus' are to be interpreted in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). The emphasis on the written is worth noting; nowhere does Luke appeal to the oral traditions for his interpretation of Jesus. I have indicated that this is consistent with priestly attitudes towards the oral and written traditions.

This clear, almost dominant emphasis in Luke-Acts on the matter of Scripture and its interpretation indicates that Luke is defining the boundaries and the identity of his community. His understanding of the Scriptures and of Jesus is what makes his community distinctive from the synagogue in particular, but also distinctive from some other Christian communities. Any Christian community that wished to divorce itself from the traditions of Israel would be seen as alien to Luke's interpretation of both the Scriptures and Jesus.

But who gave Luke (and others) the authority as interpreters? It is sometimes too easy to slip into anachronisms in this regard. Today, especially among evangelical Protestants, the right of the individual to read and to interpret is almost sacrosanct. In addition, postmoderns, in particular, are dismissive of any claims to 'authoritative readings' of any text. But it was not always so. In the first place, not everyone could *read* the Scriptures; nor can it be assumed that every Jewish community had access to *all* the Scriptures, and it is even less likely that many individuals, if any, could afford such an expensive item. It is also well known, as has been discussed already, that priests controlled the teaching and therefore also the interpretation of the texts. True, the Scriptures were not hidden from the laity. Josephus, himself a priest, highlights the difference between Gentiles and Jews on this matter. He argues that among the former, the secrets of the mysteries are only revealed to people for a few days in the year, but among Jews, 'the entire body of the people' is instructed 'with great pleasure and unshaken resolution during our whole lives'. But it is the priests, of whom 'extraordinary degree of care is required', who carry out the public instruction (*C. Apion* 2.22–23). As Snyder says, 'the right to pronounce authoritatively on texts was the prerogative of a limited number of text-brokers' (2000: 190). And again, 'access to Jewish scripture was brokered by a relatively restricted number of literate individuals' (196). Most of these were priests.

There are discernible characteristics of acceptable authoritative interpretation in Jewish tradition. It was important to be in the chain of tradition, to cite one's authorities and not to simply spout one's own theories and ideas. In the Gospel, Luke claims two authorities: The Scriptures themselves, and Jesus. Secondly, authority came from the Spirit of God, often in the forms of revelation or inspiration. While Luke does not seem to claim that for himself, he certainly does for his heroes who are biblical interpreters. Jesus and Paul, as well as Peter and Stephen and Philip, are all strongly identified as being under the direction, control, and influence of the Spirit. It is precisely because they are Spirit-filled, righteous men that their biblical interpretation is to be trusted and emulated.

Koet rightly points out that when Jesus and Paul are in the narrative for the first and for the last time, the interpretation of Scripture is the crucial point (1989: 15). According to Luke, both Jesus in the Gospel and Paul in Acts interpret Scripture at

crucial points in the dynamics of the story. In his first public appearance after his baptism, Jesus reads from Isaiah and then interprets the passage as a self-reference. Snyder suggests that Luke is 'anxious to showcase Jesus' ease and familiarity with texts … He is thereby shown to be an entirely self-sufficient handler and interpreter of texts' (2000: 180). Already as a twelve-year-old, Jesus is in the Temple among the teachers, listening and learning through asking questions, and amazing the teachers with his understanding (2:46–47). At the close of Luke's Gospel, Jesus 'opened the minds [of his disciples] to understand the scriptures' (24:45). As Koet says, 'The fact that Jesus is presented as an expositor of Scripture both at the beginning and at the end of [the] Gospel is in fact a key for an understanding of Jesus and his mission' (1989: 149).

It is likewise with Paul. He, too, is baptized and then in the narrative goes immediately into the synagogues of Damascus where he proclaims Jesus, saying that he is the son of God and proving to his audiences that this man (Jesus) is the Christ (Acts 9:18–22). It is behavior that characterizes Paul as he moves from place to place, and the narrative ends with him in Rome teaching 'the things about the Lord Jesus Christ' and proclaiming the kingdom of God (Acts 28:31). Both the Gospel and Acts end with a clear statement about the Scriptures and their significance for understanding what has happened in the narratives. The Gospel ends with Jesus stressing that interpretation of Scripture and understanding him are utterly inseparable. Acts ends with Paul in Rome making 'one statement' (ῥῆμα ἕν) in which he cites Isaiah 6:9 and so leaves the audience with the dilemma of Israel and the nations (Acts 28:25–28). It is a clear message that Luke wishes to convey: Both Jesus and Paul are interpreters of the Scripture and, in turn, are to be interpreted by the Scriptures. By implication, Luke has the authority to construct them in this way.

Luke uses Scripture in different ways. He sometimes cites it directly (Luke 4:18–19); there are also allusions (7:22) and summary references (24:44; Acts 28:23). He also uses an interpretive technique that was later called *gezerah shavah*. By this technique, two scriptural passages can be combined because they share a common word or phrase. Luke does this, for example, in the Gospel (4:16–30) when he combines Isa 61:1–2a with Isa 58:6, and in Acts (13:35) where he combines LXX Ps 15:10 with Isa 55:3. The use of this technique suggests Luke was both familiar and comfortable with common Jewish methods of biblical interpretation.

In the argument whether Luke was a Jew or a Gentile, in my opinion one of the strongest arguments that he was the former is his obvious familiarity with the Scriptures and with Jewish methods of interpretation. It seems that if we think of Luke-Acts being composed before 85 CE, only a Christian steeped in Jewish thought and writings could possibly have such a good grasp of Jewish thought. I find it very difficult to imagine that a Gentile Christian, by that time, would refer so comfortably to 'the law of the fathers' (Luke 2:23, 24, 39; Acts 22:3) and 'the customs which Moses delivered to us' (Acts 6:14), or would have the Apostolic Council make a decision on matters concerning converting Gentiles on the basis that 'in every city' there are those who 'preach Moses, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues' (15:21), or would have Paul say, 'I have done nothing against … the customs of our fathers' (28:17). The argument is strengthened by Luke's ability and confidence, let alone authority, to interpret the Jesus tradition in the light of the Jewish literary

and oral traditions. His memory of Jesus is so 'Jewish' that he cannot but filter that memory of Jesus through other memories, the memories of Israel and God's relationship with that people. Like others who had a circular rather than a linear understanding of history, Luke could provide a memory of events in the life of Jesus in terms of previous events in the life of Israel. Luke does this to the point where his Jesus is almost Israel personified, certainly at least he is the leader and savior of a renewed Israel.

