

From Cleansed Lepers to Cleansed Hearts: The Developing Meaning of Katharizo in Luke-Acts

Pamela Shellberg
Marquette University

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FROM CLEANSED LEPERS TO CLEANSED HEARTS:
THE DEVELOPING MEANING OF *KATHARIZŌ*
IN LUKE-ACTS

by

Pamela Shellberg, B.A., M.S., M.A.

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ABSTRACT
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Luke develops the theme of God's salvation prominently and fully in the Third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles to mean the deliverance from danger, disease, and death, experienced physically and religiously. Isaiah's oracles announcing the inauguration of a new era of God's favor and a salvation reaching to the ends of the earth shape Luke's vision; their images and vocabulary permeate his thought. For Luke, "cleansing" is a means by which God extends this salvation, and Luke therefore uses cleansing language, in forms of the word *katharizō*, to mark three specific manifestations of salvation in his accounts of the life of Jesus and of the early church. *Katharizō* explains the predominantly Gentile presence in a first-century religious movement born in Judaism. It marks a pivotal point in the heavenly speech accompanying Peter's dream of clean and unclean animals in Acts. And it appears in the multiple Gospel references to the restoration of leprous bodies to wholeness.

Luke exploits the multivalent ritual and medical meanings of *katharizō* in service of his message by means of the leprous body, understood as both physically afflicted and ritually unclean. The leprous body, with its boundary of skin appearing to deteriorate, is relegated to places beyond the reach of both the human and the holy. As such it is symbolic of salvation found at the boundaries where distinctions are made between the afflicted and the whole, the clean and the unclean, the Jew and the Gentile, the holy and the human. The cleansing of the leprous body similarly is a potent symbol of the means of that salvation.

Luke proclaims God's deliverance from the distinctions that afflict the body of humanity and God's preservation of that body in holiness. Luke shapes his message on the deliverance from a skin disease that afflicts the boundary of the individual human body. The cleansing of a leprous body thus becomes the pattern for the cleansing of Gentile hearts, and one of Luke's primary expressions of the means of God's salvation.

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Pamela Shellberg, B.A., M.S., M.A.

In this very moment I feel little bit like Abram, standing outside the tent of my dissertation and hearing God whisper in my ear, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them,” (Gen 15:5). A universe of space and time has expanded around this project so that I stand with it now under a vast sky of stars, constellations of friends and family who span the horizon from California to Maine and whose love and support have kept the measure of many of my seasons. The psalmist writes that God has numbered the stars and given to all of them their names (Psalm 147:4). This is a beautiful thought to me, and I rest in it as I give thanks for all those who are numbered in my starry skies of Dubuque and Chicago, Milwaukee and Madison, Portland and Bangor—your names are known, imprinted in this page and on my heart.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem

The fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles reports the deliberations of the Jerusalem Council regarding Gentile believers: what was to be required for their full identification with the first-century Jewish sectarian movement proclaiming Jesus as Messiah, and what was to be required for their salvation? At a climactic moment in those deliberations, Peter makes an appeal that circumcision not be required of Gentile converts on the grounds that “God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit” and “made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8–9).¹ With Peter’s declaration, the author of Acts concludes a lengthy and detailed reminiscence in which Peter, the embodiment of the Christian Jewish believer, comes to a change of heart on the question of Gentile circumcision, and Cornelius, the embodiment of the Gentile believer, comes to a clean heart by virtue of God’s favor.

The historical meeting of the Jerusalem Council bears witness to conflicts within the early Jesus movement as its identity as a sectarian movement within Judaism began to be transformed by the presence of Gentiles in the movement, Gentile believers with enthusiastic responses to the *kerygma* expressed in the idiom of their Hellenistic

¹ Unless otherwise noted, English translations of the New Testament texts will be taken from the Revised Standard Version; English translations of the Septuagint will be taken from C.L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986); repr. of *The Septuagint with Apocrypha* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1851).

sensibilities.² As both the geographic and psychic boundaries of the originally Jewish movement became increasingly permeable, the particularly Jewish character of the movement underwent varying degrees of dissolution. With their nearly primal sense of Jewish identity and self-understanding threatened, deep anxiety fueled Jewish Christians' efforts to secure the boundaries by enforcing strict observance of Jewish identity markers.³ So it is that, historically speaking, the lines of the conflicts were drawn around the practices of table fellowship, food preparation, and circumcision.

However, the meeting of the Jerusalem Council, as an episode in the larger literary work of Luke-Acts, collapses a significant expanse of historical time into a few narrative moments. In the larger expanse of time, the sectarian Jewish movement had evolved to be a Gentile religion with a universal reach. Though still nourished by deep Jewish roots, the Christian church stood at some distance from Judaism and its evolving post-Temple expressions. The distance, however still occasioned questions about identity and self-understanding, albeit now from a different perspective: questions about the continuity of Hellenistic Christianity with its Jewish origins and the legitimacy of this church's claim to be the material witness to the faithfulness of the God of Israel; questions about the coherence of the Christian church's claim to a Jewish prophet/teacher/healer as its Messiah and Savior; questions perhaps about the character of God.⁴

² Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 87.

³ A first-hand account of this meeting is reported by Paul in his letter to the Galatians (2:1–14).

⁴ Eugene A. LaVerdiere describes how Lukan communities faced the challenge of integrating their Hellenistic culture and their existence in the Roman political world with their conversion to Christianity, a religion founded, in part, by followers of a Jew from Nazareth: "The Judaism to which Lukan churches had to relate was a phenomenon which reflected the historical origins of these churches and not a Judaism which they now needed to encounter." He sharpens the point by drawing out the contrast with Matthew's Gospel, "The difference may be accounted for in terms of the very nature of Gentile-Christian

The author of Luke-Acts,⁵ writing from a perspective some thirty years removed from the time of the Council, confronts the questions by reassuring his readers that the church of their day is the legitimate extension of the promises of God to Israel because those promises had always been intended for them by God. And so it is that the theological parameters of the conflict were redrawn around that to which table fellowship and circumcision merely pointed—not around what was at issue, but around what was at stake.

The language of Peter's declaration—that Gentile hearts have been “cleansed”—is remarkable and perhaps even a little peculiar: at least on its surface, such language does not actually engage the particularity of the circumcision question. Instead it answers the question Luke's Peter has discerned to be behind the question, one not about a particular ritual practice but rather one about making distinctions. Peter's appeal suggests that the question of clean hearts trumps the question of circumcised bodies, and, moreover, that the impartiality of the one who makes hearts clean trumps the partiality inherent in the distinctions drawn by marks in the flesh. Peter's appeal suggests that, for the author of Acts, the question of the existence of a Gentile church is answered by a

communities, which did not emerge out of prior well-defined communities as in the case of a Jewish-Christian community. A Gentile Church could only reflect the Gentile world...In other words, the more universalist *Sitz im Leben* of Luke-Acts was but a reflection of the Gentile world from which its addressees were largely derived. In Luke, the universal mission was thus not a program to be undertaken by a particular community but a datum of early Christian history to be assimilated and ordered.” Eugene A. LaVerdiere and William G. Thompson, “New Testament Communities in Transition: A Study of Matthew and Luke,” *TS* 37:4 (1976: Dec): 567-97, here 585.

⁵ Following common practice, I will refer to the author of the Third Gospel and The Acts of the Apostles as “Luke.” I will, for the sake of convenience, refer to Luke as the author of these two volumes rather than as redactor, editor, or compiler, even though it is well established in the standard commentaries on Luke and Acts that Luke made use of various sources in the composition of his works, and that layers of redaction can be detected. For more on the composition of Luke-Acts, sources and redaction, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 28a; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981), 63-97; I. Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 29-35.

vision of the sovereign freedom of the God of Israel. The language of cleansing changes the terms of the discourse; it changes the realm of the discourse—and brings the questions into a realm that has been the bedrock of Jewish identity.

The reader enters into that realm of discourse through the report of a dream-vision experienced by Peter earlier in Acts. The description of this dream (Acts 10:10–16) and Peter’s subsequent report of that vision to the circumcision party in Jerusalem (Acts 11:9) are the only other places in all of Acts in which the language of cleansing can be found. It is the language of cleansing that links the dream, its interpretation, and the warrant for Peter’s claim about Gentile hearts at the Council (Acts 15:9).

[Peter] fell into a trance and saw the heaven opened, and something descending, like a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals, and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” But Peter said, “No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has cleansed, you must not call common.” This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.” (Acts 10:10–16)

Luke makes a momentous hermeneutic shift here. He introduces the language of cleansing with a context that has long been about making distinctions. God has long enjoined Israel to identify their distinctiveness, their particular ontological status, as a sign of their set-apartness and therefore their holiness. For generations Israel understood itself to be holy by virtue of the distinction God made between it and all other nations. The purity codes of Leviticus bear witness to the morality and ethos of a people who understood that because they were set apart as holy by God, they must also keep themselves separate and clean in order to be holy for God:⁶

⁶ David de Silva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 269-74.

I am the LORD your God; I have separated you from the peoples. You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; you shall not bring abomination on yourselves by animal or by bird or by with which the ground teems, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine. (Lev 20:24–26)

Therefore, when Luke records a dream about clean and unclean animals, when he introduces clean and unclean animals as an interpretive key, his intent is clear. The dream form itself indicates a divine communication, an expression of God's will.⁷ The vision itself is of clean and unclean animals, the archetypal symbol for Israel's separateness from the other peoples; the auditory dimension is an authoritative heavenly voice speaking a direct challenge to Peter's self-understanding, suggesting that the very things defining Peter's being and personhood—the rubrics and the authority for making distinctions between the clean and unclean—are no longer reliable.

Over several chapters, Luke unfolds the process by which Peter comes to interpret the dream before announcing his conclusions about it in Acts 15:9. Luke devotes more space and detail to it than any other single event, giving his readers a longer view of the reality of the struggle around identity issues in the first century, and of how long the struggles can be when appropriating new markers and relinquishing the old. He also demonstrates that the reality of what is perceived as divine communication—or God's will—and knowing how to respond to it is rarely straightforward; when it comes into the human realm—as spirit, as text, as vision—it becomes immediately vulnerable to human limitation, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation. Luke describes Peter as being

⁷ John B. F. Miller, *Convinced that God had Called Us: Dreams, Visions, and the Perception of God's Will in Luke-Acts* (Boston: Brill, 2006). See also François Bovon, "These Christians Who Dream: The Authority of Dreams in the First Centuries of Christianity," in *Studies in Early Christianity* (WUNT 161; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 144-62.

“inwardly perplexed” (10:17), sometimes translated “greatly puzzled” or “utterly confused,” by what the vision might mean; he describes it further in the complex of Peter’s experiences with Cornelius and the Holy Spirit and the gradual evolution of his interpretation of the vision culminating in his declaration before the Jerusalem Council.⁸

The issues of Peter’s time were practices of circumcision and table fellowship; the issue of Luke’s time was explaining what had been at stake in relinquishing them and therefore accounting for how God had come to make no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Luke sees quite clearly the profoundly deep nature of the dilemma and expresses it in Peter’s utter confusion—that the commitment to identity markers that set apart, draw distinctions, and keep separate were not only about a fundamental belief in the different ontological states of Jews and Gentiles (articulated in Leviticus as being holy) but also the preservation of the distinctions through rite and ritual as a covenantal responsibility. Therefore, Luke sets out to show that the extension of salvation to the Gentiles was not a violation of any principle of holiness or distinction.

Peter’s final appeal before the Council is spare, just two declarative statements without explanation or defense: “And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith” (15:8–9). But the few words chosen—bearing witness, Holy Spirit, making no distinction, and God’s knowing and cleansing of

⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson writes of Luke’s effort to create for the reader an experience of the protracted timing of this story: “The struggle Luke seeks to communicate to the reader is the process of human decision-making as the Church tries to catch up to God’s initiative. And it is precisely this struggle that gives the narrative its marvelous tension. The reader is a privileged observer, knowing far more than the characters about what God wills and what God is doing. But the reader is also drawn sympathetically into the poignancy of the human confusion and conflict caused by God’s action. The struggle of Peter and his fellow believers to understand what God is doing works subtly on the reader, shaping a sharper sense of the enormity and unprecedented character of the gift.” Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Sacra Pagina 5; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 187.

hearts—all carry heavy scriptural and theological weight. In particular, the repetition of the language of cleansing first introduced in Peter’s dream-vision, calls for a fuller exploration of its significance for Luke, because he employs it at such significant junctures and in service of advancing the overall narrative.

Luke’s Construction of Cleansing

The argument of this dissertation presumes the unity of the Third Gospel and Acts as a single work by a single author, a not undisputed or unchallenged judgment but nevertheless one that enjoys a substantial degree of scholarly consensus.⁹ Among the evidence of a single author is how Lukan theological perspectives and ethical directions are expressed consistently and coherently throughout both Luke and Acts.¹⁰ Therefore, Luke’s construction of “cleansing” is an important object of study, not only because of its

⁹ Arguments for the unity of Luke-Acts are often based on shared literary features and theological themes. Studies of the unity question treat questions of genre, motif, theme, vocabulary, characters, plot, and foreshadowing, and highlight the parallels that exist between Luke and Acts. Universal salvation, mission to the Gentiles, the role of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus-disciple parallelisms are but a few examples of the Lukan theological concerns that have been illuminated. For more on the questions of unity and of literary and theological patterns and themes, see Henry J. Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (Harvard Theological Studies; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1920; repr., New York: Kraus Reprint, 1969); Rebecca I. Denova, *The Things Accomplished Among Us: Prophetic Tradition in the Structural Pattern of Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 141; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching* (New York: Paulist, 1989); William S. Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993); A. J. Mattill, Jr., “The Jesus-Paul Parallels and the Purpose of Luke-Acts,” *NovT* 17(1975): 15-46; Robert F. O’Toole, *The Unity of Luke’s Theology: An Analysis of Luke-Acts* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1984); Susan M. Praeder, “Jesus-Paul, Peter-Paul, and Jesus-Peter Parallelisms in Luke-Acts: A History of Reader Response,” *SBLSP* 23 (1984): 23-39; John S. Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor: Character Types in Luke-Acts* (JSNT; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997); Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (SBLMS 20; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars’ Press, 1975); idem, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (rev. ed.; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2002); Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo represent a dissenting opinion with *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993).

¹⁰ Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 141-3.

peculiar usage in Acts, but also for how it may contribute to the larger body of evidence for claims about the narrative and theological unity of Luke-Acts. In other words, Gospel texts containing the terminology “to make clean,” *katharizō*, must also be investigated for insights about Luke’s construction of cleansing which may then inform the subsequent readings of Peter’s dream and appeals in Acts.¹¹

A cursory look at texts in the Third Gospel containing *katharizō* indicates that they are primarily texts with references to people afflicted with leprosy/*lepra*.¹² Luke highlights them more often and in more substantive ways than the other Gospel writers do. He incorporates two stories that have synoptic parallels—the story of a single leper cleansed by Jesus in the triple tradition (Matt 8:1–4; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 5:12–16) and the reference to lepers in Jesus’ answer to John the Baptist’s question about Jesus’ messianic identity in the double tradition (Matt 11:2–6; Luke 7:18–23). In addition, however, Luke also highlights a story from the Old Testament about the prophet Elisha who cleanses Naaman, the Syrian, of his *lepra* (Luke 4:27; cf. LXX 4 Kgs 5:1–27), and includes a story found only in the Third Gospel—the story commonly known as “the cleansing of the ten lepers” or “the cleansing of the Samaritan leper” (Luke 17:11–19).¹³

¹¹ Walter Bauer, “καθαρίζω,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (ed. F. Danker. 3d ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 488–9; F. Hauck, “καθαρός, καθαρίζω, κτλ,” *TDNT* 3:413–26.

¹² Because the term “leprosy” is properly identified with Hansen’s Disease and not the skin afflictions referred to in either the Septuagint or the New Testament, I am going to refer to the skin affliction by the Greek *lepra* and refrain from using the word “leprosy” except where it is required in citations of translations and secondary literature. Similarly, unless it makes for unnecessarily unwieldy sentences, I will speak of *lepra*-afflicted persons rather than “lepers.” This is an effort to constrain the reader’s inclination to import images of leprosy/Hansen’s Disease to the disease construct represented in the texts. I am attempting to identify the degree to which Luke’s descriptions of the affliction cohere with ancient medical texts in order to “see” as precisely as possible what it was that Jesus and Luke “saw” when they encountered people afflicted with *lepra*. It is important to apprehend Luke’s construct of the affliction in order to best determine why *lepra* and the healing/cleansing of *lepra* were such powerful images for him.

¹³ The Fourth Gospel contains no references to lepers or *lepra* at all.

A closer look at the cleansing texts across the Third Gospel and Acts reveals that Luke has linked *katharizō* with the word *dektos*, or “acceptable,”¹⁴ at two critical points in the narrative progression: the first is in the Luke’s gospel, in what is widely considered the “programmatically sermon” inaugurating Jesus’ public ministry; the second is in Acts, in Peter’s first attempt at articulating an interpretation of his dream of clean and unclean animals.

In the programmatic sermon, Jesus reads from the Isaiah scroll in the synagogue at Nazareth, announcing that the Spirit of the LORD is upon him “to proclaim the acceptable/*dektos* year of the LORD” (Luke 4:19; Isa 61:2). This announcement is received with wonder and welcome until Jesus follows prophecy with proverb saying, “No prophet is acceptable/*dektos* in his own country” (Luke 4:24). To demonstrate the truth of this proverb, Jesus recalls the story of the prophet Elisha who cleansed the *lepra* of Naaman, a Syrian, even though there were many lepers in Elisha’s own country (4:27). These two occurrences of *dektos* in the programmatic sermon passage are the only two in the Third Gospel.

Dektos appears only once in Acts, but at another critical point in the narrative; Peter defends his decision to visit Cornelius’s household despite the “unlawfulness” of Jews associating with Gentiles, saying, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation the one fearing him and working righteousness is acceptable/*dektos* to him” (Acts 10:34–5). This is Peter’s first interpretive statement about the symbolic significance of the clean and unclean animals in his vision, the first suggestion that the divinely cleansed animals are somehow symbolic of acceptable Gentiles.

¹⁴ BDAG, 3d. ed., s.v. “δεκτός,”; W. Grundmann, “δεκτός,” *TDNT* 2:58-59.

The midrashic way Luke presents Jesus' interpretation of the Isaiah scroll, with a verse from another chapter of Isaiah embedded within the one Jesus reads, expanded through an aphorism about the acceptability of prophets, and enriched by references to Elijah and Elisha, further reveals the contributions of Second and Third Isaiah to the controlling images of Luke's discourse and theology.¹⁵ *Dektos* appears in five chapters of Isaiah (49:8; 56:7; 58:5; 60:7; 61:2), all of which are either directly cited by Luke in the Gospel or in Acts, alluded to, or contribute some otherwise rarely seen image or vocabulary.¹⁶

I am suggesting, therefore, that the power of Peter's vision and his climactic declaration about the cleansing of Gentile hearts is anticipated by Jesus' programmatic sermon in chapter four of Luke's gospel. Luke's narrative focus is the relations between the Jewish and Gentile believers as they negotiate the identity markers of who constitutes the people of God and, in both his Gospel and Acts, accounts for the universal reach of God's salvation to the Gentiles. To that end, he presents the acceptable/*dektos* year of the LORD fulfilled in Jesus, the person by whom and in whom human relations—and identities—will be reconfigured and transformed. Jesus lays out his own vision of how

¹⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson: "many New Testament citations carry with them association from their original context and that these associations are as important to the meaning and function of the citation as the actual words quoted." He also identifies as "midrash" that which has been also called "intertextuality" – the allusions to and echoes of Scripture, and the complex webs of associative thinking occasioned by them. Luke Timothy Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts* (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 2002) 37. See also, Robert Brawley, *Text to Text Pours Forth Speech: Voices of Scripture in Luke-Acts* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington: Indiana University, 1995), 1-14; Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, "Gospels and Midrash: An Introduction to Luke and Scripture," in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993; repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

¹⁶ For example, Isaiah 49 contributes "to the end of the earth"; Isaiah 56 contributes references to eunuchs which only appear in Acts 8:26–40; Isaiah 58 contributes the verse embedded in Jesus' reading of Isaiah 61 by the hookword *aphēsis*; Isaiah 60 again contributes *allogēnēs*, a hapax in the NT except for Luke 17:18; Isaiah 61 contributes the text for the sermon in the synagogue, *aphēsis*, and *allogēnēs*. See chapter three of this dissertation for a full explication of Luke's appropriations from these Isaiah texts.

those relations will look in his recollection of Elisha's healing of a Syrian leper. With this story, Luke establishes cleansing as the particular mechanism by which the relationships can be clarified; Gentiles, *lepra*, and cleansing all become linked in one conceptual web. When Luke's understanding of cleansing is seen through the lens of the *lepra* stories in the Gospel, the meaning of the divine message given in Peter's vision becomes clear and the acceptability of Gentiles by virtue of their cleansed hearts becomes the fulfillment of Jesus' announcement of the "*dektos* year of the LORD."

