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A Lukan Paradigm of Witness

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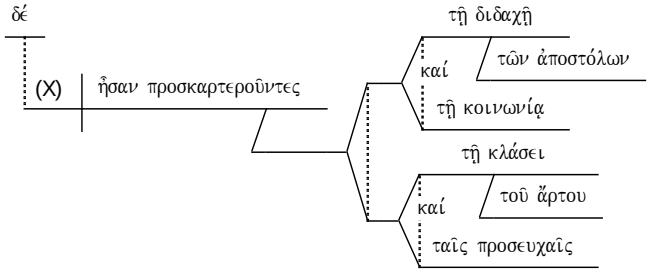
A Lukan Paradigm of Witness: Community as a Form of Witness Part II

by Lora Angeline B. Embudo

Exegetical Analysis of Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-35

Acts 2:42

Acts 2:1-41 narrates the first episode of the outpouring of the Spirit (Pentecost event). After Peter's evangelistic speech, Luke records Acts 2:42-47 describing the idyllic community formed after the mass baptism (mentioned in verse 41).[1] Luke writes in Acts 2:42, "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (NAS). Interestingly, Luke writes four aspects of the believers' community life and arranged them into two pairs. A sentence diagram in the original Greek text shows us the following:[2]



[1]I agree with Witherington that Acts 2:41 is a summary statement that serves to conclude and summarize the episode of the Pentecostal outpouring mentioned in Acts 2:1-40. On the other hand, Acts 2:42-47 is a summary passage on the interior life of the believing community in Jerusalem. Witherington notes that: "The use of summary materials is typical of ancient historiographical works that were based on research and on narrative sources, which by nature were episodic in character" (Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [UK: Eerdman, 1998], 159).

[2]The summary in verse 42 is an introduction to the life of new believers. The word, προσκαρτεροῦντες may be translated as: "they gave themselves to," "they were eager for," or "they were very desirous of." The Today's English Version (TEV) translates it: they spent their time in, while the NIV (2011) translates it: "they devoted themselves." Leedy Greek Diagrams from the Bible Works Greek Text (LXX/BNT).

The first pair of activities refers to the believers' devotion to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship. The second pair refers to the believers' devotion to the breaking of bread and to prayer. We can probably discuss the meaning attached to each activity, but since Luke intended the pairing, then this paper will discuss it as such.[3] In fact, from this arrangement we can glean that Luke presented a core value ideal for the community of believers, that is, unity in their faith and in their hope. Two rationales support this proposition.

First, the διδαχῇ (*didache*) of the apostles served to preserve and transmit historical revelation. The apostles functioned as the eyewitnesses (αὐτόπται Luke 1:2) of Christ. He commanded them to pass on all that he did and taught. Thus, the apostles passed along Christ's instructions to the believing community. These teachings would have included, among others, his resurrection, his Messiahship, fulfillment of the OT Scriptures, their Christian witness, the Good News of God's Kingdom, and surely their own testimony of Jesus' life and ministry. The believers who sat under the apostles' teaching had in common their acceptance of and faith in the apostolic instruction. They accepted Christ as the Messiah and they believed that he is the only way to salvation (Acts 4:12). Koinonia (κοινωνίᾳ) or their coming together (from all walks of life) became the visible effect of their common conviction and adherence.[4]

The term *koinonia* in verse 42 refers to the common fellowship and unity characteristic of the community. At the narrative level, the influx of 3,000 new believers into the early Christian community necessitated an organized response from its leaders. Luke explicates, "and all who believed were together and had all things in common (κοινά*)*; and they sold their property (κτήματα) and goods (ὑπάρξεις*)*, and distributed them to all as any had need" (v. 44-45). This summary presupposes that the community consisted of people from different socio-economic strata. The verbs "sell" (ἐπίπρασκον) and "distribute" (διεμέριζον) indicate a continuing past action, i.e., the selling and distributing of goods took place over a period of time. Therefore, the text indicates that they continued to sell and to distribute goods when a need arose. The New American Standard (NAS) translates it as, "They began

[3]The four aspects arranged in two pairs are all in the dative case. The genitive τῶν ἀποστόλων could alternatively be construed as modifying both *didache* (teaching) and koinonia (fellowship). Leedy Greek Diagrams from the Bible Works Greek Text (LXX/BNT).