Luke begins by writing in the style of the Scriptures, and by his very style he provides Theophilus with 'security' against any attempts to gainsay him. Those who might wish to contradict Luke would almost definitely have been those Jews (who might also have been Christian) who did not agree with Luke's interpretation of the Scriptures. They are Luke's target when he tells of Paul's discussions in the synagogues of the Diaspora on the Sabbaths. In any case, the very first words that the commissioned, baptized Jesus speaks are said to the slanderer (διάβολος): 'It is written' (Luke 4:4). In Jesus' first synagogue appearance, in his home town, he reads from the Scriptures and interprets them. Matters of scriptural interpretation crop up regularly throughout the Gospel. In Luke 10, the parable of the Good Samaritan is told in answer to the question, 'Who is my neighbor?' a question that in turn arose from an earlier question from a lawyer (νομικός) about inheriting eternal life. Jesus asked him (and so Luke asks his audience), 'What is written in the Law? How do you read?' (10:26). The lawyer knows the correct answer to Jesus' question – he cites Scripture itself – but he is not righteous (δίκαιος, compare 10:29) in the eyes of Luke until he learns what the commandment means in respect to his neighbor. For Jesus, and for Luke, correct observance of the commandments of Torah only justifies the doer if there is mercy towards the neighbor (10:37). Mercy becomes a crucial key in halakhic interpretation. It might be noted that every other time that Luke talks about mercy (ἔλεος), it is to praise the mercy of God (1:50, 54, 58, 72, 78). But the lawyers, interpreters of the Torah, do not show mercy; instead, they are accused of loading people with impossible burdens and of taking away the 'key of knowledge' (11:46, 52).

Jesus' interpretation of Torah is also at issue in 13:14–16, where Jesus counters the ruler of the synagogue's interpretation of Sabbath law, as he does also in 14:3–5. He later uses the levirate marriage laws to make the point about the resurrection to counter the Sadducees (20:27–40), and uses Psalm 110 to link the Christ with David's Lord (20:41–44). In much of this, while Jesus differs from others in his interpretation, there is no doubt that for Luke Jesus upholds the authority of 'Moses and the prophets' (a phrase almost unique to Luke-Acts in the New Testament) as do Peter and Paul and the others in Acts. This is illustrated simply in the words of Jesus to the rich man concerned about his brothers, 'they have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them' (Luke 16:29). When the rich man says his brothers will only repent if someone goes to them from the dead, the reponse is clear and sharp: 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead' (16:31).

The Gospel ends with Jesus rebuking his disciples for not understanding what the Scriptures say about the suffering and rising of the Christ. Luke then concludes, almost Johannine-like, with Jesus' final words in the Gospel: 'These are my words

which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled' (24:44). And the interpretation of all the Scriptures can be summarized as that the Christ must suffer and be raised, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all nations (24:46–47). There is the hint here that Luke is claiming that the living Jesus is still present with his people (ἔτι ὢν σὺν ὑμῖν) in the words that he has spoken. The Emmaeus episode makes the point very clearly that this living Jesus, when he interprets the Scriptures, opens the eyes of those walking with him as he expounds, with the result that their hearts burn within them. It is within the community of those who in the breaking of bread experience his presence among them that the power from on high works through the reading and interpretation of the Scriptures. And when they have this experience they pray that the living Interpreter would stay with them (Luke 24:29).

Jesus' reported final words to his disciples (24:44) provide the hermeneutical 'key of knowledge' for understanding the whole Gospel: 'Everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.' While the narrative says the whole Gospel are the words of Jesus (οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι μου), the audience only hears his words through the mouth of the reader of Luke's Gospel. In fact, Luke understands his words and Jesus' words to be one and the same. The death and resurrection of the Christ is the fulfillment of the Scriptures. But not only that: Everything that Jesus has spoken has been the fulfillment of what had been written about him in the Scriptures (24:44). By extension, everything that Luke has written about Jesus is the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Luke's Jesus does not simply look back and summarize his words; he also looks forward and nominates the Twelve as witnesses of these words (ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες τούτων, 24:48); they are witnesses to his claims that everything he has said and done is in fulfillment of what the whole of the Scriptures have said about him. It is a witness they are to give to the ends of the earth.

The important point to notice is that Luke believes the Scriptures need interpretation, and he claims to have the authority to do just that. The point is neatly made in the narrative of Philip and the eunuch in Acts 8. The Ethiopian is representative of those communities who have the Scriptures; more than that, he represents the *readers* of the Scriptures within (illiterate) communities. When asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' (ἆρά γε γινώσκεις ἃ ἀναγινώσκεις;), the reader must answer with the eunuch, 'How can I unless someone guides me?' (πῶς γὰρ ἂν δυναίμην ἐὰν μή τις ὁδηγήσει με; Acts 8:30). Luke is the guide.

As I have already indicated a few times, the fundamental hermeneutical principle for Luke is that the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Christ (who is Jesus) are the fulfillment of the Scriptures. In fact, the true teacher, the correct interpreter is to imitate Jesus himself who 'interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself' (Luke 24:47). Those who do not accept this principle are foolish, blind, of closed minds, and slow to believe. It is the principle that is reiterated by Peter in his speeches in Acts (Acts 2:22–36; 3:18–26; 10:43). Stephen, too, accused of speaking 'blasphemous words against Moses and against God' (Acts 6:11), brings down the anger of his opponents especially when he accuses them of being 'stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears' in their rejection of

the prophets and of the Righteous One whom the prophets announced (7:51–53). Stephen's run-down of the scriptural history of Israel culminates in the rejection of this Righteous One. In his Gospel, Luke has the suffering and crucified Jesus declared to be 'righteous' (Luke 23:47). Once again, the implication is that the death of Jesus is to be interpreted according to the law and the prophets. Not by chance, the Ethiopian eunuch is reading from the Suffering Servant Songs of 'Isaiah, the prophet' (the epithet deliberately added, 8:28), and Philip's question to him: 'Do you understand what you are reading?' is directed to all who read this passage. Again, the prophet, Isaiah, speaking of the servant's suffering, allowed Philip to 'evangelize Jesus' (εὐηγγελίσατο τὸν Ἰησοῦν) to the eunuch, 'beginning from this scripture' (ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῆς γραφῆς ταύτης, 8:35).

Paul also consistently argues this line from synagogue to synagogue in Acts. In his speech to the 'men of Israel and those fearing God' in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, Paul claims that the people and rulers of Jerusalem did not 'recognize him [sc. Jesus] nor understand the utterances of the prophets which are read every sabbath' (13:27) and so in executing him, they unwittingly fulfilled 'all that was written of him' (13:29). Conversely, the Gentiles 'glorified the word of God', namely Isa 49:7 which Paul and Barnabas interpreted as their commission from God to turn to the Gentiles (13:47–48). In Thessalonika, too, Paul spent three weeks in the synagogue 'arguing with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead' and that the Christ was Jesus (Acts 17:2–3). Apollos likewise goes to Achaia where he 'powerfully confuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus' (18:28).

