

The Last Years of Paul

Essays from the Tarragona Conference, June 2013

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On Why Luke Remains Silent about Paul's End (Acts 28.16–31)

Daniel Marguerat

Richard Pervo has playfully written: “If the volume of comment is the measure of an author’s impact, the close of Acts is a great success.”¹ This success story is due to two issues over which research has struggled for two centuries without arriving at an agreement. The first matter concerns the relationship between Christianity and Judaism at the end of Paul’s mission: how does Paul determine the future of Israel in salvation history by invoking the oracle of judgment of Isaiah 6.9–10 on the hardening of the people?² The second issue deals with Paul’s end: why does the author of Acts not describe Paul’s trial by the imperial court and his death? It is this second issue that we are interested in exploring here.

Whether from a historical, biographical, or literary point of view, the end of Acts leaves the reader unsatisfied: how can the story end after two years of Paul’s incarceration by Rome (28.30)? This feeling of an open ending, which closes too soon, does not date from modern times. Around 200 CE, the Muratorian Canon takes up the defence of the author of the Acts of the apostles: Luke “compiled the individual events that took place in his presence, as he plainly shows by omitting the martyrdom of Peter as well as the departure of Paul from the city [of Rome] when he journeyed to Spain” (lines 36–38). In the 4th century CE, John Chrysostom wrote: “But of his affairs after the two years, what say we? [The writer] leaves the hearer athirst for more: the heathen authors do the same [in their writings], for to know everything makes the reader dull and jaded.”³ To solve this puzzle, researchers have taken two separate paths.⁴ Some, in a theological and literary vein, have sought to give

¹ R. Pervo, *Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 688.

² For an analysis of this issue and a look at the state of the research, see my book *The First Christian Historian. Writing the “Acts of the Apostles”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 129–54.

³ *Hom. Acts* 55.

⁴ For the state of the research, see C.J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 383–87; C.K. Barrett, “The End of Acts,” in H. Cancik (ed.), *Geschichte – Tradition – Reflexion. Festschrift für M. Hengel*

meaning to the ending of Acts, identifying why Luke chose to end his account as he did. The others, coming from a historical standpoint, have listed the reasons why Luke would not have been able to do otherwise. Therefore, the first group attempted to discover *why Luke ended it as he did*, while the second group wanted to know *what Luke was unable or unwilling to say*. Returning to the subject after an initial study published in 1993,⁵ I came, somewhat to my surprise, to the conclusion that the issue requires non-exclusive, but differentiated treatment. It is a mistake to try to understand why Acts ends as it does from a theological and literary or exclusively from a historical perspective. Both should be situated in correlation.

This is why my analysis begins with an approach to the text as a meta-discourse on Paul's mission (A). It then identifies the relevant literary criteria for determining a narrative closure (B) and strives to clarify the rhetorical and theological function of Acts 28.16–31 as the ending of Luke and Acts (C). It is only after having interpreted what Luke wrote that we may wonder, in historical terms, why he chose to (or was possibly forced to) pen this ending rather than some other one (D).

A. Acts 28.16–31: Meta-Reflection on Paul's Mission

First Observation: Frustrated Expectation

The reading of the ending of Acts cannot be disassociated from the dramaturgy of Acts 20–28. Many prolepses on Paul's fate create an expectation in the reader: the Jews will deliver Paul to the Gentiles (21.11); he declares his willingness to die three times (20.24; 21.13; 25.11); he warns that his face will never be seen again (20.25); a vision gives him the divine order to testify in Rome (δεῖ, 23.11); and his appeal to the emperor is heard (25.11–12; 26.32). However, neither the trial nor the result of the trial are discussed, but the story returns to a theme that one might consider outmoded: the confrontation with Judaism. The conflict between Paul and the Jews of Jerusalem reaches its climax with the attempted lynching at the Temple (21.30–31) and the conspiracy from which he is saved *in extremis* by the tribune Lysias (23.12–35). Luke's closure of the story of Israel could have been a response to the shut

(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 545–55, see 546–50; T.M. Troftgruben, *A Conclusion Unhindered* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 1–36, and especially H. Omerzu, "Das Schweigen des Lukas. Überlegungen zum offenen Ende der Apostelgeschichte," in F.W. Horn (ed.), *Das Ende des Paulus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 127–56.

⁵ D. Marguerat, "Et quand nous sommes entrés dans Rome." The mystery of the end of the Book of Acts (28:16-31), *RHPR* 73 (1993): 1–21, published in English in D.P. Moessner (ed.), *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1999), 284–304, and in my book *The First Christian Historian*, pp. 205–30.

door of the Temple (21.30). However, it is the Jews once again that Paul addresses as soon as he arrives at the capital of the Roman Empire (28.17a). Therefore, the narrator deliberately frustrates the expectations he has orchestrated to return to a theme that he considers central and that has occupied most of Paul's missionary work since Acts 13.

Second Observation: An Unresolved Issue

The meeting with the Jewish leaders in Rome⁶ takes place in two successive interviews (28.17–22 and 28.23–28). It follows a pattern known since the beginning of Paul's mission (13.13–52) and is repeated like a stereotype throughout his long missionary travels: proclamation to the Jews—division of the assembly between those who accept and refuse—evangelisation to the pagans.⁷ Moreover, the succession of both interviews reproduces the scenario already experienced at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13), with his two meetings and Paul and Barnabas' final declaration sanctioning Jewish hostility towards them: "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles" (13.46). In Rome, it was not hostility that triggered the decision to address the Gentiles, but the division of the Jewish assembly among those that were persuaded and those that did not believe, their "asymphony" (ἀσὺμφωνοί, 28.25a).

Why repeat this familiar scenario, which is included between the beginning (Acts 13) and end (Acts 28) of Paul's mission? This inclusion has value as a summary; it allows the author to address a nagging issue hanging over Paul's mission, but never dealt with again: why does the proclamation of the Gospel not only garner so little attention among the Jews, but rather a growing hostility?⁸ Luke deals with this theological problem, with which early

⁶ Evaluations of the number of Jews living in Rome range from 10,000 to 50,000 (Josephus, *B.J.* 2.80; Suetonius, *Tib.* 36). They mainly lived in the Trastevere district. Decimated by Claudius' expulsion decree in 49 CE, but recomposed by people returning at the beginning of Nero's reign, the Jewish colony was probably fragile when Paul came to Rome (around 60 CE). R. Penna speaks of a "pale and flat" Jewish presence, devoid of centralised organisation and with a low socio-economic level ("Les Juifs à Rome au temps de l'apôtre Paul," *NTS* 28 (1982): 321–47). See also J.B. Frey, "Le judaïsme à Rome aux premiers temps de l'Eglise," *Bib* 12 (1931): 129–56; W. Wiefel, "Die jüdische Gemeinschaft im antiken Rom und die Anfänge des römischen Christentums," *Judaica* 26 (1970): 65–88; H. Lichtenberger, "Jews and Christians in Rome in the Time of Nero: Josephus and Paul in Rome," *ANRW* II.26.3 (1996): 2142–76, especially 2149–61.

⁷ This pattern is repeated at Iconium (14.1–6), Lystra (14.8–20), Thessaloniki (17.1–9), Berea (17.10–14), Corinth (18.1–17)... and Rome (28.17–31).

⁸ With E. Plümacher, "Rom in der Apostelgeschichte," in Plümacher, *Geschichte und Geschichten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 141.

Christianity was largely obsessed, in his own way, meaning as a narrative theologian, with an account that allows him to stage the prophetic oracle of Isaiah 6.9–10.⁹

Third Observation: Thinking About the Announcement and Its Failure

Two speeches are attributed to Paul, the first in a direct style (28.17b–20), where he justifies his status as a prisoner and pleads his loyalty to Judaism, and the second in an indirect style (28.23b), where he preaches to the assembly. Both speeches are characterised by their retrospective and synthetic nature. In the first, Paul summarises what led him to Rome, but the gap between what he says and the earlier account is obvious: the Jews of Jerusalem did not “hand [Paul] over to the Romans” like a prisoner (verse 17c), and the Romans never expressed any intention to “release” him (verse 18a).¹⁰ This re-reading is the means by which the narrator interprets the event, a game of intertextuality that urges Christological echoes upon the reader, with Paul’s legal woes being reconfigured as a replica of the Passion of Jesus.¹¹ This is what the narrator aims to set in readers’ minds.

The synthetic condensation is even stronger in the indirect speech of verse 23: “From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.” βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ is the summary of Jesus’ proclamation,¹² to which is added the Christological dimension (“regarding Jesus”) and the scriptural demonstration focused on all Scripture

⁹ Isaiah 6.9–10 is quoted in Micah 4.12; Matt 13.14–15; Luke 8.10; John 12.40; Rom 11.8; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 12.2.

¹⁰ Rather, it was the Roman garrison of the fortress Antonia that intervened to re-establish order in the Temple of Jerusalem and seized Paul to protect him from the murderous rage of the crowd (21.27–36); no Roman official announced any intention to release Paul, only King Agrippa declared that he could have been set free if he had not appealed to the Emperor (26.32). However, the re-reading of the events in Acts 28 is consistent with the prediction of the prophet Agabus: “This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles” (21.11). Stating that “Luke is counting on his audience to remember what has been said before in the previous few chapters” and that the audience will correct what that must be, B. Witherington misunderstands the process of re-reading that the narrator consciously engages; he reconfigures the events according to how he aims to fix them in his audience’s memory (*The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 798)

¹¹ The echoes of the Passion of Jesus Christ draw inspiration from Luke 9.44; 18.32; 23.4, 15, 22; 24.7. The parallels have been listed by W. Radl, *Paulus und Jesus im lukanischen Doppelwerk* (Bern: Lang, 1975), 258–65.