[4]The word "koinonia" does not occur elsewhere in Acts (but cf. *koinos* in Acts 2:44 and 4:32). It is however used by Paul (Romans 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13) of his collection for the poor saints and this together with v. 44; 4:32-34, 5:1-11. C.K. Barrett, Acts: Volume 1:1-14, The International Critical Commentary (Scotland: T&T Clark, 1994), 1:168.

selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as any might have need."

In this common fellowship, the believers not only united in their adherence to the apostolic teachings, but also united in their disposition to share goods. Their Christian love for each other, which superseded their love for possessions, actualized the message of Christ to the rich young man in Luke 18:18-23: ". . . sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven" (v.22). Jesus in this context did not denounce riches, rather he pointed out the need to be free from the love of money which hindered one from fully loving God and others. Clement of Alexandria, writing a brief treatise on this passage, wisely comments, "He then is truly and rightly rich who is rich in virtue, and is capable of making a holy and faithful use of any fortunes; while he is spuriously rich who is rich according to the flesh and turns life into outward possessions."[5]

Second, devotion to the breaking of bread[6] and to their prayers reflects the ideal of unity in their hope. Reading Luke's Last Supper narrative, we can identify clear differences from Matthew and Mark's rendering. Whereas, Matthew and Mark begin with a warning of the coming betrayal (cf. Mk. 14:16-25 and Mt. 26:20-29) and ending with the promise that he will not be "drinking from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes" (vv. 18, 22). Luke's version begins with a prophetic promise. Just before the actual Passover meal, Luke narrates:

> [14]And when the hour had come He [Jesus] reclined *at the table*, and the apostles with Him. [15]And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; [16]for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." [17]And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; [18]for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." (Luke 22:14-18 NAS)

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[5]Clement of Alexandria, "*Quis dives calvetur*?—Who is rich to be saved?" quoted by Justo Gonzales, *Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1990), 114.

[6]The phrase "breaking of bread" is an idiomatic Greek phrase which occurs only here in Acts 2:42 and in Luke 24:35. It is generally agreed that the phrase refers to the "fellowship meals" shared by believers which includes the commemoration of the Last Supper. These meals were characteristic of the believing community. Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1972), 63.

Twice, Jesus declares that he would not be eating or drinking this meal with them until the Kingdom of God comes. This passage would seem awkward and redundant if Luke did not intend to write it for emphatic purposes. In his way, Luke was highlighting the importance of that last Passover meal. So when Jesus commanded the disciples to commemorate the Passover meal "in remembrance of" him (Luke 22:19), he was not only referring to their remembrance of his life and ministry, but also of his promise to eat and drink with them again at the consummation of God's Kingdom. Jesus left the disciples with a powerful hope. Whenever the community of believers practiced the "breaking of bread" they demonstrated their common loyalty to Jesus Christ and their hope for his return and the consummation of his Kingdom.

Pairing this activity with devotion to their prayers, allows us to see that for Luke prayer is the ideal seedbed of this hope. In Luke's gospel, Jesus' ministry identified prayer as an important habit. In fact, only in the gospel of Luke can we read the parable of the Persistent Widow and the Uncaring Judge (Luke 18:1-8). Jesus told this parable to remind his disciples that they "should always pray and never give up" (v.1). Interestingly, Jesus ends the parable with this question: "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (v. 8). Jesus knew that his disciples could lose heart in the interim. He encouraged them through this parable to persevere in their prayers and to remain faith-filled and hope-filled. In this parable's context, their faith-filled and hope-filled prayers would be for the return of the Son of Man and the full restoration of the Kingdom of God.[7] Only the Father knows the χρόνος (times) or καιρός (epochs) of the fulfillment of the Kingdom (cf. Acts 1:7), but the disciples of Christ must remain stalwart in hope and be Christ's witnesses while they wait. Whenever they come together for fellowship, they ought to practice the breaking of bread and be devoted to their prayers as a remembrance of this blessed hope. Acts 2:46-47 indicates that the believers observed this ideal by meeting together daily and sharing food from house to house. Witherington also points out that these believers showed a "public face," by spending time in the temple.[8] Their corporate acts of worship not only built up their faith but also solidified them as people of hope. In fact, Luke records that the early Christians had glad and sincere hearts, which

[7]The parable of the Persistent Widow and Uncaring Judge is within the literary unit of Jesus' response to the Pharisee's question on the signs of the coming of the Kingdom (cf. Luke 17:20-18:8).

[8]Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles,* 160.

prompted praise of God and goodwill among local Jews in general.[9] As a result, God added converts into their community.

