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A Lukan Paradigm of Witness

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**A Lukan Paradigm of Witness:
Community as a Form of Witness
Part I**

by Lora Angeline B. Embudo

Introduction

This paper on a Lukan paradigm of witness is divided into two parts. Part I will first present a survey on modern scholarship. Following the survey, there will be a discussion of the limitations of previous studies, the features of this current study and some socio-theological approaches to Acts. Part I will also include a presentation of the thesis and methodology of this study. The last section of Part I will introduce an analysis of Luke's concept of witness, which will be continued in Part II. Part II begins with exegetical analyses of two passages in Acts that demonstrate the parallel nature of the individual's witness and the community witness. Following this, the sociology of conversion approach and a socio-theological case will be discussed. Finally, my conclusions in this study will be presented.

The Community as an Element of Luke's Paradigm of Witness:
A Survey of Modern Scholarship

In the ascendancy of Lukan scholarship, little was said about the community's witness in relation to the mission of the Church. The majority of the studies on "witness," which in Lukan definition is the proclamation and attestation of the Christian faith,¹ have been on apostolic preaching (e.g. C. H. Dodd) and philological developments

¹Allison A. Trites presents a strong case for the Lukan concept of witness as proclamation and attestation (as in law-court procedure). She also points to Luke's forensic use of "witness" in congruence with Deuteronomy 15:19. Lexical analysis of the term "witness" conducted by the present author reasonably agrees with Trites' definition. For a fuller discussion see A. A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series vol. 31 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 128-145.

(e.g. A. A. Trites).² Also, when dealing with the community in Acts, research has been predominantly done through either a Pauline or proto-Catholic lens. Accordingly, Luke's own distinctive voice on this topic has not been heard accurately due to earlier, serious suspicions of his credibility as historian-theologian. Although the trend has changed, the survey on modern scholarship below will show us that discussions regarding the community as a form of Christian witness have remained limited.

From the Dawn of Redaction Criticism to the Present

In the 1950's the leading Lukan studies came from scholars influenced by Bultmanian theology. The predominant proposition was that Luke's redaction of the Gospel and his arrangement of Acts aimed to solve early Christians' confusion on the delay of the *parousia*. Authors like P. Vielhauer, H. Conzelmann, E. Haenchen, S. Schulz, E. Grassler and G. Klein agree that Luke dealt with this diminishing eschatological hope.³ In an attempt to resolve the theological confusion of the early community, Luke, they said, historicized the *kerygma*. The most famous proponent of this thesis, H. Conzelmann, proposed "a schematized salvation-history" as the overarching theme in Luke-Acts.⁴ For him, Luke prevented disillusionment among the early believers by shifting their focus from being missiological to being institutional. In agreement with him, Ernst Haenchen, who wrote a seminal commentary on Acts, posited that the first century church existed as a unique and inimitable event of the past.⁵ Suffice it to say, scholars in this period saw Luke as a theologian who probably historicized the gospel and who painted an incredible picture of the early community of believers. Discussions of the community as witness remained few to none because the focus lingered on the idea that Luke addressed the theological problem of *parousia* delay.

Fortunately, in the 1970's, the publication of I. Howard Marshall's work, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* illuminated the tensions of this

²See C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments: Three Lectures, with an Appendix on Eschatology and History*, 3rd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), 4-22. A. A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, 1-4.

³Francois Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty Years of Research (1950-2005)*, 2nd ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006) 11.

⁴He schematized Luke's view of salvation-history into three stages: the first stage being the period of Israel, the second stage is the period of Jesus' ministry (which ended with his ascension), and the third stage is the period of the church. For a full discussion see Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* trans. G. Buswell (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 10-15.

