

ERIC C. MOORE

Claiming Places

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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Reading Acts through the Lens
of Ancient Colonization

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

It is appropriate, in a book about foundations, that I express gratitude to the individuals who made this enterprise possible. *Claiming Places* is a revised form of my doctoral dissertation completed at Emory University in 2017. Members of the Graduate Division of Religion, particularly the New Testament faculty, merit my sincerest appreciation. The way they both embody and nurture careful, creative scholarship has been a continuing source of inspiration.

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patience and persistent encouragement are the ultimate foundation upon which this book was formed.

Eric C. Moore
Atlanta, April 2020

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List of Abbreviations

Primary Sources

Abbreviations of biblical, apocryphal, and pseudepigraphical texts follow *The SBL Handbook of Style*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014.

1QM	Milhamah (War Scroll)
1QpHab	Habbakuk Peshar
1QS	Serek Hayahad (Community Rule)
<i>ad Ol.</i>	scholium on <i>Olympionikai</i> (Pindar)
<i>Adv. Jud.</i>	<i>Adversus Judaeos</i>
<i>Aen.</i>	<i>Aeneid</i>
<i>Agr.</i>	<i>De Lege agraria</i>
<i>A.J.</i>	<i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander</i>
<i>Anab.</i>	<i>Anabasis</i> (Arrian and Xenophon)
<i>Ant. rom.</i>	<i>Antiquitates romanae</i>
<i>Argon.</i>	<i>Argonautica</i>
<i>Ascon. Pis.</i>	Asconius's commentary on <i>in Pisonem</i>
<i>Att.</i>	<i>Epistulae ad Atticum</i>
<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Divus Augustus</i>
<i>B.J.</i>	<i>Bellum judaicum</i>
bMeg.	Megillah (Babylonian Talmud)
bSabb.	Shabbat (Babylonian Talmud)
<i>C. Ap.</i>	<i>Contra Apionem</i>
<i>Congr.</i>	<i>De congressu eruditionis gratia</i>
<i>Contempl.</i>	<i>De vita contemplativa</i>
<i>Curt.</i>	<i>Curtius Rufus</i>
<i>De Vit. Pythag.</i>	<i>De vita pythagorica</i>
<i>Decal.</i>	<i>De decalogo</i>
<i>Def. orac.</i>	<i>De defectu oraculorum</i>
<i>Div.</i>	<i>De divinatione</i>
<i>E Delph</i>	<i>De E apud Delphos</i>
<i>Flacc.</i>	<i>In Flaccum</i>
<i>Hymn. Apoll.</i>	<i>Hymnus in Apollinem</i> (Callimachus)
<i>Iph. taur.</i>	<i>Iphigenia taurica</i>
<i>Legat.</i>	<i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
<i>Men. Rhet. Gr.</i>	<i>Menander Rhetor</i> (Greek)
<i>Metam.</i>	<i>Metamorphoses</i>

<i>Mil.</i>	<i>Miltiades</i>
<i>Mor.</i>	<i>Moralia</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	<i>De vita Mosis</i>
<i>Nat.</i>	<i>Naturalis historia</i>
<i>Ol.</i>	<i>Olympionikai</i>
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orationes</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Orationes philippicae</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politica</i>
<i>Pyth.</i>	<i>Pythionikai</i>
<i>Pyth. orac.</i>	<i>De Pythiae oraculis</i>
<i>QG</i>	<i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesis</i>
<i>Quest. graec.</i>	<i>Quaestiones graecae</i>
<i>Quest. rom.</i>	<i>Quaestiones romanae</i>
<i>Res Gest. Divi Aug.</i>	<i>Res gestae divi Augusti</i>
<i>Rom.</i>	<i>Romulus</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	<i>De specialibus legibus</i>
<i>Thes.</i>	<i>Theseus</i>