Luke clearly believes in the evidential value and effect not only of miracles, but also of the *Koinonia Spiritus Sancti* (fellowship of/in the Holy Spirit), in attesting to the authenticity of God's work in the lives of Jesus' followers.

Acts 4:32-35

Acts 4:31 narrates the second episode of the outpouring of the Spirit. Luke writes, "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (NIV). This dramatic reception of the Spirit reminds us of the Pentecostal outpouring in Acts 2:1-4. However, the situation surrounding the text differs. At this time, the religious leaders in Jerusalem had singled out the apostles after Peter and John testified boldly about Christ (see Acts 4:5-30). There loomed over the believers the imminent threat of being persecuted by the religious authorities. Instead of wilting with fear, they prayed for a continuation of the Spirit's power to speak the Word boldly and for a continuation of signs and wonders (Acts 4:29-30, cf. Acts 2:19). God responded immediately and certifiably: "they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness" (4:31). Right after this episode, Luke inserts a summary passage (v.32-35) that helps connect the episode of the outpouring with the narrative of the community's inner life.[10] In this text, Luke helps us to see the community's inner life is co-relational to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.[11] The Holy Spirit, apart from empowering witnesses, also affects the inner life of the community. Luke describes this in chiastic structure, as follows:

A (v.32) all the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

B (v.33) with great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and much grace was upon them.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 159-160.

[11]Menzies uses the term "co-relational" which describes the relationship between two things that are frequently found together but do not have a necessary causal relationship (Menzies and Menzies, *Spirit and Power*, 206). Although witness and church growth ideally go together, sometimes one may be found without the other.

C (v. 34a) There were no needy persons among them.

B' (v.34b-35a) for from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet.

A' (v.35b) and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.[12]

Like the first summary passage, Luke describes the inner life of the community of believers but this time focusing on the ideal result of their practice: "there were no needy persons among them" (v.34a). The idea of koinonia, already mentioned in Acts 2:32, is once again clarified here as the act of total sharing among people, united in mind and heart (inner being).[13] Koinonia includes not just a spiritual fellowship, but also a total sharing of materials or resources for the meeting of others' needs.[14] The guiding principle does not emphasize the renunciation of fortunes, but the gracious meeting of needs that brothers and sisters would do for each other.[15]

Witherington points out that Luke's intended readers recognize the idea of sharing things in common.[16] Early Jewish groups, like the Essenes, practiced a community of goods, while the Greco-Roman society recognized the Hellenistic philosophy of sharing goods among true friends.[17] For the Essenes, though, one totally renounced properties for the ascetic life, while the Hellenists expected reciprocity among their social equals.[18] Luke introduces to both audiences a koinonia unlike what they already knew. Here, Christians with resources

[12]In this narrative unit, Luke orders the details into an inverted parallelism (A B B' A'). The focal point is at the center or vertex of the unit (C – v.34a). A and A' points to the commonality of goods in the community. B and B' points to the leadership of the Apostles (not just in proclamation but also in the distribution of goods). While the vertex, C points to the ideal result of this interplay—"there were no needy persons among them." This alludes to God's ideal for his Kingdom in Deuteronomy 15. For further discussion see Leander Keck, ed., *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles and Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphaldeuterocanonical Books* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994-2004), 96.

[13]In Jewish thought "mind" was the center of intellectual activity and "heart" the seat of the will. When combined in a phrase they refer to the total inner being of the person. In paraphrase then we can translate the phrase as, "they thought the same things and wanted the same things." Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook,* 111.

[14]Justo Gonzales, *Faith and Wealth, A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money (Eugene, OR:* Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1990), 82-83.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles,* 150.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

voluntarily shared their goods to those in need without thought of return. This suggests something closer to family duties. The early Christians did not practice obligatory renunciation of properties but voluntary sharing and radical generosity for the sake of the needy. They had no expectation of reciprocity. Genuine care and concern for brothers or sisters in need motivated the practice. Gonzales writes: "The Christian community was a partnership that included material as well as spiritual sharing, that this was to be governed by the need of the less fortunate, and that though voluntary, this sharing and the vision behind it challenged the traditional—particularly the Roman—understanding of private property."[19]

Unlike the usual practice of their time, these believers had formed a sharing community under the authority and leadership of the apostles, who continued to testify of the Risen Lord and who acted as stewards in the distribution of donated resources.[20] God's grace filled the community, so much so, that some willingly gave up possessions for the care of others' welfare. This practice surely realized God's promise to his people: "there will be no poor among you" (Deuteronomy 15:4). The allusion to the Old Testament text reminds readers of God's age-old promise that he will richly bless the people who submit to his rule and reign (cf. Deuteronomy 15: 4-6). In fact, because of the certainty of God's blessing, there needn't be poor people among them (Deut. 15:4a). God expects that those whom he blesses open their hands freely to those in need (Deuteronomy 15:4, 7-8). Giving generously, without a grudging heart and without expecting returns is a commanded practice for the people in God's kingdom (Deut. 15:10-11).