Luke writes in a context where the interpretation of Scripture was a key factor of identity. Synagogue–church debates and discussions centered around two closely related matters: the claim that Jesus is the messiah who has brought in the kingdom of God, and the basis for that claim in the Scriptures. So the Christian proclamation that the Messiah is Jesus had to be based on arguments from Scripture (Luke 20:41; Acts 18:28), as did their claim for the resurrection (Luke 20:28; Acts 2:25). On these issues, and others, the interpretation of certain Scriptures (for example, Ps 110:1; Deut 25:5) became crucial.

The imitation of some of the themes and motifs in Deuteronomy and Chronicles, in particular, suggests that Luke saw Jesus as being in close continuity with Israel's Scriptures. In a sense, these two writings represent the 'historian and theologian' in the Scriptures. They are also most likely both priestly documents, and if Luke imitates them it adds some support to my suggestion that Luke himself was a priest. According to Römer and Macchi, 'one of the authors most influenced by the deuteronomistic style is undoubtedly the evangelist Luke' (1995: 181). This claim is made not only on the basis of the phenomenon of retelling biblical stories, but also on the basis of the common style and vocabulary. For example, Luke is the only New Testament author who uses the expression 'God of the fathers' (Acts 3:13; 5:30; 7:32; 22:14). It is, however, used eleven times in Deuteronomy and twenty-six times in Chronicles (1995: 184). It is also common for scholars to identify very close parallels between Deuteronomy and Luke's Travel Narrative. Moessner (1989) argues that Jesus' journey to Jerusalem in Luke's Gospel has very strong Deuteronomy features, and Drury (1976) argued that the whole travel narrative in Luke is a *midrash* on

Deuteronomy. Christopher Evans (1955) is another to highlight the influence that Deuteronomy has on Luke's Gospel, and Craig Evans (1993c) has also argued that line. On a smaller, episodic scale, Green points out that in the Temptation episode, Luke 'seems to have deliberately drawn together a repertoire of elements from scriptural narration of and reflection on Israel's wilderness wanderings' as narrated in Deuteronomy, so that there is a 'far-reaching similarity' between the testing of Israel and that of Jesus (1997: 192). And other evidence of Luke basing episodes in his narrative on Deuteronomy has been noted. Nor is the observable deuteronomistic influence limited to the Gospel; in Acts 7 too it is easily identifiable. In passing, it might not be coincidental that the priests of Qumran left some twenty-nine copies of Deuteronomy in the nearby caves, second only to the thirty-six copies of Psalms.

Luke also imitates the priestly Chronicler. Through geneaologies and lists, Chronicles favors the Davidic line (2:13–17; 3:1–24), and gives attention to the sons of Levi (6:1–80) and especially to the Aaronic priests (6:1–15, 50–53). He has priestly interests and holds the Temple cult in high esteem. These are interests and emphases that Luke follows. The Chronicler also wishes to demonstrate from history that faithful adherence to 'the God of our fathers' results in blessing, whereas forsaking the Lord leads collectively and individually to run the danger of loss, of being under the curse of God, and of Israel being cut off from its chosen heritage. From Luke's perspective, forsaking the ways of God means not to accept the authority of Jesus as interpreter of God's will, and not to accept that God has raised Jesus from the dead and appointed him to be both Lord and Christ and the eschatological judge of all nations.

Koet rightly says, 'By the manner in which he deals with interpretation of Scripture he reveals not only something about Jesus, the disciples, and the community for which he wrote, but also something about himself' (1989: 159–60). So central is this for Luke that Koet can further claim, 'Knowledge of the Scriptures and their interpretation is a condition for being a disciple, and the disciples are even called to become interpreters of Scriptures in Jesus' footsteps' (1989: 160). If that is the case, and if we consider that one's heroes might in fact be how we would like to be ourselves – or even how we might see ourselves to be – then it follows that Luke's heroes, Jesus and Paul, might be an indication of how Luke saw himself – as an interpreter of Scripture.

Ultimately, for Luke, God is the teacher of the renewed Israel of the eschaton. And when the apostles are charged not to teach 'in his name', then they reply, 'we ought to obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29). When the disciples come into the eschatological test, the Spirit will teach them what to say (Luke 12:12; compare also 21:15). God has brought in that final age in the person of Jesus who proclaimed and taught the kingdom and who is its Lord; he has continued that proclamation and teaching through the apostles and especially to the Gentiles through Paul (Acts 28:31); and he continues to teach all those in the second and third generations who 'devote[d] themselves to the apostles' teaching' (Acts 2:42) through the medium of Luke.

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Chapter Eleven

Luke as Interpreter of the Jesus Traditions

The writer of the Gospel is an interpreter of traditions that he had received and in which Theophilus had been instructed. The preface (Luke 1:1–4) suggests that the many narratives of 'the things that had been accomplished among us' already had some standing, so it is really quite some claim for the author to say that he is someone who has 'followed accurately everything from the beginning' (παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς) and that he is writing 'in an orderly sequence' (καθεξῆς) so that Theophilus can recognize the 'safety of the words which he has learned' (περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν). Luke could not have been simply a compiler or editor to do that; or at least, he did not see himself in that way. Instead, he wants to put his mark on the transmission of the 'things concerning Jesus'.

It is commonly accepted that the Gospel of Mark and the source called Q were among Luke's sources. That appears to be the case, or at least offers a very reasonable explanation of what in part is 'the Synoptic Problem'. Modern research on how orality works within an illiterate society and on the importance of memory and memorization has asked some very serious questions of the historical-critical approach to the Gospels which is very text-bound and text-conscious. In any case, it is misleading to suggest that Luke simply regurgitates his sources or that he does little more than loosely edit them, correcting the style or the Greek here and there; adding his own theological agenda by changing a few things from time to time. The very act of selecting from his sources indicates his claim to be in authoritative control over them. He decides and he selects from his sources; but he constructs his own narrative and his own story with its own peculiar agenda, even if the blocks he uses to do so might be found in sources such as in Mark and Q. Luke authoritatively revises and rewrites the traditions he has received.

