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The Architecture of Acts I: Analysis of Contents
 2014/18

Scholars have reached no consensus about the structure of Acts. Some commentaries indeed offer no structural outline at all: Haenchen has divided the whole book into 68 single units of the same level, Schmithals lists 57, Pervo 56, Tannehill 33 unnumbered units.¹ Quite a few interpreters, while using summarizing headings, do not think a clear structure can be found. Eckey even argues that good stories resist a rigid subdivision.²

As soon, however, as a structuring idea is convincingly argued, previous skepticism becomes obsolete. The following analysis is an attempt to structure Luke's second book into units and subunits by observing the shifts of place and time and especially the beginning and the end of an action. If there is clear correspondence between beginning and end, we may speak of a concentric composition.

The first task is to establish the main caesuras of Acts. In a second step, the main sections proposed will each be analyzed to establish whether they can be understood as compositional units. Demonstration of striking correspondences between their sections can further confirm the analysis. Finally, after presentation of some structuring devices overlapping the sections, a summary of the general subject of Acts concludes this study.

1. Main caesuras

The book of Acts appears to consist of a short prologue and three main sections. This thesis has to be substantiated by discussing the dispositions suggested by old and new interpreters.

¹ Ernst Haenchen *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK 3; 16th ed.; Göttingen 1977) 9-10; Walter Schmithals, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (ZBK 3/2; Zürich 1982) 5-6; Robert C. Tannehill, *The Acts of the Apostles (The narrative unity of Luke-Acts, vol. 2; Minneapolis 1990)* vii-ix; Richard J. Pervo, *Acts* (ed. H. W. Attridge; Hermeneia; Minneapolis 2009) vii-ix.

² Wilfried Eckey, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; Neukirchen-Vluyn 2000) vol. 1: 3; 2nd ed. (2011) vol. 1: 6.

1.1 *Caesura before 11:19*

Many interpreters divide the book into two main parts: chaps. 1–12 Peter and the first Church in Jerusalem, chaps. 13–28 Paul’s mission and passion.³ However, Peter and Jerusalem become important again in the apostles’ council in chap. 15, and Paul has already been introduced, esp. in 9:1-30.

Zmijewski therefore puts his only first-level break at 15:36, before Paul begins his independent mission.⁴ However, there is no real shift from 15:35 to 15:36, neither in place (Antioch) nor in persons (Paul and Barnabas) nor in action (preaching the word). The same points speak against Menoud, who defines the apostles’ council (15:1-35) as the book’s “*place central*”, with two main breaks, right before and thereafter.⁵

Thus another solution is to be preferred: the caesura before 11:19. Antioch, mentioned here for the first time, becomes the principal location. All stories before this break are connected with Jerusalem: Paul returning there from Damascus in 9:26-31, as Peter does from Caesarea in 11:1-18. Afterwards the two Jerusalem episodes (chaps. 12; 15) are embedded in the Antioch section by delegations traveling to Jerusalem and back (11:27-30 / 12:24-25; 15:1-3, 30-35). Paul’s two missionary journeys start and end in Antioch (13:1-3 / 14:26-28; 15:36 / 18:22). Schille uses the caesura in 11:19, too, distinguishing two main sections (“beginnings” and “world mission”), while Kümmel and Schnelle list this break in their outlines of five or seven major parts.⁶

1.2 *Caesura at 19:21-22*

Where can one put the next caesura of comparable weight? Most interpreters favor several major breaks. After 15:36, some distinguish between the second and a third missionary journey (18:23–21:14).⁷ Some prefer to set only one

³ Wilhelm M.L. de Wette, *Kurze Erklärung der Apostelgeschichte* (Leipzig 1838) 2; Franz Overbeck, *Kurze Erklärung der Apostelgeschichte von W.M.L. de Wette, 4. Aufl., bearbeitet und stark erweitert* (Leipzig 1870) xxii; cf. Rudolf Knopf, “Die Apostelgeschichte”, in *Schriften des Neuen Testaments* 3 (ed. Wilhelm Bousset, Wilhelm Heitmüller; 3rd ed.; Göttingen 1917) 4; Hermann W. Beyer, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (NTD 5; Göttingen 1932) 77. – Willi Marxsen, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Gütersloh 1963) 147; Eduard Lohse, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments* (Theologische Wissenschaft 4; Stuttgart 1972) 97; Philipp Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin 1975) 380.

⁴ Josef Zmijewski, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (RNT; Regensburg 1994) 24.

⁵ Philippe H. Menoud, “Le plan des Actes des apôtres,” *NTS* 1 (1954/55) 44-51, esp. 47.

⁶ Gottfried Schille, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (ThHK 5; Berlin 1983) VIII-IX; Werner G. Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (17th ed.; Heidelberg 1973) 123; Udo Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (UTB 1830, 8th ed.; Göttingen 2013) 336.

⁷ Knopf, “Apostelgeschichte”, 4; Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HThK 5, 2 vols.; Freiburg 1980/82) 2:8; Marxsen, *Einleitung*, 147; Lohse, *Entstehung*, 97; cf. Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 380: 18:23–21:16.

break at the end of Paul's journeys.⁸ Some postpone this until Paul's arrival in the temple (21:27).⁹

In terms of geography these are plausible divisions, but there are more stations in Paul's journey that could be seen as a major break. Some favor the departure from Ephesus in 20:1.¹⁰ Barrett chooses the departure from Miletus in 21:1, combining it with a break before 18:24.¹¹ There seems to be no geographical turning point within Paul's journeys that would allow for a first-level caesura.

Another criterion could be the shift from mission to passion in the middle of Paul's stay in Ephesus. In 19:20 his success is summarized: "So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed."¹² In Ephesus Paul preaches "so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord" (19:10). Thereafter he visits his congregations in a farewell journey and recalls his former preaching (20:20-25). With no further explicit missionary activity on Paul's way to Jerusalem this should not be called the "third missionary journey".¹³ Only in Rome, Acts' last verse, is Paul again "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ" (28:31). In between, Luke tells the story of Paul's passion beginning with the tumult of the silversmiths in 19:23, a prelude to the tumult of Jerusalem in 21:27.

Verses 19:21-22 indicate the caesura, summarizing Paul's plans "to go through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go on to Jerusalem", eventually to Rome, but first he is staying in Ephesus "for some time longer".

⁸ Overbeck, *Kurze Erklärung*, xxiv: 13:1–21:16; Otto Bauernfeind, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (THKNT 5; Leipzig 1939) xiii: 15:36–21:14; Erwin Preuschen, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HNT 4/1; Tübingen 1912) 2: 15:36–21:16.

⁹ Theodor Zahn, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lucas* (Kommentar zum NT 5, 2 vols.; Leipzig 1919/21) vol. 2: 744; Hans Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HNT 7; Tübingen 1963) 12; Vernon K. Robbins, *Sea Voyages and Beyond* (Emory Studies 14; Blandford Forum 2010) 72: "chiastic arrangement" of 15:1–21:26 in nine parts, but without explaining the caesuras before 15:1 or 21:27.