Secondary Sources

<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>Ann. Sc. Norm. Super. Pisa</i>	<i>Annali della Scuola normale superiore di Pisa</i>
<i>BDF</i>	Blass, Friedrich, and Albert Debrunner. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Revised and edited by Robert W. Funk. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
<i>BTR</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Conservative Judaism</i>
<i>CIAnt</i>	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
<i>FGrHist</i>	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Edited by Felix Jacoby. Leiden: Brill, 1954–1964
<i>FHG</i>	<i>Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum</i> . Paris, 1841–1870
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JRASS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement Series</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSAH</i>	<i>Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</i>

<i>LSJ</i>	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTL</i>	New Testament Library
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>PEGLMBS</i>	Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> . Edited by Theodor Klauser et al. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950–.
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RE</i>	<i>Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche</i>
<i>R&T</i>	<i>Religion and Theology</i>
<i>SBLSP</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
<i>SEG</i>	Supplementum epigraphicum graecum
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>

Introduction

Colonization as a Framework for Reading Acts

Casual readers and scholars alike recognize Acts of the Apostles as a story about the beginnings of early Christianity. Its appeal stems largely from how it fills a gap in the historical imagination – providing a memorable account of “Christianity’s transformation from a small band of Galileans following Jesus into a vast, multicultural network of urban churches.”¹ However, the story’s utility in explaining this transformation does not, by itself, render Acts more culturally intelligible. Scholars thus employ various approaches to locate Acts in its first – or second² – century Mediterranean setting. I review several such attempts at contextualization in the following chapter.³ There, I distinguish approaches that focus on the genre or geographical horizons of Luke’s narrative from the one adopted in this study. My guiding question is what it means to label Acts an origins story or story of beginnings given its broader cultural milieu. To explore this dimension of the narrative, I employ ancient colonization as an analytic lens.

At its most basic, Acts is a story about community replication. From a precise point of origin, Jerusalem (Acts 1–7), the Jesus movement expands to cities such as Caesarea (10:1–11:18), Antioch of Syria (13:13–52), Philippi (16:11–40), Thessalonica (17:1–9), Athens (17:16–34), Corinth (18:1–17), Ephesus (18:19–21; 19:1–41), and eventually Rome (28:11–16). Luke thematizes this process of replication in distinct ways. Persecution often serves as the impetus for expansion (8:1–4; 11:19; 13:50; 14:5–7, 19; 17:5–7). Divine manifestations (oracles, visions, the Holy Spirit, angels) combine to authorize, guide, propel, and consolidate expansion (1:8–9; 2:1–4; 8:17, 39–40; 10:3–6; 10–17, 19; 11:4–10, 12; 13:2–4, 9; 16:6–10; 18:9–11; 19:6–7). Just as notable, charismatic figures such as Peter and Paul play a pronounced role in forming new communities of Jesus followers (e.g., Acts 3:1–26; 10:1–11:18; 13:16–43; 14:1–7; 16:1–40; 18:1–11; 19:1–20). Their activity often engenders opposition (4:1–7, 13–22; 5:17–18, 22–42; 6:8–15; 7:54–8:3; 13:6–12, 45, 50; 16:16–24; 17:5–9, 13; 18:6, 12–17; 19:9, 23–41; 21:27–30; 22:22–40; 23:12–22; 24:1–9; 25:1–12; 28:24–27). Many of the communities established feature a mixture of

¹ Walter Wilson, “Urban Legends: Acts 10:11–11:18 and the Strategies of Greco-Roman Foundation Narratives,” *JBL* 120 (2001): 78.

² See Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2006).

³ See chapter 1.

Jewish and gentile members (8:40/10:1–11:18; 13:43, 48–50; 17:4, 12; 19:10; 28:24/28–31). Though “new,” these communities are linked to a more distant past through the narrative’s references to Jewish ancestors and ancient prophecies (2:17–35; 3:22–25; 7:2–50; 8:32–33; 13:16–41; 15:15–18; 28:25–27).