The State of the Question

While the broad scholarly consensus on the narrative and theological unity of Luke-Acts is in part based on the evidence for parallels between the two books, cleansing as a theme or as a particular mechanism of Gentile acceptability and salvation has not been investigated with respect to its significance in the Third Gospel. Similarly, while the term *dektos* has been treated in detail in studies of the Third Gospel in general and Luke 4 in particular, it has not received close attention in studies of Acts in general or Acts 10:35 in particular.¹⁷ The link between the terminology of *katharizō* and *dektos*, such is proposed here, has not yet been addressed in the literature.

Also, while there are many studies that focus on Luke's portrayal of particular human conditions of illness and affliction, there has been little attention given to whether those portrayals have a consistent presentation between the two books and/or if breaks in

¹⁷ J. Bajard, "La Structure de la péricope de Nazareth en Lc iv, 16-30," *ETL* 45 (1969) 165-71; David Hill, "The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth," *NovT* 13 (1971) 161-80; James A. Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993; repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

the continuity are significant in any way.¹⁸ For example, after receiving intense emphasis in the Third Gospel, the *lepra*-afflicted are entirely absent from Acts. However, the lame and the crippled continue to receive concentrated attention there. In fact, the lame/crippled condition is the only one that is specifically singled out and detailed in Acts; other healings accomplished by the apostles are mentioned in general terms and in summary statements.¹⁹

Seen from a slightly different angle, the absence of the *lepra*-afflicted draws attention to an interruption in the “Jesus-disciples parallelism” documented in Luke-Acts scholarship. It is clear that the author intends to demonstrate that, by the power of God, the disciples and the church in Acts are able to replicate the signs and wonders Jesus performed in the Gospel.²⁰ However, nowhere in Acts is there an account of any of the

¹⁸ An exception is the work of Dennis Hamm, whose treatment of the healing of the man born lame focuses on the symbolic value of the lame as representing the Christian community of Jerusalem as Israel restored. Dennis Hamm, “Acts 3:12–26: Peter’s Speech and the Healing of the Man Born Lame,” *PRSt* 11(1984): 199–217. This leaves open the question of whom the *lepra*-afflicted might represent. Roth, arguing that Luke’s audience was familiar with the Septuagint, considers how various afflictions portrayed in Luke-Acts represent character types whose salient features would be recognized by Luke’s readers for the meaning and symbolic value such afflicted groups carried in the Septuagint. However, his methodological commitments disallow characterizations from any source other than the Septuagint which result in descriptions that seem too thin to account for all that these afflictions represent to Luke. Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor*, 23–26.

¹⁹ Consistent, I believe, with the purposes of this study, I am not considering the exorcisms of demons and unclean spirits as of the same character as the other kinds of healing/restoration acts that Jesus and the apostles perform. There is considerable overlap, to be sure, in the Gospels as well as in the scholarly literature as to whether exorcisms are to be considered healings, some other kind of miracle event, and/or symbolic of the contest between the unclean spirits and the Holy Spirit. However, the study of demons and unclean spirits in the ancient world as well as their portrayal in the Gospels are enormous fields of study all their own, and beyond the reach of this project. The physical conditions of interest in this dissertation will be generally limited to those of the kind listed in Luke 7:22 (the blind, the lame, the deaf, the lepers, and the dead). For more on Jesus, exorcisms, and unclean spirits, see Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Clinton Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits in the Synoptic Gospels* (WUNT 185; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

²⁰ Jesus, Peter, and Paul all heal the paralyzed and lame (Luke 5:17–26; Acts 3:2–10; 8:8; 9:33–35; 14:8–10), Jesus heals the sick and casts out demons and likewise the apostles heal the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits (Luke 4:40–41; Acts 5:16). Both Jesus and Peter raise the dead (Luke 7:11–17; 8:49–54; Acts 9:40). Jesus and Paul are both recorded to exorcise demons (Luke 8:26–33; 11:14–15; Acts 16:16–18) and teach in the synagogues (Luke 4:16–32; Acts 17:2).

apostles cleansing a leper, an anomaly that has not been adequately explained.²¹ The Jesus-disciple parallelism seems complete enough to justify at least two judgments about the absence of a parallel in Acts to Jesus' cleansing of lepers: one, that the closest parallel is the cleansing of Gentile hearts suggests that Luke understands cleansing as an act of divine power; and, two, that this particular power is not given to the apostles suggests a demonstration of divine prerogative.

The presumption of the unity of Luke-Acts obligates the interpreter to look for perspectives and directions that can be documented in both.²² Therefore, Luke's use of *katharizō* throughout the two volumes can and should be investigated as a reasonable object of study potentially participating in and contributing to the evidence for the narrative and theological unity of Luke-Acts. In addition, given the evidence for parallel motifs between the ministries of preaching and healing of Jesus and those of the apostles, we are perhaps obliged to look for a reason for the disappearance of lepers in Acts. Finally, we are obliged to question whether the people afflicted with *lepra* have a particular function in the Gospel, and if so, how that particular function relates to Acts.

²¹ Nor is there any report of an apostle restoring sight to a blind person. Roth pursues the question of the disappearance in Acts of almost all the afflicted groups prominent in the Gospel. His conclusion is that the blind, lame, lepers, and poor are prominent in the gospel because they serve a Christological function in establishing Jesus' messianic identity, a function unnecessary in Acts. Roth, *The Blind, the Lamé, and the Poor*, 26. But Hamm's work around the symbolic value of the lame in Acts, and the specific attention given to the lame in Acts by Luke, actually seems to make the absence of the blind and *lepra*-afflicted that much more curious. Hamm, "Acts 3:12–26," 201–4.

²² Roth, *The Blind, the Lamé, and the Poor*, 13.

B. Thesis

Therefore, the thesis of this dissertation is that Luke's use of the language of "cleansing," uniquely articulated in multiple references to lepers, functions to create a literary and theological association between the *lepra*-afflicted in the Third Gospel and the Gentiles in the Acts of the Apostles; "cleansing," identified with an Isaianic understanding of acceptability, is established as a sign of divine power and prerogative, and is the means by which Luke accounts for how Gentiles have become an "authentic realization of God's people."²³

C. Method

The methodology employed here can be broadly identified as a traditio-historical analysis. The initial question about Luke's construct of cleansing emerges from a literary analysis of Acts 10, 11, and 15, and the story contained there of Peter's interpretation of his dream of clean and unclean animals. *Katharizō* is of no small significance, appearing only in this story line, and as the key term in Peter's interpretation and Luke's explanation of how God's salvation is extended to Gentiles. The initial analysis of the Acts texts illuminates the proximate pairing of *katharizō* with *dektos* and the possibility that Luke is locating the issue of Gentile acceptability within a symbolic field marked out by Acts 10 and Luke 4, the other passage where *katharizō* and *dektos* also function in mutually interpretive ways. The entry point to that symbolic field, however, is *dektos* and

²³ Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash*, 2.

its boundaries established by Luke's use and interpretation of Isaiah, in particular. As noted above, Luke's interpretive method is midrashic, and as such, requires its contemporary methodological analogue—intertextual analysis or comparative midrash. The exegesis of the significant texts more closely follows traditional historical-critical methods and the outcomes of those investigations are assessed for their potential to give clearer definition to the contours of Luke's theology and artistry.

D. Project Outline

The dissertation will proceed in four chapters, each taking up an essential element of the thesis: explicating a model of how the affliction of leprosy/*lepra* might have been medically, socially, and religiously constructed in Luke's worldview and how *katharizō* functioned in those constructions; securing the narrative, intertextual, and theological linkages between *katharizō* and *dektos*, with special attention to the relevant Isaiah texts; providing the exegetical work for the *lepra/katharizō* texts in service of clarifying Luke's construct of *lepra* and the significance he ascribes to *katharizō*; applying the yields of the research and analyses in a narrative-critical reading of Acts 10, 11, and 15.

Chapter 2 explicates the various ways *lepra* is presented across a range of ancient texts—medical and biblical. Luke's special emphasis on the affliction of *lepra* raises questions: What exactly did Luke *see* when he saw a person so afflicted? What did he see in his mind's eye when he read Mark's story of Jesus cleansing a leper? What did *lepra* "mean" for Luke? What did it signify, that is, what social, religious, and/or medical constructs did it bear that made it such a potent image for him?

From within ancient medical and religious texts, *lepra* emerges as something of an ambiguous affliction, its varied presentations ranging along what might be best described as a cultic purity–bodily disease continuum. The Leviticus legislation is, at one end of the spectrum, an example of a text in which the construction of *lepra* appears singularly cultic. *Lepra*, in Leviticus 13, is a physical affliction rendering one ritually unclean, but the texts are not concerned with it as an illness *per se*, for no therapeutic interventions or treatment plans are offered. Rather, the text offers descriptions of various skin appearances allowing a priest to determine if the leprous surface has been sufficiently restored to a condition that passes muster on the test of ritual purity, followed then by the requirements for ablutions and sacrifices.

Passages in the Hippocratic Corpus represent the other end of the spectrum where *lepra* is clearly a disease with the texts providing descriptions to guide diagnoses and suggestions for treatment. In addition, we see here that skin afflictions are most often not seen as particular diseases in themselves but as symptomatic of other underlying health conditions.

And then, in the mid-places along that continuum, are texts in which the condition of *lepra* accrues other meanings: a divine punishment, a contagion for which its effect on sacred food is of more concern than the leprous condition itself, an affliction the cleansing of which becomes the marker of a prophet and an eschatological sign of the messianic age.

Chapter 2 begins with a brief consideration of the difficulties posed when *lepra* is translated as “leprosy” and interpreted to mean that which would be recognized today as Hansen’s Disease. Then I explicate the theoretical concept of the “construction” of an

illness, clarifying the distinctions between ancient and modern constructions of the body and disease. Clarifying the distinctions is necessary for ensuring that modern constructs do not interfere with seeing in the *lepra*-afflicted body in as close a way as possible to how Luke saw it. The theory of illness construction also provides a way to evaluate the secondary literature on Jesus' healings and miracles, clarifying how modern constructs of illness tend to force scholarly interpretations into the mutually exclusive, and limiting, categories of miracle or modern-day medical diagnoses. The chapter continues with a review of the occurrences of *lepra* in the texts relevant to this study. The presentation of *lepra* in the Hippocratic Corpus helps to clarify what the ancients "saw" when they came upon the condition or a person afflicted with it. The Hippocratic Corpus and other ancient medical texts also provide explanations of disease etiologies and the role of the *pneuma* in health and sickness. These are given particular attention in order to expand the range of interpretive possibilities in how biblical writers like Luke might have seen and explained the relationship between the Holy Spirit and healing.

The presentation of *lepra* in the biblical texts of the Septuagint follows. These are reviewed for how they expand the construction of the affliction to include the cultic, religious, and moral dimensions that give shape to Jewish interpretations of it, interpretations Luke might have appropriated in his readings of the Torah and the historical writings where the references to lepers and *lepra* are found, interpretations also embedded in the Jesus traditions he received.

Common to writings on *lepra* across the spectrum of religious and medical texts is the terminology of "cleansing," of "making clean," of *katharizō*, the word that initiated

this investigation. Chapter 3 thus begins with an exploration of what *katharizō* means in ancient medical texts, and then proceeds with how it is used in all the potentially relevant passages from Leviticus.²⁴ While the vast majority of occurrences of *katharizō* are found in the chapters of Leviticus and other *lepra*-related passages, it also appears in non-*lepra* related texts. Ezekiel 36 and Psalm 51 are remarkable for their uses of cleansing language in significant proximity to other important Lukan references—clean hearts, and new hearts and spirits. *Katharizō* also appears in three Isaiah texts (chapters 53, 57, and 66), none of which Luke directly quotes or alludes to, but which are of interest, nevertheless, for how they fall within a cluster of Isaianic texts which Luke clearly knows and contributes significantly to the scriptural intertext of his gospel.

The multivalence of both terms, *lepra* and *katharizō*, contributes to the ambiguity of the affliction and responses to it in Luke's gospel narrative. In cultic contexts, these words connote priestly declarations of ritual purity. In medical contexts, however, "making clean" refers to therapeutic treatments and "cleansed" refers to skin that has been restored to health and vitality in a way that is synonymous with "healed" or "cured." The ambiguity is deepened further still when cultic connotations become spiritualized, reflect moral dimensions of impurity, and/or establish group identity and boundary markers. The ways in which any particular social group articulates its own purity codes and deals with purity issues provide lenses by which to understand its efforts to protect the group from interior dissolution and exterior threats to its coherence.²⁵ The issue

²⁴ In addition to chapters 13 and 14, specifically devoted to *lepra*, *katharizō* also appears in other sets of instructions for dealing with ritual uncleanness: chapter 11, with reference to clean and unclean animals; chapter 12 with reference to parturient purification; chapter 15, with reference to genital emissions; and chapters 21 and 22 with reference to the requirements for priests.

²⁵ de Silva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity*, 249.

facing the early Christian/Jesus movement and the one for which Luke is making an account is this very issue: how the social group emerging from Jesus' earliest followers, with its clearly proscribed Jewish identity markers, responded to the threat to those boundaries posed by the presence of non-Jewish believers, and how Luke understands those boundaries to have been reconfigured. Therefore, theoretical treatments of the relationship between purity and group identity are also addressed in this chapter.

Finally, it becomes clear that whatever *katharizō* signifies for Luke in its most full and nuanced constructs, it functions in varied contexts to link concepts and texts.

Katharizō links the *lepra*-afflicted to Gentiles/non-Israelites; it links the prophecies of Isaiah to a story Jesus tells of a non-Israelite afflicted with *lepra* whose flesh is restored by a command of the prophet Elisha; it links lepers and prophets to prophetic announcements of the eschatological signs of the messianic age; it links the whole complex to Peter's dream-vision and his appeal for the inclusion of Gentiles as Gentiles in the Jerusalem church. However, the most significant connection is the one between *katharizō* and *dektos*, a pairing that is present in the paradigmatic passages of Luke 4 and Acts 10.

Therefore, the third chapter continues with the exegetical demonstrations that locate the issue of Gentile acceptability within the wider horizon of those two passages by means of an analysis of the literary parallels suggested by the proximate pairing of cleansing/*katharizō* with acceptable/*dektos* in each of those chapters. It will be shown that the word *dektos* functions as the exegetical keyword opening up several intertextual fields—all of which contribute theologically significant language and concepts that give

shape to the unique and defining features of Luke-Acts, language and concepts that make sense of Luke's emphasis on cleansing—and, by extension, those afflicted with *lepra*.²⁶

Having established a range of possibilities representing the various ways the affliction of *lepra* was constructed in the first-century and having clarified the range of denotations and connotations around the word *katharizō*/"to cleanse," the next chapter presents the exegeses of the "cleansing" texts in Luke and Acts in service of generating a Lukan profile of the *lepra*-afflicted and securing the claim for Luke's purposeful identification between them and the Gentiles.

Chapter 4 begins by presenting how *katharizō* appears and functions in the texts not related to *lepra*, of which there are just two, but both unambiguously in the realm of cultic purity. One invokes Leviticus 12 and the directions for the purification and necessary sacrifices to be made after childbirth, alluded to in Luke's infancy narrative at the point where Mary and Joseph take the infant Jesus to the temple for the purpose of "their purification" (Luke 2:22). This passage is of particular interest as it invokes Leviticus 12 and its instructions for parturient impurity, a chapter placed between the chapter on clean and unclean animals and the chapter on *lepra* in the collection of legislation in Leviticus 11–15 dealing specifically with ceremonial uncleanness.

The other occurrence of *katharizō* in a text with no reference to lepers or *lepra* is Luke's report of a conflict between Jesus and some Pharisees over the practice of hand-

²⁶ These texts serve to link passages that share other important words, evidence that Luke is doing some kind of deliberate, midrashic exegesis similar to that seen in rabbinic legal texts but also discerned, for example, in the writing of Paul by Carol Stockhausen, in *Moses' Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), here 26-27. See also, Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash*.

washing before a meal (Luke 11:37–41). Here, too, *katharizō* carries only connotations of cultic purity. This passage raises some interesting questions—less for what it presents than for what it suggests as an omission from the tradition received from Mark.²⁷ Much of the seventh chapter of Mark is dedicated to controversies between Jesus and the Pharisees over distinctions drawn between the commandments of God and the traditions of the elders and Jesus’ discussion of what defiles (Mk 7:1-23). This is fully paralleled in the Gospel of Matthew, while only a small bit is found in Luke’s gospel, and that bit curiously pared of the very features that might have been expected to serve his purposes. In the Markan text, Jesus declares all foods to be “clean” and lists the impulses “out of the heart of man” that are morally defiling, using *katharizō* in a way that makes plain its connotations of moral purity (Mark 7:18–23). But if Luke had this story before him, he did not use it and, on the presumption of the suppression of this moral dimension as an editorial choice, the question of what theological weight Luke wants *katharizō* to carry must be answered with more precision.²⁸

The exegetical work continues with the four Gospel texts in which *lepra* and the *lepra*-afflicted feature prominently. Each text is culled for the particular attributes it adds to Luke’s constructs of cleansing and *lepra*; the four are considered together for how their order and placement in the Gospel contribute to a progression of thought. The first mention of a leper, occurring in the programmatic sermon of Luke 4, establishes the

²⁷ On Luke’s “great omission” of Mark 6:45-8:28 see Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 67, and idem, *Luke X-XXIV*, 943.

²⁸ Fitzmyer lists the possible reasons that have been proffered for the omission, judging the best to be Luke’s interest in limiting the geographic range of Jesus’ ministry to Galilee. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 770-1. That there is a geographical structure to Luke’s gospel is certain; still, as will be shown in chapter 4, there are reasons to suspect that he did not find Mark’s emphasis on the moral dimension to cleaning congenial to his purposes.

power of God's prophets, when extended beyond Israel, as a sign of the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of the acceptable year of the LORD. The story of Elisha's cleansing of Naaman is paired with another, that of the prophet Elijah raising the dead son of the widow of Zarephath, a story clearly recast in Luke's report of Jesus raising the dead son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11–17). The question of how the two stories from Israel's scriptures function intertextually to structure the Third Gospel requires a closer look at how the story of Elisha and the leprous Syrian is similarly recast.

The episode in which Jesus heals a solitary leper who asks Jesus to make him clean comes to Luke by means of the tradition received from Mark. Luke's construct of *lepra* is illuminated by an investigation of the evidence of his editorial activity. Moreover, this episode, because of its placement, now must be read for its intra-textual resonances with the earlier Elisha/Naaman reference.

In a passage shared with Matthew, Luke includes the question brought to Jesus from the disciples of John the Baptist, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" and Jesus' response, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them" (Luke 7:18–23; Matt 11:2–6). Between question and answer, Luke inserts a report that Jesus "healed many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind he bestowed sight" (Luke 7:21). In some ways this passage may well be identified as the hermeneutical key to understanding Luke's construct of *lepra*, as *lepra* is here embedded in a list of signs that mark the arrival of "the one who is to come," signs that not only include the healing of certain body afflictions and conditions, but also the raising of the dead and preaching of

good news to the poor. The allusion to Isaiah 61 is unmistakable but raises the interesting question of from where exactly the lepers come since they are not to be found anywhere in the prophecies of Isaiah. Several scholars have suggested that Luke's use of Isaiah 61 in the programmatic sermon at Nazareth was derived from this pre-synoptic tradition, a tradition which itself is situated in the larger context of the eschatological expectations of second temple Judaism.²⁹ The Isaianic prophecies are interpreted in several of the sectarian writings at Qumran. Scholars have studied, for example, 4Q521, Psalm 146, and Isaiah 61 and 35, trying to determine orders of literary dependency and how it is that the raised dead find a place in this collection of signs of the messianic age.³⁰ These studies serve as good models for determining how cleansed lepers similarly have found a place in the list. Expanding the context of eschatological expectation, studies of texts like 4Q521, 4QMMT, the Zadokite Fragments, and other fragments among the Dead Sea Scrolls highlight the defining features of the saved eschatological community by means of the lists of those forbidden from entering into the midst of the congregation, defining features against which Jesus and the Gospel writers may have been leveling a harsh prophetic critique. This chapter takes up the question of the symbolic/metaphorical nature of the afflictions, and the corollary questions of if and how they are paralleled in paradigmatic ways by new groups in Acts.