¹⁰ Hans Wendt, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK 3, 8th ed.; Göttingen 1899) 6; Schille, *Apostelgeschichte*, ix.

¹¹ Charles K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ICC, 2 vols.; Edinburgh 1994/98) 2:ix.

¹² Scripture quotations: *NRSV*, © 1989 by NCC in the USA.

¹³ Cf. Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK 3, 17th ed.; Göttingen 1998) 486-487. Not convincing: Scott Shauf, *Theology as History, History as Theology: Paul in Ephesus in Acts 19* (BZNW 133; Berlin / New York 2005) 237: "19:23-40 as a continuing part of Paul's mission"; Robbins, *Sea Voyages*, 75: the we-sections in chaps. 20-21; 27-28 as Paul's "mission by sea".

Several exegetes have seen the importance of these verses. Usually they take 15:36–19:20 together, beginning the new section in 19:21.¹⁴ Yet it is also possible to wait until 19:23. Verses 19:21–22 seem to outline the rest of the book, they can be understood as an introduction. However, the topic is Paul’s traveling, not his passion. The two verses may therefore close the journey section as well, in which Paul has come from Antioch to Ephesus.¹⁵ The decision on where to attach them depends finally on the internal structure of the two main sections. Do they better fit to 11:19–19:20 as conclusion or the following chapters as beginning? At any rate, there is no other break of comparable weight thereafter, neither the arrival in Jerusalem nor the departure to Caesarea or to Rome (21:17; 23:12; 27:1). All following parts tell the story of Paul’s passion and, at the same time, the fulfillment of his destiny in Rome (see 19:21; 23:11; 27:24).

1.3 *Caesura after 1:11*

Like Luke’s gospel, his second book begins with a prologue, visible in the author’s first person and the address “Theophilus” in 1:1a. How far does it go? The proposals vary from 1:1–3 (Schneider, Zmijewski) and 1:1–8 (Haenchen) to 1:1–11 (Pesch, Johnson), 1:1–12 (Zahn, Schille) and 1:1–14 (de Wette, Jervell).¹⁶ Some commentaries regard the whole chapter as an introduction and begin their first main section in 2:1. There is obviously a smooth transition from the proemial verses recalling the content of Luke’s “first book” (1:1–2) to the narrative of Acts. Instead of being informed about this second book, the reader is immediately involved in the conversations the risen Lord has with his disciples in 1:3–8. Only in retrospect does it become clear that Jesus’ announcement of the Spirit is a forecast of the story that follows: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (1:8).

Certainly in 1:12 there is no change of day (it’s still Ascension Day), but the place moves from the Mount of Olives to the “room upstairs”, and the leading characters change from Jesus to the apostles. The topic is no longer the “king-

¹⁴ Johann Albrecht Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (1742; 3rd ed.; Tubingae 1855) 416; Frederick F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids 1954) 393; Kümmel, *Einleitung*, 124; Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; EKKNT 5; Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn 1986) 2:8; cf. Kirsopp Lake, *The Acts of the Apostles (The Beginnings of Christianity 1/4; London 1933)* 243; John C. O’Neill, *The Theology of Acts in its Historical Setting* (London 1970) 72; Jürgen Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (NTD 5, 17th ed.; Göttingen 1981) 288: 19:21–22 mark “einen entscheidenden Wendepunkt”.

¹⁵ See Beyer, *Apostelgeschichte*, 113: 19:1–22 as one section; Tannehill, *Acts*, 230: 18:18–19:22.

¹⁶ Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 1:9; Zmijewski, *Apostelgeschichte*, 5; Haenchen, *Apostelgeschichte*, 9; Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 1:8; Luke T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SacPag 5; Colledgeville 1992) v; Zahn, *Apostelgeschichte*, 1:9; Schille, *Apostelgeschichte*, viii; de Wette, *Erklärung*, 6; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 5.

dom of God” and the universal testimony to Christ (1:3, 11). Now it’s the internal question: who belongs to the apostolic circle? A caesura before 1:12, not after 1:14, makes sense.

In this understanding the prologue can be divided into three paragraphs: proem (1:1-3), conversations of the 40 days (1:4-8) and ascension (1:9-11). Then the following passage about the by-election of the twelfth apostle is tripartite as well: gathering of the first congregation (1:12-14), Peter’s speech (1:15-22) and the decision on Matthias (1:23-26). The whole passage 1:12-26 seems to be a literary unit since the “eleven apostles” are listed at the beginning (1:13) and explicitly mentioned at the very end (1:26).

2. Paul’s mission: 11:19–19:22

Can we understand each main section as a well-designed unit on its own? The advantage of a main caesura introduced in chap. 19 concerns the second and third main sections. Since it is not possible to discuss the single stories in detail here, the focus will be on demonstrating the internal consistency in the structure of these sections.

The middle section of Acts consists of three groups of major parts which are quite different in size. The most voluminous ones relate the two missionary journeys and have a similar structure. They are framed by three major parts dealing with events in Jerusalem and Ephesus; the analysis will show their careful concentric composition. Two small parts form the beginning and the end of the section.

2.1 *Two great missionary journeys*

Barnabas’ and Paul’s mission in Cyprus and Asia Minor: 13:1–14:28

The narrative culminates in two episodes: Paul’s sermon before Jews in Antioch of Pisidia (13:14-43), and the contrast between the reverence paid by Gentiles in Lystra and the persecution by Jews of Iconium (14:1-20a). Both episodes are tripartite: first exposition, speech, reaction (13:14-16, 17-41, 42-43), then persecution, adoration, execution (14:1-7, 8-18, 19-20a). The dramatic shift to Gentile mission is told in the central part (13:44-52): “the word of God should be spoken first to you [...], we are now turning to the Gentiles” (13:46). The two parts at the beginning deal with the departure from Antioch (13:1-3) and the mission in Cyprus with John Mark first accompanying, then leaving (13:4-5, 6-12, 13). The two short parts at the end tell about their way back, visiting congregations and introducing elders (14:20b-25), then the return to Antioch (14:26-28).

Paul's mission in Asia Minor and Greece: 15:36–18:23

The journey begins with the departure from Antioch and Paul's parting from Barnabas (15:36-41). A dramatic report about the new destination deals with Timothy as Paul's co-worker, the call to Macedonia and the first success in Philippi (16:1-5, 6-12, 13-15).¹⁷ The journey culminates first in Paul's wonderful deliverance from the Roman prison in Philippi, with arrest, earthquake at midnight and honorable release (16:16-24, 25-34, 35-40), then in his encounter with Gentile philosophers in Athens – again a tripartite scene with exposition, speech, reaction (17:16-21, 22-31, 32-34). Paul's preaching in Thessalonica, the conflict there and his withdrawal to Beroea are told in the middle (17:1-15). The 18-month stay in Corinth is important because of Paul's separation from the synagogue, God's promise of future help, and the proconsul's refusal to proceed against Paul (18:1-6, 7-11, 12-17). Finally, Paul returns to Antioch and departs again to Asia Minor (18:18-23).