My argument in this book is that our understanding of Luke’s narrative is enhanced when reading it in light of a specific *topos* in Mediterranean antiquity: civic or community origins. To be clear, I am not making an argument about the genre of Acts, for instance, that it *formally* constitutes a “foundation narrative.” Rather, what this study does is offer an assessment of the narrative informed both by the phenomenon of ancient colonization *and* representations of it in literary and material forms. My approach is heuristic. I develop a colonization model to identify prominent concerns which Acts shares with other accounts of community/civic beginnings.

Let me explain what I mean by “colonization” in this study. Most basically, I adopt it as a convenient term to express the idea of replication or expansion. In this basic sense, colonization is an umbrella term flexible enough to encompass a great many different types and instances of community foundation. But I also employ the term colonization since it is what is conventionally used in scholarship to describe the establishment of new cities in the ancient Mediterranean world, including during the Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. Since foundations took many forms, as did later reports about them, colonization functions as a baseline term. Here a further clarification is in order. Some will immediately think of post-colonial criticism when encountering the term colonization. This is not the nuance intended here, though insights gleaned from this study can be deployed in service of this interpretative strategy. In sum, the use of “colonization” to describe my analytic framework is intended, first, to signal community replication and, second, to evoke the varied expressions of civic/community foundations in the ancient Mediterranean world.

This book therefore contributes to Acts scholarship at both the conceptual and analytic levels. First, conceptually, colonization offers a culturally intelligible framework for reading Luke’s narrative. To begin with, themes in Acts like dislocation/relocation were associated with different forms of colonization in the ancient Mediterranean world. There is also the resonance of the narrative’s subject matter – community origins. Stories about how communities (especially cities) came to be were immensely popular, remaining so from the Classical period of Greece down through late antiquity.⁴

Appreciation for this context can illuminate Acts. The narrative’s episodes are typically set in cities with rich foundation traditions and/or that are distinguishable as Roman colonies (e.g., Antioch of Pisidia, Philippi, Corinth). This setting evokes a world of competing origin stories against which Luke’s is set.

⁴ See chapter 2.

Comparing Luke's tale about the beginnings of a minority community to the foundation of cities is not as odd as it appears at first glance. As we will see, Philo adopts colonization language/themes to glorify Jewish communities planted in cities throughout the Roman Empire, and he and Josephus alike utilize colonization terms/concepts in their reworking of exodus traditions.⁵ An argument of this book, therefore, is that the conceptual world of community foundations is a productive one for assessing the subject matter and goals of Acts.

Second, colonization offers an effective framework for analyzing the form and features of Acts. As observed above, at the macro-level Acts is about a process of replication beginning in Jerusalem and expanding outward to "Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It is only natural that this replication should involve the spread of the Christian cult and not merely the formation of communities. After all, ancient colonization frequently entailed the transfer of cult.⁶

My analytic framework likewise helps account for the shape of Acts at the micro- or episodic level, that is, when it comes to *how* the story of replication is told. I identify three prominent concerns which encompass a "general fund of narrative and tropological strategies" deployed in foundation accounts⁷: community origins, divine sanction, and founders.⁸ These preoccupations correlate with the features of Acts detailed above. Luke traces the origins of the Christian cult back to Jerusalem and a memorable crisis – persecution – which precipitated its spread throughout the Mediterranean world. His characters' references to the ancestors and prophecies push those origins back further still, connecting new communities to an ancient salvation-history and its proto-founders.

The risen Jesus's oracle (1:8), dream-visions, and the Holy Spirit provide divine sanction for the replicating Christian community. Acts' non-divine protagonists, Peter and Paul, operate as founders. Their primary activities are preaching and miracle working. The founders typically provoke opposition but manage to establish new communities, most of which are ethnically mixed – comprised of Jews and gentiles. In the study which follows, I will show the profitability of using ancient colonization as an analytic resource to fill out this sketch of Christian foundations in Acts.

