

ANTIOCH: A CASE STUDY IN SPIRITUAL VITALITY

A Paper Presentation

Submitted to the Faculty and Administration

of the

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

The Spring 2005 Ola Farmer Lenaz Lecture

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

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May 10, 2005

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I want to extend my gratitude to the administration of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary for their invitation to bring the 2005 Ola Farmer Lenaz Lecture. My earnest desire is that this paper will meet with their expectations and the high standards of academic pursuit integrated into the pragmatics of working within the local church.

Second, I am greatly in debt to Dr. Will H. McRaney, Jr. for agreeing to be the respondent to this paper. His commitment to the local church is evident in his teaching and ministry. He pursues his academic work with a keen eye on both impact and implementation in the local church, providing an admirable blend of theory and practice. I indicated to Dr. McRaney that my interest in his pursuit of the response was to stimulate creative thinking about the local church and the practical application of this study on issues of spiritual vitality through the lens of his own experience and perspective. I wanted to turn him loose to go in whatever direction seemed appropriate and fruitful to him.

Finally, I want to thank Mrs. Pam Cole for her generous offer of time and assistance in proofing the form and style of this paper. Her superior skill and expertise as an outside reader are hard to equal and a tremendous asset for improving any written material. To be sure, any problems that remain are entirely my responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

The 1964 hit movie *My Fair Lady* stars Rex Harrison and Audrey Hepburn.¹ Harrison plays Professor Henry Higgins, an English phonetics expert who boasts he can determine one's place of origin to within a few miles on phonetics alone. Hepburn plays Eliza Doolittle, a low-class Cockney flower girl. One memorable song production in Alan Jay Lerner's musical adaptation is the pub ditty sung by Eliza's father, Alfred. Alfred is a hard-drinking scoundrel and bachelor. By the hilarious circumstances of a fortuitous inheritance, Alfred feels forced to legitimize the social position of his live-in companion, Eliza's stepmother, by marrying her. Before taking this fateful and dreaded step, Alfred goes out on the town one last time with his friends. In the waning hours of his bachelor freedom, drunk Alfred asks his pub companions for one last favor: "Get Me To the Church on Time." He belts the chorus:

*I'm getting married in the morning,
Ding dong the bells are gonna chime
Kick up a rumpus, but don't lose the compass
And get me to the church—Get him to the church
For Gawd's sake get me to the church on time.*

Luke characterized the Jerusalem disciples and their leaders as a community of believers that increasingly, like Eliza Doolittle's father, Alfred, just did not get to church on time for the main event (gospel advance). The Acts narrative documents how Antioch becomes the surrogate "mother church"—at least in terms of the gospel mission in the ever-increasing circles of witness announced in the programmatic Acts 1:8. One can

¹*My Fair Lady*, prod. Jack L. Warner, dir. George Cukor, 170 min., Warner Bros. Pictures, 1964, videocassette.

appreciate these points Luke made through applying specific aspects of historical, sociological, and narrative analysis. This paper is an effort to show how Luke set up Antioch as his parade example for defining the constituent elements of what typically is labeled “spiritual vitality.” In the process, an alternate framing of the topic is suggested in the conclusion in the hope of preserving the distinctive Lukan perspective that is generated from exegesis of pertinent Lukan texts.

By way of explanation, almost all translations are the writer’s own. Because of this translational feature of the paper, the original text often has been supplied in the text or in footnotes for the reader’s convenience and consultation. This situation became an unavoidable necessity, especially with the English translations of various Loeb volumes, which, in some cases, were so glossed as to be almost unrecognizable from the actual Greek text paralleled on the opposite page. In any case, any weaknesses in the supplied translations are the writer’s own. The hope is that any such weaknesses do not detract appreciably from the point being made.

CHAPTER 1

ANTIOCH: THE MATRIX OF THE SETTINGS

Historical Setting

Two of Alexander the Great's generals, Seleucus I (Nicator) and Antigonus, struggled for control of Syria after Alexander's death. Seleucus won the decisive battle between these two generals, fought at Ipsus in 301 B.C. While control of Syria after Alexander was contested, its Hellenistic culture never was in doubt. Seleucus settled the region with Greeks. He founded the city of Antioch in Syria with its strategic location on the Orontes River.² His city plan incorporated the Hippodamian grid style (city blocks) of the standard Hellenistic design. Seleucus also settled a large number of Jews in Antioch, giving them full citizenship rights that were reaffirmed by later Seleucid and Roman rulers.³ Antioch, therefore, had a significant Jewish presence from its beginnings. With its strong Hellenistic culture and its large Jewish quarter, Antioch had a distinctive cultural mix among cities in the ancient world.⁴

²One of no less than sixteen cities named after his father, Antiochus.

³Josephus *Ant.* 12.3.1. Flavius Josephus *Flavii Iosephi opera*, trans. B. Niese (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892, accessed 09 April 2005); available from the Perseus Digital Library at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>; Internet.

⁴The classic source, still unsurpassed, for all things Antioch is Glanville Downey, *Ancient Antioch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963). A good recent summary is found in Renate Viveen Hood, "A Socio-Anthropological Analysis of Gentile-Jew Relationships in Rome and Antioch" (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002).

After Pompey's Near East Campaign brought Antioch politically and militarily into the Roman orbit some 237 years later in 64 B.C., Antioch's deep roots in Hellenism remained unchanged. In fact, despite Rome being three times larger than Antioch, Antioch had the larger Jewish population. Julius Caesar conducted major Hellenistic building projects in Antioch. These public works included a theater, an amphitheater, bathhouses, an aqueduct, and a Kaisareion (dedicated to the Roman cult). Caesar also rebuilt the Pantheon temple. Among other reasons, this large Jewish presence and the extensive Hellenistic public works are why Josephus ranked Antioch as the third city of the empire, just behind Rome and Alexandria.⁵

Antioch remained a bastion of Hellenism into the New Testament period. Herod the Great contributed a marbled street that ran the entire length of the city north and south; this street basically divided the city in half, according to Josephus.⁶ Various sources put Antioch's total population anywhere from 200,000 to 300,000.⁷ Longenecker estimated the Jewish population at about 65,000, perhaps one seventh of the city's population.⁸ Thus, the Christian community in Antioch had a more Jewish social mix

⁵Josephus *War* 3.2.4. See Richard N. Longenecker, "Antioch of Syria," in *Major Cities of the Biblical World*, ed. R. K. Harrison (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 11.

⁶*War* 1.21.11; *Ant.* 16.148.

⁷See Strabo *Geography* 16.2.5; cf. John Chrysostom *St. Ignat.* 4.50. The size of ancient cities is notoriously hard to estimate because ancient sources vary significantly. Strabo *The Geography of Strabo*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones, Loeb Classical Library, ed. T. E. Page, W. H. D. Rouse, E. Capps, L. A. Post, and E. H. Warmington, vol. 7 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932); John Chrysostom *Saint Ignatius, John Chrysostom: On the Priesthood, Ascetic Treatises, Homilies and Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975).

⁸Longenecker, "Antioch of Syria," 15–16.

than even Rome.⁹ Antioch played a key role in the First Jewish War as a staging ground for Roman troops under Titus. Tensions ran high against the Jewish population in Antioch, which became acute when parts of Antioch burned in a great fire and Jews were blamed. Though lobbied intensely by the Antiochene populace, the Roman general Titus refused to expel Jews from the city.¹⁰

Social Setting

*Group/Grid Analysis*¹¹

Antioch's historical background brings into focus the city's ethnically and culturally diverse populace. This diversity highlights the distinctive social matrix of this ancient city among others of the empire. According to Hood, the social-anthropological description of the Christian community at Antioch evidenced in the late first to early second-century documents is high group and fairly high grid. Boundary maintenance concerns were high.¹² The conclusion drawn was, "Since the community in Antioch was subject to a strong Judaizing influence, and the use of Jewish practices and terminology were [*sic*] apparent in the community, the group had an increased need to legitimize the existence of the community as a separate entity. Christianity in Antioch, which was predominantly Jewish in form, struggled to define itself especially as distinct from Judaism."¹³ The beginnings of this drawing of distinctions already seems implicit in the

⁹Which was more Gentile; see Hood, 164, 166.

¹⁰Josephus *War* 7.55–57; 7.96.

¹¹The social modeling tool derived from the work of Mary Douglas. See Mary Tew Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966); *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, 3d ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

¹²Hood, "Gentile-Jew Relationships," 163, 168.

¹³*Ibid.*, 189.

nature of Luke's reference to the appellation "Christians" in Acts 11:26, to be discussed below.

Persons and Their Place

In terms of kinship associations in the ancient world as a social structuring device, one preliminary question to consider is whether significant differences existed between Jewish families and non-Jewish families, such that the conceptualization of kinship associations would be affected significantly. Probably not is the conclusion of Ross Kraemer in an important essay on the topic.¹⁴ Kraemer concluded, "The dynamics of Jewish families do not appear appreciably different from those of non-Jews (of similar class and status conditions) in the early imperial Roman period."¹⁵

Particular interest lies in the connection between persons and their place. In a discussion of the nearby cities of Asia Minor, Bruce Malina has pointed out the organic link in the ancient sociological matrix between persons and their place, that is, their city of origin.¹⁶ City of origin provided identity especially through kinship associations. Since kinship ideas can be broadened to include groups bound by common interests or social interactions, such as *collegia* or guilds, then "Christians" in Acts 11:26 will have its context as a powerful sociological force in the development of early Christianity in terms of identity and unity. That is to say, though Christianity clearly had roots in Jerusalem, Luke had to wrestle with the historical role Antioch played in defining that distinctive

¹⁴Ross S. Kraemer, "Typical and Atypical Jewish Family Dynamics: The Cases of Babatha and Berenice," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek, Religion, Marriage, and Family, ed. Don S. Browning and David Clairmont (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 130–56.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁶Bruce Malina, *The New Jerusalem in the Revelation of John: The City as Symbol of Life with God* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 41.

kinship of “Christian” known both within and without the church. Luke’s use of the term “Christians” in Acts 11:26 will be his tipping the hat to this historical reality. The exegetical responsibility will be to place that usage within its proper context.

“*Christian*” in Acts 11:26

Acts 11:26 is one of only three times the term “Christian” (Χριστιανός) is used in the New Testament. The three passages are listed below for reference:

Acts 11:26

“And after he found (him) he brought him to Antioch. And it happened that for an entire year they were gathered together with the church and they taught a large crowd. Now, the disciples were called “Christians” first in Antioch.”¹⁷

Acts 26:28

“Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘With so little do you persuade me to make a Christian?’”¹⁸

1 Pet. 4:16

“Let one not be ashamed as a Christian; but let that person glorify God in this name.”¹⁹

The discussion will cover these three occurrences in reverse canonical order.

¹⁷καὶ εὐρὼν ἤγαγεν εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν. ἐγένετο δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐνιαυτὸν ὅλον συναχθῆναι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ διδάξαι ὄχλον ἰκανόν, χρηματίσαι τε πρώτως ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τοὺς μαθητὰς Χριστιανούς. *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed., ed. Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, in cooperation with the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Münster/Westphalia (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). The translation of the infinitive χρηματίσαι admittedly is difficult. Taken as middle, the idea would be Christians making self-reference with the name. Taken as an intransitive active with a passive sense, the meaning would be the name as applied by those outside the group. Most scholars take the second option, as reflected in the translation above. A good summary of the issue is found in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 478.

¹⁸ὁ δὲ Ἀγρίππας πρὸς τὸν Παῦλον· ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις Χριστιανὸν ποιῆσαι.

¹⁹εἰ δὲ ὡς Χριστιανός, μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ.

1 Pet. 4:16—*Christianos* in a Persecution Setting

The term *Christianos* is found in 1 Pet. 4:16. This 1 Peter reference can be taken as a forensic setting, but that setting usually has to be nuanced carefully. That is, the term can be understood to echo charges made by authorities, but not suggesting a state-sponsored or empire-wide effort. Those who would date 1 Peter later in the first century, or early second century, would opt for the kind of Roman jurisprudence evidenced in the Pliny correspondence from Bithynia (A.D. 115) and its allusion to those who recanted their faith twenty years earlier (Domitian's time frame).²⁰ Other New Testament literature evokes this type of background. For example, in writing Revelation, John has pitted his community over against his society. "The prophetic work of John might thus have its most far-reaching effect on the church, serving the function of evoking the hearers' commitment to continuing and fortifying the identity of *communitas* over against the *societas*, thus to maintain their uncontrolled allegiance to the God revealed in Christ against both the coercive and seductive drives towards compromise with the imperial world."²¹

²⁰John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 37B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 138 (between 73–92); Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on 1 Peter*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, ed. Eldon J. Epp (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 49–50 (likely A.D. 80–100); J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1988), lxvi (later than the Neronian setting, but Peter could have lived longer than church tradition indicates); Ernest Best, *1 Peter*, New Century Bible, ed. Ernest Best (London: Oliphants; Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, Ltd., 1971), 63 (between A.D. 80–100).