⁵Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 246.

debate. His book opened another period in Lukan studies that encouraged scholars to reconsider the story of the early Christian community in Acts. For instance, C. F. D. Moule identified the Book of Acts as the historical reality of early Christianity.⁶ He proposed a “distinction without separation” of the three types of testimony in the book of Acts:

1. by action, the first Christians witnessed to the present activity of the Holy Spirit in the individuals and in the community
2. by word, they presented not a moral code but a recollection of the Acts of God in history
3. by communal lifestyle, they rendered glory to God and testified to others.⁷

P. H. Menoud also points to the missionary interest of Luke and states that the intent of Luke lies “in the extension the Spirit gives to the church through the apostolic testimony.”⁸ He cites Acts 1:8 where Jesus commands his witness to proclaim the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Menoud shows in his work that the book of Acts describes the accomplishment of this missionary paradigm.⁹ However, Menoud cites only three main witnesses: Peter, the mouthpiece of the Twelve who testifies to the Jews; Stephen, the witness to half-Jews; and Paul, to the non-Jews.¹⁰ For him, this pattern fulfills the program in Acts 1:8. Peter G. Bolt follows this thesis by limiting the witness in Acts to the activity of the Twelve and of Paul.¹¹ He sees mission as primarily the work of God in sending Christ to the Jews and the Gentiles through the word of his witnesses.¹² Believers, post-Acts, are not to be called witnesses, but as those who responded in faith and repentance to the message of the witnesses.¹³ For Bolt, there is no “mission of the church” because Acts does not present the Church as a sent institution.¹⁴ For Menoud and Bolt, the vocation of witness and the empowerment of the Spirit for witness had ceased at the end of the apostolic age. Consequently, modern believers should stop identifying themselves as “witnesses of Christ” and they should stop

⁶C. F. D. Moule, “Christ’s Messengers: Studies in the Acts of the Apostles” in Bovon, 353.

⁷Ibid.

⁸P. H. Menoud (1954) in Bovon, 419.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Peter G. Bolt, “Mission and Witness,” in I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson, eds., *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 191.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., 211.

¹⁴For Bolt, a church may send individuals to do a particular work (cf. Acts 13:1-4), but the church itself is not sent (ibid., 210-211).

talking about the “mission of the church” as though that mission still lived. However, this does grave injustice to the theme of witness in Luke-Acts. The narrative shows that Luke considered the community’s witness as important. In fact, he parallels the individuals’ testimony to the community’s testimony (Acts 3-4:27, et al.).¹⁵

Limitations of Previous Studies and Features of the Current Study

Our brief survey shows that even with the critical approaches to Luke-Acts, none has really explicated the relationship between Luke’s theology of witness and the early community. Perhaps theological approaches without sociological study may not fully grasp the context of the early community, that is, certain dimensions of the text are beyond the reach of philology, history, and literary criticism.¹⁶ Barton did point out that “to the extent that ‘the Lukan community behind the text’ continues to be a legitimate object of scholarly speculation, social scientific method has an inevitable and necessary part to play.”¹⁷ Thus, accepting the benefits of the social sciences in descriptively analyzing the community behind the text, this study employs a socio-theological method to understand the concept of “community as witness” in Acts. Perhaps the sociological viewpoint of conversion can aid readers to understand the role and significance of the community in the task of witness.

Socio-Theological Approaches to Acts

The use of socio-theological approaches are not entirely new since from the 1970’s exegetes have been experimenting with socio-scientific methodologies in an effort to advance our understanding of the Acts narrative.¹⁸ A positive side to this approach is an improved socio-historical sensitivity. This method gives a “thick description” in interpretation.¹⁹ An example of a modern author who has employed this approach is Philip Francis Esler. He applied socio-redactional criticism to isolate Luke’s intent, in light of the proposed socio-political

¹⁵We will resume this discussion of Bolt’s thesis in the next pages.

¹⁶Stephen C. Barton, “Sociology and Theology” in I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (eds.), *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 456.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Barton, 460-462.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 465.

pressures faced by the community.²⁰ Esler posits that Luke redacted his materials to prove the legitimacy of Christianity. His main contention was that “Luke wrote in a context where the members of his community, who were mainly Jews and Gentiles (including some Romans) . . . needed strong assurance that their decision to convert and to adopt a different lifestyle had been the correct one.”²¹

Esler gave a notable contribution, since he recognized the socio-political pressures that the community may have faced as a result of their conversion. It’s important to note because “witness” serves as an instrument for conversion.²² Inherent in Christian witness is an invitation to turn toward God (i.e., to convert). Its progressive and integrative process has consequences in the community.²³ Essentially then, “witness” (and its result) goes far beyond individual considerations—functioning in reality as a social phenomenon. Unfortunately, Esler’s socio-redactional criticism excessively uses the sect-church typology.²⁴ This resulted in his conclusion that Luke, in order to defend the new community (with its Jew-Gentile cohesion), rewrote history. In the end, his proposition ran counter to the stated purpose of Luke-Acts, that is, to proclaim a divinely revealed truth that has universal significance.