An episode unique to the Third Gospel, the story of ten lepers healed by Jesus is the last one in Luke's presentation of lepers and *lepra* (Luke 17:11–19). It bears many

²⁹ For a summary, see C. J. Schreck, "The Nazareth Pericope," in *L'Évangile de Luc. The Gospel of Luke* (ed. F. Neirynck; BETL 32; Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 399–471, here 414–17.

³⁰ John J. Collins, "The Works of the Messiah," *DSD* 1(1994): 98–112; James D. Tabor and Michael O. Wise, "4Q521 'On Resurrection' and the Synoptic Gospel Tradition: A Preliminary Study," *JSP* 10 (1992): 149–62.

similarities to the story of the single leper in chapter five, and if the earlier story served as this last story's narrative core, expansions and elaborations bring into sharp relief the features of lepers and *lepra* significant to Luke's construction. Therefore, the exegesis of this passage illuminates it as a confluence of several of Luke's other lines of thought. The leper who is the focus of this episode is described in two specific and significant ways, as a Samaritan (Luke 17:16b) and as an *allogenēs*, or a "foreigner" (Luke 17:18). This is the only place in all of the New Testament where the word *allogenēs* is used, but even more compelling for its appearance in three of the five Isaiah passages containing *dektos*, passages already identified as significant in the Third Gospel's intertextual fabric. Several other references to Samaria and Samaritans throughout the Third Gospel and Acts (Luke 9:51–56; 11:25–37; Acts 1:8) suggest an emphasis that is significant both geographically and theologically. In the story of the leper identified as both Samaritan and *allogenēs*, the threads of Isaiah/*dektos*, Samaritan, and *lepra* are woven together. In addition, several stories throughout the Gospel, like this one about the Samaritan leper, end with this statement from Jesus, "your faith has saved you."³¹ This phrase, common to the three stories, suggests they be considered in mutually interpretive ways and thus the relationships between forgiveness and healing and faith and salvation become a more precisely articulated hermeneutical key.³²

Finally, I conclude the chapter by addressing the use of *katharizō* in the passages where it appears in Acts, in Peter's dream and a report of it (Acts 10: 15 and 11:9) and in Peter's appeal to the sign of God's impartiality toward Gentiles (Acts 15:9). The content

³¹ These stories are the woman who anoints Jesus feet, 7:50; the woman with flow of blood, 8:48, and the blind beggar near Jericho, 18:42.

³² Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 94-96.

of Peter's dream in Acts 10 invokes Leviticus 11 and its instructions for distinguishing clean animals from the unclean. Therefore, I consider the implications of interpreting *katharizō* within the complex of texts of Leviticus 11-15.

The previous chapters investigated the ways *lepra* was medically, religiously, and socially constructed in the first century such that it became a salient feature of Luke's gospel and also how he employs *katharizō*, linking the affliction of *lepra* and the Isaianic concept of acceptability, to explain how the salvation of the God of Israel had come to Gentiles. Having established in Chapter 4 a uniquely Lukan construct of *katharizō* and Luke's anticipation of the Gentiles' cleansed hearts in Acts by means of those afflicted with *lepra* in the Gospel, the final chapter concludes with narrative-critical analysis of Acts 10 and 15 read with the analyses of *lepra*, *katharizō*, and *dektos* in view.

Chapter 5 returns to a literary analysis of the report of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, Peter's appeal to release Gentile believers from the demand for circumcision as entry into Christian fellowship, and his argument that Gentile hearts "have been cleansed by faith" (Acts 15:9). The religious authority with which Luke's Peter makes this declaration derives from his interpretation of the vision he has had of clean and unclean animals descending from the heavens with an accompanying divine command (Acts 10:9–16). Peter concludes, on the basis of the dream, that God is impartial with respect to the Gentiles, and that Peter himself is to make no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Acts 10:34, 35; 11:12). However, Peter does not arrive at this interpretation instantaneously but rather by an extended process that Luke lays out in narrative detail and complexity.

“And Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable/*dektos* to him’” (Acts 10:34–35). With this statement Peter articulates, for the first time, his interpretation of the vision of clean and unclean animals; God has shown him he “should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28) and for Peter—at least for the moment—the participation of Gentiles in the Christian community is decided on a new measure of what is *dektos*/“acceptable” to God. Peter then preaches the good news of Jesus Christ to Cornelius’s household and “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word...speaking in tongues and extolling God” (Acts 10:44, 46), an event confirming Peter’s interpretation with a demonstration of divine sanction.

Through the Peter-Cornelius complex, Peter navigates a dynamic interplay of image, language, context, and experience. There is the vision image itself, deeply symbolic of Peter’s religious and ethnic identity; there is a heavenly voice, changing the definitions of some key and critical terms; there is a context in which identities and worldviews are in flux; there are experiences of perplexity and pondering, anxiety and risk, of people and of the Holy Spirit. Images and texts influence how Peter perceives subsequent experiences; in an effort to understand and explain those experiences, Peter returns to his vision-text. In that recursive process, everything deepens in meaning—the image expands from animals to people, the word expands from “cleansed” to no distinction to impartiality to acceptable, and a tentative insight expands to a developed and nuanced claim about God’s activity.

While the narrative complex as a whole can be read as Luke’s etiology of how Christian churches grew from Jewish roots into the Gentile communities of his own lived

experience,³³ it is more than a description of that historical process. It is Luke's defense of the status, before God, of the Christian community in his own time, advanced in his narration of how the status of Gentiles within the Jesus movement, at the time of Peter and the Jerusalem Council, was changed by an act of divine prerogative. In the story time, this change is witnessed to by Peter, the Christian Jew whose testimony sanctions the outcome—an outcome into which Gentiles lived then and into which Luke and his Christian contemporaries have lived now.

The historical author of Luke-Acts writes from and for an established Gentile Christian fellowship, decades beyond those questions of identity markers contested in the time of the first apostles, and with the experience of the character of the Christian life shaping his understanding of how that community has come to be. In the context of such a Gentile Christian fellowship Luke must have experienced that which he would be compelled to name “salvation,” an experience already shaped for him in part by the words of Jesus and of Isaiah. In the context of such a Gentile Christian fellowship, Luke must have reflected on its history and God's activity in its history, reflections shaped by the community's sacred scriptures and language about God's spirit. In the context of such a fellowship, and on behalf of it, Luke saw what was at stake for the community's fundamental self-understanding as the legitimate heir to the promises of the God of Israel and the Messiah of Israel—a self-understanding challenged by texts and traditions that had historically excluded it. Luke sees that the reality which the community believes to manifest the very salvation of God—forgiven and saved by God, having received the Holy Spirit and having been baptized into the community, experiencing love and mercy

³³ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Sacra Pagina 3; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1999), 9-10.

in relationships the acceptability of which is not determined by marks in the flesh or table practices—that this reality is seemingly a reversal of historical Jewish messianic and eschatological expectation. But Luke reads the texts and traditions through the stories of Jesus, whose prophetic critique of his own tradition has become, in the intervening years, constitutive of the identity and character of the Christian community.³⁴ Luke interprets the reversals he perceives as coherent with the prophecies of Isaiah and continuous with Jesus’ prophetic critique.

Luke’s narration of the process of Peter’s interpretation the dream is also analyzed in this chapter, illuminating how Peter’s discernment of God’s will is a process mutually informed by the language and images of the dream and Peter’s experiences of Cornelius and Cornelius’s household. Changes in how Peter recalls and reports the dream from the narrator’s details, Peter’s attributions to the activity of the Holy Spirit, and the language sounding the echoes of Isaiah from the Gospel into Acts all give shape to Luke’s articulation of the events which have culminated in his church’s lived experiences and claims to identity.

The conceptual meaning of *katharizō* is at last fully articulated in this chapter as it connects the Peter-Cornelius complex to Luke’s gospel presentations of Jesus’ programmatic sermon and the *lepra*-afflicted as recipients of Jesus’ cleansing. The intertextual resonances of *dektos* weave Isaiah’s prophecies into the subtext of Acts, supplying the final determinations for Peter, for Luke, and for Luke’s church of who and what is *dektos* before God. Finally, the relationships between faith, cleansing, healing, and saving are fully articulated in an elaboration of how *lepra*, the *lepra*-afflicted, and

³⁴ Sanders, “From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4,” 92-106.

cleansed Gentiles all come to symbolize God's restoration to wholeness of individuals and a people.

CHAPTER TWO: *LEPRA* IN ANCIENT CONTEXTS

While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and besought him, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” And he stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.” And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one; but “go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to the people.” Luke 5:12–14

A. Introduction

In the passage above, part of the gospel tradition Luke received from Mark, the references to examinations by priests, declarations of being clean, and allusions to Moses and levitical legislation situate the cleansing of the man “full of *lepra*” in a decidedly cultic context. Here *lepra* appears as an affliction requiring priestly examination and an offering, an affliction identifying one as unclean until the proper purification rituals are practiced, an affliction rendering a person unfit to live in a home shared with others or to enter temple precincts. When *lepra* is considered in this cultic context, judgments about what transpires between Jesus and the man full of *lepra* are often interpreted primarily in terms of ritual purity, and subsequently, as manifestations of Jesus’ power to make whole and holy. The theological cache is rich: in the cleansing of one afflicted with *lepra*, Jesus restores him to a state of purity and opens the way for his access to the temple, to the worshipping community, and to God.

But in 85 C.E.,³⁵ more than fifteen years after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the cleansing of *lepra* as restoration to ritual purity—even as a religious metaphor for access to the divine—might be less significant to Luke’s audience of largely non-Jewish auditors, at least not significant in the same way it would have been to the first Jewish followers of Jesus whose reports and interpretations of their experiences of Jesus’ healing formed the tradition Luke received.³⁶

Still, it is clear that the affliction of *lepra* captured Luke’s imagination. Among the canonical gospels, only Luke relates four separate episodes in which *lepra* is a prominent element, two of which are unique to his gospel.³⁷ In fact, among all the conditions, afflictions, and disfigurements suffered by people in Luke’s narrative and specifically identified, *lepra* is named most often.³⁸ However, the significance of the affliction is shaded with a slightly different nuance in each of the four episodes. In Luke 7:22, cleansed lepers appear in a list of signs identifying Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish

³⁵ Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 57.

³⁶ Fitzmyer makes the same point on the question of the scarcity of New Testament references to the destruction of Jerusalem: “After all, the destruction of Jerusalem took place at least a generation after the crucifixion of Jesus, and Christianity had by that time moved out of its Palestinian matrix. Moreover, how few of the NT writings were actually composed in Palestine, where we would expect Jewish-Christians to have been concerned about the destruction of the city of their mother church!” In a similar way, he accounts for the focus of New Testament authors, saying “the spread of Christianity into the Mediterranean world and among European Gentiles was obviously more important to them than the Palestinian matrix which, in general, showed itself unreceptive to and uninterested in what was of supreme importance to these writers: the interpretation of the Christ-event.” Ibid., 56-57.

³⁷ Luke 4:27; 5:12–13 (Matt 8:2–3; Mark 1:40–42); Luke 7:22 (Matt 11:5); and 17:12. *Lepra* is not unimportant in Matthew’s gospel; the story of the cleansing of the leper received from the Markan tradition is given a certain pride of place as the very first specific healing Jesus effects in the Gospel, coming immediately after the end of the Sermon on the Mount. The lepers are also found in Matthew’s report of Jesus’ commissioning of the twelve: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons,” (Matt 10:8). In chapter 4 I will discuss the differences between Matthew’s and Luke’s versions of the commissioning statements, and consider why Luke’s Jesus does not give the instruction to cleanse lepers.

³⁸ Only demon possession or possession by unclean spirits is mentioned more often. Blindness is named specifically twice (7:21–22; 18:35–43); some form of paralysis or being “crippled” is specified three times (5:17–26; 7:22; 13:10–17).

messianic expectation.³⁹ In Luke 4:27, Jesus recalls a story from the Hebrew Scriptures in which *lepra* afflicts a non-Jew of high stature and reputation and who subsequently is healed by Elisha, a prophet of God. The narrative of the healing of a single leper in Luke 5:12–16 is marked by cultic features and the afflicted one’s restoration to a state of ritual purity. Luke’s final report of *lepra*, the story of the healing of ten lepers (Luke 17:11–19), recapitulates and juxtaposes elements from the two stories told in chapters 4 and 5, suggesting layers of accumulated meaning.⁴⁰ The fulfillment of messianic expectation, the role of the prophet, the recipients of God’s favor, the realities of the social and religious isolation of the afflicted, and instruction in faith and piety appear as different shades of meaning in the spectrum of Luke’s theology when refracted through the prism of *lepra*.⁴¹

The thesis of this dissertation is that lepers, the cleansing of *lepra*, and the terminology of cleansing have special significance for Luke, a significance that Luke relates to the warrant for Gentile acceptability in the Christian community as recorded later in the Acts of the Apostles. This chapter investigates all the potential fields of

³⁹ According to James D. Tabor and Michael O. Wise, “[t]he dominant themes of the Q saying and ‘On Resurrection’ run through Luke’s Gospel. They characterize his understanding of the Messiah: care for the poor and outcast, release of the oppressed (blind, deaf, lame, lepers) and raising of the dead. For Luke these activities are nothing less than the signs of both the Messiah and the messianic age.” James D. Tabor and Michael O. Wise, “4Q521 ‘On Resurrection’ and the Synoptic Gospel Tradition: A Preliminary Study,” *JSP* 10 (1992): 162.

⁴⁰ The story of the ten lepers includes many of the same features that were prominent in the story of the single leper (e.g., the lepers calling out to Jesus; the use of *katharizō* “making clean,” Jesus’ command that they show themselves to the priests). In addition, the two stories are so similar in form that it seems clear the significance of the story of the ten lepers, for Luke, must extend beyond its function as just another healing narrative or miracle story. Indeed, all those similarities set in stark relief a different set of features, foregrounding emphases on mercy, worship, and the response of a foreigner to Jesus’ power—the very motifs of the Elisha/Naaman story from LXX 4 Kgs 5 that Jesus recalls in Luke 4:27.

⁴¹ Robert Alter recognizes this kind of repetition as an intentional authorial technique used in “larger narrative units to sustain a thematic development and to establish instructive connections between seemingly disparate episodes.” Robert Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 94.

meaning *lepra* could have had for Luke such that it became for him a potent symbol of some of his theological points—and that we might appreciate its full potency.⁴²

The chapter will be ordered in two major sections. The first half of the chapter is devoted to a general explication of the theoretical notion of “constructs” of bodies and of illnesses in an effort to clarify the distance between first-century understandings of disease and disease etiologies and twenty-first century understandings of the same. The purpose is two-fold: the first is to demonstrate specifically how modern-day constructs of illness in general, and of *lepra* in particular, are different from those of first-century people and, as such, create a kind of interference when it comes to trying to understand how the ancients understood the affliction. This “interference” can be seen in the difficulties posed when *lepra* is translated as leprosy in English editions of the Old and New Testaments calling to mind the appearances, symptoms, and treatments related to what is known in today’s medical world as Hansen’s Disease. It is evident in the many and varied perspectives scholars take when dealing with the healing narratives in the New Testament, with conclusions often limited to the forced choice of seemingly mutually exclusive categories of explanation—religious (e.g. miracle or cultic) or medical (e.g. a modern-day diagnosis). Therefore, the first purpose in considering the theoretical idea of illness constructs is to illuminate the reality of the interference caused by the presuppositions of modern-day constructs of the body and illness—and to minimize it.

⁴² Both Dennis Hamm and Mikeal C. Parsons pursue a similar question regarding the significance of Luke’s emphasis in Acts on the paralyzed and the lame. Hamm, “Acts 3:12–26,” 199–217; Mikeal C. Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 109–22.

The second purpose then is to highlight some of the more important features of the ancients' constructs of the body and illness, and to locate the symptoms, etiology, healing, and meaning of *lepra* in the context of those constructs. Then we can get a little closer to how *lepra* might have been seen, understood, and explained by Luke.

The second half of the chapter is devoted to surveying how *lepra* appears in the ancient medical texts and in the Septuagint (LXX). The different character of *lepra* in the priestly and non-priestly writings will be highlighted, and commonalities and differences in the representations of *lepra* in the medical texts and the Septuagint will be summarized.

***Lepra* is not Leprosy**

English translations of the Bible from medieval to modern times have regularly employed the word “leprosy” to translate the Greek *lepra* where it occurs in the New Testament and Septuagint and the Hebrew *tsara’at* where it occurs in the Hebrew Bible.⁴³ Many modern translations typically include footnotes and annotations that qualify the use of the term “leprosy,” such as The New Oxford Annotated Bible’s footnotes at Luke 5:12: “the terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases” and at Lev 13:45: “A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain,” and the annotation provided at Matt 8:2–4: “*Leprous*, a skin disorder of an uncertain nature. Several diseases were

⁴³ According to E. V. Hulse, the first author to use the term *lepra* for the disease we call leprosy was the Arabic physician, John of Damascus (A.D. 777-857), his terminology later followed by many Arabic authors and then medieval European authors after them. This use of *lepra* for the disease we know to be leprosy led to the modern name. E. V. Hulse, “The Nature of Biblical ‘Leprosy’ and the Use of Alternative Medical Terms in Modern Translations of the Bible,” *PEQ* 107(1975): 87-105, here 89.

probably referred to by this name.”⁴⁴ The effort behind the footnotes and annotations accomplishes at least two things: first, it acknowledges, in light of modern and advanced medical knowledge about leprosy, that the conditions signified by the term “leprosy” in the biblical texts are not actually the same disease which we refer to as leprosy today; second, it attempts a corrective to the modern day reader’s inclination to associate the characteristics of leprosy with the skin diseases identified in the bible as leprosy, and thus inadvertently import images, beliefs, and attitudes that can interfere with a proper understanding of what is intended in the biblical texts.⁴⁵

Known today as Hansen’s Disease, leprosy is an extremely chronic condition of relatively low infectivity produced by *Mycobacterium leprae*, the leprosy bacillus. In its more severe form, and when left untreated, large skin lesions are numerous and can cause deformity of the feet, hands, and face, the bacteria affecting particularly the nerves near the skin surface and in oral and nasal mucous membranes. The presence of the bacteria can lead to a loss of sensation in affected areas which renders the afflicted person vulnerable to unnoticed cuts and burns which become infected. The infections can become so serious that amputation becomes the only medical recourse. Paralysis of the blinking reflex results when the leprosy bacteria attack the nerves around the eyes, and can lead to blindness. The mucous membranes of the nasal cavity are especially vulnerable, susceptible first to scarring and eventually to collapse of the nose.

⁴⁴ Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 86 NT, 141 OT, 11 NT, respectively.

⁴⁵ However, while such correctives function to keep us from importing inaccurate representations to our reading of the biblical text, the continued use of the word “leprosy” in modern English translations has failed to restrict the exporting of biblically derived notions of uncleanness and contamination to the person afflicted with Hansen’s Disease, and has contributed to continued practices of social isolation/quarantine (i.e., the leper colony) that are in no way medically justified. See, for example, Jaymes Song, “Last Days of a Leper Colony” n.p. Cited 21 February 2012. Online: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/03/22/health/main545392.shtml>.

I describe the symptoms here simply to contrast Hansen's Disease with the descriptions of *tsara'at/lepra* given in Leviticus 13 and 14.⁴⁶ Chapter 13 of Leviticus begins with the LORD describing to Moses the skin appearances which should be recognized as potentially unclean: "When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a leprous disease on the skin of his body, he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests" (13:2). Leviticus 13:30 describes a fourth potentially unclean appearance, that of an itch, "a leprous disease of the head or the beard." These four appearances, swellings, eruptions, spots, or itch, are characteristic of many different skin diseases, however, and cannot be regarded as four different manifestations of a single disease.⁴⁷

Upon the appearance of these primary characteristics, Leviticus requires examination by the priest for certain secondary skin features and only when those features were present could a pronouncement of *tsara'at/lepra*, and therefore unclean, be made. Secondary features include a change either in skin color or hair color, an infiltration of the skin, an extension or spread in the skin, and an ulceration of the skin. Leviticus 13 lays out a fairly complex diagnostic scheme for the priest to follow in determining the presence of ritual uncleanness; only certain combinations of primary and secondary features result in a declaration of unclean.⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that skin

⁴⁶ The detail also serves later discussions regarding the character of the visual images that correspond to modern-day understandings of leprosy.

⁴⁷ E.V. Hulst, "The Nature of Biblical 'Leprosy'," 88. See also John Wilkinson, "Leprosy and Leviticus: A Problem of Semantics and Translation," *SJTh* 31(1977): 153-66. Wilkinson commented on a list of skin conditions which could present the secondary features for which priests were to examine: "It illustrates how numerous are the conditions which could produce the required physical signs, and therefore how impossible to confine the application of our passage (Lev 13:1-44) to any single disease." In addition to conditions already listed above, his list includes vitiligo, syphilis, scleroderma, eczema, dermatitis, tuberculosis, and carcinomas. *Ibid.*, 165.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

does not have to have been fully restored to a non-leprous state (i.e., what we might consider “healed”) to be considered clean; there are instead certain combinations of skin appearances and/or indications of no further spread that determine whether a person with a leprous condition is clean (e.g., Lev 13:29–37).