²¹David A. deSilva, "The Social Setting of the Revelation to John: Conflicts Within, Fears Without," *Westminster Theological Journal* 54 (1992): 301.

Those who would date 1 Peter in the 60s would opt more for a context within the authority of the Sanhedrin and the high priest in Jerusalem or Nero in Rome.²² The high priest option, in effect, would be a renewed effort of the type of persecution Saul attempted to extend from the high priest's authority in Jerusalem to the synagogues in Damascus (Acts 9:1–2). While the “forensic” setting might be pushing the civic and legal context too much both for 1 Peter and for Acts 9, the persecution aspect, perceived or real, is clear. This persecution setting, then, is evocative of the inevitable direction of the social relationships that will be developing for those identified with the *Christianoi*, and premonitions of that direction happen early.

Acts 26:28—*Christianos* in an Outsider Setting

Herodian outsiders

Second, the term *Christianos* is used by Herod Agrippa II in Acts 26:28. Agrippa's use in Caesarea connects to the earlier Antioch passage as evidence that the term is a reference by those outside the community of faith. Another connection between the two passages (Acts 26:28; 11:26) is Paul himself. Paul is a central character both in this conversation with Herod Agrippa and in Paul's earlier ministry in Antioch, along with Barnabas and others. The association of the use of the term *Christianos* particularly

²²Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, gen. ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2003), 36–37 (A.D. 62–63 before Nero); Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter. Jude*, New International Commentary, New Testament Series, ed. W. Ward Gasque (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1992), 3 (A.D. 63); I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 23–24 (apostle Peter); Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, gen. ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 10 (A.D. 64–68, through Silvanus at Peter's direction); John N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: A. and C. Black Publishers, Ltd., 1969), 33 (the apostle Peter, pre-Nero).

as due to the influence of Paul and his preaching in Antioch, with Paul's characteristic emphasis on Christ, lies close at hand.²³ The strong sense of Pauline tradition and kinship is voiced by Ignatius to the Ephesians: "You are fellow initiates with Paul, a man sanctified, of character magnificently attested, and worthy of every felicitation, in whose footsteps I wish to be found."²⁴ The notion of a distinct *societas* whose boundaries are not permeable is clear, if not earlier, at least by Theophilus, bishop of Antioch (168 to 181), who declared Christians as the only bearers of truth.²⁵

Herod Agrippa's use in Acts 26:28 also shows that this appellation has reached the elite of society. Thus, even if the term has origins in street slang,²⁶ which simply cannot be known, the use is beginning to percolate fairly rapidly through various strata of society (as well as geographically).

²³Noted by Grundmann: "Thus the designation Χριστός was perhaps the dominant one for Jesus in Antioch, and Paul played a decisive part in promoting it. This leads to the use of Χριστιανοί for the μαθηταί, and the term spreads rapidly to other places." Walter Grundmann, "Χρίω κτλ." in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 537.

²⁴Ignatius *Eph.* 12.3. Ignatius *To the Ephesians* in *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992, 1999), accessed through *Accordance*, ver. 6.4.1, OakTree Software Specialists, Altamonte Springs, FL, 2005. All Greek references to the Apostolic Fathers are from this electronic version, unless specified otherwise.

²⁵Theophilus *Autol.* 2.33. Theophilus *Ad Autolyicum*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Grant, Oxford Early Christian Texts (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

²⁶So Dicke by way of agreeing with Ramsey's earlier assessment; John Dicke, "Christian," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Fully Revised, Illustrated, in Four Volumes*, gen. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 657. Dicke's article, simply reprinted from the original ISBE edition, probably still is the most succinct and informative overview of the background and use of *Christianoī* and is followed in the main in the discussion above. He lacks, however, sociological analysis, which has been supplemented.

Pagan outsiders

Herod Agrippa's use of *Christianos* in Acts 26:28 from the perspective of an outsider transitions to the question of the pagan documentation for the term *Christianos*. The most frequently referenced documentary evidence is within Tacitus's discussion of the fire of Rome. Tacitus spoke of those who were "called Christians by the populace."²⁷ This usage is significant, as the term, though circulating among the common people, has become familiar to the political and literary elite of Roman society. This significance would be true even if Tacitus is reading back into the term the more political ramifications of his own day.²⁸ Dicke noted Blass's conjecture that the correct reading in Tacitus should be *Chrestianos* (notice the "e").²⁹ The confusion could occur among pagan populations between the Greek designation of the Jewish messiah, Χριστός (*Christos*), and the common Greek slave name Χρηστός (*Chrestos*, "beneficial," "useful").³⁰ Suetonius seems to make this mistake related to the expulsion of Jews from Rome.³¹ By Tacitus giving the correct form *Christus* just a few words later in the *Annals*

²⁷Tacitus *Annals* 15.44, *vulgus Christianos appellabat*. Cornelius Tacitus *The Annals*, trans. John Jackson, Loeb Classical Library, ed. T. E. Page, W. H. D. Rouse, E. Capps, L. A. Post, and E. H. Warmington, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1925–37).

²⁸Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 167.

²⁹Dicke, "Christian," 657.

³⁰Cf. Cicero *Fam. Ep.* 2.8.1, *et Chresti compilationem*, "of robberies by Chrestus." M. Tullius Cicero *Epistulae ad familiares*; accessed 08 April 2005; available from <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Cic.+Fam.+2.8.1>; Internet.

³¹Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4, *Iudaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit*, "he banished from Rome all the Jews who continuously were making disturbances at the instigation of one called Chrestus." Suetonius *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, ed. and trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library, ed. T. E. Page, W. H. D. Rouse, E. Capps, L. A. Post, and E. H. Warmington, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). Cf. Acts 18:2.

15.44 reference,³² Blass conjectured Tacitus was reflecting, but then immediately correcting, the common misunderstanding about the *Christos* name.³³

Besides Tacitus, other notable extra-biblical references include the following:

- (1) Josephus *Ant.* 18.64: εἰς ἔτι τε νῦν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ τοῦδε ὀνομασμένον οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τὸ φύλον, “still until the present time the tribe of Christians, so named from such one, are not extinct”
- (2) Pliny *Epistles* 10.96.3: *Interrogavi ipsos an essent Christiani*, “I personally interrogate them whether they are Christians,” using a common cognomen³⁴
- (3) Suetonius *Nero* 16.2: *afflicti suppliciis Christiani*, “he inflicted punishments on Christians,” rehearsing the same material covered by Tacitus

The references from Josephus and Suetonius do not add significantly beyond what already can be observed in the Tacitus reference. Pliny’s reference requires comment.

Pliny the Younger as proconsul of Bithynia attempted to establish the proper legal (and functional) lines of enforcement between *religio* and *superstitio* particularly in dealing with Christians. In terms of Roman provincial administration, *superstitio* is set within a matrix of political loyalty to the state. (The Romans never divested themselves of the equation between *superstitio* and sedition.) Pliny reviewed for the emperor Trajan

³²In the clarifying phrase *auctor nominis eius Christus*, “Christ, the progenitor from whom the name.”

³³Such a conjectured correction is not too far fetched, since Tacitus is a careful historian and certainly surpasses Suetonius in both research and writing. Interestingly, the spelling *Chrestianos* (with the “e”) corresponds to all three New Testament occurrences in the uncorrected readings of Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲡ). These readings are given in the textual apparatus in *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed., ed. Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopolous, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).

³⁴Pliny the Younger *Letters*, trans. Betty Radice, Loeb Classical Library, ed. E. H. Warmington, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

current procedures for dealing with persons brought before him on the charge of being Christians (*Christiani*). Pliny wrote, “For the moment this is the line I have taken with all persons brought before me on the charge of being Christians.”³⁵ Trajan responded with affirmation and further directives. In doing so, Trajan revealed that no set policy was in place; that cases had to be handled individually; that the central issue was a perceived challenge to the political order; and that such persons were not to be hunted down.³⁶ The loss of any connection with the synagogue setting of the original Antioch context for *Christianoi* is patent. However, one must be careful not to read the Pliny context back into Acts 11:26.

Acts 11:26—*Christianos* in a Synagogue Setting

Third, the term *Christianoi* occurs in the immediate text of interest, Acts 11:26. Before proceeding, attention must be focused briefly on a curious Western text tradition in some surviving Greek manuscripts that reveals itself two verses later.

The Western text of Acts 11:28

The Western reading at 11:28 encodes a “we” style notation evocative of those three famous first-person plural sections in the text of Acts.³⁷ The apparent inference is that Luke was from Antioch, which reflects an ancient tradition in the church. The Western reading at 11:28 might suggest that Luke had personal knowledge of the special

³⁵Pliny *Letters* 10.96.2, *Interim, iis qui ad me tamquam Christiani deferebantur, hunc sum secutus modum.*

³⁶*Ibid.*, 10.96.97.

³⁷συνεστραμμένων δὲ ἡμῶν, “and when we had assembled,” the reading in D it^{d,p} (cop^{meg}) Augustine. Cf. Nestle-Aland.

use of *Cristiano* such that the term slips into 11:26 as a fortuitous, circumstantial note.³⁸ One does not need to adjudicate whether Luke was from Antioch to be fully persuaded that Luke did not write so circumstantially with such inattention to detail. Hopefully, later discussion will show how Luke's use of *Christianoi* is integral to his narrative.

Christianos—Social origins

The first observation is linguistic. The inflection *-ianos* is a Greek derivative based on the Latin adjectival form *-ianus*. This adjectival usage occurs in the early empire and is widely distributed; thus, the usage is not exclusive to Italy or even a Latin audience. The suffix typically was used to mark adherents of a person or party.³⁹ The linguistic likelihood, then, is that the term *Christianoi* had its origins outside the group.

Would Jews coin the term? Probably not. Antiochene Jews probably would not have chosen such a term for disciples of Jesus, not because the inflection is Latin based, but because in so doing they would have conceded the very point of dispute (messiah). Inasmuch as can be determined from the text of Acts, Jews seemed to prefer other names, such as “sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5). *Christianoi* as used in Acts 11:26 is unlikely to be Jewish in origin. The 24:5 appellation, however, does confirm the sectarian framework of Jewish perceptions about disciples of Jesus, which could prejudice perceptions in the pagan populace as well that these disciples, though distinct, still should be understood within a synagogue context.

The origin of the term *Christianos*, then, more probably was among Antioch's pagan population. Taking the cue from Herod Agrippa's use in 26:28 and the Jewish

³⁸Assuming, of course, that Luke had something to do with the Western text of Acts. Cf. W. A. Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts*, Society for New Testament Studies, Monograph Series, gen. ed. G. N. Stanton, vol. 71 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

³⁹As adherents, see the *Herodiano*i of Mt. 22:16; Mk. 3:6; 12:13.

sectarian framing of the alternate appellation in 24:5, the connotation in 11:26 would be Jewish sectarian. That is, in its earliest use by Antiochenes, the term had its functional force as *a social appellation applied to a perceived Jewish subgroup within the context of Antioch's synagogues*. The general populace was able to perceive some type of distinction between this group of *Christianoi* and others within the Jewish synagogues of Antioch who did not associate particularly with this group.⁴⁰ This usage would be in a context before the parting of the ways.⁴¹ Luke was saying outsiders noticed a difference between traditional groups in the synagogue and those who confessed Jesus as Messiah, and he insinuated that difference in his characterization of the disciples at Antioch.

Christianos—Christian Usage

While the term began as an appellation by outsiders, *Christianos* was taken over by believers themselves and became the definitive name historically for the Jesus movement. Unfortunately, this transition cannot be documented in the first century. After all, the New Testament itself has only three occurrences. However, the usage by the early second century is clear. The earliest documented Christian self-reference outside the New Testament perhaps is *Didache* 12:4.⁴² The dating can be argued. In any case, in the Apostolic Fathers, Ignatius frequently uses the term in self-reference as a believer. His

⁴⁰*Contra* Grundmann, “*χρίω*,” 537: “A reason for coining the term *Χριστιανοί* is that the Christians in Antioch were now viewed as a separate society rather than as a section of the Jewish synagogue.” Nothing concrete actually indicates this kind of institutional schism already has taken place this early in the church. The scattering of Hellenist believers in Acts 8:4 is localized to Jerusalem and is the direct consequence of Stephen’s alleged blasphemy before the Sanhedrin.