By practicing koinonia, the believing community in Jerusalem presented to the world the tangible results of allegiance to Christ. With Christ as Lord, people receive grace from God and enter into a communal fellowship of genuine love and support. The members of the community know that they have brothers and sisters willing to come to their aid in time of need. This practice reflects the Kingdom of God. Their bold testimony before crowds, tribunals, and authorities gained additional credence not only because of the miracles they performed, but also of the *koinonized* community life they observed.

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[19]Gonzales, *Faith and Wealth,* 84.

[20]The imperfect tense of the verbs in v.34-35 suggest continued and repeated action. When there was a need, able believers would sell their property and turn the money over to the (authority of) the apostles. The apostles were the agents of the verb "was distributed." Therefore in the active form, we can phrase it as: "the apostles distributed the money to each as that person had need." Newman and Nida, *The Translators Handbook*, 112. This was not however the constant arrangement, since as the community grew, the distribution of goods had to be delegated to Spirit-filled deacons (cf. Acts 5-6). Gonzales, *Faith and Wealth,* 82.

The importance of this praxis as an element of witness cannot be overstated. For instance, the Roman Emperor, Julian (AD 332-63) remarked how it was becoming difficult to revive the traditional Roman religion. He wanted to set aside Christianity and bring back the ancient faith, but he saw clearly the drawing power of Christian love in practice. Emperor Julian said:

> Atheism (i.e., Christianity) has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through their care for the burial of the dead. It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the godless Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them.[21]

For the early church, surrounded by a hostile pagan world and suffering from socio-economic injustices, the outpouring for the marginalized people was one of the most powerful causes of their numeric success.[22] The practice of biblical koinonia sealed the authenticity of evangelistic witness, and ushered people into a new worldview where Jesus is Lord and Savior and his kingdom values were observed.

The Community and Witness in Acts

The Community as Witness: Sociology of Conversion Approach

In the previous discussion, we were able to deduce that Luke considered the community as a form of witness. But, the question remains: Why is community important in terms of how people become Christians?

Actually, the importance lies in the instrumentality of a "witnessing community" for conversion.[23] Inherent in the task of

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[21]Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, Updated 2nd ed., (Dallas: Word Pub. 1995) 35-36.

[22]Read also Gonzales' discussion on the social stratification and socio-economic injustices in Palestine under the Roman Empire. He points out that it was in an unsettled atmosphere (full of fear and resentment), of crushing poverty and messianic expectations, that the Jesus movement began. It is no wonder that biblical koinonia has such a convincing impact for the people. Gonzales, *Faith and Wealth*, 71-79.

[23]Conversion comes from the Greek word *επιστρεπειν* which means a turning around either in the physical or the mental or the spiritual sense of the term. In Acts it is more frequently used of a mental or spiritual turn (Acts 3:19; 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18; 26:20). William Barclay, *Turning to God*, 21.

witnessing is a kerygmatic wooing, especially since it is within the context of continuing Christ's mission. Whenever witnesses testify or give evidence, they offer to their audience or persecutors opportunity to believe in Christ and his Gospel. In its kerygmatic sense, bold witness aims at repentance and forgiveness (cf. Luke 24:48, Acts 2:38) which leads to salvation (Acts 2:40). For Luke, this salvation doesn't end at personal conversion, but also includes entrance into a community of believers and into an ongoing change of life. Community functions integrally in this task especially at the sociological level. An understanding of the sociology of conversion reveals that conversion is an experience rooted in both self and society.[24] Chester citing Alan Segal states: "The early Christian communities played an important role in securing and sustaining the conversion of their members. They employed means by which new converts were integrated into them and promote a relationship between the communal and ethical dimensions of conversion."[25]

Yes, community plays an important role in religious conversion, but at what level and in what manner?