Another author, Matthias Wenk, also conducted a study with a socio-theological approach. In his book, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts*, he applied “speech-acts theory” to the Holy Spirit’s prophetic empowerment.²⁵ Wenk argues that the community’s witness depends not only in verbal proclamation but also in their renewed communal lifestyle. He posits that the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is a means for covenant renewal, especially in terms of a purifying experience (cf. Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36).²⁶ Sadly, his thesis is contradictory to Luke’s emphasis

²⁰Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: the Social and Political Motivations of Lukan Theology*, SNTSMS, no. 57 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.

²¹*Ibid.*, 16.

²²William Barclay, *Turning to God: A Study of Conversion in the Book of Acts and Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), 45.

²³Lewis R. Rambo, “Current Research on Religious Conversion” *Religious Studies Review* vol. 8, no.2.

²⁴Barton, *Witness to the Gospel*, 469-470.

²⁵With “speech-act theory,” Wenk argues that “speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behavior. To put it more briskly, talking is performing according to rules.” Matthias Wenk, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 133.

²⁶Wenk builds on Turner’s thesis and posits that Pentecost was a salvific experience, and the community formed as a result of the Pentecostal outpouring was the “this-worldly dimension of salvation and covenant realization” (Wenk, 58).

on the Pentecostal outpouring as an empowerment for witness.²⁷ It also diminishes the missiological thrust of Luke, and somehow describes the concept of “witness” as a dead metaphor in Acts, since the community becomes a mere object of renewal, and not really an active form of witness.²⁸ The brief survey again raises some important questions. Could it be that Luke portrayed the life of the community in Acts as a form of witness? If so, how important is the Christian community for the mission of the Church?

Thesis of this Study

In light of the already discussed acceptance of Acts’ historical and theological reliability, it is only right that we seek to answer the questions posed above to inform the current witness theology of the Church. Hence, for this study, the working hypothesis is that for Luke, the Christian community is a form of witness. In fact, we see in the Book of Acts:

1. The inclusion of the wider community in the task of witnessing
2. *Koinonia*
3. The community of goods as confirmatory evidence of the gospel

Methodology

We shall employ a socio-theological approach to ascertain Luke’s intention in this topic. The investigative process will include the following:

1. Brief philological discussion of Luke’s use of the term “witness”
2. Exegesis of select biblical passages that imply a relationship between community and witness²⁹ and
3. Co-relating results with the sociology of conversion

²⁷This paper disagrees with Wenk’s pneumatology and closely adheres to the claim that the Pentecostal outpouring is for empowered witness. It is subsequent to regeneration, and is more prophetic/missiological in nature. For further discussion see Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 44-45.

²⁸This study agrees with Trites that witness is a live metaphor in Acts. Even until today, Christians have to testify (literally) to the Gospel before tribunals, courts, or hostile parties. There is a vigor and continued use for the metaphor of “witness” when linked to the Christian (Trites, 153).

²⁹Due to limitations of this paper, we will only exegete two relevant passages: Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-35.

Luke's Concepts of Witness

Brief Philological Explorations of the Term "Witness"

In the New Testament, the word "witness" (μάρτυς) and its 14 cognates appear at least 200 times.³⁰ But it is in the book of Acts that one can "observe the 'greatest reflection on the meaning' of witness as it applies to the mission of the church."³¹ So, what does this word mean and how does Luke use it in his book?

Briefly stated, the term "witness" (μάρτυς) comes from legal language associated with the courtroom. Etymologically, it refers to someone who remembers or who has knowledge about something by recollection and who can thus tell about it.³² In extra-biblical Koine Greek, witnesses were those who gave evidence in a trial with respect to events in the past.³³ In a second sense, it could also be used to refer to "proclamation of views or truths of which the speaker is convinced."³⁴ In the Old Testament Septuagint (LXX), the concept closely relates to the legal sense of giving testimony in a court of law (e.g., witnesses before the judgment, Nu. 5:13, 35:30; Deut. 17:6-7, 19:15).³⁵ The Old Testament (OT) stricture, however, is that a testimony can only be accepted with the support of two or three witnesses (Deut. 19:15). Trites points to the juridical use of "witness" in the Old Testament.³⁶ For example in Isaiah 40-55, God emerges in a massive dispute with the nations concerning his claim to be the true God. The nations try to proclaim the superiority of their gods, but they

³⁰Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, 64.