The fact that it is the secondary features that are significant for the pronouncement of *tsara’at/lepra* indicates that the concern was not with the diagnosis of a disease, for then only the primary features would have been important. Rather, the purpose of the descriptions in Leviticus 13 and 14 is to draw attention to certain secondary features common to a variety of skin conditions regarded as producing ritual uncleanness.

B. The Theoretical Lens and Conceptual Tools of Constructivist Theory

This chapter extends the insights gleaned and conclusions drawn by Annette Weissenrieder in *Images of Illness in the Gospel of Luke: Insights of Ancient Medical Texts*.⁴⁹ Weissenrieder is representative of biblical scholars whose work is shaped by the thought of contemporary critical theorists and social scientists and their questions of how identity, disability, and illness are socially constructed.⁵⁰ Her work is of particular value

⁴⁹ Annette Weissenrieder, *Image of Illness in the Gospel of Luke: Insights of Ancient Medical Texts* (WUNT 164; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

⁵⁰ See Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel* (HSM 54; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); idem, *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies* (ed. Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper; SemeiaSt 55; Leiden: Brill, 2007); Joel S. Baden and Candida R. Moss, “The Origin and Interpretation of *sāra’at* in Leviticus 13–14,” *JBL* 130 (2011): 643–62; Coleen Grant, “Reinterpreting the Healing Narratives,” in *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice* (ed. Nancy L. Eiesland and Don E. Saliers; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998); Rebecca Raphael, *Biblical Corpora: Representations of Disability*

here because she engages texts from the Gospel of Luke in particular, and because she challenges the ways in which constructions of illness have limited New Testament scholarship in general. She argues that scholars' persistent failure to include analyses of ancient medical texts in investigating questions about Luke's presentation of illness, and of Jesus as a healer, results in a subsequent failure to appreciate the success with which Luke makes plausible *to his readers/hearers* a central claim of his gospel.⁵¹ She argues that Luke's claim that the divine reality is present and operative in the human sphere is articulated via descriptions of illness conditions and healings that cohere with the medical understandings of his time.⁵²

The theoretical underpinnings of Weissenrieder's work are in contemporary constructivist theory, a full explication of which is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, its basic concepts and premises are helpful in at least two ways that advance this project.⁵³ First, it provides a theoretical lens through which to identify some influential presuppositions about the body and illness held by present-day researchers and biblical exegetes. These presuppositions underlie many of the seemingly different approaches to studying illness in the NT predetermining—and subsequently limiting—the reach of their conclusions. The presuppositions, based on modern medical knowledge and assumptions about illness and health, force *a priori* decisions about whether to

in Hebrew Biblical Literature (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 15-22; Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, chapter 3, "Perceptions of Reality and the Construction of Illnesses," 21-42.

⁵¹ Emphasis mine. The literature reviewed by Weissenrieder is substantially, though not exclusively, German NT scholarship.

⁵² Weissenrieder writes, "[Luke] meticulously employed the illness constructs of his time in order to make his central message plausible: that of the presence of the divine reality in the human sphere. Expressed in the theoretical language of constructivism, the well-informed presentations of illness serve to establish coherencies between the two realities, the human and the divine." Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 2.

⁵³ Theories concerning the construction of identity reflect a large field of study. For a good introduction to some of the main themes of larger field and some of the key voices that began it, see A.K.M. Adam, ed., *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis, Mo. : Chalice Press, 2000).

analyze healing narratives according to modern diagnostic criteria or to focus on their religious connotations.⁵⁴ The resulting “either/or” thinking limits our understanding of how Luke sees the *lepra*-afflicted body apart from the two categories imposed on the outcomes of the queries. The premises of constructivist theory provide a way through the forced choice of giving either a medical account or a religious one, and in turn allow the method and the conclusions of this dissertation to move beyond those of previous studies of *lepra* in the New Testament.

Second, constructivist theory provides conceptual tools for considering how Luke is reconstructing the *lepra*-afflicted body in order to say something about what we would consider the ontological status of that body. I am not suggesting here that Luke himself thought about ontology or constructions and reconstructions of the body, although there is some evidence to suggest that he was, in fact, trying to subvert commonly observed physiognomic conventions.⁵⁵ I am positing that his interest in the *lepra*-afflicted body and his varied presentations of it, his use of *katharizō* in ways that exploit the ambiguity of the term, and the powerful symbol in Peter’s dream of unclean animals being made clean by divine declaration, are all markers of Luke’s effort to say something about God’s salvation and agency that cannot be fully known if we read the texts already having determined how Luke’s presentation of *lepra* coheres either with modern medical understandings or with religious ones. To consider Luke’s “construct” of the *lepra*-

⁵⁴ As Weissenrieder states, “Either we concern ourselves with medicine, which can lead us to neglect the New Testament texts, or we deal with the miracles, which can be accompanied by explanations of illnesses and healings that are plausible for us today,” Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 19. This either/or dilemma is also expressed in the question of whether the *lepra* stories are properly read as ritual cleansing stories or as healing/miracle stories, and in the question of whether Luke makes a distinction between healing and being cured. Interpretations within a religious model would include how healing narratives are read as miracle stories, how they reflect the Jewish cultic context, and how Jesus is seen in imitation of the Hellenistic thaumaturge. On Jesus as Hellenistic thaumaturge, see Johnson, *Luke*, 95; Marshall, *Luke*, 207.

⁵⁵ Parsons, *Body and Character*, 81-82.

afflicted body is to explore what that body means to him beyond traditional expectations that it provides either an occasion for saying something about Jesus' power to heal or an occasion for saying something about the purity matrix in which Jesus functioned. To consider the construct of an illness such as *lepra* allows us to see how the symptoms of illness reported by Luke flow into the text coherently with the ancient medical understanding of *his own time*. This is important because the thesis of this dissertation is that Luke means to say that "cleansing" is a "mechanism" of salvation; to consider Luke's construct of the illness of *lepra* allows us to investigate how the claim that Gentile hearts have been cleansed by faith might cohere with the understanding Luke has of the means by which *lepra* comes to be healed/cleansed.

Four insights from constructivist theory are valuable for this project:

1. Constructivist theorists question the possibility of an "objective" view of the body and suggest that many of the things we consider natural "givens" about the body, such as its gender, sex, and race, are instead social/cultural constructs. A central question is what, if anything, about the body is "natural" or naturally meaningful rather than dependent on social location (time/space) for meaning.⁵⁶ The constructivist approach to the question begins with a "null hypothesis," that is, with the presumption that there is no necessary, naturally dictated view of the body but only cultural constructions of it. Weissenrieder suggests that this null hypothesis is similarly useful in thinking about illness; there is no "objective view of illness" but only cultural understandings

⁵⁶ Weissenrieder writes, "Therefore, bodies and illnesses can never be studied independently from their cultural context. Corporeality—including that of the diseased body—is not merely a given; it is a cultural symbol, and it is produced and generated as such." Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 35.

of/attitudes toward illness influencing the way we view sick bodies and the conclusions we draw from/about them.⁵⁷

2. The meanings we give to bodies and illnesses change over time because knowledge and contexts change, as does the language available to describe the body and its health.⁵⁸ For Weissenrieder, along with other constructivist theorists, descriptions of the body and illness are seen as culturally mediated. Descriptions of the body's corporeality and of the appearance of illnesses are accessible only through language, seen not as giving expression to reality, but rather as a system of symbols producing or generating meaning. Therefore, bodies or illnesses cannot be understood as "natural constants" onto which culturally determined descriptors are attached, but rather as culturally mediated constructions. Furthermore, because the terminology used to describe the visual presentation of illnesses will differ in various societies and in different times, the patterns of recognition of and responses to sick people will also differ as they, too, are mediated by the cultural knowledge specific to time and place.⁵⁹

3. If presumed natural categories can be understood as constructs then they can also be reconstructed to have other meanings.⁶⁰ We can have a more critical eye for how scholarly constructions, always themselves reflecting the mediating influence of the

⁵⁷ For example, some leprologists will only refer to leprosy as Hansen's Disease, wishing to counteract biblically derived implications that the leper is unclean and the subsequent negative effect on public health measures and application of effective treatment – esp. the social isolation of "leper colonies" on remote islands and special hospitals. Other health officials reject the use of "Hansen's Disease" because they are dealing with a bacteria and not a disease. E. V. Hulse, "The Nature of Biblical 'Leprosy,'" 87.

⁵⁸ Consider the relatively recently generated medical descriptors of Attention Deficit Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, the concept of an "autism spectrum," and the many differentiations of mental health conditions.

⁵⁹ Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 36-37.

⁶⁰ For example, bell hooks, a cultural scholar, explores meanings of race learned through images and representations as well as how we can change the meaning of race by representing it in different ways through what she refers to as "border crossings." bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (London: Routledge, 2006).

social/cultural contexts in which they emerge, have influenced meanings of the texts over time.⁶¹ We can also have a more trained eye for how Luke is reconstructing the *lepra*-afflicted body to give it a different meaning in his Gospel than it would have had in his social-cultural context.

4. Finally, constructivist theory illuminates the way that representations of the body depend on symbolic divisions accepted as given, or even natural, within the same culture, which results in dichotomous descriptions such as male/female, black/white, and in this case, clean/unclean. These descriptions are “read” from bodies as absolutes or as ontological realities. Traditional readings of Luke’s Gospel and the healing narratives therein are shaped by the same kind of dualistic thinking and by how such dualistic thinking creates polarized frames of reference. The result is that we read Luke’s treatment of purity/impurity, Jew/Greek, etc. as if Luke understood them as absolute categories when in fact Luke may be reconstructing bodies and illnesses in ways that subvert the presumption of such dichotomies as natural givens.⁶²

⁶¹ Weissenrieder describes a comprehensive study of illnesses in the New Testament published in Germany in the 1930s which attributed the majority of the illnesses and possessions to the generalized phenomenon of “hysteria,” noting that this phenomenon was typical of the time period. Similarly, in the later part of the twentieth century several studies appeared in which the condition of anorexia nervosa, a disorder among young women which was the focus of much medical and social attention, was given as the explanation for several illnesses, in particular that which afflicted Jairus’s daughter in Luke 8:40–42, 49–56. Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 8–9.

⁶² Mikeal C. Parsons suggests something similar when he explores the ancient practice of physiognomy, in which judgments are made about a person’s character based on physical characteristics. Parsons makes the case that Luke sets out, with intention, to subvert the practice in the portrayal of persons whose character, by conventional physiognomic standards, would have had been suspect, but who are, nevertheless, transformed in their encounters with Jesus and his apostles. Parsons, *Body and Character*, 85–89 (re: the bent woman, Luke 13:10–17), 105–8 (re: Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1–10).

Representative Perspectives in Studies of Healing in the New Testament

The literature related to the New Testament healing narratives is extensive, dealing with questions of the historicity and/or the nature of miracles, the role of Jesus as healer and/or miracle worker, modern-day medical diagnoses of the conditions represented, the cultural experience and social implications of illness, distinctions between disease and illness and between healing and curing, comparisons to Greco-Roman literature on illness and healing, the form and structure of healing narratives, and the language of healing used in the New Testament—to mark out just a few of the places on the scholarly horizon.⁶³ For the purposes of this dissertation, I want to consider the studies of New Testament healings broadly, in terms of how they might be ordered according to which of three general perspectives is taken by each—the medical, the religious, or the social/cultural. I will consider how each perspective shapes the methods and conclusions, and what is lost and what is gained by each. I also consider the presuppositions on which the perspectives are based, insofar as those presuppositions clarify the constructs of illness brought to the texts by the theorists and exegetes. These

⁶³ A representative list of the literature includes: Reinhard von Bendemann, “‘Many-Coloured Illnesses’ (Mark 1.34): On the Significance of Illnesses in New Testament Therapy Narratives,” in *Wonders Never Cease: The Purpose of Narrating Miracle Stories in the New Testament and Its Religious Environment* (LNTS 288; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 100-124; Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer: Possession, Trance, and the Origins of Christianity* (New York: Continuum, 1995); Larry P. Hogan, *Healing in the Second Temple Period* (NTOA 21; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992); J. Keir Howard, *Disease and Healing in the New Testament: An Analysis and Interpretation* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2001); Werner Kahl, *New Testament Miracle Stories in their Religious-Historical Setting: A Religionsgeschichtliche Comparison from a Structural Perspective* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); Michael Labahn and Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, eds., *Wonders Never Cease: The Purpose of Narrating Miracle Stories in the New Testament and Its Religious Environment* (LNTS 288; London: T & T Clark, 2006); John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000); idem, “Biblical Leprosy and Body Symbolism,” *BTB* 11 (1981): 119-33; Louise Wells, *The Greek Language of Healing from Homer to New Testament Times* (BZNTW 83; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998); John Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

considerations will then frame closer analyses of the treatment in the standard commentaries on Luke and Acts, as well as the studies of healing in Luke-Acts and of the *lepra* narratives, in particular.

Studies taking a medical perspective offer an analysis of how an illness is named and how symptoms are described in a given gospel healing story, and conclude with attempts to correlate the information to a modern day diagnosis.⁶⁴ For example, treatments of the affliction of the boy possessed (Luke 9:37–43; Matt 17:14–21; Mk 9:14–29) have identified the behaviors described as symptomatic of epilepsy.⁶⁵ Similarly, studies of Luke 8:43–48 (Matt 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34) have presumed that the woman with the flow of blood suffered from something related to irregular menstrual bleeding, such as menorrhagia or metorrhagia or uterine fibroid tumors.⁶⁶ Paul’s sudden blindness in Acts 9:8 has been attributed to temporary retinal damage from looking at a

⁶⁴ Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing*, 69–73. Wilkinson correlates the illness conditions with very precise and technical modern medical diagnoses, however always with the presuppositions that Jesus can and did heal these illnesses and of the reality of demons and demon possession. Wilkinson’s list of ailments suffered by characters in Luke’s gospel and his diagnoses include: the centurion’s servant (Luke 7.2) has “acute anterior poliomyelitis”; the bent woman (Luke 13:11) has “rheumatic disease of the spine” “spondylitis ankylopoietica”; and the paralyzed man (Luke 5:18) suffers from “paraplegia.” Wilkinson, *Bible and Healing*, 70–71.

⁶⁵ Fitzmyer titles the section in his commentary, “The Cure of the Epileptic Boy,” and includes a detailed description of the symptoms and etiology of epilepsy in his notes: “Today epilepsy is regarded as chronic nervous disorder involving changes in consciousness and motion resulting from either an inborn defect which produces convulsions of greater or lesser severity or an organic lesion of the brain (by tumor, toxic agents, or injury). The attacks often begin in childhood or puberty.” Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 808. Marshall stays close to the text and speaks almost exclusively of the boy being seized by an unclean spirit, yet still inserts that the description of the boy’s condition, foaming at the mouth, and being bruised and worn out, “correspond to epilepsy.” Marshall, *Luke*, 391. Weissenrieder provides examples of older studies identifying the condition as a psychological affliction such as mania, a dissociative disorder, or a borderline personality disorder. The Gadarene/Gerasene demoniac is described in one study as “mentally ill.” Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 8.

⁶⁶ Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 229. In addition, she refers to studies suggesting dysmenorrhea and also hemorrhoids. Weissenrieder helpfully expands the range of possibilities beyond gender-specific illnesses in her study of “issue of blood” in the ancient medical texts. Fitzmyer names this text, “The Cure of the Woman with a Hemorrhage.” Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 743. Marshall suggests that the problem is a uterine hemorrhage. Marshall, *Luke*, 344. Wilkinson identifies the condition as uterine fibroid tumours. Wilkinson, *Bible and Healing*, 70.

bright light, and the scales that subsequently fell from his eyes when his sight returned (9:18) could have been the crusts of dried secretions which would have accumulated in and around his eyes during the three days of blindness.⁶⁷

Fitzmyer, in his analysis of Luke 5:12–16, makes a note of the skin conditions plausibly indicated for the *lepra*-afflicted one by the descriptions of *lepra* given in Leviticus 13 which include: favus, lupus, psoriasis, ringworm, or white spots.⁶⁸ Marshall writes that some of the skin diseases considered as leprosy were regarded as highly contagious and incurable, while others were capable of cure, concluding, “It is therefore impossible to say precisely what disease was meant in the present passage and some scholars think that a disease of a nervous origin may be meant.”⁶⁹ In these studies, the implicit presumption is that the presentation of symptoms of any given illness have remained a stable feature of human biology and physiology over time, and that with a few descriptive clues, the condition can be diagnosed based on the perceived correspondence to illnesses and conditions well-known and recognized today.

From a religious perspective, the affliction of *lepra* has traditionally been classified either as an illness, the healing of which also contributes to interpretations of Jesus as a healer and/or miracle-worker,⁷⁰ or as a marker of ritual uncleanness, the

⁶⁷ Wilkinson, *Bible and Healing*, 159.

⁶⁸ Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 573.

⁶⁹ Marshall, *Luke*, 208. Davies writes, “From these and other consideration [flaking skin and redness beneath the skin], biblical “leprosy” is certainly psoriasis. However, biblical “leprosy” might have been diagnosed for individual suffering from favus, a severe fungus infection, and perhaps also seborrhoeic dermatitis, patchy eczema, and other flaking skin disorders.” Davies, *Jesus as Healer*, 68. Wilkinson identifies the leprosy as a chronic and infectious disease. Wilkinson, *Bible and Healing*, 70.

⁷⁰ The question of Jesus as a miracle-worker is a complex and complicated one. Scholars take up the questions of the definition of a miracle, the historicity of Jesus’ miracles, the literary form and structure of miracle accounts, the theological motivations behind the use of the term miracle to describe Jesus’ healings, and critiques of those motivations. For the record, I presume the historicity of Jesus’ healings, but see the label of “miracle” to be more concealing than revealing as it says more about how the people of Jesus’ day interpreted what Jesus did than it can tell us about what Jesus actually did. It is itself something of a

cleansing of which contributes to interpretations with more strictly religious connotations around Jewish purity concerns. Luke Timothy Johnson describes the “distinctive touches Luke puts to the Markan portrayal of Jesus” in the stories of the healing of the leper and the paralytic which emphasizes Jesus’ powers as a miracle-worker:

He heightens the impression of a Hellenistic thaumaturge. Like other Greek sages, Jesus’ teaching and working of wonders are closely joined (5:17). Through him, the divine *dynamis* is at work (5:17), enabling him to heal with a word (5:13, 20) and a touch (5:13). His deeds draw great crowds to him (5:15), and his *paradoxa* (marvels) generate fear and amazement (5:26).⁷¹

Davies, by contrast, makes a distinction between healing and cleansing, which he interprets with a strictly ritual connotation. He suggests that since the New Testament texts clearly report Jesus as “cleansing” the *lepra*-afflicted, he is in fact not curing them, but simply giving them a positive diagnosis, something like a “clean bill of health.”

Davies tries to puzzle out exactly what role Jesus plays since the texts do not say he cured

construct whose definitional contours change over time and context. Robert L. Hamblin defined a miracle as “a marvelous occurrence taking place in human experience which could not have been exercised by human powers or by the power of any natural agency. It is an event that must be attributed to divine intervention. It is usually thought of as an act which demonstrates divine control over the laws of nature.” R. L. Hamblin, “Miracles in the Book of Acts,” *SWJT* 17 (1974): 19-34 (20). John P. Meier defined it in this way: “(1) An unusual, startling, or extraordinary event that is in principle perceivable by any interested and fair-minded observer, (2) an event that finds no reasonable explanation in human abilities or in other known forces that operate in our world of time and space, and (3) an event that is the result of a special act of God, doing what no human power can do.” John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2, (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 512. One of the points I am trying to make in this dissertation is that descriptions of the healing of an illness could be coherent with what first-century people understood about the body and illness while not precluding them from seeing in that healing a divine power or presence. The literature is beyond the scope and purpose of this dissertation. For more on miracles in the New Testament, see Kahl, *New Testament Miracle Stories*, 11-36; Thomas Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah: Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?* (ConBNT 38; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2002), 91-98; Beate Kowalski, “Eschatological Signs and Their Function in the Revelation of John,” in *Wonders Never Cease: The Purpose of Narrating Miracle Stories in the New Testament Its Religious Environment* (ed. Michael Labahn and Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, LNTS 288; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 201-18; Geert Van Oyen, “Markan Miracle Stories in Historical Jesus Research, Redaction Criticism, and Narrative Analysis,” in *Wonders Never Cease*, 87-99.

⁷¹ L. T. Johnson, *Luke*, 95. See also Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 572.

the *lepra* but he is also not authorized to pronounce the afflicted ones ritually clean.