A recent article by Fenggang Yang and Andrew Abel reveals three levels of approach in conversion: the micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level.[26] At the micro-level, individual psychological factors or situational contingencies (e.g. being at a turning point in one's life, a sense of deprivation or searching, interacting with believers of a new religion, religious seeking, etc.) affects religious conversion. At the meso-level, religious conversion involves "a change in affiliation not just from one group to another or from one set of beliefs to another, but to the ritual and interactional routines associated with these groups and their beliefs."[27] Ritual links micro and meso factors. It creates and maintains an ideological and social milieu into which people convert.[28] In an interesting study by William McNeill, he implied that the level of emotional energy experienced by congregants would strongly relate to their level of participation in church activities and would consequently

[24]Stephen J. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives On Conversion in Paul's Theology and the Corinthian Church*, Studies of the New Testament and Its World (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 8.

[25]Ibid., 7.

[26]Fenggang Yang and Andrew Abel, "Sociology of Conversion" in Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 142.

[27]Ibid., 144.

[28]Ibid.

enhance conversion as well.[29] This means that religious rituals or interaction helps in recruiting and sustaining converts. Fenggang Yang, basing from Chinese conversion studies, states: "Some Chinese converts report that their initial interest in Christianity was sparked by experiencing the awe-inspiring congregational hymn singing, corporate prayers, and collective rituals of some congregations."[30]

Affective bonds formed either through friendship or short-term acquaintances also aided in the conversion process. Yang continues:

> Chinese Christians employ different interactional rituals—than is typical among Chinese. Such behavior among Chinese congregants catches the notice of recruits. Those who convert often report that it was personal qualities seen in the behavior of church members that attracted them to church and to conversion. For instance, Chinese Christians routinely extend favors and gifts anonymously, to perfect strangers, persons of lower status, and with no expectation of result. It is common for such behavior to be interpreted as Christian love and for converts to mention how well they were treated in their conversion accounts.[31]

Thus we can say that religious conversion involves both a religious adaptation and socialization. The rituals and interactions organized by a religious community aids in recruiting, informing, and sustaining converts.

Finally, at the macro-level, social and cultural contexts play a significant part in conversion (especially mass conversion). If in the micro-level, the Lofland and Stark model identified predisposing factors such as openness factors and receptivity factors,[32] in the macro-level, socio-cultural context is the primary factor.[33] Fenggang Yang again cites the Chinese Christians as an example, stating:

> . . . openness to Christianity has increased because of the collapse of traditional culture in the process of rapid and coerced modernization including industrialization, urbanization, and mass education that emphasized modern sciences instead of Confucianism. . . Converts claim that Christianity provides peace

[29]Ibid., 145.
[30]Ibid., 144.
[31]Yang and Abel, *The Oxford Handbook*, 144.
[32]Openness factors are factors that cause a decline of barriers to joining a new religion. While receptivity factors are factors that make a religion attractive. Ibid., 147.
[33]Examples of socio-cultural factors are wars, social turmoil, political storms, and collapse of traditional cultural systems. Ibid., 147-148.

> and certainty amid the wilds of market capitalism and that Christian faith is liberating in a political atmosphere these converts characterize as stifling.[34]

Clearly, social, cultural and even global factors have an effect on conversion. In recent studies, scholars utilize the combination of micro-, meso-, and macro-level research to understand conversion phenomena.

In relation to the current research, sociology of conversion points to the community as a form of witness because it fosters an ideological and social milieu that sparks interest from outside observers and proactively recruits more people through interactional rituals and affective bonding. The community also sustains, informs, and enhances the transformation of new converts so that the latter may become deeply rooted and widely participative. The case of the witnessing community in Acts demonstrates how these factors come into play.

The Witnessing Community in Acts: a Socio-Theological Case Presented

At the micro-level, the prophetic word from Peter—"Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2:36, context from 14-40)—convicted his hearers and posed an individual crisis of faith. Apostolic witness via bold and prophetic proclamation became the agent of conversion. The hearers encountered a divine truth that "cut their hearts" and exposed their sin. At a crucial turning point, they asked, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) The evidence of the Pentecostal outpouring, the apostolic testimony of Jesus' resurrection, and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit destroyed their doubts. On that day, 3,000 made the choice to convert to belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior (Acts 2:41) and to be part of the already-existing believing community (Acts 2:42-47). From then, the new converts became distinct from the Greco-Roman society. Although they did not necessarily renounce their ethnicity, their change of religious affiliation necessitated a rejection of some previously held notions and values, and a learning of new behaviors and norms (e.g. the way of Jesus, cf. Luke 9:51-19:27). The community came in as important for the ongoing transformation of the people,[35] as well as for the continued attestation of the gospel.