Luke does mention his sources, even if only implicitly. Obviously, he does not mention Mark or Mark's Gospel as one of them; instead, he acknowledges the traditions handed down by 'eyewitnesses and ministers of the word' who, I suggested earlier, might have been guardians and 'owners' of the narratives. They could be included among 'the many who have attempted to write a narrative' (1:1) and they served as Luke's sources. Their narratives dealt with 'the things that have been accomplished (or, fulfilled) among us' (Luke 1:1). The phrase περὶ τῶν (or, περὶ τοῦ …) is one used repeatedly in Luke-Acts, and it is worth looking at its usage. In Luke 1:1, it refers to things that have been done, presumably by God in or through the person of Jesus, but also possibly through the apostles like Peter and Paul. A number of times Luke uses the expression τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ιησοῦ almost as if it were shorthand for 'the gospel'; shorthand especially for the words and deeds of this Jesus. In Luke

24, for example, Jesus meets the two disciples walking to Emmaeus and asks them what they have been discussing. They reply, τὰ περὶ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Ναζαρηνοῦ, ὃς ἐγένετο ἀνὴρ προφήτης δυνατὸς ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ (24:19) – the gospel narrative, according to Luke, in a nutshell! These 'things about Jesus' are then interpreted to the two disciples on the basis of the Scriptures (διερμήνευσεν αὐτοῖς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς τὰ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ, 24:27). Similar language is used at the beginning of Acts when the risen, appearing Jesus speaks to the apostles τὰ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ (Acts 1:3); again, it appears to be shorthand for the whole of Jesus' message and activity. Later in Acts 13, as in Luke 24, the 'things about Jesus' are seen as a direct completion of πάντα τὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ γεγραμμένα (13:29). In Ephesus, Apollos ἐδίδασκεν ἀκριβῶς τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ (18:25), although there were limits to his teaching so Prisca and Aquila 'expounded to him the way of God more accurately' (18:26). In Ephesus, too, Paul spends three months in the synagogue 'arguing and persuading about the kingdom of God' (διαλεγόμενος καὶ πείθων [τὰ] περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ, 19:8). Later in the narrative, Felix, the Roman governor, is said to have known accurately 'the things about the Way' (τὰ περὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ, 24:22). And finally, the very last sentence that Luke writes describes Paul as κηρύσσων τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διδάσκων τὰ περὶ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας ἀκωλύτως (Acts 28:31). So phrases like 'the things about Jesus' might well suggest that there were many traditions, both oral and written, that could be summarized with that expression. Indeed, it was the role of an evangelist to recite the 'things about Jesus', that is, his words and deeds, for instruction in righteous living. Luke definitely fulfills that role.

The desire to determine Luke's sources and how he has used them has dominated much of Lukan studies over the past century or more. As long as that is where the interest is, Luke will never be seen as an author in his own right. The fact is, no matter what sources Luke might or might not have used, what we have is 'the Gospel according to Luke', not simply a regurgitation or rehash of the gospel 'according to Mark' or according to anyone else. Luke selects, and selection is a significant interpretive tool. So is arrangement of material. A comparison between what Matthew does with the teaching of Jesus (classically, in the 'Sermon on the Mount' Mth 5–7) and how Luke handles the material is a good example of how arrangement of material is part of the interpretive process. The close association that Jesus has with John the Baptist is another example of Luke using traditions available to him to fit the understanding of Jesus he wishes to communicate to his audience. In doing all this, Luke is therefore controlling and shaping the tradition.

The Church Fathers of the first three centuries, while acutely conscious of the variations that exist between the Gospels, rarely ever show any sign of thinking that Luke, for example, had Mark or Matthew as a source. It is only with Augustine that the dependency of one Evangelist on another is explicitly stated. Instead, they consistently claim that Luke's source was Paul and other apostles. It is a claim that moderns might need to take more seriously. True, as we have seen, there were second-century circumstances which meant the Luke–Paul link was important, but no one from that early period is known to have called the bluff on that association or to discredit it on 'historical' grounds. The least we can say is that early Christian

interpreters of Luke, for whatever reason, aligned both him and his Gospel with Paul rather than with Mark or Matthew.

There is a discernible agenda in what Luke wants to say about the tradition to Theophilus and others. He has a clear understanding of Jesus as God's Lord and Christ; he is keen to locate Jesus within the history of God's dealings with Israel and the nations; he believes that 'today' is the day of God's salvation, and that the 'today' of good news and salvation is marked by traditional Jewish eschatological expectations – the renewal of Israel by God's holy Spirit (Luke 3:16), the instruction of Israel by a Teacher and Prophet in the mould of Moses and Elijah (7:16; 9:30–35), the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins (5:32, 24:47) the attraction of the Gentiles to Israel (2:32), and the resurrection of the dead (14:14).

The inextricable link between Jesus and Israel is stated right from the outset in Luke's Gospel as he links Jesus so closely with the priestly John and his family. Luke interprets Jesus as being in very close continuity with the history of God's plans and activities in and for Israel. But my point is that the link is very priestly in its narrative character. It is a link that a priestly author, and even a priestly audience, might care to make and would like to hear. Priests are not abandoned by God. The Temple might be gone, the cultic rhythm broken, but priests are still potential agents through which God can perform his wonderful and mighty deeds.

On a larger scale, Luke writes almost as if he believes he is continuing the writing of Scripture. For him, Jesus is part of the continuing story – central to it, absolutely the key to the story's meaning, but still a part of it – as also are Peter and Paul, and so the Acts of the Apostles is also the continuation of Scripture. In 1937, Dom Chapman asked hesitantly, was Luke 'consciously composing a sequel to the Greek Old Testament, a supplement to the canon, a sacred book? Is that too bold a suggestion?' (1937: 175). The daring of that question has lost is sting. Canonical studies and the texts from Qumran have shown that ideas of canon and of 'Scripture' were nowhere near as fixed and rigid as many Christian scholars had come to think. To 'add' to the Scriptures and even to 'rewrite' them was an acceptable practice in some Jewish circles around the turn of the Era. Gruen (1998), for one, has shown that the Hellenistic age saw the 'reinvention' of Jewish traditions (the Exodus tradition in particular) with the Scriptures appearing in a new guise, often embellished and sometimes with a sense of comedy. Evans argues that Luke rewrites the Jesus story 'in a way that is truly analogous to the Jewish rewriting of biblical narrative' (1993d: 177), and that 'Luke in all likelihood viewed the gospel story as a sacred tradition, if not in some sense as Scripture itself' (1993d: 175). He argues this on three bases. First, Luke's use of the phrase 'word of God' or simply 'the word' is reminiscent of the Jewish Scriptures' use of *dabar Yahweh*. Luke describes Jesus as 'mighty in deed and word' (Luke 24:19) just as he describes Moses in Acts 7:22. The authority of the words of Jesus equals that of Moses. Secondly, Evans argues, within a generation of Luke's writings, there are indications that some Christians regarded some New Testament writings as Scripture; and thirdly, 2 Pet 3:15–16 seems to link Paul's writings with the Old Testament writings (1993d: 178). I think Evans overstates the case in the last two points, but the point still stands that Luke 'in all likelihood' understood the Jesus tradition, or better, understood the gospel, as being in clear and direct continuity with the sacred traditions of Israel. In a sense, he was providing Theophilus with

an updated biblical text. If that is the case, then my point is that he must have had authority to do that. And such authority fits well that of a Jewish priest.