⁴¹Alluding to James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for Christianity* (Norwich, UK: SCM Press, 1991).

⁴²κατὰ τὴν σύνεσιν ὑμῶν προνοήσατε πῶς μὴ ἀργὸς μεθ’ ὑμῶν ζήσεται χριστιανός, “according to your own judgment decide how, not being idle, he will live among you as a Christian.” *The Didache*, in *Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Michael W. Holmes.

most famous statement is, “It is proper, therefore, not only to be called Christians, but actually that we be Christians.”⁴³ This Ignatian evidence bears some weight. As bishop of Antioch during the reign of Trajan (98–117) and a martyr in Rome in 115, Ignatius is the standard-bearer of Antiochene traditions. Ignatius serves to confirm the historical probability of Luke’s observation in Acts 11:26 connecting the use of Χριστιανός especially to Antioch.

Polycarp (d. 156) was bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor. He also was a colleague of Ignatius, sharing letters with him. Polycarp provides evidence for the continuing spread of the use of Χριστιανός. He used the term as a self-appellation in *Poly.* 10.1: “Listen carefully: I am a Christian!”⁴⁴ This development in the mid-second century seems rapid. Justin Martyr in Rome (d. 166) already was arguing that the justification for the use of the term *Christianos* extended all the way back to Jesus himself, apparently not aware that in so doing he tacitly had stumbled into contradicting Luke’s own observation in Acts 11:26.⁴⁵ By late second century, the term was in constant use, as illustrated in the *Epistle to Diognetus*.⁴⁶

⁴³Ignatius *Mag.* 4:1, Πρέπον οὖν ἐστὶν μὴ μόνον καλεῖσθαι Χριστιανούς, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἶναι. Ignatius *To the Magnesians*, in *Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Michael W. Holmes.

⁴⁴μετὰ παρρησίας ἄκουε· Χριστιανός εἰμι. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* (author unknown), in *Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Michael W. Holmes. The story continues that the Asian proconsul’s herald proclaimed three times to the stadium crowds in 12.1, Πολύκαρπος ὡμολόγησεν ἑαυτὸν Χριστιανὸν εἶναι, “Polycarp declares himself to be a Christian.” The text in 12.2 further indicates that Polycarp’s enemies in Smyrna in demanding his death in the theater used a string of appellations, including ὁ πατὴρ τῶν Χριστιανῶν, “the father of the Christians.” The *Martyrdom* also has the unusual phrase “race of the Christians” in 3.2, θαυμάσαν τὴν γενναιότητα τοῦ θεοφιλοῦς καὶ θεοσεβοῦς γένους τῶν Χριστιανῶν, “they marveled at the nobility of the God-loving and God-fearing race of the Christians.”

⁴⁵Cf. Justin Martyr *Apol.* 12. Justin asserted that the name “Christians” was received from Jesus Christ himself: “Jesus Christ; from whom also we have the name of Christians.” Justin Martyr *The First and Second Apologies*, trans., with introductions, Leslie William Barnard, *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in*

Narrative Setting

Narrative criticism has offered the tool of ethos analysis for understanding story development. Ethos is characterization, and characterization can be one of the crucial ingredients to understanding a narrative.

Ethos as Central

Characterization captured the attention of Greek writers. Take, for example, this self-reflective observation from the Greek historian Polybius: “What advantage do readers have in describing wars and battles and the besieging and capturing of cities, unless they understand the causes according to which the withstanding or the overthrowing happens in each individual case? For the immediate results of such matters barely interest the hearers, but what follows after the cessation of the hostilities necessarily benefits the students. Above all is the revealing of the management of each part by those who joined in the attack.”⁴⁷ In this reflection the historian is saying that

Translations, ed. Walter J. Brughardt, John J. Dillon, and Dennis D. McManus, no. 56 (New York: Paulist Press, 1997).

⁴⁶*Diog.* 1:1; 2:6, 10; 4:6; 5:1; 6: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; author unknown and date disputed, but usually assigned to the late second century; *Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Michael W. Holmes.

⁴⁷τί γὰρ ὄφελός ἐστι τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσι διεξιέναι πολέμους καὶ μάχας καὶ πόλεων ἐξανδραποδισμούς καὶ πολιορκίας, εἰ μὴ τὰς αἰτίας ἐπιγνώσονται, παρ' ὧν ἐκάστοις οἱ μὲν κατάρθωσαν, οἱ δ' ἐσφάλησαν. 2 τὰ γὰρ τέλη τῶν πράξεων ψυγαγωγῆ μόνον τοὺς ἀκούοντας, αἱ δὲ πρόσθεν διαλήψεις τῶν ἐπιβαλλομένων ἐξεταζόμεναι δεόντως ὠφελοῦσι τοὺς φιλομαθοῦντας. 3 μάλιστα δὲ πάντων ὁ κατὰ μέρος χειρισμὸς ἐκάστων ἐπιδεικνύμενος ἐπανορθοῖ τοὺς συνεφιστάνοντας. Polybius *Histories* 11.19a. Polybius *The Histories*, trans. W. R. Paton, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1925; reprinted 1954).

action without development of characters, their stratagems, and their motivations is a vain exercise. In so doing, Polybius is avowing the historiographical approach of Isocrates.⁴⁸

Of course, such Greek historians were taking their cues from the great poets, especially Homer. What one remembers most upon finishing the famous *Iliad* are not the battles, though these are magnificently portrayed. Western society forever will memorialize the indelible characterizations of Hector and Achilles, or the powerful kings Agamemnon and Priam, and others.⁴⁹ Since the Greek historians schooled on these great stories, their minds were set at a young age to pay close attention to characterization, through which the story is insinuated line by line so that the reader almost can declare the result of the engagement before the battle is fought.

For example, of the lawyer's training Aristotle said, "Rather, trustworthiness of character, so to speak, yields almost complete mastery."⁵⁰ Aristotle went on to discuss the

⁴⁸Greek historiography actually had two traditions. One school centered on a "hero" with a series of dramatic incidents intended to captivate the reader and inspire admiration, expectation, delight, annoyance, fear, etc.—the ancient equivalent to the Hollywood "action" movie, if you will. This "Peripatetic" historiography worked to create a sense of ἡδονή ("pleasure") in readers. The other school came from Isocrates, who advocated a goal of διδασχῆ (instruction) in regard to the reader. Polybius is following the Isocrates tradition. See A. D. Leeman, *Orationis Ratio: The Stylistic Theories and Practice of the Roman Orators Historians and Philosophers, Vols. 1–2*, in one vol. (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, Publisher, 2001; reprint of the 1963 edition), 1:174.

⁴⁹Pretty much obliterated in the Brad Pitt version (*Troy*, prod. Wolfgang Petersen, Diana Rathbun, and Colin Wilson, dir. Wolfgang Petersen, 165 min., Warner Bros. Pictures, 2004, DVD). Notice in the modern movie how the ancient storyteller's art is turned on its head: instead of unforgettable characters that drive the plot, one encounters the unforgivable absurdity of plot driving the characters. What becomes most important for the director is not Homer's literary genius—the story of character—but an "action movie," wasting time and energy painting a fantasy fleet of impossible thousands of Greek ships stretching across the entire Aegean horizon. Peripatetic wins out over Isocrates with a vengeance.

⁵⁰ἀλλὰ σχεδὸν ὡς εἰπεῖν κυριωτάτην ἔχει πίστιν τὸ ἦθος. Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.2.4. *Ars Rhetorica*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, accessed 08 April 2005);

usefulness in adapting the character of the speaker to the character of the audience.⁵¹ In the elite training of the rhetor, then, the study of characterization was considered essential. As Leeman observed in speaking of the development of Roman historiography in the early empire period, “Still, no writer of the Empire could or wanted to free himself altogether from the powerful influence of rhetoric.”⁵² Characterization in its concept, function, and development was one such powerful influence that rhetoric exerted.

Ethos as Insinuation

Auctor ad Herennium contains advice on using figures of “personal representation,” or how characters are portrayed. Summarizing this use, Leeman said,

Character portrayal, *notatio*, (ἠθοποιία),⁸⁸ belongs to the same sphere of light dramatization, but may also occur in a *narratiuncula*. It implies not only a straight-forward sketch, but also a story which [*sic*] characterizes a person indirectly by his behavior in everyday life.⁵³

⁸⁸*Rhet. Ad Her.* 4.63–65. Not a figure according to Quintilian.

This characterization happens as much implicitly by behavior and actions as by any direct statement. The ancient writer expects the reader/listener to be accumulating a character profile indirectly on the basis of behavior and action characterizations in stories about that person (or city, in the case of corporate ethos discussed below).

available from <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Aristot.+Rh.+1.2.1>; Internet. Cf. Kennedy’s translation: “Character [of the speaker] is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuasion.” Aristotle *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, *Newly translated with Introduction, Notes, and Appendixes*, trans. George A. Kennedy (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁵¹Throughout chapters 12–17 in Book 2 covering topics related to ethos.

⁵²Leeman, 256.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 40.

One might wonder, Is this type of literary convention too subtle for the ancient reader? Not hardly. As Leeman observed about Roman historians, “I think that the allusive element in Latin literature is generally under-estimated. In comparison with modern literature, the Romans had very little direct, naturalistic or realistic description, and they kept equally far from pure fiction and illusion. Theirs was the middle way of allusion, and this ‘allusionism’ determined not a few of their literary conventions. . . . Tacitus again follows this allusive method in his *Dialogus*, and thus gives indirect expression to his personal experiences.”⁵⁴

Ethos as Corporate

Ethos can be applied to groups and institutions, especially cities, as much as to individuals.⁵⁵ In fact, the importance of an individual by a stroke of destiny could be tied to a particular city. Quintilian gave this example of the famous Roman general, Scipio, while discussing *antonomasia* (replacing a name with something else): “I should not hesitate to say ‘the sacker of Carthage and Numantia’ for Scipio.”⁵⁶ Quintilian continued by describing how epithet rhetorically was an “ornament” (actually a technical designation) more for poets than orators.⁵⁷ The epithet builds on the *trope* of *antonomasia*

⁵⁴Ibid., 346. As an example, Leeman wrote, “Under a new regime Tacitus begins to speak. But from the beginning he chooses an indirect form of expression: Agricola and Maternus are Tacitus; Vespasian is, in a way, Trajan, Nero perhaps what Tacitus feared in the designate emperor and philhellene Hadrian” (Leeman, 347).

⁵⁵For example, in discussing the *trope* (figurative use of a single word) of *metonymy* (use of one term for another), when Quintilian admitted, “Usage permits ‘cities of good character,’” (*bene moratus urbes*), he implicitly was drawing upon the common concept of how cities are characterized. Quintilian *Inst.* 8.6.24. Quintilian *The Orator’s Education*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁵⁶Ibid., 8.6.30.

⁵⁷Ibid., 8.6.40.

if the noun for which it stands is added, as in adding “Scipio” to “sacker of Carthage and Numantia.”⁵⁸ Perhaps this type of maneuver is reflected in Luke’s pointed designation of “disciples” as “Christians” at Antioch in Acts 11:26.

Thucydides provides another example. The Greek historian made astute observation of Homer’s transformation of the use of “Hellene” from an individual city into an appellation of an entire people: “On the other hand, neither does he say barbarian, likely, as it seems to me, because the Hellenes had not yet struggled to be set apart unto one name. Even so, therefore, as each Hellenic city acquired the name, in as much as they came to understand one another, then finally all together they were called.”⁵⁹

Much later the Smyranean orator Aelius Aristides (155 A.D.) seems to echo this Homeric invention noted by Thucydides when Aristides addressed the imperial court about Rome, the city, as actually a marker not exclusively for a city, but for a culture and way of life of an entire people developed out of that city: “But you have sought a citizen body worthy of it, and you have caused the word ‘Roman’ to belong not to a city, but to the name of a sort of common race, and this not one out of all the races, but a balance to all the remaining ones. . . . You have divided people into Romans and non-Romans. So far you extended the use of the city’s name.”⁶⁰ Such a conceptualization is paralleled by the golden milestone positioned prominently in the forum of Rome in 20 B.C. marking

⁵⁸Ibid., 8.6.43.