Davies writes:

The simplest explanation may be the best one. Jesus had a considerable reputation as a healer. People who were said to be lepers came to him and asked his opinion whether or not their condition remained leprous or not. He said sometimes they were clean of leprosy; they rejoiced to hear his opinion and subsequently they journeyed to Jerusalem to have his opinion formally verified.⁷²

This may be the “simplest explanation” to Davies’ dilemma, but it strains the texts to breaking. It is clear in Luke 5:13 that at Jesus’ touch and word to the afflicted man “the *lepra* left him.” The *leproi* in Luke 17 do not ask Jesus for an opinion, they clearly ask for his mercy (17:13), and Luke clearly states they were healed in v. 15. Davies’ explanation falters on the question it begs, for what then is meant when Jesus asks the Samaritan leper, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?” (17:17). Still, Davies’ dilemma makes quite plain the difficulties for the exegete when the terminology of “cleansing” is restricted to its cultic usage.

Another example of a study where *lepra* is considered (among other conditions) as a marker of ritual uncleanness and where the reports of Jesus healing yield interpretations more strictly oriented toward Jewish purity concerns is Thomas Kazen’s *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*. Kazen assumes that the narratives carry historical reminiscences of Jesus’ acts of healing and then pursues the question of Jesus’ defilement through contact with ritually unclean people and places (the *lepra*-afflicted, the bleeding

⁷² Davies, *Jesus as Healer*, 68-69.

woman, corpse contact with the widow's son, the time among the tombs with the Gadarene demoniac).⁷³

Lastly are those studies which focus on the social/cultural consequences for the afflicted, for example, the shame of infertility or the isolation on the outer edges of the camp of the *lepra*-afflicted ones. Fred B. Craddock describes the *lepra*-afflicted man who approaches Jesus for healing in Luke 5:12 as having a "social disease" and characterizes *lepra* as so "threatening" that the "religious, social, and political forces join in the demand that the diseased persons be removed from sight, isolated from all domestic, religious, and commercial contact."⁷⁴ Pilch, drawing on insights from medical anthropology, considers how first-century people described the experience of their illness, how they interpreted it, and what meaning they made of it. Presuming that all illness realities are fundamentally semantic and all healing is fundamentally interpretation, Pilch concentrates on the hermeneutic dimension of healing rather than the medical model's emphasis on symptoms and diagnoses.⁷⁵ He identifies healing as an elemental social experience, characterizing it as fundamental as the gift or exchange relationship.⁷⁶ He states, "[H]ealing boils down to meaning and transformation of experience. The change or transformation is created by all participants who effectively enact culturally authorized interpretations."⁷⁷ This approach opens up wider

⁷³ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*.

⁷⁴ Fred B. Craddock, *Luke*, (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 71-72. Craddock makes no reference to ritual purity concerns, nor does he focus on the healing as a demonstration of Jesus' power. It is instead an act of Jesus' "selfless caring" and "compassion."

⁷⁵ Pilch writes, "Human sickness as a personal and social reality and its therapy is inextricably bound to language and signification." Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament*, 41.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

understandings of the whole experience of a disease as well as of the notion of its healing to include a restoration of meaning to one's life beyond what we would call a cure.⁷⁸

Implications for Exegesis

If *lepra* is analyzed in the secular terms of modern medical diagnostic criteria, the gain of a more precise determination of the illness often comes with the loss of religious meaning. The poor man probably had only a bad case of eczema or psoriasis. What is so significant about that? If one begins with the presumption that some kind of “miracle” had clearly occurred, explanations of the affliction as severe or even horrific must often follow in order to make the story plausible, despite the fact that those explanations may not cohere with ancient thought.⁷⁹ Even conceptualizations of what it means to be impure/unclean or the consequences of social and religious ostracism make more sense if

⁷⁸ Ibid., 23. Pilch here makes a clear distinction between curing and healing: curing is efficacious when biomedical change takes place; healing is efficacious when the people who seek it say it is.

⁷⁹ Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 19. Wilkinson exemplifies this point in his discussion of the differing manuscript traditions witnessing either Jesus' anger or his compassion in the story of the healing of the leper in Mark 1:41: “Any acceptable explanation for the anger is rendered even more difficult when we realize that the man's disease was probably not leprosy as we know it today, and therefore not as disfiguring as that disease can be, but some variety of skin disease which showed the features which made the one who suffered from it ceremonially unclean according to the levitical regulations” (Lev. 13:1–3). Wilkinson, “Bible and Healing,” 99. Another example of the exegetical implications when current images of an illness are presumed to be self-evident is that of the rendering of the Greek *lepra* as leprosy in English translations of the Bible. Even when annotations qualifying the term as encompassing a wide range of skin diseases are offered, “leprosy” still typically evokes images of Hansen's Disease and graphic images of bodily decay and disfigurement. The aesthetics of those images may occasion visceral reactions ranging from distaste to revulsion. Language and images together elicit fears of contagion and judgments about the necessity of quarantine. These judgments find precursors in biblical texts about the isolation of the leper outside the camp [Num 5:2–3; 2 Kgs 7:3–9; 15:5 (Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 573)] and modern analogs in the isolation of the leper colony. When apprehended through the lens of faith and confessions about Jesus as God incarnate, the words and the images combine to interpret Jesus' healing of *lepra* as demonstration of great power over a horrible and horrifying disease.

what is “seen” is something dramatic like leprosy/Hansen’s disease.⁸⁰ In any case, there are exegetical and interpretive consequences when exegetes presume that current images of illness and psychological theories can serve as explanatory models for Lukan texts as if they were self-evident.⁸¹ Illnesses become loosed from their contextual moorings and stripped of their cultural and time-specific characteristics. Explanations of disease based on modern understandings fail in at least three ways: 1) They are not representative of ancient experience insofar as they attempt to determine the severity of illnesses; 2) They do not correspond to ancient thought about how the body’s composition, being of the very same elements as the cosmos—earth, fire, water, air—is similarly influenced by weather patterns, climate, and geography; 3) They do not correspond to ancient understandings of disease etiologies and rationales for the methods of therapeutic interventions.

Modern judgments about the severity of an illness tend to influence interpretations toward enhancing the miraculous aspect of healings. Descriptors such as “harmless” or “severe” often do not correspond to ancient classification. In point of fact, the Hippocratic Corpus employs instead the categories of “acute” and “chronic.”⁸² *Lepra* does not even appear in ancient discussions of acute or chronic disease, nor in discussion of common ones. Therefore, a modern construct of *lepra*, especially if conceptualized as

⁸⁰ Craddock’s description of biblical leprosy suggests a range of severity and attempts to correct judgments inaccurately based on images of Hansen’s Disease. However, in the final analysis, he still characterizes *lepra* with words that suggest a fearsome and repugnant condition: “Leprosy was a name given to a range of maladies from mildew in houses and on clothes to skin diseases in humans...Much more and much less was classified as leprosy than what we know today as Hansen’s disease. But into every culture sooner or later come diseases so mysterious and so threatening that they are met primarily with fear and ignorance. [The leper’s] problem is not only one that evokes compassion, such as blindness or a withered limb; his disease is social, evoking repulsion.” Craddock, *Luke*, 71.

⁸¹ Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 8-9.

⁸² W. H. S. Jones, *Hippocrates*, vol. 2. (1927; repr. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), ix.

severe cases of leprosy/Hansen's Disease, is likely to be quite off the mark as a useful analog to ancient perceptions. Conversely, modern constructs of psoriasis or eczema as afflictions less serious than Hansen's Disease may also lead to the unhelpful and inaccurate presupposition that the ancients, too, would not have seen them as very serious. Therefore, it would seem there is more to discover in determining why the healing/cleansing of *lepra* was considered such a significant demonstration of Jesus' power: why it was singled out and set apart from Luke's summaries of generically identified diseases; why it was instead included with conditions specifically named, like blindness, paralysis, and hemorrhaging; and what this condition signified for Jesus, for Luke, and for Luke's readers.

The *lepra*-afflicted body is unique in the New Testament for being named but with virtually no descriptive detail of the affliction.⁸³ In Luke's Gospel, the affliction is named without additional information about its appearance or other symptoms. When we read the narrative report of Jesus healing the one "full of *lepra*," how does the affliction appear in the mind's eye? How does this *lepra*-afflicted one look? When we read "the leprosy left him," how do we imagine the leaving? And when we read the story in the larger context of Luke's gospel of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, what value do we give to its particularities? What judgments do we make about its place in the larger narrative?

The claim of constructivist theorists is that meaning is given *to* an illness via language, not that the language used to describe the illness expresses something *about* the

⁸³ Hogan *Healing in the Second Temple Period*, 18-19. See also Klaus Seybold and Ulrich B. Müller, *Sickness and Healing* (trans. D. W. Scott; Nashville: Abingdon, 1981).

illness as an objective reality.⁸⁴ So, then, what did the *lepra*-afflicted body mean to Luke? How did the people physically present at Jesus' healing of the leper in a Galilean city recognize that *lepra* was afflicting the man? What signs or symptoms did they recognize that led to the conclusion—"Hey, that guy has *lepra*"? And when the *lepra* "left him," what changes marked this leaving and how did people explain what had happened? What sense did they make of the means by which Jesus effected a change in the man's condition? When the ten lepers in that area between Samaria and Galilee were "cleansed" (Lk 17:14), what exactly did the Samaritan leper "see" that led him to recognize he had been healed? When Luke's audience heard or read these stories some four or five decades later, how did the *leproi androi* appear in their minds' eyes? How did they imagine the men's affliction and how would they have understood its implications—or the magnitude of Jesus' response? What, if any, relevance would the stories of Naaman and a Samaritan leper have for them a decade after the destruction of the Temple and the consequent dissolution, in practice, of Jewish legislation regulating purity concerns and temple sacrifices?

These questions reflect the recognition that there might be a difference between what was actually seen and what we think was seen. They challenge assumptions that have come to us in the translation of *lepra* as leprosy. They are reminders that a significant time gap exists between the life of Jesus and the writing of Luke's gospel so that the healing-miracle stories inherited by Luke may have had a range of meanings for

⁸⁴ Weissenrieder writes, "Illnesses only ever exist for us in the form of socially imposed image that reflect both the knowledge and the judgments and expectations of particular eras and cultures. Objective manifestations such as medical and social evidence are nearly always the cornerstones on which images of illness are built. However, the meaning that people attribute to these manifestations is a constructivist issue rather than a natural one." Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 3.

him not necessarily exhausted by demonstrations of Jesus' power to cure diseases and infirmities. The notion of the "construction of an illness," a construction of *lepra*, is one that allows us to consider all the implications of the affliction—ritualistic/cultic, social, and medical—in order to be sure not to limit our interpretations to questions of miracle or purity.

In recent years, a few scholars have begun to explore the degree to which New Testament thought and writings reflect principles of ancient medical knowledge. Some of those scholars intentionally engage those principles in their theologizing. Several lines of research have been particularly promising for this project. In one, the case is made for how Luke, in particular, presents the symptoms of many illnesses in coherence with the medical knowledge of the time and what that coherence suggests about his theological message.⁸⁵ Another set of studies investigates the physiognomic consciousness that pervaded ancient thought about the body, character, and morality and the degree to which such a consciousness may have pervaded Luke's thought.⁸⁶ A third area includes those

⁸⁵ E.g., Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*. As a point of historical interest, W. K. Hobart made the argument, in 1882, that the terminology Luke used to describe afflictions and diseases was similar to the more technical language found in the medical writings of Hippocrates, Galen, and others. Hobart's case was later overturned by H. J. Cadbury who showed that most of the so-called medical terminology could be found, not only in the writings of well-educated Greek writers who were not physicians, but also in the LXX. Fitzmyer summarizes: "Consequently, though such expressions as listed above [4:38: "suffering from a very high fever"; 5:12: "a man covered with leprosy"; 5:18, 24: "paralyzed"; and 8:44: "her hemorrhage stopped"] might seem to be more technical than their Marcan parallels, they are not necessarily more technical than expressions used by educated Greek writers who were not physicians. Ancient medical writers did not use an exclusive technical jargon such as the modern argument once presupposed." Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 52. See W. K. Hobart, *The Medical Language of St. Luke: A Proof from Internal Evidence that "The Gospel according to St. Luke" and "The Acts of the Apostles" Were Written by the Same Person, and that the Writer Was a Medical Man* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, & Co., 1882; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954); H. J. Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (HTS 6/1; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920).

⁸⁶ Chad Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts: The Use of Physical Features in Characterization* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Parsons, *Body and Character*. For more on ancient physiognomy in relation to other New Testament writings, see: J. Albert Harrill, "Invective against Paul (2 Cor 10:10), the Physiognomics of the Ancient Slave Body, and the Greco-Roman Rhetoric of Manhood." In *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy: Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on His 70th Birthday* (ed.. Adela

studies which read NT texts about the spirit with a more nuanced understanding of how the ancients understood the *pneuma*/spirit (also air, breath) and its role in health, illness, and disease etiologies—and how this more complex semantic range for *pneuma* affects our understanding of Luke’s interpretation of the role of the Spirit in the Gospel and the Acts.⁸⁷ These studies are promising for this project because, insofar as they elaborate a first-century construct of the human body, they allow for Luke’s construct of the *lepra*-afflicted body to include images, concepts, and terminology that overlap the semantic fields of cult, medicine, and sociology. In the next section, I take up these three aspects in more detail: physiognomic consciousness in the ancient world; how the ancients understood the body and its composition; disease and disease etiology in the ancient medical writings.

C. *Lepra* in Ancient Constructions of the Body and Illness

Physiognomic Consciousness

Physiognomy is a pseudo-science based on the beliefs that moral character is revealed in physical features of the body, that particular physical traits correspond

Yarbro Collins and Margaret M. Mitchell; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, eds., *Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

⁸⁷ Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Troy W. Martin, “Paul’s Pneumatological Statements,” in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in the Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune* (ed. John Fotopolous; Boston: Brill, 2006), 105-26. Both Troy Martin and Dale Martin have contributed important studies on Pauline literature and pneumatology, reading Paul’s letters through ancient constructions of body, health, disease, and the *pneuma*. Both studies offer cautions about how present day readings of Paul (and by extension, of Luke and the New Testament) can be distorted when we assume that Paul’s ideas about the body and the spirit somehow reflect the same understandings of anatomy, physiology, kinesthetics, and disease etiologies that are part of medical discourse/theories today. See also, Candida R. Moss, “The Man with the Flow of Power: Porous Bodies in Mark 5:25–34,” *JBL* 129 (2010): 507-19.

absolutely to particular character traits, and that judgments about moral character can be discerned by an examination of the physique and its aspects.⁸⁸ In the treatise titled *On Physiognomy* written in the third century B.C.E., the author known as Pseudo-Aristotle wrote the following:

The science of physiognomics, as its name implies, deals with the natural affections of disposition, and with such acquired ones as produce any change in the signs studied by the physiognomists...I will now state from what types the signs are drawn, and this is the complete number. The physiognomist draws his data from movements, shapes, and colours, and from habits, appearing in the face, from the growth of hair, from the smoothness of the skin, from voice, from the condition of the flesh, from parts of the body, and from the generally character of the body.⁸⁹

A consideration of physiognomy as practiced in the ancient world and the pervasiveness of what classicist Elizabeth C. Evans calls a “physiognomic consciousness” in that world is important for at least two reasons. First, it serves as a splendid example of the constructivist insights laid out in the previous section. The very

⁸⁸ Philip S. Alexander, “Physiognomy, Initiation, and Rank in the Qumran Community,” in *Geshichte—Tradition—Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag*, vol. 1, *Judentum I* (ed. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer; Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), 385. Elizabeth C. Evans, *Physiognomics in the Ancient World* (TAPS 59/5; Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1969); idem, “Galen the Physician as a Physiognomist,” *TAPhA* 76 (1945): 287-98; Robert Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995); Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (AB 3a; New York: Doubleday, 2000), see esp. “Blemished Priests,” 1841-3; Simon Swain, ed., *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁸⁹ Aristotle, *Physiognomics*, 806a:22-34. Evans summarizes the sources from which physiognomic signs are drawn in Ps-A: movements and gestures of the body, color, characteristic facial expressions, growth of hair, smoothness of the skin, the voice, the condition of the flesh, the parts of the body, the build of the body as a whole, inferences from complexion, hair, flesh, movement, voice, gesture, and expression, and also these signs of character: “courage, cowardice, good disposition, dullness of sense, shamelessness, well-ordered behavior, high spirits, low spirits, the effeminate nature, harshness, hot temper, the gentle disposition, dissembling, meanness of spirit, gambling instincts, abusiveness, compassion, gluttony, lasciviousness, somnolence, and good memory” (summarizing Ps-A 805b-808b). Evans, *Physiognomics*, 8.

existence of physiognomy illustrates that the understanding of the body is culturally mediated: in the ancient world, the character of a person could be interpreted from the text of the human physique, and moral meanings were given to the physical features of the body. That meanings given to bodies change over time, according to how knowledge and context change, is also clearly seen in how physiognomic analyses of character is no longer considered credible or defensible today. Certain types of physiognomic readings, ubiquitous in the literature of the ancient world, would today be considered immoral and, in some cases, illegal as criminal acts of racial stereotyping or profiling. The second reason for taking seriously the degree to which a “physiognomic consciousness” was pervasive in the ancient world is that it helps us to hear the texts of Luke-Acts as its first hearers would have, with ears more finely tuned to how Luke’s use of physical descriptions may be communicating so much more about his characters’ inner lives than we might otherwise have discerned or imagined.

In what has become a standard reference on physiognomy in the ancient world, *Physiognomics in the Ancient World*, Evans considers both the formal theory and practice of physiognomy as well as the pervasiveness of a physiognomic consciousness influencing philosophy and medicine, drama and history, literature, and rhetoric. She gives thorough attention to the four extant technical handbooks supplying most of the information on ancient physiognomic theory and practice, two of which date the interest in physiognomy to periods securing its influence to the first-century: the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomica*, dated to the third century B.C.E. and Polemo of Laodicea’s

de Physiognomonica, dated to the second century C.E.⁹⁰ In addition, Evans catalogues hundreds of examples of physiognomic conventions found in literary documents across a vast array of genres and fields or that illustrate the pervasiveness of a physiognomic consciousness as ancient authors attempted to describe moral character. She concludes: “It is clear that the technical handbooks on physiognomy enjoyed a far greater popularity among Greek and Roman writers, especially those of later Greek society and Roman Empire, than has generally been supposed. As a quasi-science, it always bore a close relationship to the science of medicine; as an art, to the practice of rhetoric. It has also an obvious kinship with the field of ancient portraiture.”⁹¹

Evans’s work is intended to show the readers of classical literature how the use of descriptions of physical appearances can be an interpretive lens in the analysis of character.⁹² A cursory introduction to ancient physiognomy is presented here for the same reason—to draw readers’ attention to the possibility that Luke is using descriptions of physique to underscore his own analysis of character.

The origins of physiognomy trace back to ancient philosophy and medicine. The practice of “physiognomizing” is first attributed to Pythagoras and the first occurrence of the verb *physiognomoneō* is found in Hippocrates’s *Epidemics*.⁹³ Instances of

⁹⁰ Both Ps.-Aristotle and Polemo are cited in other contemporary philosophical works and in the medical treatises of Galen in the second century. Two others dated to the fourth century, a time Evans refers to as a “revival of interest” are the *Physiognomonica* of Adamantius the sophist and an anonymous Latin handbook, *de Physiognomonica*. Evans, *Physiognomics*, 5.

⁹¹ Ibid., 5. Physiognomic consciousness combines with the general ridicule of physical deformity in Greco-Roman society. See Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*. Our attention here is limited to the presence of physiognomic markers in philosophical, medical, and biblical texts, but evidence for the pervasiveness of a physiognomic consciousness is also to be found in ancient art; see Jaś Elsner, “Physiognomics: Art and Text,” in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul* (ed. Simon Swain; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 203–24.

⁹² Evans, *Physiognomics*, 6.

⁹³ Parsons, *Body and Character*, 18, citing *Epid.* 2.6.1

physiognomic thinking are found throughout the Hippocratic Corpus, where they link the effects of climate and geography on the body as well as on the soul. Philosophers from Aristotle and Plato to the Stoics reflected on the relationship between physical attributes and virtues.⁹⁴ Origen, Dio Chrysostom, Philostratus, and Seneca all made direct reference to the physiognomic handbooks of the time and employed physiognomic conventions in their descriptions and characterizations with explicit intention and self-conscious awareness of doing so.⁹⁵ Physiognomic conventions are prevalent in ancient rhetoric and their use is dictated in rhetorical invective or speeches of condemnation and blame.⁹⁶ Physiognomic conventions are explicitly disparaged or implicitly subverted in the writings of Lucian, Plato, Epictetus, Pliny the Elder, Seneca and Galen, demonstrating that physiognomic conventions were widely enough used and commonly enough recognized to have engendered opponents of the method.⁹⁷ The Homeric epics, their character descriptions rife with physiognomic markers, are such foundational cultural and educational writings as to almost guarantee the widespread appropriation of the conventions. Similarly, the popularity of the biographies of Plutarch, Suetonius, and Diogenes Laertius, would have contributed to a physiognomic consciousness.⁹⁸

Several methods were employed in physiognomic analyses. The conventions of the zoological⁹⁹ and the ethnographic methods represent the more formal side of

⁹⁴ Ibid., 20-21. See also Boys-Stones, "Physiognomy," 19-124.