The study proceeds in the following fashion: Chapter 1 contextualizes this project. I trace how my approach offers an insightful alternative to other readings of Acts while building on studies of ancient colonization and foundation

⁵ See chapter 3.

⁶ See chapters 2 and 4.

⁷ Wilson, "Urban Legends," 79; see chapter 1.

⁸ This tripartite scheme serves two purposes. First, it allows me to identify overarching concerns in colonization accounts. Second, it facilitates comparison between Acts and other accounts, even when the use of individual motifs (e.g., "surprised *oikist*," "crisis") differs.

narratives. Chapter 2 elucidates the colonization framework used throughout this book. To begin with, I illustrate key concerns in colonization accounts. Then, I analyze individual narratives that depict colonization in the Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods and finally accounts about the origins of Rome. Proceeding thusly, I provide a textured portrayal of how colonizing motifs function in specific accounts of community origins. This discussion sets the table for my analysis of Acts in the succeeding chapters.

In chapter 3, I argue that Acts 1–5 functions like a colonizing account in its own right as well as the “origins” portion of a longer such narrative. I show how these chapters introduce founding figures and their pattern of “founding acts”; underscore the importance of Jerusalem as the origin of the colonizing movement; reveal the movement’s divine mandate; and depict the way of life, or “institutions,” that characterize the community of Jesus followers in Jerusalem.

Subsequent to this, chapter 4 tracks the major development in the colonizing narrative that occurs at Antioch of Syria (Acts 11:19–30; 13:1–3; 15:1–35). I demonstrate how the replication of the community here serves a pivotal role in Acts. On the one hand, the community represents a “colony” of the Jerusalem community, one which is generated by a “crisis” in the mother community, formed via cult transfer, and characterized by its mixed composition. On the other hand, the community at Antioch operates as a “mother city” akin to Jerusalem but of “second-generation” colonization outside the land of Israel. The community’s leadership and religious institutions – the latter dictated in Jerusalem (Acts 15) – reflect its outward orientation. Yet ultimately it is the community’s mandate, given by the Holy Spirit and recognized by its leadership, which formalizes its role as mother city of other Jewish-gentile communities. The narrative span 13:4–14:28 represents the first wave of such replication.

Chapter 5 focuses on the replication of the community in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:13–52), foremost of the sites Paul visits during the colonizing venture sanctioned by the mother community at Antioch of Syria. I contend that the site, as a colony of Rome, was highly symbolic for Luke. Paul’s activities here anticipate the spread of the movement to the empire’s capital. His synagogue speech is characterized by the rhetoric of “second-generation colonization”; it legitimates replication of the Jesus movement outside the land of Israel – and with it, the establishment of mixed (Jewish-gentile) communities. Indeed, this is precisely the profile of the community produced by Paul and Barnabas’s proclamation in “little Rome.” The successful outcome is precipitated in no small measure by opposition, a common feature in Acts as well as colonization accounts more broadly.

This represents an apt end to my study. The colonizing movement which begins in Jerusalem has spread to Antioch of Syria and from there to another Antioch, near Pisidia. At the end of the latter colonizing venture, the founding figures report back to the mother city “all that God had done with them”

(14:27). In a brief conclusion (chapter 6), I summarize my findings and their implications for the study of Acts.

Above, I asked: What does it mean to call Acts an origins story in light of its cultural context? My book proposes that colonization offers a compelling framework for addressing this question. The following chapter distinguishes this mode of analyzing Acts from other approaches.

Chapter 1

Locating This Book's Approach to (Luke-) Acts

1.1 Two Common Approaches to (Luke-) Acts

To my knowledge, no one has fully exploited the lens of ancient colonization to read Acts. While scholars are not blind to the narrative's territorial pretensions, they have tended to adopt other frameworks for analyzing its subject matter. Two approaches relevant to this study consider, respectively, the work's genre and its geographical features. Limitations in these approaches, I argue, highlight this book's analytic value.