⁵⁹οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ βαρβάρους εἶρηκε διὰ τὸ μηδὲ Ἑλληνάς πω, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, ἀντίπαλον ἐς ἓν ὄνομα ἀποκεκρίσθαι. οἱ δ' οὖν ὡς ἕκαστοι Ἕλληνες κατὰ πόλεις τε ὅσοι ἀλλήλων ξυνίεσαν καὶ ζύμπαντες ὕστερον κληθέντες. Thucydides *War* 1.3.3–4. Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Charles Forster Smith, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923, rev. and reprinted 1935).

⁶⁰Aristides *To Rome* 63. Aelius Aristides *Aristides in Four Volumes*, trans. Charles Behr, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1973).

distances of all major empire cities to the gates of Rome, supporting the myth of Rome as the center of the world (*caput rerum*).⁶¹ According to the fourth-century church father Lactantius, Seneca compared Roman history to the life stages of a person.⁶²

Of course, the use of a city as a *trope* or even *figure* (metaphor) is common in biblical writers. One can trace the history of names such as Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament⁶³ or Chorazin and Bethsaida in the New Testament.⁶⁴ One of the most dramatic New Testament examples is when Jerusalem itself becomes a place of evil, the dual *trope* of a combined Sodom and Egypt!⁶⁵ This rhetorical twist startles the readers into reevaluation of their own context at Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, Pergamum, Thyatira, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.⁶⁶ In the next chapter, focus will turn to another biblical author, Luke, to observe how he uses Antioch and its narratively defined corporate ethos.

⁶¹Cassius Dio *History* 54.8.4. Dio Cassius *Roman History*, trans. Ernest Carey, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1914). See Miriam Griffin, “Urbs Roma, Plebs, and Princeps,” in *Images of Empire*, ed. Loveday Alexander (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 20.

⁶²According to Lactantius *The Divine Institutes* 7.15.14, “Seneca therefore not unskillfully divided the times of the Roman city by ages. For he said that at first was its infancy under King Romulus,” etc. *The Church Fathers: The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, American reprint of the Edinburgh edition; electronic text from Christian Classics Ethereal Library, hypertexted and prepared by OakTree Software, Inc.; accessed through *Accordance* 6.4.1.

⁶³ Is. 1:9; Jer. 23:14; Ezek. 16:46.

⁶⁴Mt. 11:21 (Lk. 10:13).

⁶⁵In Rev. 11:2, 8, and 13; probably Sodom for perversion, Egypt for idolatry.

⁶⁶Cf. James Robert Futral, Jr., “The Rhetorical Value of *City* as a Sociological Symbol in the Book of Revelation” (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), 250.

Summary

Antioch of Syria was born a Hellenistic city of the Seleucid dynasty that eventually came under Roman provincial administration by New Testament times. Though thoroughly Greek, the population from the beginning also had one of the more significant Jewish quarters per resident population of ancient cities in the Roman empire. This strong Jewish presence created a distinctive social mix even more notable than that of Rome itself.

Kinship tied to Antioch as a city of origin would be a strong socializing force shaping the boundaries of social groups along these dominant, often competing, Hellenistic and Jewish elements. Antioch's synagogue Jews, as well as the general populace, would notice the social distinctions generated by disciples of Jesus who were attempting to function within Antioch's synagogues. Initial Jewish perceptions of these disciples would be sectarian, and the general populace would absorb these sectarian perceptions. The probable setting, then, for the use of the appellation *Christianoi* in Acts 11:26 is external to the group and Jewish sectarian in perception.

The Christian movement in its distinctive Antiochene form would come to dominate the history of Christianity. This dominance probably was due to the ministry of one of the brightest stars in the constellation of early Christianity, Antioch's own Paul the apostle. Inevitably, the Jesus movement would experience growing pressure for a title of self-definition within the social matrix of persecution. The choice was "Christian" in the Antiochene sense. This choice is clear by the early second century.

In the ancient world, ethos, or characterization, was a central feature of writing, both in classical poetry and in historiography, as well as in speaking, that is, in rhetorical training. Literary characterization should not be seen as the pedantic exercise of dry, descriptive text. Ethos could be a sophisticated exercise, insinuated subtly through dialogue or astute observations of behavior in everyday life. Such literary sophistication was not felt to be beyond the normal expectations of the ancient reader/listener, nor was

ethos the exclusive domain of individuals. Corporate ethos especially included the characterizations associated with cities. These associations at the social level were based on ideas of extended kinship. Groups find their identity in their city of origin.

Thus, in making special notation that disciples first were called “Christians” in Antioch, Luke was doing more than showing extraordinary historical prescience. From a historical perspective, he had the insight to point to the appellation that history would canonize for the Jesus movement. From a literary perspective, though, Luke also defined the profile of the Antiochene church through insinuated corporate ethos, contrasting the churches in Jerusalem and Antioch. He intended to leave a vision of a paradigm to be emulated by any community wishing to identify itself as “Christian.” That paradigm was focused more on Antioch than on Jerusalem. Attention now turns to the narrative features of corporate ethos in Acts especially related to the churches in Jerusalem and in Antioch to draw out the meaning of disciples being called “Christians” first at Antioch.

CHAPTER 2

ANTIOCH: THE MEANING OF THE ETHOS

Luke has generated a carefully composed document in which characterization is a crucial component for understanding the plot movement.⁶⁷ In the latter part of Acts, for example, the city of Jerusalem functions as a *topos* integrated into the development of Luke's negative characterization of Saul-Paul.⁶⁸ In the early part of Acts, Luke has trained the reader's attention on the *topoi* of two cities, Jerusalem and Antioch, as a way to develop the characterization of the early church. Luke will use Jerusalem to contrast and highlight Antioch. A brief overview of the basic structure and movement of the plot in Acts 1–12 will reveal the significance of this design.

Literary Structure of Acts

Basic Structure of Acts 1–12

The structure of the story line in Acts falls neatly into two major parts based on the twin ideas of leadership and mission. The first half, Acts 1–12, presents the Jewish mission of the early church in, around, and beyond Jerusalem under the leadership of Peter. The second half, Acts 13–28, presents the Gentile mission of the early church moving out into the world under the leadership of Saul-Paul. The internal structure of the

⁶⁷David Blake Shipp, "A Literary-Rhetorical Study of the Damascus Road Accounts in Acts" (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003).

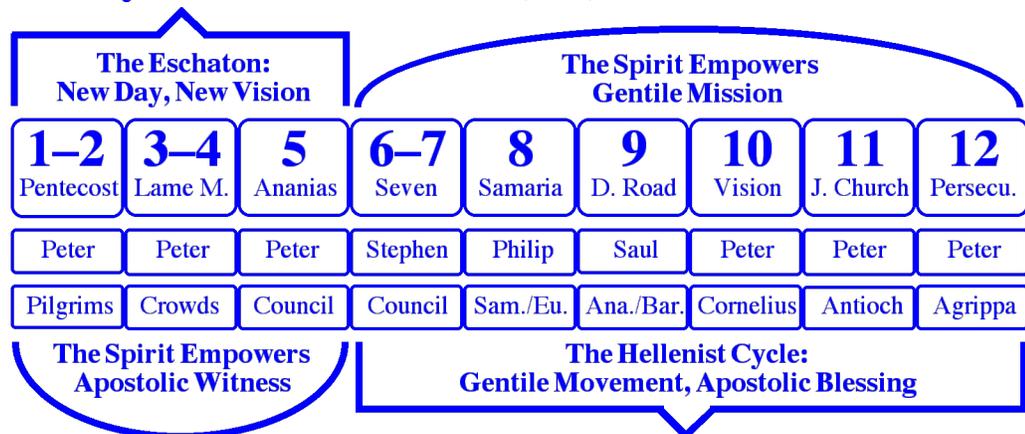
⁶⁸This literary observation squares with the general outline developed by Shipp, 171–74.

first part of Acts, the focus of this paper, can be visualized schematically in the figure given below.

Acts Structure

Part 1: The Jewish Mission of the Early Church (Peter: Acts 1–12)

1. Early Church in Jerusalem (1–5)



2. Early Church Beyond Jerusalem (6–12)

Fig. 1. Structure of Acts 1–12.

Structure, Characterization, and Meaning

The crucial point to make here is that the second half of Acts does not exist without this first half, for the actors and actions in the second half almost entirely lose their meaning and significance without the characterizations carefully developed in the first half. Notice, for example, at the macro-literary level the six literary subunits centered on Peter “bracketing” the beginning and the end of the material introducing the Hellenist movement in chapters 6–9. This bracketing communicates the representative significance of Peter’s character. That is, Peter’s character is the official post-resurrection tie back to the original mission of Jesus in the Gospel. Luke has used Peter’s character to “bracket”

the Hellenist movement in the early church to justify and legitimate the movement as both having Apostolic blessing and representing the intended design of the original mission of Jesus in the Gospel. The Hellenist movement in the early church was no fluke. In fact, God guided that very movement to become the foundation of the church's witness, fulfilling the programmatic Acts 1:8. Thus, one can observe how Luke used various narrative techniques to move his story along. What other techniques did Luke incorporate? Luke developed narrative characterizations of Jerusalem and Antioch. An outline of Jerusalem's ethos sets the stage for understanding Antioch's distinctive profile.

The Jerusalem Ethos

Jerusalem's Ethos in the Gospel

Positive Characterization in the Gospel

Jerusalem has the preeminence historically. She represents the historic roots of Jewish faith. As a city of origin, she endows any group associated with her with the religious traditions of Jewish faith. To be identified with Jerusalem is to have kinship with Israel as the people of God. For example, characters associated with Jerusalem in Luke's story of Jesus express the ancient hopes and aspirations of Israel at their finest. Zechariah and Elizabeth "were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord."⁶⁹ Their son, John, is filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth.⁷⁰ Zechariah, though a simple functionary in the temple service, is a prophet of God.⁷¹ Mary is favored of God and filled with God's Spirit (Lk.

⁶⁹Lk. 1:6, ἦσαν δὲ δίκαιοι ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ, πορευόμενοι ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐντολαῖς καὶ δικαιομασίαις τοῦ κυρίου ἄμεμπτοι.

⁷⁰Lk. 1:15, πνεύματος ἁγίου λησθήσεται ἔτι ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ.

⁷¹Lk. 1:67, Καὶ Ζαχαρίας ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ ἐπλήσθη πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ ἐπροφήτευσεν.

1:28, 35). Joseph and Mary perform all the legal requirements for their infant and also make the annual trek to Jerusalem for each Passover (Lk. 2:22–24, 41). The prophet Simeon is righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, endued with the Holy Spirit, and prophecies about Jesus.⁷² Three times in three verses the reader is told that the Spirit controls Simeon and even directs his path (Lk. 2:25, 26, 27). This Spirit guided movement will reverberate in Acts in the story of how the Hellenist Philip intersects with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26, 39). The prophetess Anna confirms Simeon’s prophecy, and thereby satisfies the requirements of the law for two witnesses (Lk. 2:36–38). Thus, the story of Jesus is grounded thoroughly in Jerusalem and shares in the kinship of that city of origin in its character as the city encapsulating the hope of Israel.

Negative Characterization in the Gospel

Jesus’ death

While Jerusalem can encapsulate the hope of Israel, the city also bears a negative characterization. Luke left subtle hints along the way,⁷³ but the formal inauguration of the negative characterization is Lk. 9:51, often taken as the dividing line at the crucial midpoint in the outline of Luke: “Now it happened that the days for his taking up were fulfilled, and he set his face for the purpose of going to Jerusalem.”⁷⁴ In terms of

⁷²Lk. 1:35, ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος δίκαιος καὶ εὐλαβῆς προσδεχόμενος παράκλησιν τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, καὶ πνεῦμα ἦν ἅγιον ἐπ’ αὐτόν.

⁷³One example is the episode of the boy Jesus in the temple declaring that he *must* be in his father’s house, Lk. 2:49 (οὐκ ἤδειτε ὅτι ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρός μου δεῖ εἶναί με;). This “must” (δεῖ) is the well-known, theologically loaded term for Luke that expresses the divine imperative of God’s sovereign will. Jerusalem’s recently celebrated Passover festival provides the context that insinuates the divine necessity.