⁹⁵ Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*, 28-32.

⁹⁶ Parsons, *Body and Character*, 27-28. See also Harrill, "Invective against Paul," 201-4.

⁹⁷ Parsons, *Body and Character*, 34-36.

⁹⁸ Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*, 36-50; Parsons, *Body and Character*, 29-34.

⁹⁹ According to the conventions of the *zoological method*, judgments about a person's character are deduced from similarities to a particular kind of animal. As the character of animals was believed to be fixed for an entire species, e.g. lions are courageous, deer are timid, and foxes are crafty, the physiognomist had first to identify the physical characteristics peculiar to each animal (with specificity related to species and genus) and then look for the same characteristics in the human. Depending on the shared physical

physiognomy.¹⁰⁰ The influence of the expression method is most clearly seen in the descriptions of figures/characters in “such diverse literary forms as epic, elegy and lyric, history and biography, drama, philosophy, satire and fiction,” and reflects the physiognomic consciousness of ancient authors.¹⁰¹ The ethnographical method served to establish the Greek/Roman body as normative and elevated the Greek race in terms of purity.¹⁰² Here is an example, clarified by the distance of twenty centuries, of the constructivist premise that representations of the body rely on divisions and polarities in the same culture. The superiority of the Greek/Roman body is established as an ontological reality by ethnographical conventions that create the dichotomies of Greek/non-Greek and pure/impure on which its superiority is then based.

traits, the human would be assumed to share the same character trait or corresponding nature. Because the characteristics were tied to classifications of species and genus, they were theorized to be constant, Evans, *Physiognomics*, 8-9; Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*, 21. Ps-Aristotle: “some base the science on the genera of animals, assuming for each genus one form and disposition for the animal. On these grounds they have supposed one type of body for the animal and then have concluded that the man who has a body similar to this will have a similar soul” (805a), cited in Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*, 21.

¹⁰⁰ In the *ethnographical method*, judgments were made according to race, and insofar as differences were observed in appearance (Ps.-Aristotle lists Egyptians, Thracians, and Scythians as examples; 805a), corresponding sets of character attributes were assigned. Ethnographic judgments such as “all Corinthians are promiscuous” and “all Cretans are liars” were widespread in the ancient world. The linking of this method with science may go back to the Hippocratic treatise, *Air, Water, Places*, which treats the influences of geography and climate on both the body and its temperament. According to the ancient theory of bodily fluids, or humors, the people of any given race would share traits based on having in common the same mixture of fluids fixed by their geographical location. Evans, *Physiognomics*, 10; Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*, 25; Parsons, *Body and Character*, 23-26. Weissenrieder sees evidence of these kinds of physiognomic markers in the specific settings described by Luke, and highlights the ethnographical significance of the location of the ten lepra-afflicted men in the region between Samaria and Galilee as described in Luke 17. *Images of Illness*, 187-95. Ethnographical readings may also be more than hinted at in the descriptions of those present at Pentecost in Acts 2.

¹⁰¹ Evans, *Physiognomics*, 6-7; Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*, 20-28; Parsons, *Body and Character*, 22-26. See also A. MacC. Armstrong, “The Methods of the Greek Physiognomists,” *GR* 5(1958): 52-56. The *expression method* focused on individual physical features of facial expressions and the emotions that corresponded to them. Particular traits were identified with expressions like scowls or furrowed brows. Although all the physiognomists regularly and frequently employed this method, it is the one most often critiqued; the other two methods with their emphases on permanent physical characteristics were regarded as more reliable than the expression method’s attention to transient facial features. Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*, 27-28.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 24-35. Parsons notes the phenomenon of “geocentrism” and the bias against “inferior” men/races permeating physiognomic thinking in the ancient world, which resulted in marginalizing and vilifying the people on the borders/edges. Parsons, *Body and Character*, 24-6.

Widening the cultural horizon, there is substantial evidence that Mesopotamian cultures also interpreted the human body's physical features. Although not found in the same scale, "scientific," and systematic presentations as in the technical handbooks of the Greeks, physiognomics is evidenced in Akkadian literary artifacts from Babylon, areas all around the Fertile Crescent, and Syria.¹⁰³ Since surrounding cultures believed character was perceivable through the body, it is reasonable to expect that ancient Israel would reflect many of the same thought patterns; many examples of likely physiognomic references are evident in Old Testament and other non-canonical Jewish literature, the writings from Qumran, and later Jewish apocalyptic texts.¹⁰⁴

Of particular interest here are the possible physiognomic references in Leviticus regarding the physical condition of the sacrificial animals (Lev 22:17–25) and of the priests who offered the sacrifices (Lev 21:16–18).¹⁰⁵ There is more than a rough correspondence between the lists of blemishes disqualifying the sacrificial animals and the priests.¹⁰⁶ What the blemishes seem to have in common is that they are all visible and observable, true for all except for the damaged testicle of the would-be priest, which

¹⁰³ Tamryn S. Barton, *Power and Knowledge: Astrology, Physiognomics, and Medicine Under the Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994); J. Bottéro, "Symptômes, signes, écritures," in *Divination et rationalité* (ed. J.-P. Vernant; Paris: Éditiones du Seuil, 1974); Guiseppe Furlani, "A Short Physiognomic Treatise in the Syriac Language," *JAOS* 39(1919): 289-94; Fritz Rudolf Kraus, *Die Physiognomischen Omina der Babylonier* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Buchhandlung, 1935); idem, *Texte zur babylonischen Physiognomatik* (Berlin: E. F. Weidner, 1939).

¹⁰⁴ Parsons, *Body and Character*, 39-65. Examples include: Ehud the left-handed judge and fat Eglon; the tall and handsome Saul, Israel's first king; multiple physical descriptions of David; the long-haired Samson; ruddy Esau; Jacob, characterized in terms associated with the feminine. For additional information on physiognomic references in the texts from Qumran, see Alexander, "Physiognomy, Initiation, and Rank." An interesting article on physiognomic references in identifying signs of the anti-Christ is J. Massyngbaerde Ford, "The Physical Features of the Antichrist," *JSP* 14 (1996): 23-41.

¹⁰⁵ Animals disqualified include the blind, injured, or maimed, those having a discharge or an itch or scabs, those having a limb too long or short, those having bruised, crushed, torn, cut, or mutilated testicles. Requirements for the priests included: unshaven heads or beards and no cuts on the body (Lev 21:5); they could not be blind, lame, or have a mutilated face or a limb too long, a broken foot or hand; they could not be a hunchback or dwarf, or have a blemish in the eye, an itching disease or scabs, or crushed testicles (Lev 21: 16-17).

¹⁰⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17-22, 1875-82.

would not be visible under garments. Jacob Milgrom has argued that the list of priestly blemishes probably derives from the list of animal blemishes since the crushed testicle would have only been observable on the animal. Therefore, the direction of correlation, as in physiognomic convention, is from the animal to the human.

Samuel Balentine writes, “In Israel’s priestly system the concern for wholeness and integrity of the physical body is an extension of the understanding that God’s holiness is perfect and complete. Holy and unblemished persons (and sacrifices) are external expressions of the requirement to be holy as God is holy.”¹⁰⁷ The absence of a list of moral requirements in Leviticus comparable to the list of physical ones suggests that purity concerns were expressed and met in terms of a body’s physical wholeness. However, Milgrom notes that the absence of moral requirements—widely attested in Mesopotamian texts—does not necessarily mean that moral qualities were not required, only that those requirements would have been taken for granted by the priests who wrote the legislation.¹⁰⁸ Mikeal C. Parsons pushes a physiognomic reading further, suggesting not that the writers simply assumed the moral qualities of the priests but that the descriptions of unblemished bodies were indicative of pure moral character.¹⁰⁹

Of similar interest are the texts of Isaiah, on which Luke leans heavily, where blindness is used as a metaphor for the spiritual condition of Israel. Chad Hartsock concludes that we can, with some certainty, be confident that the readers of Luke-Acts and other early Christian literature in which Isaiah is called forth would have associated

¹⁰⁷ Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 169. See also, John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Dallas: Word, 1992), lvi-lxiv; Baruch Schwartz, “Israel’s Holiness: The Torah Traditions,” in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (ed. M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 47-59

¹⁰⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17-22, 1843.

¹⁰⁹ Parsons, *Body and Character*, 41.

physical blindness with being spiritually lost.¹¹⁰ Therefore, Luke's readers (as well as those of the other gospels) would understand Jesus' healing of the blind as signs of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God or as a sign of the restoration of spiritual sight that comes with the kingdom.¹¹¹

Interest in physiognomic characterization, as well as critiques of the conventions, is found in non-canonical Christian writings and as well as those of the Church Fathers.¹¹² It is a striking feature of the canonical literature in general, and of the gospel genre in particular, that physical descriptions are rare. The Gospel writers construct their characterizations of the major figures of Jesus and the disciples through dialog, monologues, and actions rather than physiognomic conventions.¹¹³ It is primarily in the healing narratives where physiognomic references may be heard although one must be careful, given the dearth of physiognomic references in the gospels, to be too quick to conclude that every physical description reflects the writers' efforts at moral characterization.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*, 122. He cites Isaiah 6:9–10, 29:18, and 35:5–6, highlighting their metaphorical usage of blindness as a sign of spiritual ignorance, obtuseness, hard-heartedness, and an apocalyptic sign of the coming of the kingdom or Day of YHWH.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 123.

¹¹² Harrill, "Invective against Paul"; Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*, 128–43; Michael L. Humphries, "The Physiognomy of the Blind: The Johannine Story of the Blind Man," in *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack*, ed. Elizabeth A. Castelli and Hal Taussig (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1996); Malina and Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox, 1996); Parsons, *Body and Character*, 48–61; Karl Olav Sandnes, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹¹³ Parsons notes those places where conventional animal imagery may be present in Jesus' description of Herod as a fox (Luke 13:32), Jesus' description of his disciples and their expected opponents as lambs and wolves in his commissioning of the seventy (Luke 10:3), and John the Baptist's characterization of those who go out to the wilderness to be baptized by him as a "brood of vipers" (Luke 3:7); Parsons, *Body and Character*, 68–76.

¹¹⁴ Hartsock offers a cautionary word about finding physiognomic indicators in every healing narrative: "The healing stories are generally not about the person being healed, but they are interested in the healing power of Christ. These stories teach Christological lessons by and large. With this in mind, one must be careful when reading the stories in light of physiognomics because the goal of physiognomics is the characterization of the person whose body is being described. Since the person being healed is typically a

Physiognomics in Luke-Acts

If it is the case that Luke lives in a world in which physiognomic conventions were as pervasive as Evans and others suggest, then it is reasonable to ask whether it pervaded Luke's thinking, and how an awareness of physiognomic conventions and consciousness might illuminate Luke's art of characterization. Moreover, it is reasonable to consider that Luke's audience would have been similarly sensitive to Luke's descriptions of physical features as markers of the characterization he intended. These questions are fruitfully pursued by Parsons¹¹⁵ and Hartsock¹¹⁶ who provide substantive support for the claim that physiognomic consciousness is present in Luke's patterns of characterization as well as providing analogs from the Third Gospel to guide the consideration of Luke's presentation of *lepra*-afflicted characters here. Both scholars argue that Luke is quite aware of this physiognomic consciousness in the thought patterns and world views of his contemporaries. They both suggest that Luke resists the influence of this consciousness, yet uses its language in his presentation of the afflicted and disabled to intentionally subvert its commonly accepted rhetorical function.

secondary character in the story, very little is done in terms of characterization... they are usually little more than nameless, faceless, recipients of the healing power of Christ, the one who is the proper object of attention in the story." Hartsock claims that the blind healing narratives are of a different sort, with more developed characters who are not just passive recipients of healing, and so may be an exception to the cautionary rule. He continues, "thus while we resist making too much of other healing stories in terms of physiognomic implications, the blind stories require more attention and care." Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*, 128. I suggest that this is true of the leprosy narratives as well and the lepers as characters. Moreover, I am not entirely convinced that the claim for a Christological function of the healing narratives necessarily holds true for Luke.

¹¹⁵ Parsons, *Body and Character*.

¹¹⁶ Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*.

Parsons argues that Luke's writing reveals evidence of formal training in grammar and literary studies, and that such training would have involved training in rhetoric—that the *progymnasmata*, or introductory handbooks in the fundamentals of rhetoric, employ physiognomic methods in constructing rhetorical descriptions of a literary or historical figure's moral character.¹¹⁷ He contends that Luke appeals to “physiognomic categories in his literary presentation of certain characters, usually for the purpose of subverting them.”¹¹⁸

Parsons devotes chapters to Luke's characterization of Zacchaeus (Luke 19), the bent woman (Luke 13:10–17), the man lame from birth (Acts 3:1–4:31), and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40). With each example he highlights the physiognomic symbolism of these characters' physical descriptions. The description of Zacchaeus as a tax collector of “short stature”/*hēlikia mikros* employs a phrase invoking the rhetoric of ridicule and may even suggest a condition of pathological dwarfism.¹¹⁹ For Luke's readers, it would most certainly have been a physiognomic marker for a person of small spirit.¹²⁰ Physiognomic conventions dictate that the bent woman's moral character be read or interpreted as “feeble” and possibly even evil. Her “spirit of weakness” (Luke 13:10) is indicated in the handbooks as a characteristically feminine problem, reflecting the physiognomic presumption that women are weaker in moral character than men.¹²¹ The episode involving the man lame from birth includes the specific detail that

¹¹⁷ Mikeal C. Parsons, “Luke and the Progymnasmata: A Preliminary Investigation into the Preliminary Exercises,” in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2004), 43–63.

¹¹⁸ Parsons, *Body and Character*, 15.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 80. Parsons observes: “The citing of physical features in both encomia and invectives pervaded ancient rhetoric. Small physique was a preferred target in the Greco-Roman world.”

¹²⁰ Ibid., Parsons, 97–104.

¹²¹ Ibid., 86.

his “feet and ankles were made strong” (Acts 3:7). Feet and ankles commanded considerable attention in the handbooks, “ill-jointed,” “poorly-jointed,” or “thick” ankles being signs of weak character, cowardice, stupidity and madness, softness, and laxity.¹²² The story about the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 is replete with physiognomic conventions from all three methods: the ethnographic method focusing on the “swarthy,” dark-skinned complexion of the Ethiopians as a marker of their collective cowardice; the expression or anatomical method¹²³ highlighting the eunuch’s sexually ambiguous identity; and the zoological method suggested by the passage from Isaiah 53 being read by the eunuch, “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth,” thus identifying the eunuch with sheep who, by physiognomic conventions, were timid and lowly.¹²⁴

Parsons argues that in these texts and through these characters, Luke seeks to establish his vision of the eschatological community, “a radically inclusive community, comprised not only of sinners and social outcasts but also of the physically disabled and disfigured who, on the basis of the appearance of their physical body, have been ostracized as misfits from the body politic (or religious).”¹²⁵ It is Parson’s intention to illuminate the degree to which much of the prejudice and bias of Luke’s day was

¹²² Ibid., 112-3.

¹²³ Parsons prefers the terminology of “anatomical” rather than “expression” with respect to this method, based on the work of Jacques André in *Anonyme Latin: Traité de Physiognomonie* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1981); he also notes the slightly different system of A. MacC. Armstrong who refers to “the expression method, the zoological method, and the racial method” in “The Methods of the Greek Physiognomists,” *GR* 5(1958): 53; cited by Parsons, *Body and Character*, 23.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 131-40.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 14-15.

“grounded in this pervasive physiognomic consciousness that presumed one’s outer appearance determined one’s moral character.”¹²⁶

Hartsock’s project focuses on the eyes as the most important physical marker to the physiognomists and on blindness as the most terrifying afflictions to the ancients. Presuming the pervasive “physiognomic consciousness” suggested by Evans, Hartsock attempts to describe what assumptions about peoples’ characters would likely be made by Luke’s audience; what moral traits they would have ascribed based on the physical descriptions Luke provides. Focusing on the marker of blindness, he finds in Greco-Roman literature a prominent *topos* in which the blind character is helpless and pitiable and an icon of spiritual blindness or divine punishment.¹²⁷ Drawing together the texts of Luke-Acts involving eyes and blindness with the physiognomic handbooks and the Greek literature where physiognomic conventions are clearly in view, Hartsock concludes that Luke employs the *topos* of blindness as interpretive principle that is programmatic for Luke-Acts.¹²⁸ Highlighting how Jesus’ reading of Isaiah 61 in Luke 4:18, “recovering of sight to the blind,” and Paul’s citation of Isaiah 6:9 at Acts 28:26, “and their eyes they have closed,” bracket the whole of Luke-Acts, Hartsock makes the case for the opening of spiritually blind eyes as an equally a significant an element as is proclaiming good news to the poor and releasing the oppressed in the programmatic proclamation of Jesus’ ministry.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Ibid., 15.

¹²⁷ Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*, 207.

¹²⁸ Hartsock’s point is supported by these examples in addition to the references to the blind in Luke 4:18 and 7:22: the inclusion of the blind in the parable of the wedding banquet (Luke 14:12–24); the unnamed blind man at Jericho (Luke 18:25–43); the blinding of Paul (Acts 9); the blinding of Bar-Jesus/Elymas (Acts 13:4–12); Paul’s final proclamation of Isaiah (Acts 28:23–31), 172–205.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 173–9.

Hartsock's work is of particular interest as it functions as a model for Luke's appropriation of physiognomic conventions in service of literary *topoi* that layer multiple meanings upon characters that are blind. Hartsock's project is instructive in the way he links physiognomic convention to literary *topoi*, and his conclusions mark the way for considering *lepra* as a similar *topos* with meanings/interpretations to which the ancient ear would have been attuned in ways that the modern ear is not; how metaphorical meanings about the *lepra*-afflicted body and its appearance might similarly have been drawn in a world in which a physiognomic consciousness pervaded.

Nevertheless, the question of whether the *lepra*-afflicted body can be physiognomically interpreted in the same way as can the bodies of the bent woman, short-statured Zacchaeus, or the blind beggar near Jericho, must be held as something of an open question since *lepra* does not appear as a specifically recognized marker in the physiognomic handbooks. Complexion and flesh are analyzed as important markers, but the methods are generally applied to those features that are more or less permanent, a given part of a body's physique expressing an innate character trait, and not to the temporary changes in appearance indicated by accident, injury, or disease. Neither Parsons nor Hartsock treat *lepra* as a physiognomic marker in their analyses of the Third Gospel, and neither gives *lepra* any particular attention in discussions of Lukan texts where *lepra* is referenced. Parsons makes note of the *lepra* of Luke 5 only in a list of illnesses for which no duration is indicated, makes no mention at all of Luke 7:21–22, and references Luke 17:11–17 only in a footnote on the identification of "praising God" as a "Lukan equivalent to faith."

Still, Parsons' perspective on Acts 10–15, of primary interest here, is instructive. He reads the stories of the bent woman, Zacchaeus, the lame man at the gate, and the Ethiopian eunuch as a mounting case in service of the statement Luke puts on Peter's lips in at Acts 10:34, "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." Parsons reads the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch as "the culmination of Luke's argument that those who are physically 'defective' by the prevailing cultural standards are in no way excluded from the body of the new Abrahamic community" and argues that Luke's interest in the eunuch "has less to do with a proleptic fulfillment of Jesus' command to take the gospel 'to the ends of the earth' (though this is not entirely missing) than with the inclusion into the eschatological community of those who might otherwise be excluded because of their physical characteristics."¹³⁰ Thus, for Parsons, the story of the eunuch, as the culmination of the "inclusion" dimension of Luke's message, is distinguished from the story of Cornelius, as the commencement of the Gentile mission.

This is an important insight. The story of the eunuch carries the gospel theme of "inclusion in the eschatological community" into Acts. That theme was developed in part through the healing ministry of Jesus, which also had the function of establishing Jesus' identity as the messiah and inaugurator of the messianic age. Figures like Zacchaeus and the eunuch do not require healing, but on the basis of physiognomic markers of "permanent disfigurement" shared with some who do, facilitate the expansion of the range of those for whom the who are to be included in the eschatological community.

¹³⁰ Parsons, 123-4.