¹² A. Prieur, *Die Verkündigung der Gottesherrschaft. Exegetische Studien zum lukanischen Verständnis von βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), see 20–83.

(Law and prophets). In 28.31, Paul's predication is circumscribed by the same two entities (the Kingdom of God and Jesus) that assure continuity between his preaching and that of the other apostles (8.12; 28.23); it is defined by two verbs: κηρύσσειν and διδάσκειν, to proclaim and to teach. One could not be more comprehensive and summative. To guess the content, the reader should refer to Paul's sermons punctuating the story starting in Acts 13. But this summative character signals that it is not the content of the announcement that is important here, unlike in previous speeches, but the event of the announcement itself and its effects.¹³ Specifically, it is the public exposure of the announcement and its disappointing reception that are the subject of the reflection.

Fourth Observation: Focusing on the Figure of Paul

Between the beginning and end of the text, there is gradually a perceptible focus on the figure of Paul. The first interview (28.17–22) establishes the status of each interlocutor and their availability for the meeting. On one hand, Paul justifies his appeal to the emperor through opposition to the “Jews” (verse 19a), but demonstrates his good faith by declaring himself a prisoner “for the sake of the hope of Israel” and ensures that he has no charge to bring against his nation (verses 19b–20). Right away, we notice the emphatic ἐγὼ with which Paul begins his speech.¹⁴ The formula ἐλπὶς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, unexplained in the context, synthesises (once again) the argument that Paul developed earlier in his apologetic discourses, dealing with Israel's millenary hope for messianic salvation that took the form of faith in the resurrection of the dead (23.6; 24.15; 26.6–7), but unlike his interlocutors, Paul sees this eschatological promise as fulfilled by Christ's resurrection. Meanwhile, the Jewish leaders attest to their neutrality (verses 21–22): they have received no information about Paul, whether officially (through Judea) or privately; the only thing they know about his “sect” is that it is spoken against everywhere.¹⁵ The

¹³ L.C.A. Alexander, “Reading Luke-Acts from Back to Front,” in Alexander (ed.), *Acts in its Ancient Literary Context* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 216–18.

¹⁴ The apostrophe ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί appears frequently in Acts to express the orator's solidarity with his audience (1.16; 2.29, 37; 7.2, 26; 13.15, 26, 38; 15.7, 13; 22.1; 23.1); this is the sole instance where it is preceded by an ἐγὼ in emphatic position (compare with 23.1 where ἐγὼ follows!).

¹⁵ ἀντιλέγειν is only used in Acts for the Jewish protest against the Gospel (4.14; 13.45; 28.19, 22). The historical plausibility of Jewish ignorance of the Christian “sect” has been put into question. It has been suggested that Luke wanted to make Paul the first missionary of Rome (G. Lüdemann, *Das frühe Christentum nach den Traditionen der Apostelgeschichte* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1987], 273; but that is to forget 28.15!) or that the interlocutors feigned ignorance (C. Gempf, “Luke's Story of Paul's Reception in Rome,” in P. Oakes [ed.], *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002], 42–66, especially 54–59). However, I believe that a) the

use of the term αἵρεσις, in its neutral sense of a party in the same way as the Sadducees and the Pharisees,¹⁶ indicates that they consider the controversy surrounding the Pauline communities to be an internal debate within Judaism. At the end of this first interview, both parties have demonstrated their mutual goodwill.

In the second interview (28.18–28), Paul takes the dominant position, shifting from an apology of someone accused to the posture of a judge. His commitment to scriptural argumentation with the Jewish group is impressive, lasting from morning to evening (verse 23). Then, before the group's shared reaction, he joins his voice to that of the Spirit speaking through the prophet Isaiah. It has not been discussed much that if Luke abbreviates the quotation of Isaiah 6.9–10 in his gospel (Luke 8.10 diff. Mark 4.12) to reserve it for this solemn occasion of Paul's last words in Acts, he is the only one in the New Testament to cite it with its introduction: "Go to this people and say" (verse 26a). Is this a concern about scriptural accuracy? I rather think that the beginning of the citation is significant in Luke's eyes, because Paul may thereby be aligned with the mandate given to the prophet. Under the auspices of the Holy Spirit, a similar situation of failed preaching establishes continuity between these emissaries of God. Welding the present to the past, the drama of the hardening hearts of Israel places the Christian preacher on the prophet's side. Thus, Paul becomes the spokesman – he does not speak himself, but *makes the prophet speak* – for a theological reading of the entire assembly of Israel's failure to have faith in its Messiah, with this failure being understood as an integral part of God's plan. It therefore allows Paul to prophesy that the Gentiles will welcome "this salvation of God" sent to them (verse 28). The final picture (verses 30–31) consecrates the implementation of this programme¹⁷ by the image of Paul as the ideal pastor, welcoming in his evangelisation "all who came to him" – a figure of the universality of his mission, with no indication in the text that Jews were excluded. In Luke's eyes, Israel has not lost its right to salvation, but only its priority in salvation history.¹⁸

stress is placed on the global nature of the protest (πανταχοῦ), participating in the summative dimension of the scene; b) the narrator is especially concerned about constructing a benevolent neutrality among Paul's audience; and c) the silence about the Christians of Rome may have another historical explanation (see below, pp. 321–23).

¹⁶ See 5.17; 15.5; 26.5. Application to Christianity in 24.5, 14.

¹⁷ To fail to perceive the link between verse 28 and verses 30–31 is to trivialise the role of the final scene and reduce it to a "fast beiläufig anmutenden Notiz" (according to G. Wasserberg, *Aus Israels Mitte – Heil für die Welt* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998], 112).

¹⁸ M. Wolter, "Israels Zukunft und die Parusieerwartung bei Lukas," in *Eschatologie und Schöpfung. Festschrift E. Grässer* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 405–26, especially 421; S. Buttica, *L'identité de l'Eglise dans les Actes des apôtres* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 414–31.

Paul is therefore portrayed successively as an innocent witness loyal to Israel, as the actor of a final symbolic attempt to convince, as the interpreter of the great failure of the mission to the Jews, as a prophet of the success of the mission to the Gentiles, and as the agent of the universal openness of evangelisation.¹⁹

To sum up, the conclusion of Acts does not present Paul's last, desperate attempt to convince a Jewish assembly, but it does build a typical situation where the narrator theologically evaluates the major failure of the mission to the Jews. In this sense, it is less about a final stage of the Pauline mission than an evaluative discourse on the event of the announcement and its effects, a meta-reflection,²⁰ or if one prefers an evaluative account of what happens in Acts 13–28. The figure of Paul emerges in his decisive role as the mediator of a theological word by interpreting the failure as part of a divine design and legitimizing the unreserved openness of the mission.

B. Literary Criteria of a Narrative Closure

The end of a literary work is a strategic place where the author addresses a final word to his readers and wraps up the story world. What are the criteria of composition for identifying the conclusion of a narrative?

Marianna Torgovnick speaks of narrative closure as “retrospective patterning,”²¹ leading the reader back to the story to ensure real comprehension. According to Torgovnick, this retrospective function is guaranteed by two literary devices: circularity and parallelism. By circularity, it must be understood that the end of a work reminds readers of the beginning and the beginning foreshadows the end (frame technique). Parallelism consists of the recur-

¹⁹ I do not subscribe to the thesis that “Luke keeps the emphasis on the message that Paul preaches, not its human mediator” (M.L. Skinner, *Locating Paul: Places of Custody as Narrative Settings in Acts 21–28* [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003], 169; also H.J. Hauser, *Strukturen der Abschlusserzählung der Apostelgeschichte* [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979], 136–40). The alternative is not correct: the opening of the universal Gospel finds its legitimacy in the figure of Paul.

²⁰ In my view, this term, applied by E.S. Malbon to the narrative prologue, seems to correspond suitably to this other end of the story, which is the conclusion (“Ending at the Beginning: A Response,” in D.E. Smith [ed.], *How Gospels Begin* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991], 184).

²¹ M. Torgovnick, *Closure in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 5: “Endings enable an informed definition of a work’s ‘geometry’ and set into motion the process of retrospective rather than speculative thinking necessary to discern it – the process of ‘retrospective patterning’. ...the process of looking back over events and interpreting them in light of ‘how things turned out.’” R.C. Tannehill was the first to apply the typology of narrative closure to the conclusion of Acts (*The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, II [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990], 353–54).

rence of structural patterns throughout the work and their final repetition at the end. Two other criteria may be added:²² the fulfilment of expectations and the representative scene. The fulfilment of expectations occurs when the ending's events meet specific expectations or predictions raised by the narrative. When that is not the case, Torgovnick speaks of incompleteness. The representative scene crystallises motifs that play heavily throughout the narrative. To these four criteria is added a final function of narrative closure: organising the transition from the story world to the world of the reader.