2.2 Three decisive events in Jerusalem and Ephesus

Peter's exodus from Jerusalem: 11:27–12:25

The episode itself is framed by the connections between Antioch and Jerusalem (11:27-30) and by Barnabas' and Paul's return to Antioch (12:24-25). In between, King Herod's persecution and Peter's arrest correspond with Peter's puzzling absence from prison and Herod's death (12:1-5, 18-23). Peter's somnambulist walking out of prison corresponds with the congregation's amazement when he knocks at the door (12:6-10, 12-17). The exact center is the moment when Peter realizes: "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting" (12:11).¹⁸ His deliverance is worded like Exod 18:4 LXX, quasi as a new exodus.¹⁹

Apostles' council in Jerusalem: 15:1-35

Delegations from and to Antioch frame the narrative again (15:1-3, 30-35). The controversy is defined at the council's beginning, its decree is written down in a letter at the end (15:4-6, 22-29). Statements of the main characters make up the

¹⁷ The three parts seem to be rather disparate, but in the middle, the first of the "we-passages" (16:10-16) connects the two last parts (16:6-15) quite obviously. Therefore Paul's tour through Derbe and Lystra (16:1-5) can be regarded as a prelude of his shift to Europe rather than as a separate unit.

¹⁸ Friedrich G. Lang, "Apostelgeschichte 12,1-11," in *Gottesdienstpraxis A.IV/4: Exegesen* (Gütersloh 1993), 162-164, at 163; cf. Ronald H. van der Bergh, "The Contrasting Structure of Acts 12:5-17," in *HTSTeolStud* 69 (2013) Art. #1313: correspondence of 12:5-11 and 12:12-17, but without 12:11 as central verse.

¹⁹ See Knut Backhaus, "Die Erfindung der Kirchengeschichte: Zur historiographischen Funktion von Apg 12," *ZNW* 103 (2012) 157-176, at 165.

middle: Peter reminds of Cornelius' baptism and quotes a *sola-gratia*-formula, Barnabas and Paul tell of all "God had done through them among the Gentiles," and in concentric correspondence James refers to Peter's report and proposes the solution that becomes the council's decree (15:7-11, 12, 13-21).

Paul's missionary success in Ephesus: 18:24–19:20

Disparate traditions are combined in this major part consisting of five paragraphs. In the middle is Paul's stay of over two years and his exodus from the synagogue into the hall of Tyrannus (19:8-12) "so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord" (19:10). The congregation in Ephesus begins with a group of disciples baptized into John's baptism, then baptized by Paul in Jesus' name, receiving the Holy Spirit (18:24-28; 19:1-7). Correspondingly some Jewish exorcists misusing Jesus' name are chastised by evil spirits, and many believers give up their magic practices. "So the word of the Lord grew mightily" (19:13-17, 18-20).

2.3 Two smaller parts framing the section

Beginnings in Antioch: 11:19-26

Three important events are reported: the unorganized conversion of "Hellenists", the visitation of Barnabas sent off by the Jerusalem congregation and accepting the new development, and the close connection between Paul and Antioch (11:19-21, 22-24, 25-26).

Paul's future plans: 19:21-22

Paul's active planning precedes the main section relating his passion. The verses fit as a compositional counterpart to 11:19-26. The route revealed to Paul by the Spirit will lead through Greece and eventually to Jerusalem and Rome.

2.4 Axial symmetry in middle section

Thus the section has a concentric structure of seven parts. In the middle stands the apostles' council of Jerusalem, officially opening the way to Gentile mission (15:1-35).

It is framed by the great missionary journeys in which several pairs of motifs correspond in axial-symmetrical order: the two great sermons, first before Jews in Pisidia, then before Gentiles in Athens (13:16-41; 17:22-31); the two dramatic persecution scenes, the attempted stoning initiated by Jews of Iconium and the arrest initiated by Gentiles in Philippi (14:1-7, 19-20; 16:16-40). Twice a proconsul is mentioned: Sergius Paulus in Cyprus at the beginning and Gallio in Corinth at the end (13:6-12; 18:12-17). The congregations are visited twice: at the first journey's end and the second journey's beginning (14:20b-25; 16:1-5). All these seem to be arranged intentionally.

The two surrounding smaller parts correspond as well: Peter's exodus from Jerusalem and Paul's separation from the synagogue in Ephesus (12:11; 19:9). A

prelude introduces Paul in Antioch, the closing verses his further destinations (11:19-26; 19:21-22).

3. Paul's passion: 19:23–28:31

The last section also seems to be carefully disposed. It consists of seven major parts again, arranged in a concentric composition of three pairs and one central part. The middle three parts belong together and deal with Paul's trial. The basis of this analysis, a caesura before 19:23, turns out anew to be an improvement.

3.1 *Ephesus and Rome*

The riot of Ephesian silversmiths: 19:23-40

The episode takes place in one city and on one day, but the three scenes have different main characters: first Demetrius and the silversmiths worried about their business, then the people of Ephesus shouting against the Jews, finally the town clerk calming the emotions (19:23-28, 29-34, 35-40). He recommends the regular judicial procedure to Demetrius, referring back to the charges of the beginning.

Paul's witness in Rome: 28:16-31

Most interpreters begin the book's last part with 28:17. Yet 28:16 and 28:30-31 correspond in dealing with Paul's lodging.²⁰ They frame three paragraphs about his meetings with Jewish leaders (28:17-22, 23-24, 25-29), the last verse being Paul's summary responding to Jewish rejection: "This salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."

Comparison

The two major parts take place in important cities. They hint at Paul's situation in the trial. According to the town clerk's judgment, Paul and his companions are "neither temple robbers nor blasphemers of our goddess" (19:37), and at the end "the lenient conditions of custody" attest "that the Roman authorities considered the apostle to be innocent of the political charges preferred against him".²¹

3.2 *Two great journeys*

Paul's visitation journey from Greece to Jerusalem: 20:1–21:16

The end of this part can be defined differently, as we have seen.²² A break before 21:17 recognizes the difference between journey and arrival. In the subsequent Jerusalem part, the beginning and end frame the speech of the elders

²⁰ Alfons Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (ÖTK 5, 2 vols.; Gütersloh/Würzburg 1981/85) 2:674; cf. Schmithals, *Apostelgeschichte*, 238.

²¹ Harry W. Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul* (WUNT 2/35; Tübingen 1989), 179.

²² See notes 7-11.

(21:17-19, 20-25, 26). The whole journey is divided into two corresponding parts: passage from Ephesus through Greece to Miletus with a stop in Troas (20:1-6, 7-12, 13-16), then passage from Miletus to Jerusalem with visits in Tyre and Caesarea (21:1-16). In between in Miletus, Paul's address to the elders of Ephesus is framed by a short introduction and a highly emotional farewell (20:17, 18-35, 36-38).