Luke interprets the Jesus traditions not only in and through his Gospel, but also in Acts. I will suggest later that Luke in Acts wishes to provide a balance to Paul's interpretation of Jesus. In Acts, Luke constructs Paul (and Peter) along the same lines as he does Jesus in the Gospel – all three are men of God 'mighty in word and deed'. In the preaching in Acts, Jesus is the one who 'went in and out among us' (1:21), an expression that is commonly used of Israel's leaders (Strelan 2003). He is God's agent, crucified 'at the hands of lawless people' but raised by God from the dead and exalted to his right hand. God has in fact made him both Lord and Christ (2:22–24, 33, 36) and he has done that to 'give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins' (5:31). All of this is to fulfill what is written in the law and the prophets. In Acts, Peter and others are said to be called as witnesses to testify to all that Jesus said and did (1:8). In addition, Jesus is the Lord who heals, who directs, who is present as a blessing priest who has ascended into the heavenly realms and whom God has appointed as eschatological judge of all. Rather curiously, when Paul preaches to Gentiles, almost none of the message given to Israel is repeated. Jesus rarely, if ever, is explicitly mentioned; instead, the message is one about the living God who made and sustains all things (Acts 14:15–17; 17:24–31).

As has been repeatedly said in this book and in Gospel scholarship generally, Luke not only interprets Jesus through the lens of the Scriptures, seeing him as their fulfillment, but he also constructs his narrative and story by using patterns from those writings, sometimes along midrashic lines. Well known is the portrayal of Jesus along the lines of the biblical Elijah–Elisha cycle of stories. A very good example is given in Luke 7 where Jesus visits Nain and restores to life the dead son of a mourning widow. The people respond with 'A great prophet has risen among us', and, 'God has visited his people' (Luke 7:16). The episode reads very much like a retelling of the Elijah and Elisha stories (1 Kgs 17:17–24; 2 Kgs 4:32–37). This practice of telling familiar biblical stories under the new guise of Jesus is a phenomenon common to all the Gospels. The audiences who knew their Scriptures would have been thinking: 'We've heard this story before in our Scriptures. What are you trying to tell us, Luke?' And the answer might be something like: 'The God of our Scriptures has acted again in our own time in the person of Jesus.' Jesus, despite his scandalous and shameful crucifixion, is indeed favored of God and is indeed as righteous as the prophets. The judgment of the widow of Zarephath on Elijah is the judgment that is to be made of Jesus: 'You are a man of God, and the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth' (1 Kgs 17:24). God has given Jesus (and by extension, Luke) teaching and prophetic authority in Israel.

Luke is often accused of being silent about the significance of Jesus' death. True, Luke does not follow Mark's interpretation of Jesus' *diakonia* which is 'to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45). But there are hints of something similar in Luke's passion narrative. There the theme of forgiveness is quite clear as Jesus prays for the forgiveness of his executors (23:34), and as he offers Paradise 'today' to his fellow-sufferer (23:43). In fact, apart from in his final submission of his spirit to his Father, Jesus *only* speaks words of forgiveness and restoration from the cross. What is also clear is that, like with so much else about Jesus, Luke interprets his death as

being 'according to the Scriptures'. In fact, Jesus insists that the Scriptures are not understood correctly unless they understand that the Christ must suffer and die and be raised on the third day. In Acts, too, it is obvious that the gospel proclamation, in Luke's understanding, includes the death of Jesus. It was part of the plan and foreknowledge of God (2:23).

Luke interprets the Jesus tradition in such a way as to provide a balance or counterbalance to claims about Jesus and about The Way. That is one reason why his central characters – Jesus, Peter, Paul – are portrayed so consistently. It could be argued that the programmatic word on the mission of Jesus as Luke understands it is that spoken by Simeon in the Temple at the purification of Jesus and his mother: 'This child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel' (2:34). Those who fall will be the rich and powerful; those who will rise will be the poor. This is a persistent motif throughout Luke-Acts. It is at the heart of Mary's *Magnificat* as she sings of the Lord and God 'my savior' (1:46) who 'scatters the proud … puts down the mighty … exalts those of low degree' (1:51–52). If Luke belonged to the 'common priests' and was aware of some of the mistreatment that his ilk had experienced at the hands of the wealthy aristocatic priesthood in Jerusalem, then his siding with the poor and his elevation of the humble might be expected. For him, Jesus is the savior, the bringer of good news to the poor, the marginalized and those who were accused of not living according the the traditions of the fathers.

Luke has rightly earned a reputation for representing Jesus as having an 'option for the poor', with the saying of Jesus in his home town synagogue: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor' (Luke 4:18) singled out as being programmatic. In this, Luke might be wishing to counter the practice and control of the wealthy in his communities, including even some fellow-priests. Acts of compassion was one of the three marks of Israel, the other two being Torah study and Temple worship. Repeatedly in the Torah, Israel is commanded to protect the poor, the widows and the orphans, remembering that they too were once without rights and slaves in Egypt. 'This is the acceptable fast that God loves: when you break your bread with the hungry and you welcome the stranger into your house, when you see the naked and cover him, and you do not neglect the son of your flesh' (Isa 58:6–7). 'For the Lord your God is … the awesome God who does not show partiality … He brings about justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the stranger by giving him food and clothing. Therefore, show your love for the stranger' (Deut 10:17–19). So, the Israelites were to care for the traveler or alien in the land because they had once been 'strangers in the land of Egypt' (Lev 19:34). They were to promote justice for the needy because 'I, the Lord, love justice' (Isa 61:8; Ps 146:7). They were to help those who could not sustain themselves because God 'supports the orphan and the widow' (Ps 146:9).

Luke believes that Jesus has called a remnant of Israel to be a light to the rest of Israel and to the nations of the Way of God, calling Israel to repent and to return to living righteously, that is, according to Torah. Mercy and almsgiving for those who are 'poor' are to characterize the individual Jew and the renewed Israel. The matter of riches and poverty is a dominant theme in Jewish Wisdom literature (as a reading of Proverbs will illustrate), and Luke's interest in them is yet another indicator of his familiarity and ease with Jewish literature and its substance. As with a number of

other halakhic issues, we can find close parallels in the Dead Sea texts as they urge their Yahad to protect the poor, and they thank God for saving the poor among them. The Wicked Priest is condemned in those texts because he 'plotted to destroy the poor' (1QpHab 12.2). But the Teacher sings, 'You, my God, have helped the soul of the destitute and the poor against one stronger than he. You have redeemed my soul from the hand of the mighty' (1QH 10.35).

Much of this slant that Luke gives to the Jesus traditions can be summed up in his penchant for depicting Jesus as one who shares meals with outsiders. The well-known parable, unique to Luke, of the Prodigal Son (or, Waiting Father, Luke 15:11–32) is an excellent example of this motif in the Gospel. Jesus has come to bring joy, to welcome the sinner (= the non-Torah, non-tradition observant) and to offer salvation 'today' to such. As in the whole Gospel, the point of these episodes is not simply to inform Theophilus or anyone else of certain facts about Jesus but to give encouragement and direction to any community that meets together in his name. The Emmaeus episode provides a very fitting ending to the Gospel for that very reason: it emphasizes to the audience that the living Lord Jesus is present in and for his community when they come together in table-fellowship. That commensality is to be offered to all, but especially to the 'tax-collectors and sinners' among them.