1.1.1 Studies of (Luke-) Acts' Genre

A particularly prominent approach to (Luke-) Acts considers the work's genre. Many scholars preoccupied with this question have concluded that Luke's narrative represents an example of ancient historiography. Eckhard Plümacher, for instance, has made this identification on the basis of similar literary techniques deployed in Acts, on the one hand, and the works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Livy, on the other.¹ He specifically points to each author's use of archaizing speeches, adaptation of literary models, and construction of dramatic episodes as historiographical building-blocks. Helpful to a point, the overly broad classification of Acts as "historiography" fails to fully illuminate the work's preoccupations and their function. Though aiming at greater precision, David Aune's proposal that Luke-Acts is an example of general history warrants critique on the same grounds.²

Still more precise is Gregory Sterling's classification.³ He maintains that Luke-Acts should be considered an example of apologetic historiography, a subgenre flourishing during the Roman period but having roots in the ethnographic tradition of Herodotus. Explicating this classification, Sterling analyzes the content, form, and function of selected works from the fifth century

¹ Eckhard Plümacher, *Lukas als hellenistischer Schriftsteller: Studien zur Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972).

² David Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1987), 88–89.

³ Gregory Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

BCE to the second century CE.⁴ What distinguishes examples of apologetic historiography such as these is the privileging and hellenization of native sources in order to legitimize subject peoples. This characteristic defines Luke-Acts just as it does the works of Josephus and other Hellenistic Jewish authors. Though designed for “insiders,” the two-part narrative would have given its intended audience confidence in their “interplay” with “the larger outside world.”⁵

Sterling has introduced greater precision to the classification of Luke-Acts as a form of historiography, but his work raises further questions. In particular, how might broader cultural traditions have influenced the way Acts (the focus of my investigation) was conceived and constructed? Sterling has adduced convincing formal and functional parallels between Luke-Acts and other “native” works. But for Luke’s narrative to give “insiders” confidence in their

⁴ Ibid. Herodotus’s works attempt to situate peoples within the hegemonic framework of the Persian Empire. Paralleling Herodotus’s endeavor were the attempts of those writing during the Roman period who sought to valorize the histories of their respective (minority) communities. Works by Hellenistic Jewish authors, the *Antiquities of the Jews* by Josephus, and Luke-Acts itself do this by appropriating native sources and transforming them according to Hellenistic norms.

⁵ Ibid., 629. While specific literary features vary as a function of the groups and interests represented, the general rules of the game are strikingly similar whatever the chronological and geographical context. Thus, for example, the appeal to antique origins typifies many works. Stories of Israel’s patriarchs and kings provide Jews access to venerable histories on par – from their perspective – with the legendary and mythical narratives of their neighbors. Yet for these traditions to function effectively, they must conform to general Hellenistic conventions. Sterling argues that this is what one witnesses in the works of those such as Artapanus, Pseudo-Eupolemus, and Josephus, who recast HB and LXX traditions in order to eulogize the origins, histories, and practices of their communities (ibid., 355–60; 490–94).

Sterling’s argument elsewhere that Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 represents a programmatic justification for Jewish life outside Israel – and thereby legitimation for the early Christian mission in different centers of the Roman Empire – is thus quite plausible. See Gregory Sterling, “‘Opening the Scriptures’: The Legitimation of the Jewish Diaspora and the Early Christian Mission,” in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke’s Narrative Claim upon Israel’s Legacy*, ed. David P. Moessner (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1999), 199–217. Sterling buttresses this claim with illustrations of similar legitimation strategies in comparanda drawn from the Jewish diaspora (especially the Hellenistic Jewish fragments). Jewish luminaries such as Moses and Abraham are associated with particular “places” outside the land of Israel in many of these examples. Descriptions of a respective figure’s characteristics (e.g., “great learning”) and activities in these distant lands effectively co-opt such space for Jewish community living there. In this manner, figures such as Moses and Abraham operate akin to cult heroes or colony founders around whom local mythical traditions develop in order to justify minority identities. Sterling brings this assessment to bear on his analysis of Stephen’s speech. He argues that Luke’s variation from the LXX at key junctures reflects a similar desire to broaden the scope of life and mission beyond the narrow borders of Jerusalem and Judea. Despite his stoning, Stephen’s legitimation for God’s work outside Israel, according to Sterling, threads its way through the subsequent spaces of Luke’s narrative.