Paul's transfer from Caesarea to Rome: 27:1–28:15

The central event is the five-part drama of storm and shipwreck (27:14-44). In the three middle scenes Paul is gradually becoming the secret commander, predicting the rescue of all, preventing the escape of the sailors, urging food be eaten (27:21-26, 27-32, 33-38). The voyage first leads from Caesarea via Lycia to Fair Haven on Crete (27:1-13). After the shipwreck they spend three months on Malta before setting off to Rome (28:1-15). Paul is a prisoner first, and the centurion doesn't appreciate his advice (27:11). Finally the natives adore him (28:6-10).

Comparison

The two corresponding parts are journeys, mostly by ship. Similar motifs are the itineraries listing the fellow-travelers (20:4; 27:1-2) and the stops (esp. 20:5-6, 13-16; 21:1-3, 7-8; 27:2-8; 28:11-15). These parts make up most of the so-called "we-passages".

3.3 Paul's great apologias in Jerusalem and Caesarea

Paul's arrest and his apologia before the Jewish people: 21:17–23:11

The last verse marks a strong caesura within the on-going dramatic events: the Lord's nightly appearance with the announcement, "you must bear witness also in Rome". This heavenly intervention closes a major part of five scenes. The center is Paul's public apologia narrating his turnabout from persecuting to preaching Christ (22:2b-21). This is preceded by his arrest in the temple and the protective Roman custody (21:27–22:2a) and followed by his claiming Roman citizenship (22:22-29), scenes all taking place on the same day. Seven days earlier, in the first scene, Paul has met James and the elders (21:17-26). In the fifth scene "the next day", Paul is brought to the Sanhedrin, provoking a controversy between Sadducees and Pharisees, with summons, proceedings and following night (22:30; 23:1-10, 11).

Paul's apologia before Governor Festus and King Agrippa: 25:1–26:32

The unity of this major part is constituted by Governor Festus. His inaugural visit in Jerusalem and the meeting with the Jewish leaders re-opens Paul's trial in a tripartite scene: Festus in Jerusalem, the proceedings in Caesarea, Paul's appeal to the emperor (25:1-5, 6-8, 9-12). The following four scenes present King Agrippa and Bernice as guests of Festus, first in an internal consultation (25:13-22), the next day in a tripartite hearing: Festus' summary of the case

(25:23-27) is followed by Paul's apologia (26:1-23) and the final judgment: "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to the emperor" (26:24-32). This concluding "not guilty" plea contrasts with the Jewish charges at the beginning (25:7), reported by Festus in the middle (25:25).

Comparison

The two major parts correspond especially in two points. Firstly, Paul in his great apologies tells his own story twice: his origin as a strict Pharisee, his conversion near Damascus and his mission among Gentiles. In Jerusalem it is the central scene of five (22:2b-21), in Caesarea the fourth one (26:1-23). Secondly, the legal procedure: Paul proclaims his Roman citizenship (22:25) and appeals to Caesar (25:11).

3.4 Middle major part

Paul's transfer to Caesarea: 23:12–24:27

With no caesura in time the story continues the next morning (23:12). Change of place, however, is the main subject of these dramatic scenes.

Three smaller scenes provide the framework for two longer parts. First, an agitated Jewish group is plotting against Paul (23:12-16), then Paul is handed over to Governor Felix (23:33-35), and finally Felix leaves Paul in custody (24:24-27). In between, Paul is rescued in a tripartite action: Tribune Lysias is informed of the planned ambush by Paul's nephew, he prepares the transfer, and Paul is brought to Antipatris by a gigantic convoy (23:17-22, 23-30, 31-32). In the other tripartite scene Paul's trial is formally opened: the charges are stated, Paul defends himself, the governor postpones the decision (24:1-9, 10-21, 22-23).

Most important for Paul's trial are the corresponding middle parts of these two scenes: Lysias' judgment that Paul "was accused concerning questions of their law, but was charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment" (23:29), and Paul explicitly denying the charges against him (24:12-13).

4. Beginnings in Jerusalem: 1:12–11:18

We return to the unity of the first main section, given by Peter as protagonist and Jerusalem as main arena. Even the episodes playing elsewhere later connect back to Jerusalem: Philip's mission, Paul's conversion and Peter's Gentile baptism (8:14-25; 9:26-30; 11:1-18). We distinguish four "great scenes" and try to combine the rest to three further major parts.

4.1 Four "great scenes"

Pentecost: 2:1-47

The story consists of five scenes arranged in a concentric composition. The "being together" of the believers in ecstasy corresponds with their being in a cordial

fellowship (2:1-4 / 2:43b-47). The Jerusalem crowd asking what's going on is later asking what to do (2:5-13 / 2:37-43a). Peter's tripartite speech stands in the center (2:14-21, 22-28, 29-36).

The unusual paragraph division after 2:43a is supposed to solve the problem of repetitions in 2:42, 46-47a (fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer) by a distinction in time: 2:41-43a as the end of the Pentecost day, 2:43b-47 as a summary of the following period.

By this paragraphing, the longer text of 2:43 may be regarded as *lectio difficilior*: "(43a) Awe came upon every soul. (43b) Many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles [in Jerusalem, awe was great upon all. (44) And] all who believed...", secondarily shortened in order to avoid the double "awe". So the summary may distinguish between all in Jerusalem (2:43b) and all believers (2:44).²³

Peter's and John's first arrest: 3:1-4:31

Again it is a unit of five scenes dealing with the salvific power of Jesus' name, starting with the healing at the temple's gate (3:1-10) and concluding with the congregation's prayer (4:23-31). Peter's speech (3:11-26) and the trial before the Sanhedrin (4:5-22) are the two especially momentous parts. In the middle, Peter and John are arrested because of proclaiming the resurrection of the dead (4:1-4).

Stephen's martyrdom: 6:8-8:3

When the installation of seven deacons (6:1-7) is taken separately, the narrative about Stephen has three parts: his accusation before the Sanhedrin (6:8-15), his extensive apologia (7:1-53), finally his death by stoning and the subsequent persecution (7:54-8:3). The latter is a tripartite unit (7:54-58a; 7:58b-8:1a; 8:1b-3)²⁴ since Stephen's death (7:59-60; 8:2) and Paul's hostility (7:58b; 8:1a; 8:3) are intermingled repeatedly. In a chiasmic way Stephen is characterized as a man full of Spirit and as a visionary (6:10, 15; 7:55-56).

Baptism of the first Gentile: 10:1-11:18

This extraordinary step in the Church's early history is initiated by Cornelius' and Peter's double visions (10:1-24a), retold by Peter in Jerusalem when he has to justify himself before the congregation (11:1-18). Their encounter in Caesarea forms the tripartite middle: they tell each other their visions (10:24b-33), Peter

²³ See James H. Ropes, *The Text of Acts (The Beginnings of Christianity, ed. Frederick Foakes-Jackson, vol. 1/3; London 1926)* 24; Josep Rius-Camps, "Las variantes de la Re-censión Occidental de los Hechos de los Apóstoles (VI) (Hch 2,41-47)," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 8, 1995, 199-208, at 203 n. 15. Almost all others prefer the shorter text. Bruce M. Metzger is undecided: *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Corrected edition; Stuttgart 1975) 302.