The reception of Luke's gospel of Jesus by women in his audiences is related to this dimension of the Gospel. How did they hear Luke interpret the traditions of Jesus about them? In scholarship, some have thought Luke to be favorable towards women and to include them among those lifted up in Israel. More recently, feminist scholars particularly suggest otherwise. Luke, far from championing the new status of women in Christ, wishes to control the powerful and wealthy women in particular; and he wishes them to submit to the authority of men. These authoritative and powerful women belong to those who are 'brought low', not to those who are raised and lifted up by Jesus. Martha might well be a good instance of this. Her concern with *diakonia* probably is not a worry about making tea and scones but an anxiety over some ministry in the church which Luke says need not be the concern of women. Mary has chosen the better part – of sitting, listening and learning from the male teachers – and she serves as the model for women in Luke's intended audiences. In this matter, as in some others, Luke is in harmony with the Pastorals, and both seek to provide a balance to the more liberal and radical understanding of Paul on issues such as the role and authority of women.

Luke interprets the traditions he has received about Jesus by arranging them in an order that he thinks is appropriate, by using a language style that his audiences would recognize as being 'biblical', and by focusing on the righteous teaching and practice of Jesus. Such righteousness includes the elevation of the poor and the humble and the humbling of those who exalt themselves. It is enacted in the commensality that is practiced within the Christian community.

Chapter Twelve

Luke as Interpreter of Paul

It is very commonly held that Paul is 'the exalted hero of the whole second half of Acts' (Brown 1997: 324) and that his travel companion, Luke, is a great admirer and sympathetic compiler of his work and thought. Fitzmyer (1981: 35–51) represents modern scholars who accept as accurate and reliable the traditional view that Luke was a companion of Paul, the author of the Gospel and Acts, and one who heroicized Paul. This position has a very ancient and long tradition because the early Christian writers, with their own agenda, also depicted Luke as Paul's companion and as a faithful recorder of 'Paul's gospel'.

But in the last two centuries, this traditional view has certainly had its detractors, especially in Germany. The Tübingen School in the mid-nineteenth century led the counter claim by asserting that it is impossible for someone who was a companion of Paul, as is claimed of Luke, to get Paul so wrong. It was a view that was supported and strengthened in the 1950s, when Acts was at the 'storm centre', as van Unnik (1976) saw it. Opposition to the traditional view was cogently posited by Vielhauer, who argued that the differences between Luke and Paul are such that one can only conclude that the author of Luke-Acts was *not* a companion of Paul in any sense. The differences are largely theological: in Christology, in the understanding of Jesus' death; in the attitude towards natural theology; and in the stance over the Law. Vielhauer suggested that Luke wanted to claim Paul for Jewish Christianity, and to show that the claims that Paul was an apostate are false. 'Luke's view [is] that the law retains its full validity for Jewish Christians and that Paul acknowledged this in a conciliatory concession to the Jews' (1976: 41). Nolland summarizes the opinion of many, but not all, who find the theologies of Luke and Paul incompatible: 'Any careful comparison of Luke's theology with Paul's makes it impossible to accept Irenaeus' claim for the link between Paul's gospel and the Lukan text' (1989: 1. xxxv).

There are also doubts raised about the historical reliability of Acts. The travel movements of Paul are not easily reconciled with those constructed from Paul's own letters, and the matter of the Apostolic Council also has raised serious questions for many. Dibelius is typical of those who grant Acts very little historical credibility. On the matter of the Apostolic Council report in Acts 15 and the report of Paul in Galatians 2, for example, he says the latter 'contains no difficult historical problem, as long as we are not compelled to regard Acts 15 as a serious rival source. My intention has been to make it clear that there is no need to do so, if we acknowledge the real purport of Luke, that is, his literary and theological concern' (1999: 101). This is the typical argument: If a decision needs to be made between Acts and Paul on the matter of historical reliability, side with Paul because Luke has an agenda. This implies, of course, that Paul does not!

But it is not only in the area of theology and history where difficulties lie. There is also the difference in character portrayal. Luke depicts Paul as a miracle-working orator with convincing speech powers, while Paul says little about any healing powers, and if anything is very conscious of his lack of speech skills. The portrayal of Peter in Acts also conflicts with other depictions of him in the Gospels and in Paul.

One of the driving factors, especially in German scholarship for centuries, has been the question of the historical reliability of the New Testament texts. The question of history was shaped very largely by German philosophers of history, especially Hegel. In addition, when the Tübingen School was in full swing, Marx and Darwin were having a significant impact on the way Western scholars thought about history. This impact has only subsided since about the 1980s, but it still can be seen today. More recently, the question of history has become more problematic, and a greater stress has been put on history as interpretation. Others have also raised questions of cultural understanding, and suggest that we ought to start from the position that what we have in the New Testament comes to us in foreign, alien cultural forms. When it comes to Luke-Acts, what if history (by modern or ancient criteria) is not the concern? In my opinion, Luke had no more intention of leaving Theophilus with 'the historical Paul', than he had of leaving him with 'the historical Jesus'. On both sides of the argument, the basic premise is skewed because it has made history – and a generally anachronistic view of it – the crucial point of debate.

Of course, there have always been those who maintain the tradition is reliable and defensible (and therefore historical), despite the difficulties that have been pointed out. Hengel, for example, thinks the theological differences between Luke and Paul are not surprising, and that they reflect little more than what often happens in the relation between teacher and student. He uses the example of the Melanchthon–Luther relation, and that of many current professors and their students (2000: 274 n. 436). I would like to take up the Reformation example Hengel uses, because I think it provides a different perspective again on the relation between Paul and Luke. Paul and Luther had in common that they were both passionate in their convictions concerning the gospel as a result of experiences which provided a breakthrough for them in their formation. Both claimed a calling which they could not refuse; both were non-systematic; both had intense pastoral concern for the church, and both evoked responses and reactions to almost everything they wrote and said. On the other hand, Luke and Melanchthon were both thinkers and writers in their own right, who, while admirers of their more famous contemporaries, were not blind to their faults, and were not afraid to tone down the implications of their visions. In some cases, they felt they had to pick up the pieces from what, in their opinion, had been inadvertently knocked over. Both were more systematic and concerned with order than their more famous colleagues. In the end, both provided a less radical, more irenic understanding of what the more dynamic reformers advocated and represented. Yet both Luke and Melanchthon felt they were being true to Paul and Luther, respectively.