⁷⁴Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ἀναλήψεως αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς τὸ πρόσωπον ἐστήρισεν τοῦ πορεύεσθαι εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ. The “taking up”

“fulfilled” in Lk. 9:51 and Acts 2:1, both narratives at these verses are at crucial turning points in the story: at Lk. 9:51, Jesus turns toward his ultimate mission and destiny in Jerusalem, and, at Acts 2:1, the church turns toward its ultimate mission and destiny in the world. The difference is, in 9:51, this word strikes an ominous note in the text. Jesus deliberately will move to Jerusalem to fulfill his messianic destiny, but this story ends in Jesus’ death. Jerusalem’s own destiny is sealed by Jesus’ fate.

Jerusalem’s destiny

Four Lukan passages in the second part of the Gospel are focused on Jerusalem’s destiny.⁷⁵ These passages work in concert to build a theme of judgment. Each of these passages enhances or amplifies the reality that Jerusalem is under divine judgment as a consequence of the rejection of Jesus and his own destiny of death in that city. The picture is blunt in Jesus’ remonstrance, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! The one who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her!”⁷⁶ Thus, while Jerusalem represents the historic roots of Israel’s faith, that city also is where Jesus was rejected and crucified.

(ἀνάληψις) is a *hapax legomenon* (singular occurrence in the New Testament), so the exegesis is impeded. In terms of range of meaning, the expression could be an allusion to his impending death or to his ascension. Most commentators opt for the latter meaning, since Luke is the only New Testament author to incorporate a formal ascension story into his text, and twice at that, providing another narrative connecting device between the plotline in the Gospel and that in Acts (Lk. 24:50–51; Acts 1:9).

⁷⁵Lk. 13:33–35; 19:41–44; 21:20–24; and 23:27–31.

⁷⁶Ἱερουσαλήμ Ἱερουσαλήμ, ἡ ἀποκτείνουσα τοὺς προφῆτας καὶ λιθοβολοῦσα τοὺς ἀπεσταλμένους πρὸς αὐτήν. Lk. 13:34. “Jerusalem” is *metonymy* (a part for the whole) for the Jewish nation, especially her leaders; one should note, though, the amazing amnesty granted in Acts 3:17 to Jerusalem by Peter: “You acted in ignorance, as also your leaders did” (κατὰ ἄγνοιαν ἐπράξατε ὥσπερ καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες ὑμῶν).

Jerusalem's Ethos in Acts

For the purposes of this paper, attention in Acts is delimited to the church. The discussion of ethos will be directed to developing profiles of the church in Jerusalem and in Antioch. The crucial focal point will be the ethos of mission impulse. The profile of the Jerusalem church is more developed in order to show distinctively the contrasts with Antioch on this crucial point.

Positive Characterization in Acts

Pentecost festival

In Acts, Jerusalem is where the church formally is launched on its mission of witness. Jerusalem represents the earliest stages of the Spirit's activity with the nascent church. Using the theme of the "promise of the Father," the end of the Gospel and the beginning of Acts are tied together.⁷⁷ This promise is the effluence of the Spirit, which happens at Pentecost. As the Spirit had guided all developments at the beginning of the story of Jesus and empowered Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry, so the Spirit guides all developments at the beginning of the story of the church and empowers the church at the beginning of her public ministry of witness.⁷⁸ In this way, the role of Jerusalem as the mother church in the early stages of the Jesus movement is made clear, inextricably tied to the story of Jesus. The early church finds its initial characterization through kinship with its city of origin, Jerusalem. The eschatological harvest of the

⁷⁷Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4.

⁷⁸Lk. 3:21–22; Acts 1:5, 8; 2:4. In 1:5, for example: ὅτι Ἰωάννης μὲν ἐβάπτισεν ὕδατι, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐν πνεύματι βαπτισθήσεσθε ἀγίῳ οὐ μετὰ πολλὰς ταύτας ἡμέρας.

people of God to which the original Pentecost annual festival celebration pointed is being realized in Jerusalem in the church.⁷⁹

Pentecost fellowship and fulfillment

The story of initial unity and worship appended to the Pentecost message in Acts 2 adds to the characterization of the Jerusalem church. The realization of Pentecost fellowship in home and hearth is represented in the early church's sharing of meals and homes.⁸⁰ The harvest celebration was rich in imagery, symbolized by offering two loaves of leavened bread, which can be summarized in the following way.

The Jewish offering of two loaves of leavened bread symbolized gratitude to God for the plentiful harvest and was a token of the feast celebrated in Jewish homes. This feast was meant to be inclusive. No one in Israel should be in want of food at the celebration of harvest. The exhortation in Deuteronomy 16 repeatedly echoed in the elaboration of the feasts Israel celebrates is: "Rejoice before the LORD your God—you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites resident in your towns, as well as the strangers, the orphans, and the widows who are among you—at the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name" (Deut. 16: 11, NRSV). That is, the Pentecost celebration is intended to be inclusive, with specific attention to those normally vulnerable to life's vicissitudes.⁸¹

The character of Luke's description of the Jerusalem church in Acts 2:42–43 clearly is meant to be a direct reflection of this Pentecost fellowship. Then, Luke immediately went a step further and modulated this time-delimited, annual feast celebration, which itself

⁷⁹This theme of eschatological harvest is an interpretive narrative superstructure in Acts derived from the story of Israel's movement from wilderness to promised land giving eschatological significance to the historical events taking place in the early church as defined in the seven Petrine speeches in Acts 1–12, 15. See Gerald L. Stevens, "Luke's Perspective on Pentecost in Acts 1–12," paper, SBL Southwest Regional Meeting, 2001.

⁸⁰Epitomized in the intertestamental literature in the story of Tobit through his command to his son Tobias to retrieve one of Israel's poor in the streets of Nineveh for their Pentecost festal meal in Tobit's home. Cf. Tob. 2:1–2, *Septuaginta*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt/Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935, 1979).

⁸¹Stevens, "Pentecost," 7–8.

anticipated the final fulfillment of God’s complete and abundant provision for his people, into a higher key: the extension of the agricultural Pentecost fulfillment into that timeless church experience of perpetual eschatological fulfillment in Acts 2:44–47.⁸²

Apostolic preaching and healing

Luke also characterized the Jerusalem church corporately through her apostolic leaders. Peter is the premier representative, the heart and soul of the original Jesus movement.⁸³ Luke carefully portrayed the life and ministry of Jesus replicated in the life and ministry of his followers, but especially Peter. As Jesus preaches, so does Peter.⁸⁴ As Jesus heals a lame man, so does Peter.⁸⁵ As Jesus raises a girl back to life, so does Peter.⁸⁶

Even though this preaching and healing receives opposition from Jewish leaders, the condemnation is transformed into witness. Already noted is how Antioch responded by the early second century such that the term “Christian” was transformed into a positive badge, even in spite of persecution. DeSilva pointed out, “Suffering for Jesus’ sake is even transformed into a badge of honor before God. This strategy represents perhaps the strongest tool the minority group has for reversing the effects of society’s attempts to reign the ‘deviants’ back into line with dominant cultural values. The response of the twelve apostles to the Sanhedrin’s marking them with the whip as deviants requiring

⁸²“They were having all things in common,” εἶχον ὅπαντα κοινὰ, Acts 2:44.

⁸³Lk. 9:20; Acts 2:14.

⁸⁴Lk. 11:28; Acts 5:29.

⁸⁵Lk. 5:17–26; Acts 3:1–10. Observe the parallel structure: a lame man, a healing miracle, and a word of forgiveness.

⁸⁶Lk. 8:49–56 (Jairus’s daughter); Acts 9:36–43 (Tabitha). Observe the parallel structure: a young girl, an untimely death, and the close wording of the command (“talitha koum” vs. “Tabitha koum”). Luke makes a play on the moniker for “little girl” (talitha) in the Gospel episode and the actual name of the girl in the Acts episode (“Tabitha”). Only one letter separates the two terms.

correction becomes paradigmatic: ‘They rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name’ (Acts 5:41).’⁸⁷

Negative Characterization in Acts

However, though Jerusalem was the mother church, the picture is not completely rosy. Numerous episodes indicate either a passivity or, worse, a growing resistance on the part of the Jerusalem church to God’s action through the Spirit, but most acutely in the key issue of the outward impulse of gospel witness. In terms of outward impulse, Jerusalem just never gets to church on time, like Eliza Doolittle’s father, Alfred, in *My Fair Lady* in jeopardy of missing the main event because of his recalcitrant behavior. What narrative elements carry this theme? This theme shows up in stories such as Ananias and Sapphira, the constant after-the-fact attempts to “validate” gospel expansion among unacceptable social groups after the Spirit already has taken the initiative, the preaching of the gospel exclusively to Jews, and the Jerusalem Conference.

Ananias and Sapphira

The story of Ananias and Sapphira is the harbinger (Acts 5:1–11). This episode has been the source of much confusion in commentaries. Narrative analysis clarifies the meaning. The episode is bracketed by the two appearances of Peter before the Sanhedrin. Peter’s first appearance in Acts 4:10–12 is an offer of forgiveness to Israel’s leaders for the death of Christ. Peter’s second appearance in Acts 5:40 is the Sanhedrin’s public rejection of Peter’s offer. The consequence of that rejection, within the eschatological context of God’s unique offer of forgiveness for the death of Jesus, will be tragic and fatal (cf. Acts 3:17). The Ananias and Sapphira story reveals the Sanhedrin’s fatal flaw of presuming upon God’s Spirit at a critical juncture in the story of God’s people.

⁸⁷David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 66–67.

The crucial indictment is coded in Gamaliel’s warning to the Sanhedrin in 5:38–39: “So now about these things I tell you, keep away from these men and leave them alone; because if this counsel and activity be of human origin, it will be destroyed; but if it is of God, you will not be able to destroy them—lest even you be found to be God fighters!”⁸⁸ By opposing the Jesus movement, one could be fighting God himself. Ironically, Gamaliel’s warning eventually goes unheeded, not only by the Sanhedrin, but also by his best student, Saul of Tarsus. Playing the part of a “God fighter” becomes a theme in Acts among individuals and groups inside and outside the church. Such was the position of Ananias and Sapphira, and their situation was a harbinger of judgment to come. Significantly, Peter alluded to this “God fighter” theme when confronted by the Jerusalem church about Cornelius: “Who was I, as if I was able to resist God?”⁸⁹

Passivity and remonstrance

Jerusalem is either passive or remonstrating others when the Spirit moves the gospel outward beyond Jews. Gospel expansion in Acts actually happens in the Hellenist movement, not in Jerusalem. Luke used the story of the daily widow distribution in Acts 6 not to introduce the formal office of deacon but to introduce the main leaders of the Hellenist movement within the early church. Thus begins the Hellenist Cycle in Acts.⁹⁰ Luke was forced to access this Hellenist material to tell the story of gospel expansion, not the Jerusalem church. Outside of preaching to Jews themselves in and around Jerusalem,

⁸⁸καὶ τὰ νῦν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀπόστητε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τούτων καὶ ἄφετε αὐτούς· ὅτι ἐὰν ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἢ βουλή αὕτη ἢ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο, καταλυθήσεται, εἰ δὲ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐστίν, οὐ δυνήσεσθε καταλῦσαι αὐτούς, μήποτε καὶ θεομάχοι εὐρεθῆτε.

⁸⁹Acts 11:17, ἐγὼ τίς ἤμην δυνατὸς κωλύσαι τὸν θεόν;

⁹⁰For a full development of the Hellenist Cycle, see Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn, rev. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971).

the Jerusalem church never gets to church on time when the issue is gospel expansion. Careful reading in the stories about the Samaritans, the Ethiopian eunuch, Cornelius, and Antioch reveal that Jerusalem representatives either *are not involved at all* or always are sent *after the fact*, as if presuming they could sit in judgment on what the Holy Spirit already had accomplished in moving the gospel outward.

For example, Philip the Hellenist leader, not Jerusalem, evangelizes the Samaritans (8:5). Only afterward does Jerusalem send out emissaries attempting to verify the Spirit's work (8:14). The Ethiopian eunuch is the result of the Spirit's initiative through an obedient Hellenist, Philip, not Jerusalem (Acts 8:26, 29, 39). Even Peter himself initially resists God's instructions in the heavenly vision leading up to Cornelius's conversion (10:13–15). Afterward, circumcised believers in the Jerusalem church challenge Peter's actions with Cornelius (11:2–3). Or again, the narrative is clear that "some men of Cyprus and Cyrene" breach the Gentile boundary in Antioch, not Jerusalem (11:20). Only *after* news of the Hellenist evangelization at Antioch hits Jerusalem's ears were they even aware of what the Spirit was doing and felt like they needed to send a representative to check things out.⁹¹ When the issue was gospel preaching to Gentiles, the Jerusalem church never got to church on time. The issue came to a climax in the Jerusalem Conference in Acts 15.