²⁴ Differently Schille, *Apostelgeschichte*, VIII: major break already before 8:1b.

reveals his new insight (10:34-43), and the glossolalia of the Gentiles authorizes their baptism (10:44-48).

4.2 *Three further major parts*

Constitution of the first congregation: 1:12-26

See above part 1.3.

The congregation grows and conflicts increase: 4:32–6:7

Two quite different topics, the internal problems concerning the community of goods and the external conflict with the Sanhedrin, have a common basis in the growing number of believers. In this respect the five scenes belong together. The ideal community at the beginning (4:32-35) corresponds to the problems of the “daily distribution of food” solved at the end by the appointment of seven deacons (6:1-7). Highly dramatic scenes are the examples of sharing, by Barnabas and negatively by Ananias and Sapphira (4:36–5:11), then the arrest of all apostles and their trial before the Sanhedrin (5:17-42). The center is the summary about “signs and wonders” and on-going growth (5:12-16).

The mission beyond Jerusalem: 8:4–9:43

The stories of this passage may seem too disparate to form one major part. However, Philip’s mission in Samaria and south of Jerusalem (8:4-40) and Peter’s wonders in Lydda and Joppa (9:32-43) belong together geographically, fulfilling the prophecy of 1:8 “in all Judea and Samaria”. Paul’s conversion (9:1-31) is inserted into this context. It begins (9:1-2) as continuation of his persecution (8:3); at its end “the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace” (9:31). There is also a chiasmic element in Peter’s visits first in Samaria (8:14-25), then in Judea (9:32-43). The whole passage is carefully composed under the heading “those who were scattered” (8:4).

4.3 *Concentric structure?*

Analyzed this way, the section consists of seven parts. There is no obvious concentric composition. Yet at the beginning the universal mission is indicated twice, first in the prologue: “You will be my witnesses [...] to the ends of the earth” (1:8), then in the audience at Pentecost coming “from every nation under heaven” (2:5). In the last major parts Paul is “chosen to bring my name before Gentiles” (9:15), and God is praised for giving “even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life” (11:18). Being filled with the Spirit is found in the prologue and at Pentecost (1:8; 2:4) and correspondingly in the Samaria mission and the Cornelius story (8:17; 10:44). The three major parts in the middle belong together, dealing with the deteriorating conflict with the Jewish Sanhedrin: first Peter and John are arrested (4:3), then all apostles (5:18), and finally Stephen is executed (7:59).

5. Axial symmetry between first and last main sections

Our analysis demonstrates how Luke composed the book of Acts. The smaller units are usually tripartite or have an odd number of parts, so that beginning, middle and end can be distinguished. The smaller units build paragraphs, the paragraphs major parts, the major parts main sections, and on all levels one can observe axial-symmetric correspondences. This is obvious within the middle main section and also true concerning the first and third sections.

5.1 Three middle major parts

It is well known that the charges against Stephen and Paul are almost identical: “This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law” (6:13), and “This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place” (21:28a). There is some difference in the charge concerning the temple: “we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place” (6:14), and “he has actually brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place” (21:28b). Yet in both scenes the charge is characterized as false, either due to “false witnesses” or to an erroneous assumption (6:13; 21:29). Even the Jews arguing with Stephen come from Asia (among other provinces) as do those stirring up the crowd against Paul (6:9; 21:27).

Luke has obviously aligned the two stories and has intentionally situated them in exact axial-symmetrical correspondence: Stephen in major part 1.5, Paul in major part 3.3. In his apologia Paul refers to his presence at Stephen’s death (22:20), which has been told correspondingly in 7:58b–8:1. Some other parallels are striking in these contexts. In the two apologies, the youths of Moses and Paul are sketched similarly (7:20–22; 22:3): “born” (ἐγεννήθη, γεγεννημένος), “brought up” (ἀνετράφη, ἀνατετραμμένος) and “educated” (ἐπαιδεύθη, πεπαιδευμένος).²⁵ Another relation connects the major parts 1.3 and 3.5: governor and king cooperate against Jesus (4:27: Herod and Pilate) and in Paul’s trial (25:13–26:32: Festus and Agrippa).²⁶

The three major parts in the middle of the first and last sections deal with persecution and passion, first of the apostles and the primitive congregation, later of Paul. In both cases the events take place in Jerusalem and Judea. They develop in three steps. First the Sanhedrin must release Peter and John, “finding no way to punish them” (4:21). The situation worsens: now all apostles are arrested by Sanhedrin order. Finally, Stephen is seized and executed by the mob (major parts 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5). The apostles’ case remains undecided due to Gamaliel’s

²⁵ This seems to refer to a tripartite biographic formula, see Willem C. van Unnik, “Tarsus or Jerusalem,” in *idem, Sparsa Collecta* 1 (NovTSup 29; Leiden 1973), 259–320, at 281.

²⁶ Cf. Heike Omerzu, “Das traditionsgeschichtliche Verhältnis der Begegnungen von Jesus mit Herodes Antipas und Paulus mit Agrippa II.,” in *SNTSU A/28* (2003) 121–145, at 122.

advice (5:38-39), but Stephen is stoned to death (7:59). In the last main section, Paul's situation seems to improve in three steps, from the riot of the Jewish mob to the ordinary trial before the Roman governors Felix and Festus (major parts 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5). Felix leaves the trial undecided (24:22), but Festus' and Agrippa's concluding judgment is a preliminary acquittal: "This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment" (26:31).

In the middle of the first section, in major part 1.4, community of goods is the topic of 4:32–5:11 and 6:1-7. In major part 3.4, Paul correspondingly mentions the purpose of his visit: "I came to bring alms to my nation" (24:17). Even the geographical move may correspond: according to 5:16 the apostles attract people "from the towns around Jerusalem", in 23:33-35 Paul is transferred to Caesarea, definitively leaving Jerusalem.

5.2 Major parts 0.–1.2 and 3.6–3.7

Is there also a correspondence between the beginning of the book and its end? This can be denied regarding the parts 1.1 and 3.7: the election of Matthias has no relation to Paul's meetings with the Jewish leaders in Rome. However, there is an obvious "circularity" between the prologue and the book's conclusion (majparts 0. and 3.7): the Risen speaks with his disciples about the "kingdom of God", especially its future for Israel (1:3, 6), and Paul proclaims it in Rome to the Jewish leaders and to all his visitors (28:23, 31).²⁷

In major part 1.2, some of the Jews gathered in Jerusalem at Pentecost come from countries Paul touches on his journey to Rome in major part 3.6. Asia, Pamphylia and Egypt are mentioned in 2:9-11, also "Romans" and Cretans. Asia, too, is the provenance of Paul's first ship, Pamphylia is on their way, the next ship coming from Alexandria in Egypt is supposed to winter in Crete (27:2-12), and Rome is the destination.