Luke wrote probably around 75–85 CE, that is, about a generation after the death of Paul. It would seem that it was a period when there was a battle for Paul, or probably more accurately, a period when some, like Luke, believed that Paul had been misunderstood and his ideas had been taken too far. Paul needed to be

constructed as less radical and more conservative. There were those who, like Marcion later, believed that Paul had to be taken to his logical conclusion on the number of issues, and that caused some huge headaches in Christian communities, especially those who quite understandably and reasonably wanted to maintain their Jewish heritage. Some claimed Paul would want a complete break with anything based on Torah; Luke claims Paul can still be authoritative in the church without going to such extremes. There were a number of other serious issues that were raised by those who claimed to be following the teaching of Paul. The matter of women and their status and position within the church was one of these, and the inevitable issue of table-fellowship or commensality another. People could take opposing positions on these matters and still claim Paul as their teacher.

I suggest that Luke is not simply a follower of Paul, meekly repeating what Paul stood for. It is fairly clear that he does not do that. Nor does he misunderstand Paul. He probably understood him very well, and from that perspective felt that he could – indeed, that he must – modify Paul, provide a balance, and so protect everything that Paul stood for against the wolves that were threatening to rip the flock apart (Acts 20). The 'wolves' might have been those who took Paul's arguments and thoughts to their logical conclusion. They might have been the forerunners of the Marcionites. In a sense, they probably held Paul more to be their hero than Luke did! Luke thought Paul was in need of some revision, some reclaiming from the wolves; and his thought needed some balancing and nuancing along more conservative lines. In other words, I suggest that Luke is the controller of Paul and wants to present a balance, even a counter-balance to Paul himself and to other interpreters of Paul. As with the case of interpreting Jesus, to write this way about Paul assumes authority and status. It is an opinion shared by Franklin. While still claiming that 'in some way, he [Paul] is Luke's hero' (1994: 35), and that Luke embraced the fundamentals of Paul, Franklin acknowledges the differences. For example, he notes that Luke allowed for a stronger continuity between Israel and the church than Paul (1994: 36). In sum, Franklin believes, and I would agree, that Luke's 'story of Paul and his nuanced Paulinism reveals him as a freely creative interpreter of events and beliefs. He is no cipher. Since some direct relationship with Mark remains most likely, it seems that he would have handled that Gospel with the same freedom with which he handled Paul' (1994: 37).

Goodenough goes further and sees Luke as being against Paul and his 'freedom'. 'To me, Acts seems to be a piece of deliberate propaganda designed to assure "Theophilus" that Paul also had preached a return to Jewish Christianity … For this author not only minimized or denied Paul's real gospel, but anchored him in Judaism by making him a trained rabbi' (1976: 54). Goodenough thinks Acts might have been written quite early (in the 50s CE), but the problem of Paul's liberal gospel might also have been just as acute in the third generation, when it is just as likely that a more hard-nosed and less liberal position on the relation between the Jesus movement and the synagogue would have come to the fore, as is common in many reform movements. So, if Theophilus was a Jew, did Luke want to convince him that the Jew–Gentile question, as represented by Paul, needed to be understood correctly? Is this partly why Jesus, Peter and Paul are depicted in very similar ways? By doing so, does Luke keep Paul under some control? By portraying him as similar to Jesus does

he want his audience to understand Paul only through Jesus? That means, Paul is to be interpreted through the lens of Luke's Gospel of Jesus. Goodenough goes so far as to suggest that Paul might have had someone like Luke in mind when writing Gal 1:8 (58). But it is more likely that Luke and Paul are writing in two quite different historical situations (and I suggest also different theological situations) and so we would not necessarily expect their thought to be in agreement.

The major issue Luke faced was the relation between Jews and Gentiles in the Christian community. In order to provide sound leadership and instruction to Theophilus and others on this issue, Luke constructed a Paul who fitted his own attitude on the question. According to Brawley, for Luke, 'the image of Paul has suffered damage from detractors who claim that Paul's gospel is incomplete, and who raise suspicions among Jewish Christians that Paul teaches apostasy from Judaism. To repair the damage, Luke sketches the character of Paul in Jewish contours with Pharisaic overtones' (Brawley 1987: 157). Brawley rightly says, 'in Acts, Paul is first of all a missionary to Jews' (1987: 157). Brawley finishes his book by emphasizing that Acts is not the 'triumph of Gentile Christianity over Judaism … rather than setting Gentile Christianity free, Luke ties it to Judaism. And rather than rejecting the Jews, Luke appeals to them' (1987: 159). The point is that the Gentiles are included in the renewed end-time Israel, not that Jews are excluded.

Denova argues that neither Luke nor Acts

> demonstrates the transition from Jewish followers to a Gentile-dominated church, for such an entity is not demonstrated by Luke. The narrative as a whole argues for an eschatological community which includes repentant Jews, 'zealous for the Law', and repentant Gentiles who believe in the God of Israel, and this community is consistently upheld in the same light throughout the entirety of Acts. (1997: 20)

She rightly says that too much attention has been given to the Gentiles in reading Isa 49.6, for example, and not enough on the first part of that verse which talks of raising the tribes of Jacob and restoring the preserved of Israel (1997: 27). That all Jews are not believers does not mean failure; 'on the contrary, it confirms exactly what the prophets foretold' (1997: 38).

The status of Paul in Luke's narrative deserves more attention. It has been commonly noted that, with one exception, he is not referred to as an apostle. By the requirements of 1:21, he would have been excluded from that status. Even in the one passage where Paul is referred to as an apostle (14:14), he is listed second after Barnabas (as he is also in 13:2, 7). At Lystra, the name of the father of the gods, Zeus, is given to Barnabas, not to Paul (14:12). In the list of prophets and teachers at Antioch (13:1), Saul is mentioned last. Paul, at least initially, is depicted as being under the oversight and direction of others, especially of Barnabas, a Levite and therefore probably of some accepted authority and status in most communities. In addition, in Acts Peter is the first apostle to the Gentiles, not Paul (Acts 10); even Philip might claim that status ahead of him (Acts 8). Peter is also the guarantor of the traditions; he and James are the ones who decide in the Jerusalem Council about the Gentiles, not Paul (Acts 15). The movement into Greece is not at Paul's initiative at all, but by 'we' interpreting Paul's vision to mean that 'God had called

us to preach the gospel to them' (16:10). It is both Paul and Silas (not Paul alone) who 'spoke the word of the Lord' to the household of the Philippian jailer (16:32). At Thessalonica, those who were persuaded 'joined Paul and Silas' (17:4). Apollos arrives in Ephesus and is taught the way of God more accurately by Prisca and Aquila, not by Paul (18:26). In the riot of the silversmiths of Ephesus, Paul is absent, being protected from going to the theatre by his disciples and by some leading Asiarchs who befriended him (19:30–31). True, in many other episodes Paul is the central and dominant character, but it is certainly not always the case. In the end, for Luke God or the Spirit of God is the actor and Paul is the agent.