My intention is to apply these four criteria to Acts 28.16–31: circularity, parallelism, (in)completion, and representative scene. This entails verifying if these sixteen verses were designed by Luke as a conclusion to his two-fold work. It shall therefore be possible to establish how Luke ends his narrative image of Paul in order to then ask why he does not end it differently. The role of the transition to the world of the reader is particularly significant. The ending of Acts indeed serves as a narrative bridge between the world of the apostles and of Paul and the world of the readers: “how does Luke ease the reader's transition back to the word outside the text?”²³

C. Acts 28.16–31: An Open End

I. *Circularity: The Memory of Beginnings*

Credit must be given to Jacques Dupont for being the first to show, in an illuminating article in 1979, and in an exemplary fashion, that Acts 28.16–31 ends with a literary game that includes both Acts and the two-fold work of Luke in the Pauline mission.²⁴ Without using this conceptuality, he thereby highlighted the circularity of Lukan writing. His conclusions, widely approved in the research, no longer need to be demonstrated, so I shall limit myself to recalling them briefly.²⁵

²² With T.M. Troftgruben, *A Conclusion Unhindered*, 37–60, especially 50–51.

²³ L.C.A. Alexander, “Reading Luke-Acts from Back to Front,” in Alexander (ed.), *Acts in its Ancient Literary Context* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 227; see also U.E. Eisen, *Die Poetik der Apostelgeschichte. Eine narratologische Studie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2006), 205.

²⁴ J. Dupont, “La conclusion of Actes et son rapport à l'ensemble de l'ouvrage de Luc,” in J. Kremer (ed.), *Les Actes des Apôtres. Traditions, rédaction, théologie* (Gembloux/Leuven: Duculot/Leuven University Press, 1979), 359–404, also taken up in J. Dupont, *Nouvelles études sur les Actes des Apôtres* (Paris: Cerf, 1984), 455–511; for the following, see 483–511.

²⁵ A reminder of these conclusions may be found in the recent book of C.B. Puskas, *The Conclusion of Luke-Acts: The Significance of Acts 28,16–31* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2009), 64–105.

The circularity with the beginning of the Pauline mission has been mentioned above: Paul's homily at Antioch of Pisidia (13.13–41) sets off the first interview, during which members of the synagogue express their interest and Paul and Barnabas to return on the next Sabbath (13.42–43), and a second interview triggers Jewish hostility in view of “almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord” (13.44). The outcome is a narrowly favourable and more widely hostile response from the synagogue, followed by the evangelists' decision to turn to the Gentiles “since you...judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life” (13.46). This transfer of the mission receives the scriptural support of Isaiah 49.6, which indicates the mandate to “bring salvation to the ends of the earth” (13.47). The constellation of four elements (the double interview, the shared reaction, the link between Jewish rejection and the opening of the Gospel to the Gentiles and the universal extension of salvation) is recomposed in 28.16–21.

The circularity with the beginning of Acts touches on the theme of the βασιλεία, which is the subject of the catechesis of the Risen to his disciples (Acts 1.3; see 1.6). Like Philip before him (8.12), Paul places his teaching in continuity with the Master (14.22; 19.8; 20.25; 28.23–31). Dupont adds to this terminological echo the universalist references of Peter's first two missionary speeches (2.39: the promise “for all who are far away”; 3.25: Abraham's blessing for “all the families of the earth”), in anticipation of 28.28.

The circularity with the whole narrative of Luke-Acts taken together concerns the beginning of the gospel of Luke. The neutral term σωτήριον, a rarity from the Septuagint, only appears four times in the New Testament, three of which occur in Luke-Acts: Luke 2.30 and 3.6 and Acts 28.28. Luke 2.30 is particularly interesting; it deals with Simeon's declaration to the Temple (“my eyes have seen your salvation”), which involves two predictions that receive ultimate confirmation at the end of Acts: this salvation is a “light for revelation to the Gentiles” and will cause “the falling and the rising of many in Israel” (Luke 2.32–34).²⁶ The extension of salvation to non-Jews and the division of Israel before Christ are at the heart of Paul's last words in Acts. It is not irrelevant to notice the vocabulary of the vision in Luke 2 and Acts 28: these are the eyes of Simeon that see salvation (εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου, Luke 2.30), while the oracle of Isaiah 6 reproaches Israel because “they have shut their eyes, so that they might not look with their eyes” (τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμυσαν μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, Acts 28.27, notice the redundancy of the term ὀφθαλμός). The second occurrence of σωτήριον (Luke 3.6) entails

²⁶ F. Vouga has once again shown the programmatic function of Simeon's prediction, which hangs over Luke's entire two-fold work: “La fin des Actes comme accomplissement du programme théologique de Luc,” in *Raconter, interpréter, annoncer. Parcours de Nouveau Testament. Mélanges D. Marguerat* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2003), 314–23, especially 315–17.

both the vocabulary of seeing and the universal dimension at the same time; it is a quote from Isaiah 40.5: “and all people shall see [the salvation of God] together.” Moreover, the verb ἀντιλέγειν, *to contradict*, which appears twice in Acts 28 to signify Jewish resistance to Christian faith (28.19a–22b), only occurs two other times in Luke’s writing: in the prophecy of Simeon (Luke 2.34: σημεῖον ἀντιλεγόμενον) and in the episode in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13.45). This terminological network signifies the narrator’s willingness to announce from the outset the themes that will be unfolded in his account and repeated at its end; it is also an invitation to reread the account “from back to front” to retrospectively identify the consistency and unity of the work.²⁷ To these two mentions of Luke 2–3, Dupont adds Jesus’ programmatic sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4.16–30), noting that the prophet was rejected in his homeland (Luke 4.24–27).

On one hand, this triple circularity undoubtedly attests that Acts 28.16–31 represents the literary completion of Luke’s account. On the other hand, it shows that the choice of the theme of the relationship to Israel is a strategy of the narrator, returning at the end to the motif that he affixed at the outset of his work: the drama of Israel’s division before the salvation that God has prepared for it (Luke 2.31).

II. A Broken Parallelism

The second criterion of narrative closure, parallelism, is found first in the reduplication in Rome of the scenario of the two interviews in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13) that we have seen above. A second motif establishes a parallelism with the declaration that they will turn to the Gentiles, which appears three times over the course of the Pauline mission: in Antioch of Pisidia (“It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles” [13.46]); in Corinth (“Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles” [18.6]); and in Rome (“Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen” [28.28]). Asia Minor–Greece–Italy: the same decision to open the Gospel to the Gentiles rings out in all three fields of Paul’s mission after the Jews reject it. From Antioch to Corinth, we can see a graduation in effect: Paul and Barnabas leave Antioch by ritually shaking the dust off their feet in protest against those that drove them out of the region, thereby denying any link with them (13.51). In Corinth, Paul, exasperated by the Jews’ opposi-

²⁷ Such is the title of the stimulating study by L.C.A. Alexander, “Reading Luke-Acts from Back to Front,” in particular, see 224–26. In the same way, I have argued for the idea that the unity of Luke-Acts arises precisely in the act of reading and that discerning it is a task that falls upon the reader: “Luc-Actes: une unité à construire,” in J. Verheyden (ed.), *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 57–81.

tion, ritually shakes his clothing and leaves to teach a God-fearing man, Titius Justus, whose house is next door to the synagogue (18.7). But each time that Paul changes cities, he begins by preaching at the synagogue – thus Luke’s narrative translation of Paul’s saying “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1.16). And in Rome?

Robert Tannehill has defended the idea that after Acts 28, like after Antioch and Corinth, the scenario of Jewish priority would be repeated in the Pauline mission.²⁸ But this is where the parallelism breaks down. For after Antioch and Corinth, Rome presents a special case: a) we are at the end of Acts in a synthetic and recapitulative sequence, where the words have final weight; b) Paul faces the reputation of a sect that is not merely spoken against locally, but “everywhere” (28.22b); c) Paul, the Holy Spirit, and Isaiah are unanimous in judging the hardening heart of Israel; d) the sermon welcoming the Gentiles is carried out in Paul’s unlimited reception (28.30): πάντα certainly does not exclude the Jews, but the succession of verse 28 to verse 30 favours the reception of non-Jews. In other words, the third occurrence of the orientation towards the Gentiles receives a definitive value at the end of Acts that marks the end of an epoch and the end of Israel’s priority in salvation history.²⁹ Therefore, Luke’s Christianity, for which the text was written, sees its unconditional evangelisation of non-Jews as legitimate.

III. The (In)completion of the End

The end of Acts is notoriously incomplete on several levels. The first incomplete aspect regards Paul’s fate: how will he be judged and what will be the outcome of the trial? A second incompleteness concerns the Risen’s mandate to the apostles to be his “witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (1.8). When and how will the ἐσχάτον τῆς γῆς be achieved? A third incompleteness has to do with the final fate of Israel: have the hearts of the historical people of Israel hardened for good, or will they be saved in the end, as Paul hopes in Romans 11.26? Therefore, the looped thematic ending of Luke-Acts gives a three-fold feeling of incompleteness.

I have shown elsewhere that the incompleteness of a historiographical work is a phenomenon that, if not common, is at least familiar in Antiquity.³⁰

²⁸ *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, II (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 350–52.