³¹Μάρτυς and six of its derivatives appear a total of 39 times in Acts. This shows (along with other substantial evidence) that Luke placed importance on the idea of witness. Ibid, 128.

³²The word, μάρτυς, comes from the root word *μεμνησθαι* which means to "bear in mind," "to remember," "to be careful," and "to be mindful of," from which *μεριμναω*, "I am concerned" may also be formed (c.f. Latin, *memor*-mindful of). The noun, μαρτυρία means making an active appearance and statement as a μάρτυς (a witness). The verb, μαρτυρεῖν, on the other hand, means "to be a witness" or "to come forward as a witness." While the noun, μαρτύριον,³² refers to a witness from a more objective standpoint as proof of something. Hermann Strathmann, "Μαρτυς, μαρτυρεω, μαρτυρια, μαρτυριον," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)* vol. 4 eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967) 475; c.f. Allison A. Trites, "Witness," in *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)* vol. 3 ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 1038.

³³Strathmann, *NIDNTT*, 1037.

³⁴An example is the Greek philosopher, Polos, who can easily adduce a swarm of witnesses to contest the truth of his teaching. Trites, *TDNT*, 477-480.

³⁵Strathmann, *TDNT*, 483.

³⁶Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, 47.

fail because of a lack of evidence and support.³⁷ In this context, we can see that a witness advocates an assertion, presents evidence, and tries to bring his opponent around. The New Testament also uses this forensic idea of witness. Predominantly, it refers to a person who can speak about a truth from his own direct knowledge especially in legal proceedings (e.g. Mark 14:6-3; Matt. 6:25).³⁸

Luke's use of the term in Luke 24:48 and Acts take us beyond the popular usage. Luke uses "witness" as a living metaphor for believers whom Jesus has entrusted with the proclamation and attestation of his message. This brings into mind the forensic scene of believers testifying before courts, tribunals, and hostile parties.³⁹ Opponents of Christ dispute his assertions, and so Luke seeks to meet the challenge by presenting eyewitness accounts (Luke 1:2) and offering many "convincing proofs" (Acts 1:3). However, his witness does not only contain bare facts, but also includes divinely revealed truth. The message of Acts cannot be confirmed solely by witnesses, but must also be believed in and then attested to, by proclamation and demonstration.

Therefore, we can recognize that Luke uses the term in two ways: apostolic witness and evangelistic witness. Luke developed his concepts of witness by first attributing the term to the apostles. The apostles were told that they would be Jesus' witnesses (Acts 1:2, 8). To Cornelius, Peter says that Jesus was seen by us "who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:41). At the same time, Luke identifies Paul (Acts 22:15, 26:16) and Stephen (22:20) as witnesses *vis-à-vis* the Twelve.⁴⁰ Luke also extends the concept of witness to people other than the Apostles. Whereas the Apostles functioned as the divinely chosen eyewitnesses, those convicted by their testimony put their faith in Christ, joined the

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸The derivatives of μάρτυς like μαρτύρια are used generally and weakly for proof or confirmation of something; while μαρτυρίων, as with its classical use, also denotes an objective witness, i.e., evidence of an assertion or confirmation of the factuality of events (Mark 1:44, par. Matthew 8:4 and Luke 5:14). Strathmann, *TDNT*, 489.

³⁹In this sense, the word "witness" is both literal and metaphorical. Literally, Jesus predicted this would happen (Luke 21:12-19), and Acts records the instances that it did (Acts 5:17-42, Acts 6:8-8:1). Metaphorically, believers stand as witness to the world (or to non-believers) presenting evidence and eye-witness testimony.