The Jerusalem Conference

What looks like a tacit agreement about gospel expansion among Gentiles reached by the Jerusalem church in 11:18 after Peter refuses to back down about Cornelius in reality is only a flanking action by the circumcision wing of the early church. The very next verse reveals the true situation: even after Cornelius, Luke made patently clear,

⁹¹Acts 11:22, Ἠκούσθη δὲ ὁ λόγος εἰς τὰ ὄψα τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς οὔσης ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ περὶ αὐτῶν καὶ ἐξᾠπέστειλαν Βαρναβᾶν [διελθεῖν] ἕως Ἀντιοχείας.

Jerusalem’s gospel preaching is “to Jews only.”⁹² Real feelings explode out in the open again after the First Missionary Journey brings Gentiles into the church in such large numbers they no longer can be ignored (15:1–2).

In playing out the Jerusalem Conference, Luke was building on the earlier Sanhedrin story in Acts 5. That is, the earlier episode of the Sanhedrin’s condemnation by God in Acts 5 has reverberations in the narrative for the church itself. Notice that Peter’s question to Sapphira in Acts 5:9 about “putting the Spirit of the Lord to the test”⁹³ has its eerie echo in Acts 15:10 as Peter challenges the Jerusalem Church at the Jerusalem Conference!⁹⁴ Peter’s similar question in both accounts shows that the demand for Gentile circumcision in Acts 15 has put the Jerusalem church on the brink of a judgment disaster just like the Sanhedrin was in Acts 5.

The Antioch Ethos

The Seven Hellenists

The story of Antioch is the story of the Hellenists. Of the seven leading Hellenists chosen to assist in the distribution to widows in Acts 6:5, only the first and last are given additional description along with their names. Stephen, the first on the list, further is described as “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁵ Stephen is highlighted because he will bring the definitive critique of the Jerusalem temple in his speech in the next chapter. Nicolaus, last on the list, further is described as “a proselyte of Antioch.”⁹⁶

⁹²Acts 11:19, μηδενὶ λαλοῦντες τὸν λόγον εἰ μὴ μόνον Ἰουδαίοις.

⁹³πειράσαι τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου.

⁹⁴νῦν οὖν τί πειράζετε τὸν θεόν.

⁹⁵Acts 6:5, ἄνδρα πλήρης πίστεως καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου.

⁹⁶Acts 6:5, προσήλυτον Ἀντιοχέα.

Nicolaus is highlighted to allow Luke's penchant for name-dropping in anticipation of developments later in the narrative.⁹⁷ In addition, in this quick stroke, Luke has characterized Nicolaus two ways: by indicating his religious status as a proselyte⁹⁸ and by indicating his social status through his city of origin. In this description Luke deftly provided in a nutshell the two principal and defining characteristics of gospel expansion in the early church: notably successful among Gentiles, notably centered on Antioch. By this story of conflict and prejudicial treatment within the ranks of Jerusalem's church, Luke already was hinting that these Jerusalem Hellenists would not flourish in Jerusalem. The Hellenist movement will have to find a more hospitable city of origin.

Preaching to Hellenists

The next time Antioch is mentioned in Luke's narrative, the story has arrived at a crucial text that bluntly reveals the responsibility for the gospel expansion to Hellenists. The reader explicitly and unambiguously is told in 11:19–20, "Now those who were dispersed because of the persecution that happened due to Stephen went through Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one but Jews alone. *But certain ones of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, when they came to Antioch were speaking to the Hellenists also* [emphasis added], proclaiming the Lord Jesus."

⁹⁷In this case, the name of a city, Antioch. Of many examples of Luke's name-dropping, one can illustrate with the introduction of Barnabas in 4:26 because of his later crucial role in the early days of Paul's ministry (introducing Saul to the Jerusalem leaders, 9:27; getting Saul from Tarsus to work in Antioch, 11:25; taking the famine relief funds to Jerusalem, 11:30; leading the first missionary journey, 13:2). Saul himself is another example, subtly introduced at the end of the stoning of Stephen in 7:58 before the dramatic Damascus Road in Acts 9.

⁹⁸A rare term in the New Testament, προσήλυτος occurs only four times, three in Acts (Mt. 23:15; Acts 2:11; 6:5; 13:43). The general consensus is that the term refers to a convert to Judaism subscribing to the whole law, including circumcision.

For those involved in this novel phase of missionary impulse, the place of origin is specified particularly: these men are of Cyprus and Cyrene. That is, Luke is clear that *these evangelists' identity was not grounded in Jerusalem's ethos*. Identifying Nicolaus as a “proselyte of Antioch” in 6:3 now becomes clear as an interpretive marker for understanding the Antiochene audience of 11:20. Preaching the gospel to Hellenists was a synagogue breakthrough, especially made possible in Antioch because that is where these Hellenists⁹⁹ would have been found in significant numbers due to Antioch's large Jewish population and numerous synagogues, and due to a basic overall compatibility with Antioch's strong Hellenistic social environment.

Jerusalem's Passivity

Jerusalem, as usual, misses the initiative in this Hellenist impulse of the gospel. Yet, Jerusalem feels compelled to send Barnabas to check things out after the fact (11:22). Barnabas, ever true to his name,¹⁰⁰ is encouraged by these developments in Antioch and gets Saul from Tarsus to help (11:26). An obvious question arises: Why did Barnabas not think of getting someone from Jerusalem?¹⁰¹ In any case, Barnabas and Saul work together in Antioch for a year. This success implicitly is based upon the notation in 11:20; that is, when evangelized, Hellenists in Antioch's synagogues responded in significant numbers. This unhindered evangelism and significant response is one reason Luke specifies that the disciples first were called Christians at Antioch. In

⁹⁹Both full proselytes like Nicolaus in Jerusalem and “God-fearers” like Cornelius in Caesarea (10:2, εὐσεβῆς καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν θεόν).

¹⁰⁰Clearly, this surname relates to no possible etymological analysis by Luke. For a concise overview of the etymological problems, see Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 320–21.

¹⁰¹Curiously, Barnabas also has his kinship of origin in Cyprus, just like these evangelists making this bold move to preach to Hellenists in Antioch. This Cyprus connection possibly may explain why Luke was careful to note Barnabas's home territory of Cyprus when he first introduced this character into the narrative (4:36).

part, what Luke means by this observation is a subtle critique of the Jerusalem church: Jerusalem was simply out of the game completely in this Hellenist mission impulse. After all, what is the meaning of the Jerusalem delegation to Antioch? Just what was the Jerusalem church going to do if their delegation brought back a critical report of Hellenist developments at Antioch? Would they have attempted to coerce some type of Jerusalem ethos conformity, as the Sanhedrin had attempted to do to Damascus through Saul? The Jerusalem Conference was one such attempt on the part of certain elements of the Jerusalem church that failed.

Antioch's Responsiveness

At the time Barnabas and Saul are working in Antioch, Jerusalem prophets come to Antioch and warn of a great famine for Judea (11:27).¹⁰² Antioch responds to the famine warning with an offering (11:28). This famine offering will comprise another key distinguishing mark of the Antioch church: a responsiveness and social benevolence. Their assistance is delivered by Barnabas and Saul (11:29). This type of social action even may be another visible form of expressing kinship ideas.¹⁰³ In any case, Barnabas and Saul deliver the collection to Jerusalem and return to Antioch (12:25).

¹⁰²The translation “over all the world” for ἐφ’ ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην in 11:29 is common (cf. KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV). However, the broad semantic domain for οἰκουμένη simply means that “over the entire region” is perfectly adequate; the province of Judea seems the main intent, which is the reason the prophets are identified as from Jerusalem. That the church in Antioch understood Judea as the object of the prophecy is clear in sending the gift to Jerusalem only, not other parts of the world. For a contrary view, see Bruce W. Winter, “Acts and Food Shortages,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, *The Book of Acts in Its First-Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1995), 59–78.

¹⁰³DeSilva, 216. As to prophets and prophecy, the reader will learn that Antioch itself is no slouch in spiritual giftedness; Antioch also has its prophets (13:1).

Note at this point that the Antiochene collection was not given to the apostles. The “elders” formally received the gift (11:30).¹⁰⁴ With this reference to “elders,” Luke was name-dropping again. He already was insinuating the leadership base at Jerusalem was shifting away from the early dominance by the apostles. The Cornelius episode continues to haunt the church, as the reader has the first insinuation by the Acts author that Peter is no longer the principal spokesman for the Jerusalem church.¹⁰⁵ Whereas James and the elders work with the apostles in the Jerusalem Conference,¹⁰⁶ by the time Paul arrives in Jerusalem at the end of the Third Missionary Journey, James and the elders alone meet with him (21:18).

Summary

Luke has structured Acts such that characterization is an important ingredient to the development of the plot, in terms of characterizing both individuals and groups. The first half of Acts is focused on Peter and the Jewish mission. The second half is focused on Saul-Paul and the Gentile mission. The Gentile mission is built upon the foundation of the mission of the Jerusalem church, but Antioch is a crucial component to that story. Luke has set up the characterization of the Jerusalem church as a foil for presenting the difference in Antioch’s ethos that shifts the center of gravity for the gospel’s mission impulse from its early origins in Jerusalem to Antioch.

¹⁰⁴ἀποστείλαντες πρὸς τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους.

¹⁰⁵This reality is explicit in Luke’s statement at the Jerusalem Conference in Acts 15:22 that the decision of the conference was sent out by the “elders and the apostles” (τοῖς ἀποστόλοις καὶ τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις).

¹⁰⁶Acts 15:2, 4, 6; careful reading, however, reveals that James, not Peter, is the one who summarizes and concludes the discussion, makes the definitive pronouncement of the conference decision, and authorizes the notification letter to be sent out with Jerusalem representatives (15:13–21).

Jerusalem's ethos is both positive and negative in the Gospel and in Acts. In the Gospel, she represents the heritage of the faith of Israel. The characters in the early part of the story are faithful and righteous Israelites. Jesus is born to those who in their humility represent the best of Israel's hopes and aspirations. Yet, even with such a promising beginning, the story turns dark, and Jerusalem is the center of that darker story. Jesus' message was rejected, and eventually he was crucified in Jerusalem. As a result, absent any intervention, Jerusalem's destiny is judgment.

In Acts, the discussion is focused on the church. Jerusalem's positive ethos is as the place of the church's formal launch on her mission of witness. The Pentecost event that opens up the Acts narrative after the preliminaries in chapter 1 shows God fulfilling the eschatological promise for God's people to which the annual Pentecost feast pointed. The Jerusalem church is the center of that fulfillment. As interpreter of this fulfillment, Peter is the premier example of the original heart and mind of Jesus' life and ministry in Peter's preaching and healing.

Jerusalem's negative ethos is revealed in various ways, but primarily in the story of Ananias and Sapphira, the constant after-the-fact attempts to "validate" gospel expansion among unacceptable social groups after the Spirit already has taken the initiative, the preaching of the gospel exclusively to Jews, and the Jerusalem Conference. Ananias and Sapphira illustrate the seriousness of opposing God, both within the church and for the Sanhedrin. In the Acts narrative, Jerusalem never initiates gospel expansion to non-Jews. The typical Jerusalem response when the Spirit moves the gospel to non-Jews is either passivity or remonstrance. In fact, Peter's action with Cornelius, for which he was censured by Jerusalem, is the beginning of the slow erosion of apostolic authority in the inner leadership circles of the church in Jerusalem. A new group of "elders" appears in the Jerusalem church exerting a controlling influence. The Jerusalem Conference is the crisis of the Jerusalem church's resistance to the Spirit's actions in moving the gospel

outward to non-Jews, a judgment disaster with echoes of Ananias and Sapphira, but barely averted.