interactions with “outsiders,”⁶ it must resonate with customary ways of depicting community origins.

Daniel Marguerat deserves mention in this connection.⁷ He observes historiography's ability to “construct ... self-understanding”⁸ but steers the classification of Acts in a different direction than Sterling.⁹ In his second volume, Marguerat argues, Luke fashions identity via a “narrative of beginning” – a common function of remembering the past.¹⁰ Following Pierre Gibert, he delineates six “parameters” said to define such narratives:¹¹

(1) the presence of a break which functions as an [sic] founding rupture; (2) the intervention of a supernatural dimension implying transcendence; (3) a mysterious aspect reinforced by the absence of any other witnesses (vision, divine call); (4) the event is understood by reference to an ultimate origin, to an absolute beginning; (5) the situation which is created presents something new; (6) the event inaugurates a history or a posterity. (Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 32)

Marguerat demonstrates fairly convincingly that these elements can be located in Acts.¹² His study is thus welcome not only because it pushes for greater precision in the classification of Acts – as a form of historiography concerned with beginnings – but also due to its elucidation of prominent features in the narrative. These features are largely subsumable to the analytic motifs employed in my study. However, I suggest that the classification of Acts as a “narrative of beginnings” is most profitably explored in relation to cultural *topoi* rather than as a function of genre.

This is precisely what the present volume attempts. I articulate how the features in Acts together with their associated concerns relate to the larger phenomena of colonization and civic/community origin accounts. This framework allows me to compare the perspectives of “native” works (e.g., by Luke, Philo, and Josephus) with those of more “mainstream” voices in the Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. Moreover, it enables me to demonstrate how colonization perspectives – while featuring “history” in some sense – are embedded in a host of different genres, subgenres, and even material forms.

⁶ Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 629.

⁷ Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the “Acts of the Apostles,”* trans. Ken McKinney, Gregory J. Laughery, and Richard Bauckham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 8. Working from Ricoeur's framework, Marguerat identifies this “strong” type of historiography as “poetic” history. The “truth” of such history “lies in the interpretation it gives to the past and the possibility it offers to a community to understand itself in the present” (*ibid.*).

⁹ Marguerat considers the literary parallels adduced by Sterling to be “a bit forced” (*ibid.*, 30).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹¹ Pierre Gibert, *Bible, mythes et récits de commencement* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil: 1986).

¹² Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 32–34.

Charles Talbert dissents from the view that Luke-Acts is historiography.¹³ He poses an alternative: Luke's two-volume work constitutes a biographical sketch of a founder and his followers, comparable to Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*.¹⁴ Talbert produces a list of parallels between Luke's portraits of Jesus in the gospel and his disciples in Acts in support of his position.¹⁵ Parallels notwithstanding, his thesis has won few adherents. Critics note that Acts in particular contains few of the features constitutive of more well-established examples of ancient biography.¹⁶ Others complain, furthermore, that Talbert's take neglects the historical and theological dimensions of Luke's work.¹⁷

To these critiques, I add an additional: Talbert's characterization of Luke-Acts as biography is too individualistic, obscuring the communal significance of the work at the level of both the narrative and its (envisioned) reception. In the first respect, while Talbert commendably highlights the links between Jesus and his disciples in Luke's narrative(s), he neglects to reflect adequately on the role played by both in planting communities via their actions. In the second respect, he does not consider how – as a consequence – the founding activities of both parties might have functioned as charter accounts for Luke's communities. My analysis of Acts takes up both issues. I focus on how the apostles' appointment and actions qualify them as community founders as well as on how Luke's narrative about their deeds might have operated as a foundation account – or series of foundation accounts – for Christians of the author's generation.