²⁹ M. Wolter, “Das lukanische Doppelwerk als Epochengeschichte,” in *Die Apostelgeschichte und die hellenistische Geschichtsschreibung. Festschrift E. Plümacher* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 253–84, especially 266–68.

³⁰ D. Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 210–16. The literary evidence has been confirmed and extended by R. Pervo, *Acts*, 695–96 and T.M. Troftgruben, *A Conclusion Unhindered*, 61–113. A.D. Baum does not deny the existence of open ends, but refuses to see a literary device here (“Rhetorik des Schweigens”? Der unvollständige

The most prominent examples of this are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, where we cannot ignore the staggering influence that Homeric literature had on Greco-Roman culture. In Greek historiography, we can cite the end of Herodotus' *Histories* (9.114–20) and the unfinished ending of Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*. In epic literature: Virgil's *Aenid* (12.950–52). In fiction: the novel Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (11.30). The same can be said of Jewish historiography with 2 Kings 25.27–30, 2 Chronicles 36.23, and 2 Maccabees 15.37.³¹ The best evidence of this feeling of incompleteness is the writing at the end of the 2nd century CE of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* that relates the Roman martyrdom of Peter and Paul (*Acts of Paul* 14).

Concerning Paul's fate, Luke writes that the time when Paul evangelises in his home in Rome amounts to "two whole years" (28.30a). *διετία* indicates a closed period, which was entirely devoted to preaching.³² Haenchen's conclusion upholds its validity: "wer so schreibt, weiss (1), dass dann eine Änderung eintrat, und (2), worin sie bestand."³³ What clues does the account give as to what follows the events? Does the narrator lead the reader to a projection of Paul's future as a prisoner? The signs are there, but are ambiguous. On one hand, Paul's innocence from the standpoint of Roman law is affirmed several times by the tribune Lysias (23.29), by the procurator Festus (25.25), by King Agrippa (26.31), and by Paul himself in Rome (28.18). On the other hand, the deadly hostility of the authorities in Jerusalem towards Paul does not subside (23.10; 23.12–15; 24.1–8; 25.2–3) and the local Roman authorities show no haste to bring Paul to justice (24.26–27; 25.1–9). This is why some scholars think that the account leads to Paul's release at the end of a fair trial, while others are more pessimistic.³⁴ In reality, the indications in the nar-

Schluss der Apostelgeschichte [Act 28,30–31] im Licht antiker Literaturtheorie und historiographischer Praxis," *EThL* 88 [2012]: 95–128).

³¹ P. Davies, "The Ending of Acts," *ET* 94 (1982–83), 334–35; H Lichtenberger, "The Untold End. 2 Macchabees and Acts," in *Empsychoi Logoi—Religious Innovations in Antiquity. Studies in Honour of P.W. van der Horst* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 385–403.

³² *διετία* is found in Hellenic literature as a term for legal content, indicating the duration of a contract. The hypothesis that it is a deadline after which someone facing an unsubstantiated accusation is released, involving Paul's release after two years, is anachronistic because it is based on later documents. D.L. Mealand thinks instead that it is the duration of the contract to rent Paul's housing ("The Close of Acts and its Hellenistic Vocabulary," *NTS* 36 [1990]: 583–97, especially 587–89).

³³ E. Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 647.

³⁴ For example, I.H. Marshall thinks that Paul's declarations of innocence (see 23.29) foretell his release by Rome (*The Acts of the Apostles* [Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1980], 371), while H. Conzelmann thinks that the farewell speech in 20.17–35 leaves no doubt about the fatal outcome (*Die Apostelgeschichte* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1963], 150). For J. Jervell, the issue of the outcome is not decisive, for Luke "hat alles gesagt,

rative only allow for one conclusion: Paul may have been judged and condemned, but it was unlawful because he was innocent. Only an outside historical source could provide unambiguous information.

With respect to the mandate to bear witness to the Risen to the ends of the earth (1.8), Rome is not the ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς. This expression, originally from the Septuagint, never designates the capital of the empire (see Isaiah 8.9; 48.20; 49.6; 62.11). It returns in Acts 13.47, appealed by Isaiah 49.6 (LXX). Here, it not only designates a specific location, but the infinite reach of the Gospel. Rather, with its networks of roads converging on its capital like a spider web, the Roman Empire viewed Rome as the centre of the world.³⁵ In short, read retrospectively from 1.8, the conclusion of Acts opens what might be called a geographical eschatology whose message is that the mission is in progress. Paul is a prisoner in Rome for two years, but the evangelisation continues to the ends of the earth. The reader is drawn into the unfinished dynamics of the testimony.³⁶

The matter of the ultimate fate of Israel according to Luke has occupied exegesis since the 1970s. With no intention here to open the whole debate,³⁷ I confine myself to two considerations related to these verses. First, the narrator has deliberately painted an ambivalent picture of the Jewish attitude to Paul's preaching: the Roman delegation is not unanimous in its rejection, but divided (28.24–25). When Paul invokes Isaiah 6.9–10, it is to signify the refusal to have gathered *all* of Israel behind the “hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors, a promise that our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly

was er sagen wollte” (*Die Apostelgeschichte* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998], 630).

³⁵ A contrary opinion has been put forward by D.P. Moessner, which, according to others, is based on the sole mention in *Psalms of Solomon* 8.15 to identify Rome by the encrypted designation of ἀπ' ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς and thinks as a result that the arrival in Rome carries out the mandate of 1.8 (“‘Completed End(s)ings’ of Historiographical Narrative: Diodorus Siculus and the End(ing) of Acts,” in *Die Apostelgeschichte und die hellenistische Geschichtsschreibung. Festschrift E. Plümacher* [Leiden: Brill, 2004], 194–221, especially 220–21).

³⁶ Noting this openness in the story, R.F. O’Toole asserts: “Luke cleverly leaves to his reader’s imagination how this was going to be achieved” (“The Christian Mission and the Jews at the End of Acts of the Apostles,” in J.N. Aletti and J.L. Ska (eds.), *Biblical Exegesis in Progress. Old and New Testament Essays* [Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2009], 371–96, citation on 391). It seems to me that, rather than a freedom of imagination, the “we” that includes Theophilus in the prologue of Luke (Luke 1.1–4) is invited to imitate. In the same way: W.F. Brosend, “The Means of Absent Ends,” in B. Witherington (ed.), *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 348–62; J. Schröter, “Paulus als Modell christlicher Zeugenschaft,” in D. Marguerat (ed.), *Reception of Paulinism in Acts/Réception du paulinisme dans les Actes des apôtres* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 53–80, especially 78–80.

³⁷ See Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 129–54. More recently, Buttica, *L’identité de l’Eglise dans les Actes des apôtres*, 1–65.

worship day and night” (26.6–7).³⁸ The drama already predicted by Simeon is of a divided Israel (2.34). Second, Luke is a narrative theologian and not a systematic thinker. In my view, he does not express a specific idea about the future of Israel in salvation history.³⁹ Luke is not the Paul of Romans 9–11, although we should not frontally oppose these two theological visions.⁴⁰ It is significant, however, that at the end of Acts, Israel is not under a curse (the prophetic oracle of Isaiah 6 does not serve this role) and the church does not adorn itself with the theological attributes of the people of Abraham.⁴¹

IV. Representative Scene: Back to the Reader’s World

The end of a literary work is the strategic moment when the readers break with the story world to return to their own world. What final image do they take away with them? Regarding the end of Acts, there is no room for doubt: the last image imprinted in the reader’s mind is Paul the Evangelist welcom-

³⁸ D.W. Pao is right to oppose the division of the Jewish delegation of Rome to the constantly highlighted unity of the church in Acts, but he wrongly equates the division to a global rejection by Israel: “Disagreement among the Jews in Acts 28,” in *Early Christian Voices. Essays in Honor of F. Bovon* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 109–18. Verse 29, relating the departure of the Jews, is an anti-Jewish gloss inserted into the Alexandrian text.

³⁹ V. Fusco has used Luke 13.34–35; 12.24 and Acts 3.21 to uphold the idea of final salvation promised to Israel in Lukan thought (“Luke-Acts and the Future of Israel,” *NT 38* [1996]: 1–17). F. Bovon, followed by M. Karrer, proposes reading the final syntagm of Isaiah 6.9–10 καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτοὺς (Acts 28.27d) as a non-dependent future indicative of μήποτε (28.27c), announcing the restoration of Israel’s salvation; this suggestion is unfortunately highly improbable from the syntactic point of view (F. Bovon, “Il a bien parlé à vos pères, le Saint-Esprit, par le prophète Esaïe” [Actes 28,25], in Bovon, *L’oeuvre de Luc* [Paris: Cerf, 1987], 145–53, especially 150; also M. Karrer, “Und ich werde sie heilen.” Das Verstockungsmotiv aus Jes 6,9f in App 28,26f,” in *Kirche und Volk Gottes. Festschrift J. Roloff* [Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000], 255–71).