Luke basically has identified Antioch's ethos as the Hellenist movement in the early church. This movement is the key point at which the gospel moves outward to non-Jews through Hellenist leaders such as Philip, Stephen, and Saul of Tarsus. The nerve center of this movement never was Jerusalem. Antioch would become the surrogate home base for this movement after men of Cyprus and Cyrene began reaching the Hellenist populations in Antioch's synagogues in significant numbers. Barnabas, a native of Cyprus, is a key figure providing a Jerusalem connection to this ministry. Finally, various positive characteristics are evoked in the narrative about the Antiochene church. Not only does the text highlight that disciples first were called Christians at Antioch, but also that the Antioch church reveals a distinctive responsiveness and social benevolence in reaction to the prophetic announcement of the famine crisis in Judea.

CHAPTER 3

ANTIOCH: THE MAKING OF THE PARADIGM

The discussion in the previous chapters has attempted to lay the foundation for understanding that Luke intended to present the church at Antioch as a paradigm of the essential core of being labeled “Christian.” Regardless of whether the epitaph was pejorative originally, Luke assigned an ethos to the term “Christian” that was tied to the ethos of a city and, more particularly, to the ethos of the developing church in that city. The purpose for this chapter is to provide a descriptive silhouette of the Antiochene church profile generated from the previous two chapters, with particular focus on spiritual vitality. Such a project could be difficult, because the nuances of Luke’s narrative are complex and can be viewed from any number of angles. The delimited interest here, though, is to tease out characteristics in the ethos of the Antiochene church that possibly could contribute toward developing a usable concept of spiritual vitality.

Four characteristics seem to suggest themselves for this purpose.¹⁰⁷ These four characteristics divide into two groups based on internal and external patterns of relationships. Internal patterns of relationship are focused on (1) a discipleship emphasis and (2) conflict management. External patterns of relationship are focused on (3) social responsibility and (4) mission initiative. For Luke the key issue in Antioch’s spiritual vitality is not having one or all of these characteristics necessarily but in the dynamic balance among them through the energizing activity of the Spirit. Thus, in the end Luke really would be thinking more of Spirit-vitality.

¹⁰⁷Others could be listed, of course, but these four seem to be fairly dominant.

The Internal Patterns

Discipleship Emphasis

The first part of the profile derives from internal patterns of relationships. These patterns are core relationships within the community of faith. The first core relationship that seems obvious in the profile at Antioch is a discipleship emphasis. The narrative that develops this first Antioch characteristic can be traced in the call of Saul of Tarsus and the subsequent threading together of this storyline with the ongoing story of Barnabas. Basically, without Barnabas, Saul's story would have been dramatically different.

Barnabas is first met at the conclusion to the story of Pentecost. This feast setting interprets the outpouring of God's Spirit as the fulfillment of the promise of Joel related to the last days and Jewish traditions surrounding the agricultural harvest festival (2:16–21). Pentecost was a celebration of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the subsequent entry into the Promise Land with its abundant harvest. In Luke's narrative in Acts, Barnabas becomes the symbolic bearer of Pentecost's promise fulfilled. That is, Barnabas's narrative character is developed as Pentecost facilitator in Israel. He sells his property and makes a gracious contribution to the church in Jerusalem to enact Pentecost harvest abundance (4:34–37).

The full harvest to come, however, is not restricted to Israel. The Pentecost harvest includes the nations. Barnabas facilitates the key figure in that story, Saul of Tarsus, by introducing Saul to the Jerusalem church just when that church was about to reject the very one who was chosen by God (9:26–28). Saul would be the central character for implementing the light to the nations theme of Simeon's prophecy about the Christ child out of Luke's nativity narrative in the Gospel (Lk. 2:30–32).

With regard to this light to the nations theme in Acts that establishes the profile of Barnabas's relationship to Saul, one can observe that any group or individual that aligns against God in this matter will induce God to act in judgment. That is, one crucial opposition God will not abide and that reveals a lack of Spirit-vitality is the intent to limit

the full preaching of the gospel to the nations. Indeed, a “full gospel” in Acts has nothing to do with the residual effects of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues. In Acts, a “full gospel” is one that is preached without delimitation to any group—tongues or no tongues. Any church that hides a subtle racism or would exclude socially any group from the church’s responsibility to engage the world and to apply the gospel in redemptive action is not a healthy church, no matter how large the church budget or how many multiple worship services are proffered for tickling the fancy of a preferred worship modality.

Barnabas later becomes Pentecost facilitator outside Jerusalem in his ambassadorial role in Antioch after the Spirit has begun moving there among Gentiles. Barnabas retrieves Saul from Cilicia for the work of discipleship in Antioch for an entire year (11:25–26). Once again in the impetus to mission activity, the Spirit singles out Barnabas and Saul for what commonly is called the First Missionary Journey (13:2). Barnabas is the leader of this team at the beginning, even though this status does seem to change after the team leaves Cyprus.¹⁰⁸

That is, Luke has indicated that the first order of business for the spiritually vital church is a solid discipleship foundation that has a clear focus on the nations. Before presenting any of the missionary work of the Antioch church, Luke has woven the story of Saul into the story of Barnabas as Pentecost facilitator. In Saul’s case, this facilitating role meant engaging a discipleship that developed a missionary leader who would become the paragon of Simeon’s light to the Gentiles (Lk. 2:32). From this observation one could infer that mission is the derivative *outflow* of good discipleship—hence, the First Missionary Journey’s timing *after* the year of discipleship among Gentiles in Antioch.

¹⁰⁸In customary usage in the ancient world, the leader of the group always is named first, accommodating proper social conventions. Notice that the team is referred to as just Paul and his companions by 13:13.

Luke did not indicate the actual content of this discipleship between Barnabas and Saul. Whether the exact profile of the Jerusalem pattern given in Acts 2:42–47 should be inferred at Antioch is possible but debatable. This description of the early Jerusalem church in Acts 2 has broad Pentecost allusions and resonates again in Acts 4:32–37. The second passage is set up in order to introduce the key figure of Barnabas. Since Barnabas also is the central figure in the early period of the church in Antioch, one might speculate that the Jerusalem pattern would be repeated at Antioch. Would such an assumption be correct? Although the narrative is not clear about the matter, the assumption does have a few difficulties.

One difficulty is the absence in Antioch of the Jerusalem temple setting, which is crucial to the Jerusalem context, along with the related Pentecost festival. This temple setting is precisely the one component that renders the Jerusalem scene distinctive, if not unique—and certainly completely Jewish.¹⁰⁹ The early church had not yet made the break with the temple-centric focus of traditional Judaism for which Stephen, a Hellenist leader, lost his life by criticizing.¹¹⁰ Antioch simply did not have the centering force of one

¹⁰⁹The early church's focus is centered on temple activity. Cf. Acts 2:36; 3:1; 5:20, 42. The summary in 5:42 is key: "Every day, both in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah," *πάσαν τε ἡμέραν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καὶ κατ' οἶκον οὐκ ἐπαύοντο διδάσκοντες καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν.*

¹¹⁰A fervent temple movement is witnessed even today in Jerusalem. The Temple Institute, established in 1988 by Rabbi Israel Ariel, has produced a beautiful, richly illustrated publication with large folios on the temple and its service, personnel, and ritual. The introduction has these comments: "A huge number of thoroughly researched paintings and scaled-to-size gold and silver reproductions of Temple vessels, instruments and vestments are on display at the Temple Institute in Jerusalem, and may be viewed by the public. These amazing works of art have been fashioned by accomplished, contemporary craftsmen. They patiently await the day when priests will take them and ascend the Temple Mount to perform the sacred service in the Holy Temple of God, as in days of old." Israel Ariel and Chaim Richman, *Carta's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem*, trans. Yehoshua Wertheimer (Jerusalem: The Temple Institute and Carta, 2005), v.

singular institution like the Jewish temple in Jerusalem religiously or socially, and the impact of the removal of this factor from the religious/social matrix at Antioch is hard to calculate. Antioch gave rise to a more Hellenized Judaism.¹¹¹ The synagogue was the primary centering institution for the Jewish population at Antioch—precisely the reason for the immediate outward thrust of the gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch due to their strong presence in the Antiochene synagogues.

Further, as a second difficulty, whether the type of shared-life experience in the earliest Jewish church could be sustained outside Jerusalem, or even over time in Jerusalem, is doubtful. No indication exists in Acts that the shared life of the early Jerusalem church was emulated anywhere else, whether by the Petrine or Pauline missions. Luke’s point, however, was still made. With this shared life, the symbol of Pentecost fulfilled was established, and that symbolism is all the mileage Luke probably intended to get out of the description in 2:42–47 and 4:32–37 in his narrative.

A third difficulty for assuming Jerusalem’s religious experience and its style of discipleship simply would be replicated in Antioch is the pre-Jerusalem Conference setting of this “all things in common”¹¹² description that is so over-played in attempts to provide a critique of the contemporary church. Such a critique depends upon caricature, an over-idealized, superficial description of the Jerusalem church that today’s church should emulate or be shamed against. “All things in common”—indeed—as long as one

¹¹¹Not to say Jerusalem did not have its own Hellenizing influences, just that the degree of Hellenization in Antioch was greater. Cf. the “synagogue of the Freedmen,” ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τῆς λεγομένης Λιβερτίνων, in Acts 6:9. See Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine in the Early Hellenistic Period*, trans. John Bowden, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Fortress Press, 1981); Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2d ed., vol. 1, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (New York, Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1995), 236–37; Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987, 1993), 550–51.

¹¹²Acts 2:44, εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινὰ.

was a Jew! One should have no doubt that the meals shared in Jerusalem’s homes at that time were completely kosher—Gentiles not invited. Peter himself had to have a heavenly vision repeated *no less than three times* about this very issue before he was shaken up enough to be ready to accept an invitation into Cornelius’s home (Acts 10:9–16).¹¹³ The evidence provided in previous discussion of the discomfort of the Jerusalem church with Peter’s actions should be kept in mind.

Conflict Management

In the internal patterns of relationship derived out of the ethos of the church at Antioch, the second characteristic to highlight is conflict management. This characteristic is derived from the story of the Jerusalem Conference. Volumes been written about this crucial event in the life of the early church, much of which has been focused on the interrelationships with Paul’s own narrative account in Galatians 2. The focus here is not upon attempts to harmonize the Acts account with Paul’s, nor upon the theological issues at stake. The focus is on the *nature* of Antioch’s *response to conflict* within the church and how they purposed to resolve the conflict.

One management principle seen as operative in Antioch is engagement—not simply trying to cope—when the issue impinges on the ground of faith. Engagement, that is, has to distinguish the crucial from the peripheral. Antioch recognized the importance of the issue of Gentile circumcision and did not seek simply to cope with the men “from Judea” (15:1). Instead, Antioch acted proactively and brought the matter to the heart of the leadership in Jerusalem (15:2). Distinguishing the heart of the gospel from *adiaphora* (matters of indifference) is a constant challenge for both leaders and church members.

¹¹³Although not a part of the Acts text, one almost cannot help but here to think about the serious problem Peter presented to Paul by withdrawing table fellowship from Gentiles believers after “men from James” came to Antioch. Cf. Gal. 2:11–21.

Nailing down what really is worth arguing about or getting upset over seems an illusive goal for the church, but especially for Baptists.

Another management principle operative at Antioch is inclusiveness, that is, empowering the voice of the marginalized. No interested party was denied a voice in the proceedings at Jerusalem. Apostles, elders, the circumcision party, Barnabas, Saul, Peter, James, and others were involved in this discussion. In many churches the effort to “move forward” or “make progress” typically happens only by way of completely ignoring, steamrolling, or practically marginalizing the voice of dissidence. Consensus building shows spiritual vitality. However, consensus building also is thoroughly dependent upon Spirit-vitality, that is, how much the Spirit is allowed to move and manage the interested parties.

The External Patterns

Social Responsibility

The second part of the Antiochene profile derives from external patterns of relationships. These patterns are core relationships external to the community of faith. Two relationships in particular appear to stand out in the narrative that could be characterized as social responsibility and mission initiative. The first of these relationships, social responsibility, can be derived from the story of the famine relief visit of Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem. Several observations can be made about this action.

First, the issue of famine in Judea is a return to the Acts Pentecost theme. The famine is a threat to Pentecost harvest joy in Jerusalem. In response, God takes charge in order to insure the promise of Pentecost abundance. God inspires the prophet Agabus to predict the famine so that the church in Jerusalem may be supplied adequately through the believers in Antioch (11:27–28). Ironically, Jerusalem’s role as a channel of Pentecost blessing is reversed. Instead of blessing flowing from Jerusalem outward, such blessings now flow inward into Jerusalem. Antioch proactively takes up the mantle of Pentecost

fulfillment. God provides the harvest, though, because Antioch’s response is based on the Spirit’s action. Two lessons precipitate out of the way Luke has framed this famine relief story:

(1) Spirit’s initiative—whatever social activism in which the church engages should be the direct result of the Spirit’s initiative and energizing of the church.