This suggests that the *lepra*-afflicted ones, characters bearing no conventional physiognomic markers, are carrying the weight of a different emphasis.

The Relationship between Body and Soul in Ancient Thought¹³¹

The physiognomists proffer answers to questions about the relationship between the physical and the moral and between physique and character with their more or less systematic catalogs of character traits and the associated physical markers believed to accompany those traits. But the underlying principle is the relationship between the body and the soul as stated by Pseudo-Aristotle, “It seems to me that soul and body react on each other; when the character of the soul changes, it changes also the form of the body, and conversely, when the form of the body changes, it changes the character of the soul” (808b 12-15).¹³²

The body-soul relationship is considered by the philosophers and medical writers, as well as the physiognomists, three groups in which there is a fair amount of overlap in thinking and terminology.¹³³ In these next few pages, I will briefly survey the body-soul

¹³¹ For a comprehensive examination of this subject, see the essays in John P. Wright and Paul Potter, eds., *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000).

¹³² Aristotle, *Physiognomics*, 808b:12-15. The treatise opens with this: “Dispositions follow bodily characteristics and are not in themselves unaffected by bodily impulses. This is obvious in the case of drunkenness and illness; for it is evident that disposition are changed considerably by bodily affections. Conversely, that the body suffers sympathetically with affections of the soul is evident in love, fear, grief, and pleasure. But it is especially in the creations of nature that one can see how body and soul interact with each other, so that each is mainly responsible for the others affections. For no animal has ever existed that it has the form of one animal and the disposition of another, but the body and soul of the same creature are always such that a given disposition must necessarily follow a given form,” (805a 1-15).

¹³³ George Boys-Stones, “Physiognomy and Ancient Psychological Theory” in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul* (ed. Simon Swain; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Greek philosophers asked questions about virtue and vice and why humans so often failed to meet the ideal (conceived as the well-functioning individual in whom virtue, happiness, and what is “natural” for a human being coincide). For some

relationship as articulated in the thought of Aristotle, Plato, and Philo. This is not intended to be a comprehensive examination but rather a sampling of writings on the body-soul relationship to clarify how the ancient Greco-Roman philosophers conceived that relationship. Moreover, in listening to a few ancient voices, the difference between their ideas of the body-soul relationship and present-day ideas of that relationship (including present-day ideas about what the ancient ideas were) can be brought into sharper relief—and we can allow ancient ideas, conceptions that Luke likely shared, to inform our reading of his presentation of the body and its afflictions. They also inform our reading of Luke’s emphasis on the spirit/Holy Spirit by illuminating the wider semantic range of meaning given to the term *pneuma*, or “spirit,” in the first-century thought world. While it is beyond the scope of this project to detail all the trajectories of thought on the body-soul relationship found in ancient writings, a few observations are nevertheless in order as it is the fundamental question being worked out in physiognomic treatises, in philosophical questions, and in discussions of the body’s composition.¹³⁴

Probably the most important observation is the degree to which the soul was often described as material and that in its materiality it was coextensive with the body. The

philosophers, the question became whether the inclination to form a certain moral character was innate and if so, was there a link between physical particularities and character traits. The tradition of Greek ethical philosophy thereby opened a way for physiognomic speculation with its terminology and its premise that one could in principle deduce people’s character from their appearance. But not all philosophers or schools took physiognomy seriously, and not every philosopher or school displayed any theoretical commitments to physiognomy at all, and usually the difference between those philosophers who were interested in physiognomy and those who were not was whether the theoretical possibility of physiognomy followed from beliefs already held about the nature of the soul. In ancient philosophical contexts, the word “physiognomic” seems to be reserved specifically for belief that appearance is guide to innate as opposed to acquired character. Boys-Stone, “Physiognomy,” 19-20.

¹³⁴ For a full treatment, see George Boys-Stones, “Physiognomy and Ancient Psychological Theory.” See also T. M. Robinson, “The Defining Features of Mind-Body Dualism in the Writings of Plato,” in *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment* (ed. John P. Wright and Paul Potter; Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 37-55; Philip J. van der Eijk, “Aristotle’s Psycho-physiological Account of the Soul-Body Relationship,” in *Psyche and Soma*, 57-77.

ancients perceived that the condition of the soul could be determined by physical manifestations, and, alternatively, physical afflictions had effects on the condition of the soul. Moreover, the ancients distinguished the spirit, or *pneuma*, from the soul, assigning to each different functions contributing to health and illness. This is a crucial observation with respect to Luke's emphasis on the spirit and challenges us to reconsider how Luke conceives the power and efficaciousness of the Holy Spirit.

Research findings and trends in patient care in fields related to health and medicine have, over just the past few decades, challenged strictly held notions of body-spirit dichotomies.¹³⁵ The contemplative traditions of many religious traditions, enjoying a resurgence of popular interest and participation today, are grounded in practices and disciplines designed to lead people into unitive experiences of body and soul. But for many centuries, the dualistic categories bequeathed us by René Descartes have shaped dichotomous conceptions of the human body and the human spirit. When Descartes defined nature by the aspects of life that could be studied in terms of physical mechanisms, it became the category for all that was not-mind, not-soul, not-spiritual, not-psychological, and not-divine. All else fell in the category of the divine, the spiritual.¹³⁶ These dichotomous categories subsequently governed the perspectives of later interpreters of classical and biblical texts.¹³⁷ Dale Martin identifies the problem interpreters and exegetes inherited:

¹³⁵ For example, the incorporation of meditation practices, prayer, acupuncture in treatment plans; the relationship of psychological stress to hypertension and some forms of cancer; etc.

¹³⁶ Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 3-6. Robinson summarizes Descartes' ideas with respect to explanations in medicine: all bodily occurrences are either the effects of thoughts or functions of the body; we can know our soul through one function alone—thinking; everything that happens in the human body can be explained either mechanically, if corporeally, or cognitively, if spiritually. Robinson, "Descartes," 193-4.

¹³⁷ Beliefs and assumptions about "the spirit" in the present day, and especially in the minds of the faithful in the Judeo-Christian tradition, are heavily "spiritualized" and divinized. A body-spirit dualism is often

[A]n ontological dualism in the Cartesian sense is not found in the ancient world...For most ancient philosophers, to say that something was incorporeal was *not* to say it was immaterial... In other words, *all* Cartesian oppositions – matter versus nonmatter, physical versus spiritual, corporeal (or physical) versus psychological, nature versus supernature – are all misleading when retrojected into ancient language.”¹³⁸

While body-soul and physical-spiritual dichotomies are features of Platonism, an influence much closer in time to the texts of the New Testament, first-century thought about the body and soul was wide ranging. Even Platonism was more complex and variegated than many assume.¹³⁹ Although the Platonic body is comprised of what Descartes would call matter as well as a soul that belonged to the divine realm, Plato followed pre-Socratic philosophers and Hippocratic medical theory in assuming that both body and soul were composed of the same elements of the universe: air (*pneuma*), earth, water, and fire. In the *Republic*, the soul itself is divided into three parts—reason, spiritedness, and gut desire—and tensions appear not between soul and body, but rather

present in the language of prayers and liturgies, implicitly if not explicitly – reflects a body spirit dualism and a Holy Spirit human spirit dualism as well.

¹³⁸ Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 15. As a point of comparison, and as another perspective on the way the dualism of Cartesian thought shapes our construct of the body, Robinson describes the problem modern medicine has inherited from Descartes’ bifurcation of the functions of heart (mechanical) and the soul (cognitive). Descartes establishes medicine in service of the “goods” of longevity of life and health, but, Robinson writes, “he never stakes out what is good for a human being. This lacuna foreshadows our own century’s irresolution about the goods of medicine, with its insufficiently grounded comparisons between quality and quantity of life, its territorial disputes between patient as somehow endowed with worth and dignity and physician as expert mechanic, and the loss we are at about how value attaches to a being who possesses features both cognitive and mechanical. There are theories of mind and body, or heart and soul, that do not bifurcate medical explanation into the mental and the mathematical, and do not allow the the most basic questions about the purposes of the physician’s art to go unanswered. How radically would we have to transform Descartes’ conception of heart and soul in order to fill the lacunae he bequeaths to physicians who are his heirs?” Robinson, “Descartes,” 196.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 15. Martin also argues that Platonism was something of a “minority position” with respect to the kinds of popular philosophy that seems to have influenced early Christians (and Paul, in particular) which was of a general moral sort and much more related to Stoic than Platonic concepts. Ibid., 15. See also Robinson, “Dualism in Plato,” 40-52 for the “inconsistent pictures” on “soul” or “self” found not only in *Phaedo* but across Plato’s works.

within the soul itself.¹⁴⁰ In both the *Republic* and in the *Phaedo*, Plato stresses the complete immateriality of only the rational soul. In the *Timaeus*, the soul's three parts again take three distinct forms in the head (reason), thorax (spiritedness), and belly/liver (gut desire). Of the three, only reason survives death and is immortal, but is still described as material.¹⁴¹

Aristotle's hylomorphic model of the soul is based on the premise that the body requires the soul in order to exist and the soul requires bodily structures in order to operate. The soul is a dynamic structure and organizational pattern according to which, and for the purpose of which, the physical body is shaped/internally arranged; all affectations of the soul—thoughts, sensations, emotions—take place in a material body and have a material aspect.¹⁴² The soul's "psychic" powers, that is, the powers of perception and locomotion, require sense organs and limbs to be operational.¹⁴³ Moreover, the sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, flesh) cannot operate independently from the heart, where Aristotle locates the principle of perception. Blood, the heart, the condition of the flesh, and air/*pneuma* are the modalities of transmission—so the condition of these modalities affect how perceptions/stimuli reach the heart, the central sense organ.

A particular aspect of this relationship relevant for considerations of skin diseases, in that, with respect to intelligence, Aristotle considered the material factor of flesh to be that which caused humans to be more intelligent than animals and plants. He made a

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 47. This is a different idea of the soul than that appearing earlier in the *Phaedo* or the *Gorgias*.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. "There is now no doubt which part of the soul survives and is immortal; it is reason alone. And the composition of reason, be it that Reason which constitutes the totality of world soul or the reasoning part of human soul, is now described as being in some measure *material*." Ibid.

¹⁴² van der Eijk, "Aristotle's Psycho-physiological Account," 63.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

direct connection between degrees of the softness of flesh and degrees of intelligence.

Boys-Stones describes the principle of “an efficient causality between touch and intelligence” in Aristotle’s thought, such that touch was the sense nearly identical to the “common sense faculty,”¹⁴⁴ which is most closely related to intellectual activity.

Variations in the performance of this faculty might bring about variations in intellectual performance.¹⁴⁵ For example, the degree of the delicacy of skin was determined to be conducive to thinness/agility of blood, which influenced intellectual activity. The point here is that physical factors are not material aspects of intellectual activity, but the conditions that facilitate, support, or disturb intellectual activity without actually constituting the process. Aristotle’s description of the “melancholic” person reflects his indebtedness to the medical tradition and its theories of humors and the balance of bodily humors. The melancholic condition demonstrates that exercise of free will, rational deliberation, and theoretical thinking can only take place in favorable physiological circumstances.

Philo also posits three parts of the soul—the nutritive, the sense-perceptive, and the rational—referring to the substance of the rational as the divine *pneuma*. Philo, like most medical theorists in the first century, understood the *pneuma* to be the “stuff” of perception; it was the *pneuma* that made it possible for the body to see, hear and feel because it was carried through the body in veins, arteries, and nerves. Philo writes that the *pneuma*:

does not occupy any place by itself alone without the blood but is carried along and mixed together with the blood. For the arteries, the vessels of breath, contain not only the air itself, unmixed and pure, but also blood, though perhaps a small

¹⁴⁴ Boys-Stone, “Physiognomy,” 71.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 71-2

amount. For there are two kinds of vessels, veins and arteries; the veins have more blood than breath (*pneuma*) whereas the arteries have more breath than blood, but the mixture in both kinds of vessels is differentiated by the greater or less (amount of blood and breath).¹⁴⁶

This thought of Philo's is consistent with the Stoic idea that the human being is a "continuum of constantly changing *pneuma*, a mixture of fire and air," and that the soul, a corporeal substance "composed of fine particles," spreads through the entire body, blended, as it is, with the body's *pneuma*.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, it is clear that references to the soul or spirit should not necessarily be understood as immaterial substances in the way that Descartes suggested and has been assumed by interpreters of New Testament texts.¹⁴⁸

Ancient Medical Theories: Disease Etiologies and the *Pneuma*

Drawing on ancient medical theories allows us to identify different understandings of the body and its physiology at work in the first-century Greco-Roman culture that may have shaped Luke's logic of the body. Comparing the underlying assumptions about the body in the medical texts with the assumptions that underlie Luke's narrative yields insights as to how the Lukan passages specifically concerned with *lepra* and those generally concerned with the healing of illnesses might be best

¹⁴⁶ Philo, *Questions on Genesis*, 2.59. Quoted in Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 13-14.

¹⁴⁷ Heinrich von Staden, "Body, Soul, and Nerves: Epicurus, Herophilus, Erasistratus, the Stoics, and Galen," in *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment* (ed. John P. Wright and Paul Potter; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) 79-116. Philo assumes all other forms and substances may be pervaded by *pneuma* (*On the Creation*, 131); cited in Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 256, fn. 57.

¹⁴⁸ Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 13-14.

interpreted. Such analyses of passages in Luke-Acts suggest a more physiological understanding of *pneuma* lending a different dimension of coherence to the narratives we otherwise attempt to distinguish as “cleansing” versus “healing” or “healing” versus “conversion” stories. They suggest that Luke’s writings on the body and spirit, and his understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit, might be freshly read through the lens of the physiological function of the *pneuma* in and around the human body.

There are at least two dimensions of first-century understandings of the body and illness in general that are important for a proper understanding of *lepra*: 1. the role of the *pneuma* in health and illness; 2. theories of disease etiologies in the ancient world.

The *Pneuma*

Of particular interest are the Greek medical theories regarding the role of *pneuma* in and around the human body. The ancients conceived of the human body as a microcosm of the universe, literally a small version of the universe at large, composed of the same elements as the universe: air (*pneuma*), earth, water, and fire. For most people of Greco-Roman culture, the human body was contiguous with its environment. The condition of the body was tenuous, constituted by forces surrounding and pervading it like varying wind and water currents. The dynamics that one saw at work in the external world could be read onto and into the human body, the inner body vulnerable to the same

weather as the outer body, susceptible to movements of the outer elements in ways utterly foreign to our way of thinking.¹⁴⁹

Many ancient theorists considered air the ultimate source of all *pneuma*, and that the *pneuma* moved through the body as both the substance and the agent of motion, sensation, perception, rationality, thought, and life. The body's *pneuma* had something in common with the outer atmosphere, the inner *pneuma* being sustained by the outside air through inhalation. *Pneuma* outside the body was wind; *pneuma* within the body was breath. It was itself a kind of "stuff," pervading the other forms of stuff, incorporeal, but not immaterial.¹⁵⁰ *Pneuma* could condense, could have varying densities, could be rarefied air or vaporous, or could be a fluid of varying viscosity. Because it could both permeate and be permeated by other substances, it was susceptible to pollution; it could be corrupted by other toxins, pain, or other physical ailments.¹⁵¹ It is, in particular, this understanding of the materiality of the *pneuma* that is of interest here as it informs interpretations of Luke's understanding of the spirit, the Holy Spirit, and how the spirit/*pneuma* functions in the healing of *lepra*.

So also does the belief that the boundary between the inner body and the outer body was penetrable, expressed in the concept of *poroi*, that is, channels or passages. To the ancient medical theorist, the concept of *poroi* is another expression of the assumption that the human body is of a piece with the elements surrounding and pervading it, and

¹⁴⁹ Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 16. Peter Brown expresses it particularly eloquently: The learned treatises of the age collaborated with ancient commonsense notions to endow the men and women of late antiquity with bodies totally unlike those of modern persons. Here were fiery little universes, through whose heart, brain, and veins there pulsed the same heat and vital spirit as glowed in the stars." Peter R. L. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 17.

¹⁵⁰ Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 21.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 24. See, for example, Philo's *On the Creation*, 131, and *On Flight and Finding*, 182. Ibid., 256, fn. 57.

that the surface of the body is not a sealed boundary. *Poroi* allow external material—nutritive as well as harmful—to enter and pervade the body.¹⁵² *Poroi* also made for the permeability of skin that allowed for the manifestation of skin afflictions.¹⁵³

Troy Martin, considering the coherence between the construction of *pneuma* in the ancient medical texts and Paul's understanding of *pneuma*, states:

Ancient medical texts frequently present physiological conceptions of *pneuma* that provide a productive context for understanding Paul's pneumatological statements. In particular, these texts present ways in which *pneuma* enters the human body and produces dynamic, rational, health-giving, and life-giving effects. Obviously, what these texts mean by *pneuma* differs from Paul's conception of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the similarities between these texts and Paul's pneumatological statements are striking and illuminating.¹⁵⁴

Martin trawls the works of the *Corpus Hippocratum*, texts attributed to Diocles of Carystos, a recognized medical authority in the 3rd century B.C.E., and Plato's *Timaeus* and finds a common belief that the heart, through the activity of the *pneuma*, was responsible for perception, purposive movement, and rationality.¹⁵⁵ He suggests that many of Paul's pneumatological statements cohere with the medical texts insofar as they relate that the *pneuma* enters the Christian and travels to the heart producing movement.

¹⁵² Ibid., 17-18. Empedocles was the early philosopher, who promoted the doctrine of *poroi*, saying that blood and air flow into and through the body by means of *poroi*, bodies perceive when something fits into the *poroi* of any of the senses, and that *poroi* constitute passageways within the body for psychic and nutritive or destructive matter to enter and exit. See also, Hippocrates, *Regimen*, 1.36 and *Breaths* 8.30, 12, referenced in Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 256, fn. 47. Moss considers the theory of *poroi* as the "mechanical explanation" for the flow of power out from Jesus and into the woman with flow of blood in Mark 5:25-34. Moss, "Porous Bodies," here 515-8.

¹⁵³ The contiguity between the inner and outer *pneuma* is very important for understanding theories of disease. The Hippocratic writings describe how the body is endangered when *pneuma* is corrupted by the inhalation of bad air and is affected by the poison from snakebites. Likewise, psychological stress, pain, excessive movement, or any number of bodily ailments could corrupt the substance of *pneuma*. Ibid., 22.

¹⁵⁴ Troy Martin, "Paul's Pneumatological Statements," 106.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 109. Alternative theories existed that the brain was the organ of perception and bodily activity. Still, the popular belief that the heart was the source of movement persisted long after the discovery of what we would know, brain and nerves together, as the central nervous system.

Furthermore, some of Paul's statements imply an understanding that the Spirit not only provides movement but also rationality for Christians.¹⁵⁶ But not only was *pneuma* the substance of movement and rationality, it was also the substance of sense perception. Bodies perceive light, sound, touch when something fits into the *poroi* of any of the senses.¹⁵⁷ The body was able to see, hear, and feel due to the presence of the *pneuma* in the body, moving in veins, arteries, and nerves.¹⁵⁸ After considering the three explanations given for how *pneuma* entered and moved through a body—oro-nasal passages, the digestive system, and *poroi* (of the skin)—Martin reads a wide range of Pauline passages on reception of the spirit by hearing, through the Eucharistic meal, by baptism, and by the laying on of hands, as being coherent with the medical descriptions of his day.

If Luke's understanding of *pneuma* is similar to that of Paul (or consistent with first-century beliefs) then new possibilities are opened for what it means to say that Gentile hearts are cleansed as a result of the falling of the Holy Spirit upon the household of Cornelius. Martin himself makes this foray into the application of his insights to Luke-

¹⁵⁶ Martin, "Paul's Pneumatological Statements," 116. Martin gives the following citations in support: God sent the Spirit of His son into our hearts and the Spirit cries, 'Abba, Father' (Gal 4:6); The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which was given to us (Rom 5:5); Spirit is instrument that circumcises the heart (Rom 2:29); those that walk according to the Spirit set their minds on things of the Spirit (Rom 8:5); those led by the Spirit walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh (Gal 5:16-18; Rom 8:4); produce the fruits of the Spirit rather than accomplish the works of the flesh (Gal 5:22-24); Spirit moves those it leads to speak (1 Cor 12:3), to perform miracles (Gal 3:5) and to engage in gifts of ministry (1 Cor 12:4-11); only those who have Spirit of God understand the gifts of God, for "no one has known the things of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 2:11-14); the spiritual have the rationality/ "the mind" of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16). Martin concludes, "According to Pauline pneumatology, the Spirit is indeed the motivating force in the Christian life," 120.