What is too often overlooked in the debate about historical reliability in Acts is the purpose of the book. Acts has the same purpose as the Gospel: to provide Theophilus with *asfaleia* concerning the the things that he has learnt about God's actions in the end times through Jesus the Christ and through the outpouring of the holy Spirit on both Jews and Gentiles. In the end, Luke's purpose is not to write a history, revisionist or otherwise. Rothschild's recent claim that Luke writes using the rhetoric of history 'as a means of authenticating his version of origins to more critically minded audiences' (2004: 139) probably has twenty-first century audiences in mind! Versions of Christian origins might well have been an issue, but they had little to do with being critically minded. They had to do with whether they were of God or not. Luke's concern is basically pastoral; it is for the wellbeing of his audiences. They knew the traditions about Jesus and about Paul and Peter and others, and Luke uses those traditions to deal with issues that were confronting a second generation of Christians: How do we understand the relation between Israel and 'the church'? What is the role of the law? What is to be expected of Gentiles wanting to join the community? What is the role and status of Jews in the community? Who is welcome at the common table? Is the Jesus movement really of God after all or should we rejoin the synagogue? What is the role of women? How should we handle our money? To all these questions, Luke related and interpreted the traditions about Jesus and Paul and gave them his own spin.

Once again, this illustrates that Luke is free enough and in enough control not to regurgitate Paul slavishly. He does not quote from any of Paul's letters, not because he did not know that Paul wrote letters, but because he thinks he has sufficient authority of his own. It is an authority that allows him to 'use' Paul for his own ends and purposes.

New movements need strong leadership especially in their second generation; without it they disband, re-join their old associations, or become involved in petty squabbles and disputes. Such groups require strong leadership and direction if they are to survive at all. Luke belonged to that generation of Christians who still needed that strong leadership. The attraction of rejoining the local synagogue groups must have been strong, as also the attraction of continuing pagan practices. New movements need clear identity even to justify their continuation. It is difficult for Christians in the modern West, living still in a majority culture, to appreciate how different it is to live as a minority, marginalized, and at times pressured group. Boundaries and markers of identity are crucial for survival; inclusivity tends to be the luxury of the powerful, the elite, and the comfortable. Early Christians were much more exclusive

than we tend to imagine – they had to be, otherwise they might as well have stayed within their synagogues or within their pagan cultic groupings.

I suggest, then, that rather than seeing Paul as his hero, Luke has a more cynical view of him. He is not his hero, but someone who needs to be reinterpreted and revised. The Pauline view went too far for him on a number of issues. He wants to downgrade Paul, not to elevate him. As Schmithals says, 'it is not to be doubted that in the book of Acts Paul is clearly "downgraded"' (1969: 269).

Conclusion

This book has been about authority. It has argued that the Third Gospel was composed by a writer who not only had authority to tell the story of 'the things about Jesus', but also had the authority to control the story and to shape its interpretation. Given that he had that authority, either ascribed to him by others or one he claimed for himself, who was he? I have shown that the responsibility and duty within Israel to be its 'theologians and historians' belonged almost exclusively to the priests. If that is the case, and if Luke can be classified as 'theologian and historian', then it follows that Luke might have belonged to the class of priests. In the end, Luke is not a historian in that he was not interested in gathering the facts of what happened. He is aware of what had happened, and uses that data, but he is not concerned with writing a history of Jesus. Nor is he a theologian in that he does not write systematically or as an arm-chair thinker and philosopher on the way God has acted in the person of Jesus. Again, he does reflect on such things, but that is not his agenda. Luke primarily is an evangelist – not in the 'winning souls for Christ' sense, but inasmuch as he is a reciter and interpreter of 'the things about Jesus' and his 'mighty words and deeds' which he performed in and for Israel. And he uses that material to teach his audience in the way of righteousness.

The Jesus movement raised the issue of authority to another level. It was not the only movement to raise it because it is clear from the Qumran texts that the Community who wrote and used those texts also had significant authority issues with the priestly hierarchy of Jerusalem. The Christians hurried the question along because they claimed that the Christ of the Scriptures had in fact been revealed by God in the person of Jesus. Messianic hopes, spoken and written about by the prophets, had in fact been fulfilled. The dramatic nature and impact of that claim cannot be overstated. It forced into the public arena the whole matter of biblical interpretation and of authority to interpret Israel's traditions. When combined with the destruction of the Temple and the consequential threat to the authority of the priesthood in Jerusalem, the authority issue became even more wide open and up for grabs. Who now had authority to interpret Torah and so to make halakhic decisions? Who now had authority to interpret the prophets and the Scriptures in general? The rise of the influence of the Pharisees and their insistence on the importance of the oral traditions was another significant and dynamic ingredient in the authority pot of the decades after 70 CE.

But the debate and tension was not simply between Jews (including Christians). It was also one that took place between Christians themselves. It is naïve to think that Christians were a harmonious, united community with no differences in their interpretation of the Scriptures, let alone in their understanding of Jesus and of Paul. It is also naïve to think that there were no political struggles and no struggles over authority. If the Gospels reflect things that were going on in Christian communities, then they clearly are aware of the disputes and put-downs and arguments that

took place, with some people demanding greater authority roles than others. The Gospels depict Jesus as addressing his disciples on this issue as they squabbled among themselves as to who was the greatest (for example, Luke 9:46-50; 22:24-30). Divisions based on the authority claims of teachers are also evident in Paul's communication with the Corinthians (1 Cor 1:10-13). The Gospels (and Acts) also reflect that the matter of biblical interpretation was central in much of the debates and arguments and divisions.

In addition, the second and third generations of Christians had an ever-increasing body of texts, both oral and written, from which to draw for their knowledge and understanding of Jesus. These texts were not consistent in their presentation, a matter that was to cause problems for later Christian leaders and teachers like Tatian and Origen. Who are to be accepted as reliable tradents and guarantors of the Jesus tradition? Heckel suggests that Mark's Gospel problematized the authority of the disciples as guarantors of the tradition, whereas Luke's Gospel rehabilitates them as such (1999: 99). He might well be right.

It is in this environment that Luke thought it good that he write (Luke 1:3). In so doing, he adopted an authoritative method – writing! Writing provided some control of the memory, because writing served precisely the purpose of aiding the memory and of providing a 'safer' form than existed in oral transmission. Writing took the risk of fixing the tradition and of killing the 'spirit' that was present in oral communication of the gospel; but it also provided a more accurate, safer, and more orderly presentation of that same gospel. In addition, writing linked Luke with Israel's Scriptures, and he consciously used an accepted, authoritative literary form by using the Greek style and vocabulary of the Scriptures. By doing so, he claimed authority for his own writings. He also claimed authority because of his close following of things from their beginning and because of his knowledge of the traditions that had been passed down to him by eyewitnesses and by 'servants of the word' (1:2). In this way, Luke put himself in the tradition of those controllers and interpreters, the theologians and historians, of Israel, the priests. We cannot, and probably never will, know what status Luke actually had, but this book has argued that to construct him as a priest fits the bill better than most other viable options.

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