(2) Theological base—social activism for its own sake is not enough: the church should provide a theological foundation to guide its reflection on social responsibility.

Second, an interesting element of the story of the famine relief visit almost totally ignored in commentaries is that Luke has used this story in an *inclusio* technique that surrounds the story of Herod Agrippa I in Acts 12.¹¹⁴ That is, the story of the famine relief is split into two parts: Acts 11:27–30 and 12:24–25. The Herod Agrippa story is “sandwiched” between these two parts of the famine relief story. (See Fig. 2 below.)

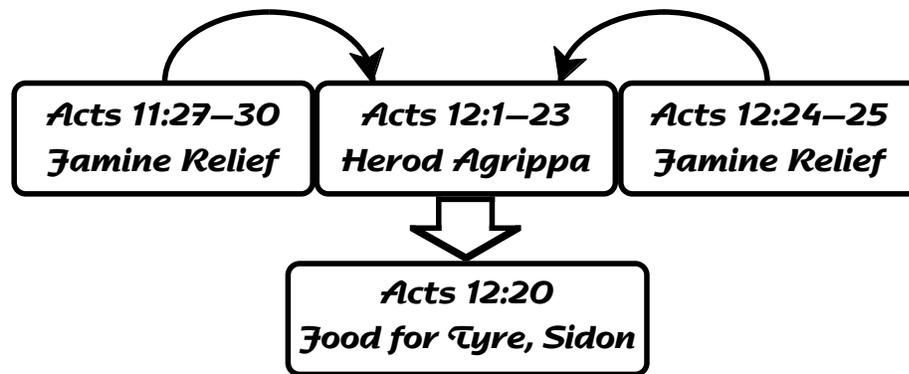


Fig. 2. Herod Agrippa’s attempted food supply patronage

¹¹⁴Polhill noted the *inclusio* style of the famine relief visit but did not expand on this insight. John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, gen. ed. David S. Dockery, no. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 276–77.

By observing this *inclusio* (“sandwiching”) technique, one can see the narrative significance of the Herod Agrippa story. Herod’s story is to be interpreted in light of Antioch’s famine relief visit to Jerusalem. In what way? The primary clue is the special hint Luke dropped about the cities of Tyre and Sidon in 12:20. In short, Herod Agrippa had attempted to force Tyre and Sidon into a client-patron relationship for their food supply. In so doing, Herod had hijacked God’s Pentecost promise of inclusive abundant harvest for the sake of Herod’s own self-serving political agenda. Any leader should take note that ulterior motives can pervert social activism, as in the case of Herod, who was co-opting legitimate social concerns by divorcing them from any appropriate theological foundation. Herod’s hubris was judged in the theater at Caesarea. The crowds shouted that Herod’s speaking was as “the voice of a god.”¹¹⁵ The crowds were only being obsequious, trying to flatter their patron. Herod was more than happy to receive the divine title, even if a complete farce on the part of the crowd. As a result, Herod died suddenly and unexpectedly, like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 12:23). God, not Herod Agrippa I, is the true patron of Israel and the world.

Mission Initiative

The second external pattern of relationship in Luke’s narrative about Antioch that seems characteristic of that church is that of mission initiative. Once the foundation of discipleship has been laid, the inevitable outflow is mission. The First Missionary Journey Luke used to play out this reality in the life of the Antioch church. An important ingredient is the leadership of the Spirit in initiating this mission. This first mission’s locus in the Antioch church is in stark contrast to the total lack of any such mission from the Jerusalem church. What about the Antioch church shows more spiritual vitality in mission initiative than the church in Jerusalem? Antioch took seriously the prophetic

¹¹⁵Acts 12:22, θεοῦ φωνὴ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπου.

theme of light to the Gentiles and did not oppose God's desire to take the gospel to the nations.

However, Luke did not shy away from addressing a particular problem in mission initiative and the responsibility of church leadership for casting a vision for the church in general. Even church leadership can play a negative role in the ability to be responsive to the Spirit. The argument between Paul and Barnabas after the Jerusalem Conference is the focus here (Acts 15:36–40). What the conservative circumcision group in Jerusalem could not do at the beginning of Acts 15—split the church—is precisely what Paul does by fracturing the mission team in an argument with Barnabas over John Mark at the end of chapter 15. Whether Paul was right or wrong in this argument really is inconsequential.¹¹⁶ The key point is that Paul sacrificed the mission team's unity and split the mission. Baptists simply do not take nearly seriously enough how devastating church splits really are spiritually. The issue is not whether one group or the other has sufficient budget and personnel to survive. The gospel message of unity in Christ already has been falsified. What mission message that Christ brings peace and reconciliation to the nations is believable after this?¹¹⁷ Further, calling a church split another mission point for a church plant is hypocrisy.

Summary

Four characteristics of the ethos of the church at Antioch could contribute to a sense of understanding this church as a paradigm of spiritual vitality. These

¹¹⁶In fact, the narrative makes clear Paul was wrong implicitly through Paul's aimless wandering at the beginning of this (so-called) Second Missionary Journey and through the Spirit's direct opposition to Paul as Paul tries repeatedly to jump start the mission effort. Cf. Acts 16:6–7. Notice carefully the verb ἐπεύραζον in 16:7 is a conative imperfect = "kept on trying." Paul did not try to go into Bithynia just once. Something was wrong with his daily quiet time.

¹¹⁷2 Cor. 5:18–20; Rom. 5:1; 14:19; Eph. 2:14.

characteristics are paired on the basis of internal and external patterns of relationships. Internal patterns involve discipleship emphasis and conflict management. External patterns involve social responsibility and mission initiative.

The image of discipleship emphasis at Antioch is built upon the narrative development of the relationship of Barnabas as Pentecost facilitator and Saul of Tarsus. Saul's development by Barnabas anticipates reaching the nations, the overarching "light to the Gentiles" theme in both Luke and Acts. Mission is the natural outflow of this discipleship, but Luke did not provide its content. The Jerusalem pattern, however, is not replicated in the more Hellenized and less temple-centric Antioch.

The image of conflict management is built on the narrative development of the Jerusalem Conference. The principle of engagement shows the church able to distinguish between central matters of faith and *adiaphora*. The principle of inclusiveness shows the church working to empower the voice of the marginalized. Ownership in the resulting decisions is the goal.

The image of social responsibility is built upon the narrative development of the famine relief visit of Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem. The famine is a threat to the promise of Pentecost harvest, that is, God's provision for the basic needs of the church. Antioch participates in an ironic "reverse Pentecost," instead of getting a blessing from Jerusalem, giving a blessing. Antioch's action is driven directly by the Spirit and is based on a theological foundation. The story of Herod Agrippa I and the issue of food for Tyre and Sidon is the antithesis of God's free provision as the true patron.

The image of mission initiative is built on the narrative development of the First Missionary Journey. The outflow of discipleship is mission. Taking the gospel to the nations is non-negotiable to God. Thus, Antioch, not Jerusalem, is where this story of mission inevitably was to be told. The Hellenist movement in the early church brought light to the Gentiles. However, a dark undertone is heard in the story of the fight Paul had with Barnabas at the beginning of the (so-called) Second Missionary Journey. This

splitting of the mission team was antithetical to the whole point of the Jerusalem Conference that had just been concluded.

CONCLUSION

Antioch's history shows the familiar profile of a typical Hellenistic city of the ancient world, but this history also has distinctive elements that shaped the development of early Christianity. As a dynamic city intersecting multiple trade routes with extensive trade contacts, Antioch always provided a bustling market with significant commercial diversity as well as a strong social identity as a city of origin. Another distinctive element of Antioch's profile was the strong Jewish presence from the very inception of the city. The large Jewish quarter meant that Antioch's pagan population would have significant and continual exposure to the Jewish religion and the Jewish way of life. This exposure would have its greatest impact within the institution of the synagogue. Those Gentiles either attracted to the Jewish faith ("God-fearers") or converted to the Jewish faith (proselytes) would have had a background in worship and Scripture upon which missionaries such as Saul of Tarsus could convert the converts. These disciples would have continued to attempt to function within the synagogue setting, and the pagan population, at least initially, would have understood them as another Jewish sect under the synagogue umbrella. Historical developments, however, rapidly would have driven those disciples into a status disassociated with the synagogue, perhaps within a few decades. The social matrix of persecution would have become a dominant factor impacting these developments.

Luke used insinuated corporate ethos in his narrative to define Antioch as a city of origin for believers as distinct from Jerusalem. Luke constructed Jerusalem's ethos with both positive and negative elements that were targeted for putting into bold relief the profile at Antioch. Luke particularly used the negative elements of Jerusalem's ethos for

this contrast. The stories that build this case include Ananias and Sapphira, Jerusalem's attempts to "validate" gospel expansion to non-Jews, Jerusalem's preaching exclusively to Jews, and the Jerusalem Conference.

The positive side of this contrast is the creation of the profile of Antioch. The Hellenist movement in the early church, with its full ethos on display in Antioch, encapsulates this profile. Within this movement no internal struggle ever was witnessed in opposition to the outward thrust of the gospel to Gentiles. Further, Antioch was ground zero when the Spirit moved to initiate intentional missionary impulse. For this reason, disciples were called "Christians" first at Antioch.

By calling disciples "Christians" first at Antioch, Luke intended to present the church at Antioch as the paradigm of spiritual vitality. The four principal characteristics of the Antiochene paradigm have internal and external dimensions. Internally, the church showed a discipleship emphasis with a natural outflow in mission. The church also showed conflict management that distinguished matters of faith from *adiaphora* and worked to be inclusive in empowering the voice of every constituent on behalf of church unity. Externally, the church showed social responsibility that was theologically informed. The church also showed mission initiative that fulfilled Simeon's prophecy about the child Jesus as fulfilling Isaiah's prophetic light to the Gentiles theme. The paragon of this fulfillment resides in the character of Saul-Paul as developed in Acts. The split of the mission team as a result of the argument Paul had with Barnabas at the beginning of the (so-called) Second Missionary Journey strikes an ominous chord in the plotline, but this development is part of Luke's ongoing characterization of an individual (Saul-Paul), not Antioch in particular.

Neither these four Antiochene characteristics nor the positive aspects of Jerusalem should be lifted out of the Acts context without reflection and simply dropped into some cookie-cutter attempt to draw the profile of spiritual vitality for the contemporary church. Jerusalem's "all things in common" profile is a good case in point. Again, one might

understand that Barnabas was a key figure in Saul's discipleship, as Luke tells the story, but have precious little from that story from which to precipitate out the profile of exactly what discipleship should look like today. Thus, readers today are prisoners to the subjectivity of their own experiences and felt needs to invent their own idiosyncratic definitions of discipleship and its corresponding category of spiritual vitality. Typically, such definitions quickly devolve into pragmatic issues that often are culturally bound.

What might Luke contribute to help in a discussion of spiritual vitality? First, one would have to recognize the Achilles heel in the concept "spiritual vitality" itself—a thinking pattern, a pragmatic modality, that puts emphasis on the human element, is performance driven, and leaves wide open the meaning of "spiritual" for any idiosyncratic definition to qualify.

Second, clear in the Lukan account, whether consideration is given to the story in the Gospel or the story in Acts, is that Luke preferred to think in categories of "Spirit-vitality," not "spiritual vitality." All the principal characters on the stage, all the epoch events in the drama, and all the significant actions in the plot are prefaced, provoked, and prospered by the Spirit. From a Lukan perspective, then, whatever profile is given to discipleship and spiritual vitality, one should avoid playing the role of Alfred in *My Fair Lady* of not getting to church on time—provided that "getting to church on time" could be defined as a responsiveness to the Spirit. "Disciples were first called Christians at Antioch" means that an Antiochene goal would be to establish the integrity of a genuine Spirit impulse that can drive a life and grow a church. Thus, for Luke to engage any discussion of "spiritual vitality," he immediately would reconfigure that discussion into recognizing the dynamic of Spirit-vitality, the real presence of the Spirit in the life of the believer as the driving force behind motivations and actions. The Spirit blows where he wills at any given moment. Just ask Simeon on the way to the temple, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Philip on the road to Gaza, Peter on the road to Caesarea, or Saul on the road to Damascus.