The similarities seem to be rather superficial, but in the geographical outline of the book it is significant that the countries mentioned in chapter 2 are non-European and that Paul's journey to Rome leads to the West, to Europe. The "Cretans and Arabs" closing the list in 2:11 seem to be a generalized summary of Occidentals and Orientals, similar to Paul's combination of "Greeks and barbarians" in Rom 1:14.²⁸

²⁷ See Daniel Marguerat, "On Why Luke Remains Silent about Paul's End (Acts 28.16-31)," in *The Last Years of Paul* (ed. Armand Puig i Tàrrach, John M.G. Barclay and Jörg Frey; WUNT 352; Tübingen 2015) 305-332, at 313.

²⁸ Friedrich G. Lang, "Apostelgeschichte 2,1-18," in *Gottesdienstpraxis A.II/4: Exegesen* (Gütersloh 1991) 103-107, at 105; cf. Eckey, *Apostelgeschichte*, 1:77 n. 182 (2nd ed., 1:142 n. 317) with reference to O. Eißfeldt.

5.3 *Major parts 1.6 and 3.2*

Concerning the remaining major parts there are no particular parallels between parts 1.7 (Cornelius story) and 3.1 (riot in Ephesus), but those between major parts 1.6 and 3.2 are obvious. There are two corresponding movements: first the Gospel moving beyond Judea (8:4–9:43), then Paul moving back there (20:1–21:16).

The middle segments deal particularly with Paul, with his conversion (9:1-31) and his farewell address (20:17-38). The one implies an outlook: “he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel” (9:15). The other implies Paul’s review: “I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus” (20:21).

It seems that some further motifs are deliberately placed immediately before and thereafter in symmetrical order. The evangelist Philip moves to Caesarea after his mission (8:40), and Paul traveling to Jerusalem stays in Philip’s home there (21:8). A raising from the dead happens in Joppa (9:40) and in Troas (20:10), the one on Peter’s, the other on Paul’s visitation journey (9:32-43; 20:1-16). Even the names “Aeneas” and “Troas” (9:33; 20:6) seem to be secretly connected. The series of these motifs cannot be explained by chance. It was the author’s intention. The proposed main caesura in 19:23 is again confirmed by these correspondences.

6. **Overlapping structures**

Some motifs connect different main sections of the whole book. They are also part of the elaborated disposition, as the following observations may show.

6.1 *Structuring visions*

The announcement of the ascending Lord in 1:8 summarizes the content of Luke’s second book: “You [...] will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This has long been recognized. Pentecost (chap. 2) and the missionary activities of chaps. 3–8 are mentioned here explicitly. The rest of Acts, however, is covered by the general objective “to the end of the earth”. What about the disposition of the remaining 20 chapters?

The prophecy in 9:15-16 given to Ananias in Damascus about Paul’s destiny fulfills this function perfectly: “He is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” The unusual term “bear my name before” has a double meaning here: proclaiming the

name of Christ as a missionary and confessing faith in Christ when on trial.²⁹ Therefore it is used for Paul's mission among Jews and Gentiles (esp. chaps. 11–19) as well as for Paul's witness: before Jews in Jerusalem and Rome (chaps. 22; 28), and before Caesar's tribunal and King Agrippa (chaps. 25–26). Paul's "sufferings" of 9:16 are the subject especially after chap. 19. Thus the prophecy about Paul can be regarded as a preview of the middle and last main sections. Paul is becoming the bearer of the witness "to the end of the earth": by his mission in chaps. 11–19 and his passion in chaps. 19–28.³⁰

A third structuring verse is 19:21, which contains the geographic disposition of the third main section as already mentioned.³¹ "Paul resolved in the Spirit to go through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go on to Jerusalem. He said, 'After I have gone there, I must also see Rome.'" These journeys are told in the two corresponding major parts 3.2 and 3.6. Thus the plan of the whole book is traced back to the divine plan. Christ's prophecies and the Spirit inspiring Paul's resolve direct the path of the history told in Acts.

The same is true in some other stories. In 8:26 "an angel of the Lord" sends Philip to the road to meet the Ethiopian eunuch, in 10:10 Peter is directed into a Gentile's house, and in 16:9 the "man of Macedonia" in Paul's vision calls him to Europe. Several encouragements Paul gets from heaven are along the same line, whether in Corinth facing Jewish opposition (18:9-10), in the Roman barracks of Jerusalem (23:11) or on the ship amidst the tempest (27:23-24).

6.2 Chapter 15 interlinked backwards and forwards

The central position of the apostles' council is confirmed by three kinds of references. They connect chap. 15 to the surrounding journeys and to the other main sections of Acts.

Barnabas' and Paul's journey (13:1–14:28) is recalled three times: on their way to Jerusalem through Phoenicia and Samaria (15:3), after their arrival (15:4), and in the council itself when they tell of the "signs and wonders" God has done among the Gentiles (15:12).

Peter's conversion to Gentile mission induced by a double vision (10:1-24a) is summarized in 10:34-35: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." Peter repeats this insight before the Jerusalem congregation (11:17). At the apostles' council the Cornelius story is referred to by Peter (15:7) and then

²⁹ See Barrett, *Acts*, 1:456; differently, i.e. exclusively the confessing meaning: Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 151; Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte*, 1:226.

³⁰ Friedrich G. Lang, "Apostelgeschichte 9,1-9(10-20)," in *Gottesdienstpraxis A.II/4: Exegesen* (Gütersloh 1991), 144-147, at 144.

³¹ Cf. Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 288: "Die Funktion von V.21 für den Schlußteil ist mit der von 1,8 für das ganze Buch vergleichbar."

by James: “Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name” (15:14). It is the decisive reason for accepting the Gentiles among the believers without insisting on circumcision. The Cornelius story is obviously one of the key scenes of Acts.

The apostles’ decree, eventually, proposed by James and passed by the council (15:20, 28), is introduced in Paul’s congregations at the beginning of his second journey and recalled upon his arrival in Jerusalem (16:4; 21:25).

6.3 *Paul’s conversion*

Paul’s turnaround from persecuting to proclaiming the Gospel is a second key scene of Acts. As in the narrative of Cornelius the extraordinary importance is indicated by a double vision: Paul and Ananias are brought together by the risen Christ (9:3-7, 10-16). Paul becomes aware that crucified Jesus lives, and Ananias receives the message about Paul’s future destiny.

Like the Cornelius story, Paul’s Damascus experience is retold first in Jerusalem (9:27), later twice in Paul’s great apologias of Jerusalem and Caesarea (22:6-16; 26:12-18). There are minor disagreements about the details of what Paul’s co-travelers see or hear, but the main point is clear: Paul becomes a witness of Jesus’ resurrection and is sent to the Gentiles.

Thus “Damascus” is a clamp between the first and the third main sections of Acts. It’s the basis of Paul’s mission to the Gentiles and then the decisive argument in his defense. For the Lord himself has commissioned him, saying: “It hurts you to kick against the goads” (26:14).