Richard Pervo offers an even more adventurous take on the genre of Acts. He proposes that it ought to be read as a Greek novel, a somewhat amorphous category of ancient fiction.¹⁸ Pervo's chief justification for this classification is the entertaining character of Acts. Its author relates imprisonment, shipwreck, escapes, trials, persecution, martyrdom, mobs, assemblies, humor/wit,

¹³ Charles Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 125–34.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15–65.

¹⁶ Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), 36.

¹⁷ Cf. Francois Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950–2005)*, 2nd ed. (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 72–77.

¹⁸ Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987). Pervo realizes the challenges of defining what constitutes a Greek novel. However, he embraces the definition of Arthur Heiserman, *The Novel before the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 114, because it provides cohesion to the classification while allowing for diversity: novel = material + manner + style + structure. Later, Pervo moderates his argument about the genre of Acts. See *idem*, *Acts: A Commentary*. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

irony, pathos, exotica, speeches, and snippets of high society.¹⁹ In Pervo's estimation, even the scenes of "local color" identified by Conzelmann (see below) reflect a proclivity of ancient novelist writings.²⁰ To the extent that Luke has utilized material from other sources, he has creatively shaped it for the twin purposes of edification and entertainment.

Pervo's proposal is to be commended for its originality, not least how it challenges unexamined assumptions about the genre of Acts, particularly its frequent classification as historiography.²¹ Moreover, his study sheds light on those features Acts shares in common with ancient Greek novels (as he defines them), illuminating a wider body of literature with which Luke's work can be profitably compared. Yet Pervo's work suffers from a significant flaw: In seeking to undermine the classification of Acts as historiography, he too downplays its communal dimensions. He goes so far as to suggest that Acts lacks a concern for institutional matters and therefore does not "intend to describe the history of the Christian mission."²² This conclusion, however, drives a false wedge between founding figures and movements and/or communities for which they possess a defining significance.²³ The narrative about the founders of the Christian movement, in other words, implies the existence of Christian communities and therefore possesses an implicitly institutional concern. To this indirect critique, I add one that is more direct: Acts actually demonstrates an *explicit* concern for institutional matters. Thus, in this book I not only characterize the apostles as community founders but also analyze the institutional features of communities established through their activities, including their leadership structures (Acts 13:1; cf. 20:17), mixed composition (11:19–20), and "customs" (15:19–20, 29; cf. 21:25).

¹⁹ Pervo, *Profit with Delight*, 12–85.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70–72.

²¹ Leaving aside the merits of his genre argument, Pervo deserves commendation for his incisive diagnosis of the motive behind many previous attempts to classify Luke-Acts as historiography. He argues that the debate over the essential truth-worthiness/historicity/factuality of the narrative has unduly influenced discussions of its genre. Owing to this subtext, even those not predisposed to read Acts as factual narrative – for example, Ernst Haenchen (*The Acts of the Apostles*, trans. and ed. Bernard Nobel et al. [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971]) – evaluate its content by the (supposed) canons of historiography. This orientation inevitably lends itself to a negative evaluation of passages striking the reader as having little or no basis in historical fact. Pervo reveals how this overall framework for reading (Luke-) Acts precludes appreciation for how such passages contribute to the entertaining character of the narrative. *Ibid.*, 1–11.

²² *Ibid.*, 131.

²³ Compare Pervo's distinction between national histories and national novels, as well as his related claim that "Luke did for Paul what Artapanus did for Moses," which leads him to conclude that Luke is a "writer of historical fiction" (*ibid.*, 135).

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