⁴⁰ Three recent contributions attempt to overcome the traditional opposition between Lukan and Pauline positions on the historical fate and blessings of Israel by showing how they both take note of the Jews’ differentiated response to the Gospel, and how Luke manages the Pauline heritage in a situation of advanced breakdown with the Synagogue: S. Buttica, “‘Dieu a-t-il rejeté son peuple?’ (Rm 11,1). Le destin d’Israël de Paul aux Actes des apôtres. Gestion narrative d’un héritage théologique,” in D. Marguerat (ed.), *Reception of Paulinism in Acts/Réception du paulinisme dans les Actes des apôtres* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 207–25; E.E. Popkes, “Die letzten Worte des lukanischen Paulus: Zur Bedeutung von Act 28,25–28 für das Paulusbild der Apostelgeschichte,” in J. Frey, C.K. Rothschild, J. Schröter (eds.), *Die Apostelgeschichte im Kontext antiker und frühchristlicher Historiographie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 605–25; K. Litwak, “One or Two Views of Judaism. Paul in Acts 28 and Romans 11 on Jewish Unbelief,” *TynBul 57* (2006): 229–49.

⁴¹ The Church in Acts is not a “new Israel.” Highlighted by R. von Bendemann, “Paulus und Israel in der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas,” in *Ja und nein. Festschrift W. Schrage* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1998), 291–303.

ing “all those who came to him” for a proclamation-teaching whose content recapitulates the βασιλεία and the Lord Jesus Christ (20.30–31). This final picture is composed with the precision of a Japanese miniature, where each detail is significant.

Firstly, the verb tenses. The imperfect tense of the main verbs ἐνέμεινεν and ἀπεδέχετο (verse 30), followed by the two participles κηρύσσων and διδάσκων (verse 31), indicate that we are dealing with a summary. This type of editorial notice created by Luke serves to describe a sustainable and stable state; the summary aims at permanence rather than the event. Furthermore, the sole theme of Luke’s summaries is the growth of the Word.⁴² In this kind of suspension of narrative time, the author offers readers a picture and calls on them to appreciate its exemplarity and permanence. One could argue that the time involved in the evangelising activity is limited to the διετία, two years (verse 30a). But we note that the longest periods of the Pauline mission in Acts are one year and a half in Corinth (18.11), two years imprisoned in Caesarea (24.27), and two years and three months in Ephesus (19.8, 10). On this scale, two years is a long time in the Lukan biography of Paul.

Secondly, the location. Paul’s accommodation is the subject of three successive designations: καθ’ ἑαυτὸν (“live by himself” verse 16), ξενία (“guest lodge” verse 23), μίσθωμα (“rented lodging” verse 30). I do not think that these are three different places;⁴³ as usual, Luke likes to vary his terms to describe the same thing, stressing a different characteristic each time: the fact that he enjoys personal lodging despite the military guard when he arrives in Rome (verse 16), the welcome he extends to the Jewish delegation fleshed out in the second interview (verse 23), and his financial independence during his evangelistic activity (verse 30). This device corresponds to the liberal legal statute of *custodia militaris*.⁴⁴ The most significant thing to note is that the last location mentioned in Acts is a house. This site ends the great transfer of Christianity narrated by Luke: from the Temple to the home. As it gradually distinguishes itself from Judaism, Christian identity is recomposed without Temple and without synagogue, but in the social space of the house where

⁴² See 2.42–47; 4.32–35; 5.12–16; 6.7; 9.31; 12.24; 16.5; 19:0.

⁴³ D.L. Mealand has demonstrated that ἐν ἰδίῳ μισθώματι (28.30) must not be translated as “at his own expense,” but designates accommodations rented at his own expense (“The Close of Acts and its Hellenistic Vocabulary,” 583–87). Eisen (*Die Poetik der Apostelgeschichte*, 215) mistakenly believes that the different designations refer to different housing units.

⁴⁴ H.W. Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 179–81. B. Rapske studies the conditions of Paul’s imprisonment in Rome in detail and situates the rented housing in the vicinity of the *Castra Praetoria* (*The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, vol. 3: *Paul in Roman Custody* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 177–82 and 227–42).

groups of believers gather.⁴⁵ This simultaneously neutral and intimate place is able to welcome “everyone,” whether of Jewish or Greco-Roman religious origin. Rome and the home represent two places (the first geographical, the second social), from which Christianity will spread thereafter. Paul’s location has no value as an anecdote, but it is paradigmatic; the rich language used to describe it is an indisputable sign of that.

Thirdly, the last four words of Acts describe Paul’s behaviour. He acts with total freedom of speech (μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας) and without constraint (ἀκωλύτως). The παρρησία is the main quality of the witnesses of Christ, whether referring to the apostles or to Paul himself. The term παρρησία expresses both the freedom of speech and the audacity to speak.⁴⁶ In literature, the adverb ἀκωλύτως, a *hapax legomenon*, is used to mean a lack of hindrance, untrammelled (ἀ-κωλύω). It is versatile, since it covers both political and religious contexts. It is therefore useless to view the Lukan use of it exclusively as an apology for the liberal prison conditions offered by the Roman government (in the legal sense) or an assertion on the irrepressible freedom of the Word (in the theological sense).⁴⁷ Both dimensions are present in the word, which conserves a general meaning, even if one is tempted to see the conditions of the second in the first.

In summary, the last two verses of Acts were too finely crafted to be only a deposit of information gathered by the author. The last image of Paul left to readers has paradigmatic value for their present. Paul is portrayed as the icon of the universal mission, which may be sent out unfettered because it has theologically overcome the drama of the stubbornness of Israel. Henceforth, Paul begins and legitimises this mission as open to all. The Pastoral Epistles establish Paul as doctor of the church, the model minister and the denouncer of heresies. Acts bestows on Paul the status of exemplary shepherd, father of the mission and figurehead of evangelisation to the ends of the earth. In this re-

⁴⁵ See my “From Temple to Home according to Luke-Acts”, in *Paul in Acts and Paul in His Letters* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 106–29.

⁴⁶ παρρησία is found five times in Acts (2.29; 4.13, 29, 31; 28.31), the verb παρρησιάζεσθαι being specific to Acts (9.27, 28; 13.46; 14.3; 18.26; 19.8; 26.26). This concept is Greek and not Hebraic. It is defined in Luke on one hand (in a political sense) by speaking frankly and courageously in public, but may also be perceived as effrontery by the audience. On the other hand, it is defined (in a theological sense) by the believer’s trusting behaviour before God. As a theologian, the author knows that the boldness of Christian missionaries does not come from their oratorical skills (4.13), but is a gift that the community asks of God (4.29) and receives from Him (4.31).

⁴⁷ Tajra retains the legal sense of Roman tolerance (*The Trial of St. Paul*, 192–93; also Tajra, *The Martyrdom of St. Paul* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994], 50–51), whereas Hauser holds to the theological sense (*Strukturen der Abschlusserzählung der Apostelgeschichte*, 146). 2 Timothy 2.9 corresponds to our verse: “...that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained (οὐ δέδετα).”

spect, we may speak of a triumphalist ending: not the triumph of a man (Paul is a prisoner), but the triumph of the Word whose expansion cannot be restrained by anything. Bengel is right to say: *Victoria Verbi Dei. Paulus Romae, apex evangelii, Actorum finis*.⁴⁸

If what Luke *wanted* to say has gained clarity, it remains to be seen whether it is possible to clarify what he was *unable* or *unwilling* to say about Paul's end. Failing to rely on Luke's narrative, we are forced to turn to historical hypotheses.

D. Did Luke Want to Silence Paul's End?

I assume that the execution of Paul in Rome – after one or two incarcerations, which is not of interest here – is sufficiently evidenced in the writings of the 2nd century CE and that the early veneration of his martyrdom is supported by enough archaeological evidence for us to consider his violent end as a reasonable historical hypothesis. Based on this assumption, scholars have tried to explain Luke's silence on Paul's death as owing to historical or literary reasons.

I. A Historical Cause?

Oddly, old assumptions about historical criticism resurface today. The fanciful idea that Luke had reached the end of his scroll and lacked space to continue, or that his account of Paul's death had been censured by copyists, may certainly be discarded. However, the hypothesis that Luke had finished his work before Paul was freed,⁴⁹ or the theory that he was waiting to describe his end in a third volume, have recently been taken back up. The first assumes that Acts was written by a companion of Paul and at a very early date (beginning of the 60s CE), but the fact that the entire work of Luke and the writing of his Gospel date from 70 CE, and not before the composition of Mark's text, argues against such an early date for Acts. The current research trend aims to

⁴⁸ J.A. Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (London, 1862), 489 (quoted by C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2 [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998], 1253). Pace R.C. Tannehill, Acts does not end as a "tragic story": the book does not end with an observation of the hardened heart of Israel, but with an integration of this refusal of God's plan and with the permanent image of the unstoppable rise of the Word ("Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story," *JBL* 104 [1985], 69–85).

⁴⁹ This hypothesis was first argued by Eusebius of Caesarea: "it is probable that Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles at that time, continuing his history down to the period when he was with Paul" (*Ecccl. hist.* II.22.6). Jerome supports this idea: "Luke wrote ... a history which extends to the second year of Paul's sojourn at Rome, that is to the fourth year of Nero, from which we learn that the book was composed in that same city" (*Vir. ill.* 7.2).

move it backward rather than forward.⁵⁰ The hypothesis of a third book by Luke, proposed by Spitta in 1891 and argued by Zahn in 1917,⁵¹ may be viewed as obsolete after the hardly contestable demonstration that Acts 28.16–31 was planned to bring a literary and theological conclusion to both Acts and to Luke-Acts as a whole. Besides, what would have been the content of this third book? A second historical theory, that of Paul's mission to Spain, could provide a documentary foundation for this alleged third book. But other than the fact that we are piling supposition upon supposition here, abandoning the terrain of reasonable historical thought, it remains to be explained why, contrary to his proven habit, the author of Luke did not include any prolepsis on Paul's future activity (other than the foreshadowing of his death in Acts 20.25). In fact, Acts has no equivalent to Romans 15.28.