6.4 *The “we-passages”*

Three of Paul’s journeys are told in the first person plural, suggesting that the author was among Paul’s co-travelers: on the short-distance tour Troas–Philippi (16:10-17) and on the long-distance tours Philippi–Jerusalem (20:5–21:18) and Caesarea–Rome (27:1–28:16).³² The reason for the repeated shift from “they” to “we” and back to “they” is not explained at all. The intensive search for analogies in ancient literature has not been very successful. Robbins postulated a sea voyage pattern based on four (albeit questionable) references.³³ Wehnert found a parallel in Dan 7–14, Thornton in Ammianus of 392 CE.³⁴

³² The traditional view of “we” as pointing to an eyewitness has gained acceptance again, see Jens Schröter, “Die Paulusdarstellung der Apostelgeschichte,” in *Paulus Handbuch* (ed. Friedrich W. Horn; Tübingen 2013) 542-551, at 551. A literary solution, however, avoids problems of the eyewitness hypothesis.

³³ Robbins, *Sea Voyages*, 59-63 (reprint of 1978): (1) Hanno, *Periplus* (350–125 BCE): a “we”-report throughout, introduced by a “he”-sentence; (2) P.Petr. 45+144 (FrGrHist 160, c. 246 BCE): a military bulletin (not a literary “episode”!) from the Third Syrian War, but

Analysis of the composition reveals a new point: due to the caesura at 19:23, the two long “we-passages” are placed in symmetrical correspondence. That means that the author has chosen the “we” intentionally, not because he wants to refer to an eyewitness, but in order to emphasize the two journeys. Why are they of such importance? They are characterized not only by “we” and sea, but also by visions. It is the Spirit directing Paul to Jerusalem (19:21; 20:22). The co-traveling “we” wishing to hinder him must concede eventually: “The Lord’s will be done” (21:14). Concerning Rome, Paul receives the message: “As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome” (23:11). This divine “must” (δεῖ) underlines the importance of Rome also in 19:21; 27:24.³⁵

The same connection of vision and “we” is found in 16:10. Paul doesn’t know where to go next, but a triple vision shows him the way. The Spirit prevents him from going to Asia, then from entering Bithynia (16:6-7). Finally, in Troas, the “man of Macedonia” appearing in the night calls him to Europe (16:9). It’s only a short passage to Philippi, but a giant leap in the history of the Church. This, too, is a key scene of Acts. The term “Europe” is missing, but an ancient reader knows that Paul switches to the other continent, like Brutus in the night before he crossed the Hellespont for the battle against Octavian in 42 BCE, hearing a man in a vision: “Thou shalt see me at Philippi.”³⁶ In this understanding, the “we” indicates a decisive new beginning in Paul’s mission.³⁷

With such a universal perspective, it may be due to careful disposition that the “we-passages” begin in Troas and lead to Rome. Troas is the first-century name of Alexandria Troados, a Roman colony and the main harbor in the district of Troy.³⁸ The famous ancient site of Homer’s *Iliad* had been rebuilt by Augustus

“we” already in I.18, not only in II.12 “as a sea voyage is recounted”; (3) *Antiochene Acts of Ignatius* and (4) *Act Pet.* (NHC VI.1): two Christian writings obviously imitating Acts.

³⁴ Jürgen Wehnert, *Die Wir-Passagen der Apostelgeschichte* (GTA 40; Göttingen 1989) 181: “möglicherweise in Dan[iel] das konkrete literarische Vorbild”, but the shift there is from “he” (7:1; 10:1) to: “I, Daniel” (7:2; 10:2); Claus-Jürgen Thornton, *Der Zeuge des Zeugen: Lukas als Historiker der Paulusreisen* (WUNT 56; Tübingen 1991) 179: Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 23-25 (Julian’s campaign against the Persians) as the only real parallel; 170-171 n. 204: critical rebuttal of Robbins’ four parallels.

³⁵ See Thornton, *Zeuge*, 365-366.

³⁶ Plutarchus, *Caes.* 69.5: “from Abydos [...] to the other continent”; Appianus, *Bell. Civ.* 4.134: “drive across from Asia to Europe”. These sources are younger than Acts (c. 110–160 CE), the story is certainly older.

³⁷ See Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:405; Gerd Lüdemann, *Das frühe Christentum nach den Traditionen der Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen 1987), 185; against Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 417: “Europe not particularly mentioned, for Asia Minor is not less Hellenistic than Greece.”

³⁸ See Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (WUNT 49; Tübingen 1989) 179.

after his visit of 20 BCE.³⁹ Vergil's *Aeneid* praising the founder of Rome had become popular in the imperial society since its publication.⁴⁰ The first verses summarize the whole epic about the man coming from Troy and arriving in Italy.⁴¹ He does not know where to sail after his flight and gets several bad omens before a divine command tells him in the night to go West.⁴² An educated author like Luke familiar with the name "Aeneas" (9:33)⁴³ – how could he not think of the Roman hero when designing Paul's similar voyage?⁴⁴

The *Aeneid* may even help toward a solution of the we-problem. Vergil's epic, written on the threshold of a universal empire comprising Europe and Asia, presents Aeneas as a figure to identify with; his story is "our" story. Maybe,

³⁹ Ch. Brian Rose, "Ilion in griechischer und römischer Zeit: Geschichte und Ausgrabungsbefunde," in *Troia: Traum und Wirklichkeit* (Stuttgart 2001) 180-187, at 185. Aeneas' flight from Troy became part of the imperial myth propagated through statues and coins; see Paul Zanker, *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* (München 1987) 204-207, 212, 311.

⁴⁰ Erika Simon, "Rom und Troia: Der Mythos von den Anfängen bis in die römische Kaiserzeit," in *Troia: Traum und Wirklichkeit* (Stuttgart 2001) 154-173, at 169; Dennis R. MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil: Imitations of Classical Greek Literature* (Lanham 2015) 3-4; Werner Suerbaum, "Der Anfangsprozess der 'Kanonisierung' Vergils," in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion: Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch* (ed. Eve-Marie Becker, Stefan Scholz; Berlin/Boston 2012) 171-219, at 215: Vergil took first place among Roman authors, second only to Homer (cf. Quintilian *Inst.* 10.1.86); cf. Johannes Irmscher, "Vergil in der griechischen Antike," *Klio* 67 (1985) 281-285, at 282: Vergil was paraphrased in Greek by Polybius (Seneca *Polyb.* 8.2; 11.5); Marianne P. Bonz, *The Past as Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic* (Minneapolis 2000) 24-25.

⁴¹ Vergil, *Aen.* 1.1: *Troiae [...] ab oris* (from the Trojan shore); 1.5, 7: *dum conderet urbem [...] Romae* (till he founded the city of Rome); cf. Bonz, *Past*, 40-41. Aeneas' story could be known even without knowledge of Vergil, see Loveday C.A. Alexander, *Acts in its Ancient Literary Context: A Classicist Looks at the Acts of the Apostles* (LNTS 289; London / New York 2005) 174: "a story whose general outline was energetically propagated by the Julio-Claudian dynasty via the imperial cult."

⁴² Vergil, *Aen.* 3.88: *quove ire iubes? ubi ponere sedes?* (where you tell to go? where to settle); 3.166: there is a land called *Italiam*; cf. MacDonald, *Luke*, 154.