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[34]Ibid., 148.

[35]At the corporate level, the community assists these new converts to find their identity and to adapt to the religious and ethical practices. Alan Segal calls conversion a

At the corporate level, devotion to apostolic teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer became the interactional rituals that served to connect and enculturate members into the community.[36] As they adhered to these truths and praxis, and as they experienced the grace of God, their emotional energies increased in terms of eschatological hope, Christological faith, and *agape* love.[37] This fostered the feelings of solidarity and awe that strengthened the members' commitment and affinity. Their deep commitment evidenced by sharing of goods, daily praising God, gladness and sincerity, missiological stance, and continual testimony to the Lordship of Christ, in turn became a witness of the gospel to both observers and persecutors. Thus we can say that the community's witness, that is, their bold proclamation (with signs following), koinonia, and solidarity, effectively invited others to the faith. In fact, Luke records that as a result the community's numbers increased daily (Acts 2:47). The chart below depicts this cycle.[38]

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transformation, where the community helps converts reinterpret their past life in light of the present (biographical reconstruction). Chester, *Conversion,* 27-28.

[36]Yang and Abel, *The Oxford Handbook,* 143.

[37]There are two ingredients to successful ritual interactions. First are the conversational/cultural resources, considered as the common reality, accepted by members of the group. Second, we see the emotional energies affected by ritual membership. Collins explains that "there must be at least a minimal degree of common mood among interactants if a conversation ritual is to succeed in invoking a shared reality. The stronger the common emotional tone the more real the invoked topic will seem to be and the greater solidarity in the group." Randall Collins, "On the Microfoundations of Macrosociology," *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 86, no.5 (March 1981): 990-991.

[38]The chart presented is adapted from Randall Collins Interactional Rituals Chains (IR Chains) theory. He explains that such chains of micro-encounters generate the central features of social organization—authority, property, and group membership—by creating and recreating "mythical" cultural symbols (or IRs) and emotional energies (ibid., 985). This framework was modified by specifying the produced social structure as the Acts community and identifying the focus as Christological. It depicts the witness of the community as described in the Acts narrative.



Figure 1: This model is adapted from Randall Collins Interactional Rituals theory of social structure.

This cycle of course is under the aegis of the Holy Spirit, who not only draws people into God's covenant community but also empowers them to witness to the founder and head of this community, Jesus Christ.

Thus, we see that the community is a form of witness. Luke presents this in the Acts narrative by emphasizing:

1. The inclusion of the wider community in "witness"
2. Koinonia
3. The community of goods as confirmatory evidence of the gospel

Moreover, from the sociological standpoint of the convert, the community effectively witnesses to the gospel because it fosters an ideological and social milieu that holistically recruits more people into its fold. Luke records that the early community's bold proclamation of the Lordship of Christ (with signs following), their koinonized lifestyle, and their unity as people of faith, hope, and love, effectively converted others to believe in Jesus and the Gospel.

Conclusion

Luke was very concerned about professing and proving the legitimacy of the Christian faith, so much so that he employed the Old Testament legal procedure of establishing legitimacy via the testimony of multiple witnesses. The apostles, the believers' community, Paul, Stephen, and even his two-volume work (Luke-Acts), all stand as a witness to the truth claims and message of Christ. Indeed, Jesus is the Risen Christ and through him one can be saved and be part of God's Kingdom. This truth is the saving truth and witnesses not only proclaim

it, they also preserve it, prove it, persuade people to believe in it, and exemplify its significance.

One cannot emphasize enough the importance of Christian witness. In a world where Christianity is slowly being viewed as a myth or as a mere moralistic belief, the willingness to stand for the historicity and saving significance of Christ is important. Moreover, a willingness to authenticate the gospel with the love and unity that koinonia displays, bears a powerful testimony to the world of what salvation in Christ truly means. Luke's holistic paradigm will help correct nominalism from within and unbelief from those outside the Christian community. It also helps Christians, then and now, to formulate their understanding of what it means to be Christ's witnesses. Indeed, to be Christ's witness is the enduring role of the Spirit-empowered believers in the interim. It is not just the task of one person, or choice persons, but is the province of the entire Christian community.

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