⁴⁰Paul is in no way inferior to the Twelve since Jesus also chose Paul to be a witness (Acts 22:14-15, 26:16), Bolt, *Witness to the Gospel*, 193. On the other hand, Stephen's vision of the resurrected Lord in Acts 7:55 implies that Luke considered him as a witness (vindicated by the Lord). It must be clarified though that Stephen was not a witness because he died for his allegiance to Christ, rather he is a witness because at the opportunity afforded him, he testified to the truth of Christ. He was a confessional witness in an emphatic and distinctive way because his death was final proof of the gravity of his confession. Strathmann, *TDNT*, 494.

believing community and can give their evangelistic witness.⁴¹ Here we see that the community of witnesses plays a significant role. The Acts narrative shows us that witness to Christ involves the witness of the wider community, not just of some individuals.

Spirit-empowered Community as a Form of Witness

Luke's Inclusion of the Wider Community in "Witness"

Interestingly, Peter G. Bolt does not acknowledge the significance of the wider group of believers (including the women), who encountered the post-resurrected Jesus (cf. Luke 24; Acts 1-2). Luke, he says, relegates them to the background in order to highlight the Twelve as the primary witnesses of Jesus. He adds that in the gospel when the Twelve were not present, Jesus did not mention the necessity for proclamation.⁴² If the wider group were also designated as witnesses, then the election of Matthias in Acts 1:26 would be useless.⁴³

Actually, most scholars accept the Apostles' unique role as the chosen eyewitnesses of Jesus' life, resurrection, and ascension.⁴⁴ However, Luke does mention disciples other than the Twelve. For instance, he records the women who first knew about Jesus' resurrection (Luke 24:1-12). He also records the two unnamed disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) and the group present with the Twelve before, during, and after Pentecost (Acts 1-2). Yes, the Twelve hold a special role in Jesus' renewed Israel, but those who covenanted with them through faith in Jesus were to function in this task of witnessing too. Penney confirms the significance of the wider audience saying, "Luke does not intend to exclude others, but simply to focus attention on the Apostles in particular who perform a unique theological role in the restoration theme of Acts 1."⁴⁵ Bolt's refusal to extend the task of witnessing to others outside of the Twelve and Paul can be considered as a refusal to see Luke's softened use of the term "witness." H. Strathman points to a semantic evolution in the word

⁴¹If apostolic witness is eyewitness testimony to the facts of Jesus, evangelistic witness is a combination of proclamation of apostolic message and personal testimony. All these are superintended by the Holy Spirit, who empowers the witnesses.

⁴²Bolt, *Witness to the Gospel*, 196

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Jesus chose the Twelve to witness to the Jews. They symbolically represented the newly constituted Israel under the new covenant in Christ. Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 65-66.

⁴⁵John Michael Penney. *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology* (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 56.

“witness” (μάρτυς) in Luke-Acts.⁴⁶ The Lukan usage goes beyond the current use (witness of events where one is personally present), but also includes witness to evangelistic truths.⁴⁷ Clearly, the Gospel consists not only of raw data but also of divine revelation.⁴⁸ Penney, in agreement with H. C. Kee, asserts the vocation of witness as the primary role of the new community.⁴⁹

Bolt also rejects the idea of a “mission of the church.” For Bolt, “The reader is not missionary but mission field.”⁵⁰ In conclusion, Bolt says “the promise of the Spirit in Acts is not for witness, but for the forgiveness of sins, and when the Spirit is received by those outside the group of chosen witnesses, it is in terms of being believers and not witnesses.”⁵¹

Here, Bolt’s presuppositions become clear. The Twelve and Paul do occupy unique historical positions, but the task of proclamation was never confined to them. In fact, evangelistic witness integrally marks a disciple of Christ. Paul exemplified a life of self-sacrifice for the proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel. The Twelve too served as leaders and models for the early community of believers. They served in the manner epitomized by Christ, and they witnessed in the power of the Spirit. This same Spirit was poured out upon Pentecost not for conversion/initiation, but for empowered witness (Acts 1:8).⁵² The disciples prior to Acts had already received the Spirit of regeneration according to their faith in the risen Lord (cf. Luke 24:36-53 and John 20:22). As witnesses to the entire gamut of Jesus’ ministry, resurrection and ascension, there can be no doubt that they believed in Jesus as Messiah. Therefore their reception of the Spirit at Pentecost was not for initiation but for missiological/prophetic empowerment.⁵³ The passage, Acts 15:6-11, which Bolt cited in support of his proposition, does not depict the Spirit as the Spirit of regeneration, but the Spirit that included the Gentiles into the prophetic community of

⁴⁶Strathman, *TDNT*, 492.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Penney, 56. Also, H. C. Kee, *Good News to the Ends of the Earth: The Theology of Acts* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 89.