⁴³ Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer: Imitations of Greek Epic in Mark and Luke-Acts* (Lanham 2015), 49 (quoting Michael Kochenash): the name "Aeneas" as "structuring marker"; M. Kochenash, "You Can't Hear 'Aeneas' without thinking of Rome," *JBL* 136 (2017) 667-685, esp. 684; cf. *idem*, "Political Correction: Luke's Tabitha (Acts 9:36-43), Virgil's Dido, and Cleopatra," *NovT* 60 (2018) 1-13: the name "Dorcas" = "deer" as an allusion to the Dido story.

⁴⁴ Against Stefan Krauter, "Vergils Evangelium und das lukanische Epos?" in *Die Apostelgeschichte im Kontext antiker und frühchristlicher Historiographie* (ed. Jörg Frey, Clare K. Rothschild, Jens Schröter; BZNW 162; Berlin 2009) 214-243: reluctant to affirm Luke's knowledge of the *Aeneid* (219), observing, however, numerous similarities, parallels, overlaps, but also characteristic differences (243).

Luke analogously wants to integrate the Gentile Church of his time into the narrative, implicitly conveying that Paul's way is "our" way.⁴⁵

6.5 *Paul's letters*

Many scholars consider it impossible that Luke knew Paul's letters; the historical and theological differences seem to be too significant.⁴⁶ The crux is the apostles' council. According to Gal 2:1 it is Paul's second visit in Jerusalem, in Acts 15 his third (after 9:26; 11:30). Gentile mission is defended before the council: in Gal 2:5 by Paul, in Acts 15:7 by Peter referring to the Cornelius story. In Gal 2:9-10 they agree to divide the mission among Gentiles (Paul) and Jews (James, Peter, John), imposing no other obligation on Paul but the collection for the poor. In Acts 15:29 Gentile Christians are bound to four commandments by a decree not mentioned in Paul's letters.

However, can one imagine that an author writing on Paul thirty or more years after his death and collecting available information has not come across his letters? The differences can be explained otherwise. According to the disposition presented here Luke seems more interested in symmetry than in chronology. Moreover the controversies of old may have appeared in a different light after Peter has come to the West as an apostle among Gentiles like Paul and after both have died as martyrs.⁴⁷

In Luke's harmonizing perspective Peter's conversion to Gentile mission is styled as a conversion to Paul's Gospel: "God does not show favoritism but [...] everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (10:34, 43); and "through the grace of our Lord Jesus [...] we are saved" (15:11). That sounds like a rewritten Paul: "the gospel [...] brings salvation to everyone who believes;" "God does not show favoritism;" "all are justified freely by his grace" (Rom 1:16; 2:11; 3:24). Paul was the first to have this insight as far as we know, but finally Peter may have come close to Paul geographically and even theologically. In reconstructing the events Luke changed the order – intentionally or because he unconsciously presupposed Peter's apostolic authority? If one concedes to Luke freedom and ability for creative writing, it is not necessary to deny his knowledge of Paul's letters.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ See Eckey, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:352 (2nd ed., 2:444): "das 'Wir' (lädt) den Leser [...] zur Identifikation mit der Gruppe um Paulus ein, so daß er deren Weg sozusagen als eigenen nacherlebt" (Eckey nevertheless suggests an eyewitness); Robbins, *Sea Voyages*, 80; Bonz, *Past*, 173: connection of "we-sections" and "among us" (Luke 1:1).

⁴⁶ See Kümmel, *Einleitung*, 147-151 (extensive discussion).

⁴⁷ See Martin Hengel, *Der unterschätzte Petrus* (Tübingen 2006) 161.

⁴⁸ Lang, *Apostelgeschichte* 9,1-9, 145; cf. Jens Schröter, "Die Paulusdarstellung der Apostelgeschichte," in *Paulus Handbuch* (ed. Friedrich W. Horn; Tübingen 2013) 542-551, at 546; Ryan S. Schellenberg, "The First Pauline Chronologist? Paul's Itinerary in the Letters

7. Conclusion

The structure of Acts becomes transparent when a major caesura is introduced before 19:23 distinguishing Paul's mission from his passion. Thus Acts consists of three main sections, recounting the foundation of Gentile mission in Jerusalem under Peter's leadership (1:12–11:18), its realization from Antioch due to Paul's journeys (11:19–19:22), and its justification before Jewish and Roman audiences in Paul's apologias (19:23–28:31). Overall subject is the Gentile mission of the early Church. The primary interest is not in general Church history or in biographies (hence the silence about Peter's and Paul's deaths). The rightness of the Gentile mission has been debated from the beginning. So the whole book defends it against Jewish, Jewish-Christian and Gentile opposition. As "apologetic historiography" it helps the young Church find her identity.⁴⁹

The three main sections are arranged in axial-symmetrical correspondences: between the major parts of the middle section as well as between the two other main sections, chapter 15 being the axis. The two missionary journeys (13:1–14:28; 15:36–18:23) or the first and third main sections correlate in many features, such as the charges against Stephen and Paul (6:13; 21:28) or Paul's commissioning in Damascus and his retrospect in Miletus (9:1-31; 20:17-38). The third main section is a concentric composition in itself with the corresponding sea voyages ("we-passages") to Jerusalem and Rome (20:1–21:16; 27:1–28:15) or with Paul's apologias before Jewish and gentile audiences (22:2b-21; 26:1b-23).

The author seems to be aware of aesthetic categories and able to create a highly sophisticated work of art.⁵⁰ The prologue Luke 1:1-4 describes the concept of historiography like Aristotle: history is presented *καθ' ἑκάστων*, in every detail. Acts, however, comes closer to Aristotle's concept of poetry: the historical process is presented *καθόλου*, in its all-embracing idea.⁵¹ Apparently Luke had to change his approach. In his Gospel he depends on several written sources,

and in Acts," *JBL* 134 (2015) 193-213, at 213: Luke has "accessed almost all of Paul's undisputed letters".

⁴⁹ See Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition* (NovTSup 64; Leiden 1992) 386-89; Knut Backhaus, "Lukas der Maler," in K. Backhaus, G. Häfner, *Historiographie und fiktionales Erzählen* (BibTS 86; Neukirchen-Vluyn 2007) 30-66, at 31.

⁵⁰ Luke's high literary standard as demonstrated here in the disposition of Acts is usually denied, see Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel* (Cambridge 1993) 210: "linguistic consensus on the 'literate but not literary' language of the New Testament (and of Luke-Acts in particular)".

⁵¹ Aristotle, *Poet.* 9.3; see Knut Backhaus, "Spielräume der Wahrheit," in K. Backhaus, G. Häfner, *Historiographie und fiktionales Erzählen* (BibTS 86; Neukirchen-Vluyn 2007) 1-29, at 21-25; Friedrich G. Lang, "Maßarbeit im Markus-Aufbau: Stichometrische Analyse und theologische Interpretation" 2, *BN* 141 (2009) 101-115, at 103.

while in Acts he combines heterogeneous materials within a frame he has created himself.⁵²

⁵² I wish to thank Dr. Beverly Olson-Dopffel, Heidelberg, for linguistic assistance.