The historical approach receives fresh impetus with the thesis of Heike Omerzu, according to which Luke lacked sufficient historical information to discuss the outcome of the Roman trial and Paul's fate, as this informational shortcoming alone would explain the author's silence.⁵² This thesis rests on a close observation of the text; Omerzu notes that, unlike the sequence devoted to Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem and Caesarea (Acts 21–26), where the vocabulary is technical and precise, Luke provides no specific indications about the sojourn in Rome beyond what is told in verses 16, 23, and 30–31 on the conditions and duration of Paul's detention. According to her, Luke's sources of information end in chapter 26 of Acts; the author knows that Paul has been executed under Nero, but he does not relate it due to a lack of documentary evidence.⁵³ That the sources gathered by the author may have been limited to the material conditions of Paul's imprisonment in Rome and contained nothing about the apostle's end is theoretically possible, but unlikely.

⁵⁰ See R.I. Pervo, *Dating Acts* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2006).

⁵¹ T. Zahn, "Das Dritte Buch des Lukas," *NKZ* 28 (1917): 373–95; Zahn, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lucas. Erste Hälfte: Kap. 1–12* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1922), 16–18. This thesis was taken up again by J. Winandy, "La finale des Actes: histoire ou théologie," *ETHL* 73 (1997): 103–06 and Baum, "Rhetorik des Schweigens?" 121–26.

⁵² Omerzu, "Das Schweigen des Lukas," 151–56. J. Taylor supported the same thesis, but in the name of critiquing the sources; he thought that by the "travel journal" ending in 28.16 with the halt of the first "we-sequence," the author lacked any further information. "Ayant amené Paul à Rome, l'auteur du Journal n'avait plus aucune raison d'écrire." (*Les Actes des deux apôtres VI. Commentaire historique [Act. 18,23–28,31]* [Paris: Gabalda, 1996], 272–74, quotation at 273).

⁵³ "Als gesichert kann mehr oder weniger nur gelten, dass Paulus in Rom unter Nero das Martyrium erlitten hat; vermutlich ist er durch das Schwert gestorben. ... Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen, dass Lukas für den Romaufenthalt nicht mehr als das in den VV. 16.23.30f verarbeitete Material vorgelegen haben wird, also eine Notiz über eine erleichterte Haftform in einer angemieteten Unterkunft für die Dauer von zwei Jahren. Er hat hingegen keine Kenntnis über eine Spanienreise und eine erneute Gefangenschaft besessen" ("Das Schweigen des Lukas," 155–56).

But what seems beyond any historical plausibility is that idea that Luke, a great admirer of Paul that magnifies his memory in his work, knew nothing about the death of his hero. How are we to imagine that a Christianity subsisting on the apostle's legacy was totally ignorant of how its hero had ended in the 80s–90s CE when the author penned his work? And how are we supposed to believe that Luke, who in the beginning of his Gospel states his desire to investigate “everything carefully from the very first” (Luke 1.3), fell short in researching such a momentous event? In my opinion, we must look elsewhere for a cause that would avoid the desperate solution of Paul's death being consigned to oblivion, including among the movement that subsists on his legacy and maintains it.

II. An Apologetic Reason?

In his reading of Acts as an *apologia pro ecclesia*,⁵⁴ Haenchen attributes to Luke the desire to avoid concluding his work by mentioning an execution that would do no honour to imperial justice. Accordingly, Luke tends to spare the image of the *imperium romanum* and to protect it by covering up a judicial process that does not serve the interests of Christianity. It is true that Luke does not hide his admiration for imperial society, its culture, its network of roads, and its system of justice. In Jerusalem, it is the Roman cohort that saves Paul from being lynched and from a denial of justice (21.30–23.35). Nevertheless, Luke is no sectarian of the *imperium*. He shows that the proconsul Gallio does not indict Paul because he is not interested in Jewish issues and remains passive before the violence suffered (18.14–17). The venality of Festus is not concealed either (24.26–27). The dysfunctions of the Roman legal system do not escape him. The apologetic dimension of his work is not enough to explain his silence.

III. A Literary Reason?

Another explanation that has often been asserted to explain Luke's silence on Paul's end relates to Acts' literary genre. Luke, it is said here, did not write a biography, but a historiographical work. Conzelmann promotes the term “historical monograph”⁵⁵ to justify Luke's lack of interest in his heroes' biographical paths and particularly his silence about their deaths. As a precedent, the analogy with the narrative treatment of Peter is striking; his martyred death is

⁵⁴ Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 90–92. I have argued that Acts actually features an apologetic purpose, but its defence of the image of Christianity is rather an *apologia pro imperio*, aimed at authorising within the church the relevance of the establishment of Christians in Roman society (Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 29–30).

⁵⁵ Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 6.

not told either (12.17).⁵⁶ Regardless, the literary genre argument fails to convince. Reading from chapters 9 and 13 to 28 of Acts makes it difficult to believe that Luke harbours no interest in Paul's biography. It would in fact be more appropriate to speak of a *Vita Pauli* when reading the second half of the book devoted to the hero Paul, where the author spares no detail, even an anecdotal one, when it serves the narrative dramatisation and celebration of the hero. Reading Acts 16.11–40, 23.1–35, or 27.1–44 is enough to be convinced. Moreover, Armin Baum has rightly argued that no Greco-Roman biographical and historiographical writings leave out the deaths of their characters.⁵⁷

However, the parallel of the silence on Peter's death deserves to be revisited to ask the more general question: how does Luke manage the deaths of his characters?

IV. The Cursed Death in Acts

A study by Gudrun Guttenberger asks a good question: "Ist der Tod der Apostel der Rede nicht wert?"⁵⁸ It is fair to ask whether the deaths of the apostles are worthy of being told, because so far scholars have been content to mention Luke's silence on Peter's death in order to conclude that the author did the same for Paul. However, this issue requires a deeper examination. We will see that this detour leads us more reliably to the heart of our question.

What about the management of the deaths of the characters in Acts? I leave aside the case of natural death, which is not problematic as such: David (2.27–29; 13.36), Jacob (7.15), Tabitha (9.37), and Eutychus (20.9–12). Two cases remain: a) the cursed deaths of Judas (1.18), Ananias and Sapphira (5.1–11), and Herod Agrippa (12.18–25); and b) the martyred deaths of Stephen (7.58), James, son of Zebedee (12.1–2), and Paul. I shall not consider the two mentions of Jesus' death (2.23 and 13.27–29), for which Luke assumes the interpretation that he has given in his Gospel.

The deaths of Judas and of King Herod are alike.⁵⁹ Both are interpreted with the help of the *topos* of the shameful death of the wicked. This motif, identified in Jewish and Greco-Roman literature, has been applied to Princess Cassandra of Thebes, to evil King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, to cruel King

⁵⁶ The theory of the biographical disinterest of Luke is notably put forward by A. Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte. Kapitel 13–28* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1985), 680; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 792–93.

⁵⁷ Baum, "Rhetorik des Schweigens?" 97–101.

⁵⁸ G. Guttenberger, "Ist der Tod der Apostel der Rede nicht wert? Vorstellungen von Tod und Sterben in den lukanischen Acta," in F.W. Horn (ed.), *Das Ende des Paulus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 273–305.

⁵⁹ On these two texts (Acts 1.18 and 12.18–25), for a detailed study I refer to my commentary: *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2007), 60–62 and 439–42.

Herod the Great, to Catullus the enemy of the Jews, to Alexander the false prophet, to the Christian-persecuting Emperors Nero and Galerius, etc.⁶⁰ Derived from popular imagination, this *topos* assigns to wicked or tyrannical people that defied the divine a demise whose horror rises to the height of their crimes. Unbelievers and enemies of God, evil despots and traitors must suffer the most atrocious of deaths. The brief note on the death of the traitor Judas is full of lurid details: he falls headfirst (from a rock? from a roof?) and his body splits down the middle, spilling out his guts. Such a repugnant end bears the mark of divine judgment. For his part, Matthew chooses a more moralising version, with Judas repenting for shedding innocent blood and hanging himself (Matthew 27.85). Matthew 27 embellishes the motif of the felon's remorse, whereas Acts 1 complacently exposes the ignominious end of the traitor punished by God.