⁵⁰Bolt, *Witness*, 212.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²This statement does not negate the role of the Spirit in regeneration. The Holy Spirit does affect salvation-regeneration. The Spirit’s empowerment for kerygmatic witness, though, is subsequent to and presupposes regeneration. For a detailed discussion of this position see William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies. *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience, A Call to Evangelical Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 110-118.

⁵³Ibid., 206.

renewed Israel.⁵⁴ The passage also shows prophetic enabling as subsequent to conversion/initiation.⁵⁵ It marks an important period in salvation history where God publicly legitimized missions to the Gentiles in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise. Penney affirms this, saying, “the role of witness is not simply restricted to the Apostles, but also viewed as the province of every Christian.”⁵⁶ The Lukan Great Commission encompassed not just the Twelve (in Luke 24:33-36) but also those who were in their company. We read this in Acts 2:15, where 120 believers received the baptism of the Spirit and spoke in tongues. We also see this in Acts 4:23-33. In this text, after the believers prayed they received another outpouring of the Spirit. They began to proclaim boldly the Gospel and to unite in a communal lifestyle that reflected the reality of that Gospel. Moreover, after Stephen’s martyrdom in Acts 8, ordinary Christians, dispersed by the persecution, began to proclaim the kerygma and spread Christianity beyond Jerusalem. Clearly for Luke, witness includes not just apostolic witness but also evangelistic witness. It includes not only individuals but also the wider community. This expansion of the concept of witness in Luke-Acts allowed the theme of witness to continue even after the apostolic era.

More importantly, Luke’s first century world was not individualistic, but dyadic (group-oriented). In a study by Malina and Neyrey, they asserted that the Mediterranean world of Luke-Acts differs from the American or Western world of individualism with its focus on the “self.”⁵⁷ Malina and Neyrey explain: “They were primarily part of the group in which they found themselves inserted. As they went through the genetically based stages of psychological awareness, they were constantly shown that they exist solely and only because of the group in which they found themselves.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: a Study in Luke’s Charismatic Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 11.

⁵⁵It is also good to note here that Cornelius and his family were already God-fearers. In fact, Cornelius had received a divine message, prior to Peter’s arrival at his home. This shows that Cornelius and his family already had faith in God, and they just needed to receive the full message of Jesus. The Spirit of prophecy gifted to them at that moment was a certification that they were accepted by God, and the time for missions to Gentiles was legitimized.

⁵⁶Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis*, 59.

⁵⁷For a more detailed discussion see Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey, “First-century personality: Dyadic, not individual” in *Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 72-81.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 86-87; The Bible gives us rich examples of this dyadic (first century Mediterranean) personality. For example, a person is known (or finds social value) based on the tribe to which he/she belongs (e.g. Zechariah was from the division of Abijah, Paul was a Benjaminite, Joseph was a descendant of David, and Barnabas was a Levite). They could also be known according to the party-group to which they belonged (e.g. Pharisee,

They go on to add, “Strong group people find it overpoweringly obvious that they are embedded in a group and that they always represent the group.”⁵⁹ Thus, first century personalities are individuals embedded in relationships. Their dyadic personality orients them to think stereotypically, that is, the moment they joined the Nazarene sect, called the Way (Acts 24:5-21), they identified with those who testify to the Lordship and Messiahship of Jesus and as those who lived according to “His Ways” (Luke 9:51-19:27). Although there were individuals highlighted in witnessing, for example, Peter, Paul, and Stephen, they always knew that they belonged to a wider community. Therefore, in Acts, the individual’s witness parallels the community’s witness (Acts 4:31). A discussion of the two passages that imply the relationship between “community and witness” further elucidates this point. This discussion begins in Part 2.

Sadducee, Herodians, etc.), or the region from which they came (e.g. Barnabas of Cyprus, Apollos of Alexandria, Gaius of Derbe, etc.).

⁵⁹Ibid., 74. In the context of the early Christian community however, this must be balanced by the impartiality of Jesus to those outside the group. It is not the community that affects membership into God’s kingdom but faith in Christ.