It is also the hand of God that strikes down Herod Agrippa, who is guilty of executing James, one of the twelve apostles (Acts 12.2), and of arresting Peter during the festival of Unleavened Bread because it "pleased the Jews" (12.3). Peter is miraculously freed by an angel during an escape whose story is traversed by a strong Exodical typology (12.7–11). What interests us is the end of the story (12.20–23). Herod must preside at a meeting with the people of Tyre and Sidon and mounts the royal platform to deliver a speech to the people. It is then that the people shout: "The voice of a god, and not of a mortal!" (12.22). In the context of the deification of Hellenistic monarchies, such a reaction is not surprising. When returning from their military campaigns, the emperors were greeted by the cheers of the crowds as they indulged in *adulatio*, or public flattery. But for Jews as well as Christians, the deification of a human being – even of a king – is unforgivable. It is the original sin according to Genesis 3.5. The punishment for such arrogance can only be death. Mistaken for Zeus and Hermes during their journey to Lystra, Barnabas and Paul react with horror and rush into the crowd, shouting: "Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you" (14.15). But Agrippa does not protest; struck down by an angel of the Lord, he dies. The narrator dramatises the scene: the blow comes "immediately" (Luke employs the adverb *παραχρῆμα*). The verb *πατάσσειν*, *to strike*, comes straight out of the Old Testament: the exterminating angel delivers the punitive blow of God. Herod-Agrippa is guilty of a sin of omission: he did not reject the popular *adulatio*.⁶¹ His death

⁶⁰ Variation on the theme of the shameful death of the wicked: Cassandra the Princess of Thebes (Pausanias, *Descr.* 9.7.1–3), Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc 9.1–10.28), Herod the Great (Josephus, *A.J.* 17.168–70), Catullus (Josephus, *B.J.* 7.451–53), Alexander the false prophet (Lucian, *Alex.* 59), Galerius (Lactantius, *Mort.* 3.3–11), Nero (Dio Cassius, *Hist.* 52.20.5; Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.15; 16.22); etc. Other examples: O.W. Allen, *The Death of Herod* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 29–74.

⁶¹ It is interesting to note that we have a parallel to this dramatic episode in the writings of Flavius Josephus (*A.J.* 19.343–50). According to Josephus, Agrippa dies of terri-

is terrible: “he was eaten by worms and died” (12.23). Luke does nothing to spare his readers, choosing a compound word originally from agricultural vocabulary: σκωληκόβρωτος, literally *worm food*. Worms are an image of the degradation and decomposition of the body (Job 17.14; 21.6; Sirach 10.11). Let us remember that in recounting the end of both Judas and Herod Agrippa, the author dramatises the defamatory conditions of their death to the point of excess, the point being to display an edifying death, even in lurid detail.

The death of the couple Ananias and Sapphira (5.1–11) is told soberly (they fall down and die), but the dramatisation is due to the theological interpretation that Peter gives of their sin.⁶² The couple has agreed to sell some property and to lay the proceeds of the sale at the apostles’ feet, in accordance with the practice to redistribute common goods in the church of Jerusalem (4.32–35). However, the couple “kept back” (νοσφιζέσθαι) part of the proceeds for themselves (5.2).⁶³ My reading of this drama excludes a moral interpretation (the couple’s crime would reside in their greed or their lying). Peter exercises a prophetic ministry by stating the theological reading of their sin: “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? ... You did not lie to us, but to God!” (5.3–4). This is not a Qumranic-type disciplinary device requiring the transfer of property to the community that has been violated, but the sanctity of a community “of one heart and soul” (4.32) – a holiness whose agent is the Holy Spirit. The crime is not ethical, but ecclesiological in nature: it jeopardises the unanimity of the Church exposed to the hostility of the surrounding Jewish world (Acts 4–5). In other words, the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, who thought that they needed to be perfect to exist in the community, is the original sin in the church. Their sudden deaths are not the work of Peter: they “fell down and died” upon hearing the prophetic words that reveal their crime (5.5–10).

ble intestinal pain that tortures him for five days in another embodiment of divine punishment. However, he has repented for the people’s *adulatio*: “Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me” (19.347).

⁶² For a discussion of this text and the various readings it has raised, I refer the reader to my commentary: *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 164–68 and 172–78.

⁶³ This verb, which is extremely rare in the Septuagint, is found in Joshua 7.1 when Achan takes some of the booty of Jericho for his own profit, the theft of which causes Israel’s defeat by Ai. Joshua 7 and Acts 5 both have the situation of a community in search of territory that cannot afford internal dangers when it is threatened from the outside. In both cases, the desecration of the sanctity of the group requires separating the guilty party from it. But from my point of view, the typological reference to the original sin in Genesis 3 is just as evident.

To sum this up, in all three cases of Judas, King Herod, and Ananias and Sapphira, the narrator has dramatised their deaths in order to draw a theologically edifying lesson. The death of a traitor, the death of a wicked king, and the death of a disloyal couple: the hand of God comes down spectacularly against those that stand against Him.

V. Stephen's Magnified Death

Unlike the previous deaths, the murder of Stephen the Protomartyr⁶⁴ is magnified by the author of Acts. Enraged by his speech (Acts 7), and especially by its accusatory ending, the members of the Sanhedrin drag him out of the city to stone him.

When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died (7.54–60).

The narrative treatment has something to attract our attention. The motif of teeth grinding was made famous in the New Testament by Matthew's eschatological refrain "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 8.12; etc.); but the turn of phrase "to grind one's teeth against someone" comes from the Septuagint, where it describes the rage of the wicked against the righteous.⁶⁵ By this choice of vocabulary, the narrator assigns the role of the wicked to the members of the Sanhedrin. However, it is not Stephen's verbal aggression (7.51–53) that triggers their move to act, but the vision he receives. The narrator stresses it, because he describes it once (7.53), then has Stephen describe it himself (7.54). Stephen sees "the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." Luke uses Christ's title Son of Man twenty-six times in his Gospel, but it only appears this one time in Acts. Does he want to provide local colour to Jerusalem? The reason must be sought at a deeper level: with this trait, Luke establishes conformity between Stephen's martyrdom and the Passion, which is emphasised in the following verses. In fact, Jesus had told his judges that "from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right

⁶⁴ The title of "protomartyr" is only bestowed on Stephen starting in the 4th century CE (see the manuscript variants *ad* Acts 22.20). Nevertheless, regarding Stephen (22.20), the author of Acts is the first to link testimony (μαρτυρία) to spilled blood, preparing for the later meaning of the martyr linked to death through loyal faith.

⁶⁵ Job 16.9; Psalms 34.16 (LXX); 36.12 (LXX); 112.10 (LXX); Lamentations 2.16.

hand of the power of God” (Luke 22.69).⁶⁶ Like Jesus, Stephen commends his spirit (7.59; see Luke 23.46b). Like Jesus, he cries out in a “loud voice” after kneeling (φωνῆ μεγάλη 7.60; Luke 23.46a). Like Jesus, Stephen asks for forgiveness for his executioners, but mention of their ignorance is omitted (7.60; see Luke 23.34).⁶⁷

The slight differences between the formulations of Luke 23 and Acts 7 are consistent with Luke’s practice of *syncretis*, this modelling of the witnesses to Jesus: the disciple imitates his Lord, but without reproducing his behaviour exactly, which remains unique in its precedence. “To describe Jesus’ death, Luke prefers the image of the martyr to that of sacrifice and expiation”;⁶⁸ it is his martyrdom that the leader of the Seven Deacons reproduces in his own way. And the exemplarity lasts to the end: Stephen dies by praying for his adversaries. Like Jesus, the Hellenist dies uttering his last words: “When he had said this (τοῦτο εἰπὼν: also Luke 23.46b), he died.”

What can we conclude, other than that Luke has interpreted Stephen’s death in a way comparable to cursed death, but by turning it upside down? Cursed death is God’s vengeance exerted upon the wicked. Stephen’s magnified death depicts the loyalty that the disciple vows to his master, even unto death. Each of these deaths is edifying. Each one shows God triumphing over His enemies. Each one is exemplary: one in the horror it arouses and the other in the model that it bequeaths.

VI. The Silenced Deaths

Before coming to Peter and Paul’s ends, I mention the execution of James, brother of John, one of the twelve disciples, by Herod Agrippa (12.2). Luke could have used this deadly act in his narrative, but did not. Two reasons arise for this, which are not really exclusive. According to the first explanation, the plot of chapter 12 focuses on the opposition between Herod and Peter: the

⁶⁶ Luke 22.69 speaks of the Son of Man “seated at the right hand of the power of God” while Acts 7.56 speaks of the Son of Man “standing at the right hand of God.” There are many interpretations to explain this change in posture (see C.S. Keener, *Acts. An Exegetical Commentary 3.1–14.28* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013], 1440–43). In my view, the image of him standing reflects the position of the judge in the heavenly court, which undermines the judicial role of the Sanhedrin.

⁶⁷ The presence of Luke 23.34 in the manuscript tradition is not assured, as an impressive number of ancient testimonies do not contain this verse. Two possibilities present themselves: either the verse is original and Luke has inserted in Acts its equivalent to confirm the modelling of Stephen’s martyrdom on the death of Jesus, or it is not original and copyists inserted the equivalent of Stephen’s prayer into the Passion. The first possibility is more likely. On this point and for a more detailed analysis of this passage, see my, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 273–77.

⁶⁸ A. George, “Le sens de la mort de Jésus pour Luc,” in George, *Etudes sur l’oeuvre de Luc* (Sources bibliques; Paris: Gabalda, 1978), 212.

king that wanted to mistreat (κακοῦν, 12.1) the disciples of Jesus and took himself for a god (12.21–22) dies in the most infamous way, whereas Peter is freed from imprisonment by an angel of the Lord. The theme is that of the antagonism of powers and Peter's miraculous release shows that nothing can resist the Exodial God. The story of James' death would have diverted attention away from this "tyrant *versus* disciple" typology.⁶⁹ Second explanation: Luke had no accurate or credible information available on the circumstances of James' death.

Also in chapter 12 of Acts, it is said that after Peter visited the community following his miraculous escape, "he went to another place" (ἐπορεύθη εἰς ἕτερον τόπον, 12.17c). Much ink has been spilled on this enigmatic ending to the verse. Indeed, this clause erases Peter from the narration of Acts; the apostle will emerge again during the assembly in Jerusalem to act as the guarantor for Paul's mission based on his meeting with Cornelius at Caesarea (15.7–11). Other than this return, Peter's activity comes to an end here. What does "another place" mean? Some have thought of another house where Peter would have taken refuge during Herod's aggression, while others have searched the regional geography for another theatre for a mission (Antioch, Asia Minor, Rome). Still others have justified the vague language as an allusion to an itinerant existence or interpreted it metaphorically (with "place" meaning "fate") supposing it referred to his death as a martyr.⁷⁰ Rather than seeing a cryptic message here, I find it preferable to evaluate a narrative strategy that fits this deliberately unclear information: the author shows his readers that he is breaking with one biographical thread (Peter's) to follow another (Paul's). Luke takes his leave from a character to which he has devoted a decisive role so far (Acts 1–6; 9.32–11.18; 12). Indeed, his understanding of the history of Christianity leads him to continue with the story of the Pauline mission. Removing Peter with an indication left in suspense lets the reader know that his life goes on, but beyond the bounds of the story, Theophilus understands that the author "moves on to another subject." From Peter to Paul, the narration of Acts begins its great turning point.

In the *syncrisis* between Peter and Paul within Acts,⁷¹ the silence about their ends is a further resemblance. There is another, which takes on major importance for our issue: before disappearing from the story, Peter and Paul

⁶⁹ Guttenberger, "Ist der Tod der Apostel der Rede nicht wert?" 297.

⁷⁰ Eusebius sustains that Peter devoted himself to his missionary activity (*Eccl. hist.* 2.9.4); Jerome described Peter's missionary work all the way to Rome (*Vir. ill.* 1). See R. Pesch, *Simon-Petrus* (Stuttgart; Hiersemann, 1980), 76; R.E. Osborne, "Where Did Peter Go?" *Canadian Journal of Theology* 14 (1968): 274–77.

⁷¹ *Syncrisis* means the literary process of modelling the character of a story on another in order to establish continuity between the two. The *syncrisis* between Peter and Paul appears in the frame of the parallelism of Jesus-Peter-Paul. See Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 56–59.

are close to death and experience a miraculous and spectacular rescue. Peter has been freed from prison by a miracle saturated with Exodical references (12.6–11). Paul has been saved from shipwreck during his trip to Rome and upon his arrival on Malta, the inhabitants of the island say of him: “He is a god” (28.6). Readers know that he is nothing of the sort, but they understand that escaping the fury of the waves and the bite of a viper (28.3–6) shows that the man is protected by divine providence. Before vanishing from the story, Peter and Paul have each received the seal of divine vindication on their existence.

VII. *The Silence on Paul’s Death*

Do the parallels between the death of James that we have just mentioned and the silenced end of Peter shed any light on the silence regarding Paul’s death? The extensive treatment given to Stephen’s death ruins the idea of repulsion in dealing with death through biographical disinterest or the hypothesis occasionally put forward that Luke did not want to overshadow the death of Jesus by describing another martyred death.⁷²

In my estimation, there are two historical solutions, both of which are hypothetical.

The first solution is that the information available to the author regarding Paul’s death was not of a nature that it could be exploited for narrative purposes. His total ignorance of Paul’s end must be ruled out for reasons given above,⁷³ but we may imagine that the circumstances surrounding what was very likely his execution by the imperial legal system were not very well known or at least were insignificant. His end may have been obscure, and thus not rising to the stature of the figure portrayed by Luke. When Haenchen writes that Luke “did not consider it his duty to encourage the piety of martyrs,”⁷⁴ it must be added that it is anachronistic to imagine an already developed martyrology in Luke’s time. We see it flourishing in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, but this text was written more than a century after Acts. Since then, if there was a choice between a triumphalist end on the victory of *Verbi Dei* and the obscure end of the apostle of the Gentiles, Luke’s option is focused on the *cantus firmus* of his work. In response to this, one could argue that Luke had the means to write an account by his own hand, which would have been replaced due to the inadequacy of his sources. To do this is to engage in the vast and complex debate about the author’s relationship to his sources, which is not my intent here. I would simply say that in my view, if

⁷² A. Ehrhardt, *The Framework of the New Testament Stories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), 80–81.

⁷³ See pp. 322–23.

⁷⁴ “Er sah es nicht als seine Aufgabe an, die Märtyrerfrömmigkeit zu beleben.” Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 655.

the latitude to develop a fiction is inherent in a historian like Luke, the author of Acts seldom creates a fictional account based on nothing; more often, Luke stages information that he has received. In other words, Luke depicts information, even of a rudimentary type, and employs its potentialities rather than creating from scratch.⁷⁵

But there is another solution, which has the advantage of being documented by independent sources in Acts. It is the famous notice in *1 Clement* 5.5–7:

By reason of jealousy and strife Paul by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance. After that he had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness unto the whole world and having reached the farthest bounds of the West; and when he had borne his testimony before the rulers, so he departed from the world and went unto the holy place, having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance!⁷⁶

The meaning of the expression διὰ ζῆλον καὶ ἔριον, (5.5a) is much discussed.⁷⁷ Oscar Cullmann understood it as a reference to internal disputes in the church of Rome, of which both Peter and Paul would have suffered at the end of their lives (see *1 Clem.* 5.2).⁷⁸ In Christian memory, their martyrdom would have left discomfiting signs of abandon among Roman Christians. C.K. Barrett adds 2 Timothy 4.16 to this dossier: “At my first defence no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them!” He concludes: “[T]here existed a tradition of a desertion of Paul by those who should have stood by him.”⁷⁹ The hypothesis constructed here is as follows: Paul’s martyred death in Rome has left problematic and even painful marks on his memory, for the apostle did not receive all the help that would have been desirable from the Roman Christians. To invert such a tradition and compose a magnified account of Paul’s death would not be decent, so Luke refrained.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ On this historiographical problem, I refer the reader to my discussion with R. Riesner: “Wie historisch ist die Apostelgeschichte?” *ZNT* 18 (2006): 44–51.

⁷⁶ Quoted according to the translation of J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Epistles to the Corinthians* (Trinity College, 1869).

⁷⁷ In this volume, see the contribution by Grünstäudl.

⁷⁸ O. Cullmann, *Petrus. Jünger–Apostel–Martyrer* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1960), 101–23, especially 115–17. The author supposes the same situation of religious tension regarding the execution of James, son of Zebedee, in Jerusalem: “Courants multiples dans la communauté primitive. A propos du martyre de Jacques fils de Zébédée,” *RSR* 60 (1972): 55–68.

⁷⁹ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* II, 1250; see also Barrett, “The End of Acts,” 549–50.

⁸⁰ G.W. Trompf had already made a similar remark. He noted that the deaths of Jesus and Stephen reflected the qualities of endurance, piety, and magnanimity that were able to evoke admiration from Luke’s readers. On the other hand, “if, as non-biblical tradition has it, Paul was beheaded, dying as a victim like his master (in all likelihood during the emperor Nero’s reign), then Luke had another ignominious (and therefore ‘problematic’)

Two indicators point in this direction. The first is internal to the conclusion of Acts: while verse 15 mentions the Christian brethren that come to meet and greet Paul from the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns, they are not mentioned further. One can imagine them included in the πάντας of 28.30, but the narrator's silence on this subject is intriguing. Would this be because he does not want to mention them in proximity to Paul? The second indicator refers to Paul's reception by the Christians of Jerusalem in 21.17–25. Informing Paul of the negative comments made about his liberal position on the Torah and circumcision, James suggests that he participate in a Nazarite rite in the Temple of Jerusalem (21.23–24). This suggestion will be fatal for Paul, because it is his presence at the Temple that sparks the Asian Jews' anger against him, the attempt to lynch him, and his Roman imprisonment, from which he will not leave (21.27–23.35). What strikes the reader about this story is that the Christians of Jerusalem are not mentioned at any time during the confrontation with the people of Jerusalem, or with the Sanhedrin. Without going so far as to attribute to James the Machiavellian purpose of setting a trap for Paul,⁸¹ I think that what we have here is another curtain of silence modestly drawn by the author of Acts over the absence of active solidarity shown by the church of Jerusalem in the whole drama. The same modesty – or, if one prefers, the same reluctance to expose the internal dissensions within Christianity – drove the author of Acts to remain silent about Paul's end and to use the end of the work to celebrate the triumph of the Word that is promised to conquer the Roman Empire.

death on his hands – and one that was not going to present the new faith as an attraction” (“On Why Luke Declined to Recount the Death of Paul: Acts 27–28 and Beyond,” in C.H. Albert [ed.], *Luke-Acts. New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* [New York: Crossroad, 1984], 225–39, citation at 233).

⁸¹ According to S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London: SPCK, 1957), 135.