¹⁵⁷ Aetius (ca. 100 C.E.), for example, spoke of hearing as 'breath' that extends from the 'commanding center' of the body to the ears; all the other 'faculties,' including even 'seed' and 'voice,' are essentially *pneumata* that extend from the commanding center to the pertinent part of the body. Cited in D. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 22. See Aetius 4,21.1-4. The function of the *pneuma* is seen most prominently in the discussions of sight and optics.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 13. The function of nerves according to many physicians was to carry *pneuma* to and from parts of the body, the *pneuma* serving as a messenger.

Acts. He speculates on how the description of the spirit falling on Cornelius's household could reflect entrance of the spirit through oro-nasal passages, or if in parallel with the Pentecost event, maybe through employing language that conceives the spirit as moving through *poroi*, in this case, the pores of the skin.¹⁵⁹

Disease Etiologies

Scholars who have written about ancient medical texts raise our awareness of varying and often competing theories of disease etiology. Generally speaking, the ancients had two theories of disease etiology: invasion and imbalance.¹⁶⁰ The first saw the body under the influence of environmental factors (which included the invasion of the body of corrupting elements); the second had to do with the imbalance of the humors, or bodily fluids, however conceived.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Martin, "Paul's Pneumatological Statements," 116. See also Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 383-4. In Acts 19, Paul encounters disciples at Ephesus, who having been baptized in John's baptism, have not received the Holy Spirit. Paul then baptizes them in name of Lord Jesus and lays hands on them and at this point they receive the Holy Spirit. Martin writes, "Thus the author of Acts closely associates Paul's understanding of the reception of the Spirit through the pores of the skin in baptism and the laying-on of hands rather than simply through the oro-nasal passages in hearing of faith as at the household of Cornelius." Ibid., 116.

¹⁶⁰ One interesting aspect of the comparison of theories of etiologies is that the two primary theories actually reflect a class distinction, that is to say, the theory of humoral imbalance was operative for the more educated and literate, while the theory of invasion was operative for the uneducated, the unsophisticated, the superstitious.

¹⁶¹ D. Martin helpfully summarizes disease etiologies in classical Greco-Roman medicine: some theorists argue that excess or deficiency among four elements (fire, water, air, earth) causes illness; others, following Herophilus, blame the humors (bile, phlegm, blood, water); Hippocrates points to the *pneuma* as most important factor in illness; Erasistratus suggests that blood is transfused in vessels fitted for *pneuma* and excites inflammation which Greeks term *phlegmone*, and the inflammation effects such as disturbance as there is in fever; Asclepiades taught that "little bodies" passed through the pores, usually without incident, but occasionally blocked the passages, resulting in illness; the Methodists (active in first and second centuries) hold to three classes of disease: one a constriction, another a flux, the third a mixture, so that the sick at one time excrete too little, another time too much. Martin summarizes that despite occasional

The belief that the body more or less mirrored its environment is seen in Hippocratic texts that attribute all illnesses to the quality of the air outside the body (e.g., *De flatibus*) or to the effects of warm and cold winds and humid and dry conditions (e.g., *De aere, aquis, locis*). In the case of *lepra*, the influence of environmental factors is always connected to an imbalance of bodily fluids. The Hippocratic authors observe strong correlations between winds and between dry and moist conditions in relations to *lepra*, but also explain the etiology of *lepra* by means of the theory of bodily fluids, which for many ancient physicians was the fundamental model of explanation.¹⁶² According to this theory, the human body functions by means of a balance of four basic fluids – blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile.¹⁶³ Good health is constituted by the equal mixture and proper distribution of the four. Illness consists of a disturbance in the balance. Examining the influence of theory of bodily fluids on the illness construct of *lepra*, three patterns of explanation appear most frequently:

1. congestion of blood in arteries leads to disturbance in the circulation of blood
2. congestion of blood around arteries causes them to heat up and draws bile and phlegm toward them, leading to swelling of arteries – which in turn causes blood to be more congested
3. currents of air in arteries render blood unable to move causing extremely fine particles of blood, which should be expelled from the body, to be pressed out

success of Asclepiades and Methodists, Hippocratic doctrine of humors was most influential theory in antiquity. This theory depended on the logic of balance and imbalance to conceptualize health and illness. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 146-9.

¹⁶² Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 143.

¹⁶³ In some texts, water replaces black bile as fourth fluid.

of the arteries; if these particles mix with phlegm and exit the body through the skin, a sore or ulcer is formed.

The Hippocratic texts introduce *lepra* as a change in the skin that can be a symptom of a serious illness. The three patterns of explanation outlined above and the theory of the influence of environmental factors on the body demonstrate that the explanation of the illness *lepra* was not clear; even descriptions of the illness is multi-faceted and resembles a group of simple illness phenomena that cannot be clearly sorted into categories.¹⁶⁴

The third etiological pattern described is significant for a consideration of Luke's conceptualization of "spirit" and how it might have shaped his understanding of Jesus' power to heal illnesses, especially skin diseases signified by *lepra*.

These observations lead to several questions: When the ancients saw *lepra*, what exactly did they see? We know how the symptoms and manifestations were interpreted when seen through a Jewish lens, but were there other possible meanings constructed by Gentiles? What would any one of Luke's Gentile auditors understand the significance of the leper's cleansing to be? What did they think caused the affliction? How did they attempt its cure and how would they have explained its etiology as well as the mechanism of its cure?

Perhaps it would have been significant for his auditors that Jesus was able to heal the leper at all. Although the term *katharizō* does indeed connote the religious and ritual aspects of this affliction, it is also a term used by ancient physicians for its healing.

Because the full semantic range of *katharizō* in the first century covers various categories that would have been recognized by Luke and Luke's readers, the term *katharizō*, in the

¹⁶⁴ Weissenrieder, 144-6.

context of *lepra*, collapses the boundaries between healing and cleansing, between cleansing and purification, between Jew and Greek (both of whom could suffer from *lepra*).

***Lepra* in Ancient Medical Texts**

In the Hippocratic Corpus *lepra* refers to an itchy or powdery thickening of the skin, reportedly most prevalent in spring seasons. The fact that the plural form, *leprai tines*, is used in the Humours (xvii) suggests that it was not considered a single disease but a set of certain skin diseases. Pliny the Elder similarly uses this plural form on a number of occasions and also seems to be using it in the Hippocratic sense. Galen refers to *lepra* thirty two times and, except for one instance, uses the term to signify diseases that most certainly are not leprosy/Hansen's disease.¹⁶⁵

Descriptions of the appearance of *lepra* in the Hippocratic writings cover a wide spectrum, ranging from simple skin secretions to a symptom accompanying a severe illness to the status of an independent illness. Since the ancients understood the skin to be permeable from the inside, it is one of several openings, *poroi*, by which harmful bodily substances could exit. So, as a symptom, *lepra* was considered a therapeutic evacuation indicating serious internal and even fatally progressing illnesses. When identified as an independent illness, it was not considered fatal in itself, but if severe

¹⁶⁵ Hulse, "The Nature of Biblical 'Leprosy'," 88.

enough, could generate a wide variety of other attendant symptoms that were life-threatening, like paralysis, for example.¹⁶⁶

The Hippocratic texts introduce *lepra* as a change in the skin that can be a symptom of a serious illness. The three patterns of explanation outlined above and the theory of the influence of environmental factors on the body demonstrate that the explanation of the illness *lepra* was not clear; even descriptions of the illness is multifaceted and resembles a group of simple illness phenomena that cannot be clearly sorted into categories.¹⁶⁷

The terms *katharizein* and *kathartos* appear in the ancient medical texts to characterize the healing of *lepra* or other sores. The terms appear most frequently in three texts: Epidemics, De morbis, and De ulceribus. In these books the terms are generally used in one of two ways, either to indicate the healing of *lepra* or to describe its prescriptive remedies and treatments. For example, in De morbis, it is reported that after a treatment, a sore cleans itself toward the outside and if this cleansing does not occur the sore becomes infected again; here the text equates cleansing with healing. Similarly, in De ulceribus, physicians are instructed to pay attention to the area around a sore. If it is not clean, that is, if it is not signaling imminent or completed healing, then he might anticipate the infection to become inflamed and the sore to spread.¹⁶⁸ *Katharizein* also appears in texts where remedies like olive oil are prescribed for cleaning sores. In another example from De ulceribus, a plaster of finely ground lentils boiled in wine and mixed

¹⁶⁶ *Lepra* is listed in Morb 1,3 with widely varying illnesses such as “blocked” issue, melancholy, quartan fever, and sciatica. Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 140.

¹⁶⁷ Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 144-6.

¹⁶⁸ Morb IV, 17/48; Ulc 11,13f. Cited in Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 152.

with olive oil is suggested as a plaster to reduce the inflammation of a clean but still inflamed lesion.¹⁶⁹

D. *Lepra* in the Septuagint

***Lepra* in Leviticus**

Lepra in the LXX translates *tsara'at*, which occurs 35 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, 29 of which are found in Leviticus. When it is not translated “leprosy” in English Bibles or commentaries, it is often translated as “skin disease” or “scale disease.” The former allows for the wide range of skin diseases that are indicated by the descriptions given; the latter allows for the common denominator of the conditions described—that of scaliness or flakiness (and is often preferred because it also refers to the condition as it is found in fabrics and on houses in Lev 14).¹⁷⁰

In this section I will first deal with *lepra* as it features in Leviticus. As the description of *lepra* in Leviticus 13 has been detailed earlier in this chapter, I will focus here primarily on the general character of the instructions in the priestly writing. Then I will survey its occurrences in the non-priestly writings.

The legislation for *lepra* is found in a collection of texts providing the instructions for purification rituals for other conditions causing ritual uncleanness. The surrounding

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. Ulc 2, 17; Ulc 11, 13f.

¹⁷⁰ Baden and Moss, for example, object to the translation “skin disease” because of its inaccurate specificity to the human body, despite that fact that the term *tsara'at* as applied to houses and fabric was probably a secondary development from its original context; they choose not to translate *tsara'at* in their article. Baden and Moss, “The Origin and Interpretation of *sāra'at*,” 651.

chapters deal with impurity from contact with corpses (11:24–28; 39–40), from childbirth (12), and from genital discharges (15). Chapter 14 addresses the circumstance of *lepra* in fabric and on buildings. It is of particular interest that the instructions for distinguishing clean from unclean animals, the central image of Peter’s dream in Acts 10, are also included in chapter 11. I note here how the texts for the animals and for the *lepra*-afflicted ones share a focus on appearance and the descriptive details necessary for making clean/unclean distinctions.

Leviticus 13 is directed toward priests in order to provide them with an exact classification system for purity and impurity. For this reason, the text contains various specific descriptions of *lepra* which helped the priests in the classification. The need for guidelines to aid in distinguishing *lepra* from other diseases suggests that other diseases must have existed that sufficiently resembled *lepra* so as to be potentially confused with it.¹⁷¹ But the purpose of Leviticus is not to offer a diagnosis; in fact, the descriptions of both primary and secondary features do not appear to require the identification of a specific disease.¹⁷² Rather, the purpose of Leviticus is simply to describe certain secondary features, also common to a variety of skin diseases, which produce ritual uncleanness or defilement within the community. The role of the priest is not that of a physician or miracle worker, and his declaration of clean or unclean is not a medical

¹⁷¹ Hulse offers a modern medical analogy to Leviticus 13, saying it is “not unlike that portion of a chapter of a medical textbook heading ‘Differential Diagnosis’; that is, the portion concerned with recognizing a particular condition from amongst others, which in certain respects closely resemble it. The writer appears to have taken for granted that more-or-less anyone would recognize when a person might have sara’at and his aim is, therefore, to direct the priest’s attention to those finer points which would help to decide whether or not the patient should be considered unclean.” Hulse, “The Nature of Biblical ‘Leprosy’,” 92.

¹⁷² Wilkinson, 164.

diagnosis.¹⁷³ In addition, that the intent of the levitical legislation is ritual and not medical is clear from Leviticus 13:47–59 and chapter 14:34–53 which deal with leprous diseases in clothing and in houses, respectively.¹⁷⁴

It is also well established that in the priestly writings of Leviticus, these defiling conditions—including *lepra*—carry no sense of moral guilt or sin. The conditions, are, instead, treated as facts of human existence which have cultic and ritual implications and must be dealt with as such.¹⁷⁵

The offerings that are required for *lepra* (14:19, 22, 31), childbirth (12:6, 8), and genital discharge (15:15, 30) are purification offerings, not sin-offerings.¹⁷⁶ The *lepra*-afflicted person is not isolated for reasons of physical contagion (as we might consider the flu being contagious), but to restrict the transmission of ritual impurity.¹⁷⁷ This is evident in how *lepra* contagion is described like corpse contagion, by “overhang,” that is, being under the same roof with the afflicted one or the corpse. The purification rites are similar to those required for one unclean by corpse contact.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, notes the bifurcation of duties in the Hebrew Bible: priests diagnose and prophets heal, 817.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 818.

¹⁷⁵ Baden and Moss state, “Although sin does cause contamination of the sancta, not all impurity derives from sin.” Baden and Moss, “The Origin and Interpretation of *sāra’at*,” 645. Bamberger writes, “These chapters are not concerned with medical practice as such. The priest examined suspected patients and made a diagnosis, not for the purpose of treatment, but to distinguish between *tzara’at*, which defiles, and other skin ailments that do not.” Bernard J. Bamberger, “Leviticus,” in *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (ed. W. Gunther Plaut; New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), 829. See also Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 805.

¹⁷⁶ Milgrom has persuasively demonstrated that a purification offering is required to purge the sanctum of impurity that has accumulated there, including that which derives from the various forms of ritual impurity described in chapters Leviticus 11–15, despite the translation of “sin-offering” in many English translations. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 253–92. Baden and Moss argue that the “guilt offering” also should be interpreted as effecting purification and not as a reparation for sin on the basis of its provision of blood for the removal of impurity. Baden and Moss, “The Origin and Interpretation of *sāra’at*,” 648–50.

¹⁷⁷ Bamberger writes, “The person afflicted with *tzara’at* was isolated to prevent the spread of ritual contamination but not to protect public health.” Bamberger, “Leviticus,” 829.

¹⁷⁸ Both rites requiring aspersion with animal blood that has made contact with cedar, hyssop, and scarlet thread, diluted with fresh water, Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 819. Bamberger describes halakhic

It has been suggested that what connects all the conditions of ritual impurity is how they are held under the same aspect of death, that the common denominator of all of them is the appearance that the body is wasting away.¹⁷⁹ John Hartley writes,

[G]rievous skin diseases make one unclean for they foreshadow death; they signal that life is being eaten out of the person. Similarly, grievous growths in garments and buildings eventually destroy those objects. Bodily discharges are not repulsive enough to be categorized with death, but, if they are not dealt with properly, they spawn the forces of death. So also the loss of blood at menses makes one unclean, both because blood is taboo (cf. 17:11) and because loss of blood robs one of strength or life's power.¹⁸⁰

Milgrom notes the explicit connection made between *lepra* and death in Job 18:13: "His skin is eaten away by disease; Death's firstborn consumes his limbs." Here the reference is to Job's boils, a verified presentation of a condition that would be identified as *lepra*, which is metaphorically called "death's firstborn."¹⁸¹

interpretations of Lev 14: "Before such a house is inspected by a priest, it is to be emptied of its contents. For should he pronounce the place 'unclean,' everything inside it would be defiled; but the household goods removed in advance remain clean! In the same spirit, the halachists held that a person or object affected by *tzara'at* is legally unclean only from the moment when the priest makes the positive diagnosis. Therefore, a person should not be examined for *tzara'at* on the eve of a festival in order not to miss the joyous celebration, and a bridegroom is permitted to postpone his examination until the marriage week is over. And a gentile 'leper' does not cause ritual defilement" (Bamberger, "Leviticus," 829; the comment about the gentile lepers he cites from Mishnah Nega'im 3:1).

¹⁷⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 819.

¹⁸⁰ John Hartley, *Leviticus*, 145. See also Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (repr. New York: Routledge, 2002; orig. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966); idem., *Leviticus as Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹⁸¹ Midrash Genesis Rabbah 1:29: "Four are similar to a dead man: a pauper, a leper, a blind man, and he who has no children."

***Lepra* in the Non-Priestly Writings**

Nine episodes referencing a person or persons afflicted with *lepra* are recorded in the LXX, concentrated in the Pentateuch and the historical writings. There are no references to *lepra* in the prophetic writings.

The first episode is part of a sequence of exchanges in Exodus between God and Moses in which Moses mounts a series of objections to his commission as the one who will deliver the Israelites from Egypt. In response to Moses' third objection, "But suppose they do believe me or listen to me, but say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'" (Ex 4:1), God shows him three signs he will be able to perform as proof. One of the signs is afflicting his own hand with *lepra*, and then restoring it: "Again, the LORD said to him, 'Put your hand inside your cloak.' He put his hand into his cloak; and when he took it out, his hand was as snow. Then God said, 'Put your hand back into your cloak,' so he put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored like the rest of his body" (Ex 4:6-7).¹⁸² Here the *lepra* is a visible sign of God's power, and intended to be a visible sign of power given to Moses. It is not a punishment, and it may be noteworthy that this is the only report of *lepra* in the LXX before it appears in Leviticus. Also, the text says that Moses' hand was "restored/*apekatestē* like the rest of his body,"

¹⁸² In the Hebrew Bible *tsara'at* appears in Ex 4:6, and is translated, "his hand was leprous, as if snow." However, *lepra* does not appear in the LXX at Ex 4:6, so the text reads "his hand was as snow." The description, "as snow," has often drawn the word "white" into English translations even when the color word does not appear in the Hebrew or Greek. Hulse suggests that the comparison has more to do with the *lepra* having the flakiness of snow rather than its color: "Actually the flakiness of snow provides an excellent simile for describing a symptom usually encountered in some skin diseases. In the healthy person the outer layer of skin (the epidermis) is continually being renewed. The most superficial part, which consists of fragments of dead cells (squames), is lost from the surface, usually imperceptibly, but occasionally noticeably so, for example when the skin peels (desquamates) after mild sunburn. In certain skin diseases the dead cells pile up on the surface and desquamation results in fine white, almost powdery, scales being loosened from the affected area." Hulse, "The Nature of Biblical 'Leprosy'," 93.

(Ex 4:7). The language is not explicitly that of healing, nor does language of defilement or purity appear here.

The second reference to *lepra* is in directions given by God to Moses as the Israelites prepare for their departure from Sinai and into the wilderness. This text explicates the rationale for the requirement that the unclean be put outside the camp:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: “Command the Israelites to put out of the camp everyone who is leprous/*lepros*, or has a discharge, and everyone who is unclean through contact with a corpse; you shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp: they must not defile the camp, where I dwell among them.” The Israelites did so, putting them outside the camp; as the LORD had spoken to Moses, so the Israelites did” (Num 5:1-4).

It appears here that the rationale for the command is to preserve the purity of the camp because it is where God’s earthly residence is located and *lepra* has the power to defile the sanctuary.¹⁸³ The text is not concerned with how to make the unclean clean in order that they may reenter the camp. Rather the concern is with protecting the purity of the camp by keeping those with defiling conditions at some safe distance. It is to be noted that all the unclean conditions addressed by Lev 11-15 are included in this command to be put outside the camp.

Just a few chapters later in Numbers, God temporarily afflicts Miriam with *lepra*, apparently as punishment for her criticism of Moses and her challenge to Moses’ authority. Here we are given a detailed and instructive description of the appearance of her *lepra*. The text reads, “When the cloud went away from over the tent, Miriam had

¹⁸³ Baruch Levine, *Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. (AB4a; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 181.

become “leprous as snow” and then from the lips of her brother Aaron, “Oh, my lord, do not punish us for a sin that we have so foolishly committed. Do not let her be like one still born, whose flesh is half consumed when it comes out of its mother’s womb” (Num12:10-12). The reference to a stillborn baby draws the comparison between the appearance of *lepra* and the appearance of the macerated infant, one who has died several days before being delivered and whose body has undergone the unique type of decomposition that occurs when surrounded by amniotic fluid. Hulse describes the condition: “The most striking feature of such a stillborn child is the way the superficial layers of the skin peel off. The skin which comes off is white but the surface which is left usually reddish and is obviously abnormal, and could, not unreasonably, be thought of as raw flesh, that is, flesh from which the outer surface is missing.”¹⁸⁴ Again, it appears that it is the peeling skin that characterizes *lepra*, and accounts for the description of Miriam’s skin, like that of Moses’ hand in Exodus 5, as being “as if snow,” that is to say, her skin was peeling off in snow-like flakes.

Aaron’s words also identify Miriam’s affliction with *lepra* as God’s punishment, as was generally believed of illnesses in ancient Israel. In response to Moses’ appeal that God heal Miriam, God replies, “If her father had but spit in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp for seven days and after that she may be brought in again,” (Num 12:14). Here the requirement for isolation outside the camp appears not to be in the interest of preventing the camp, as God’s residence, from being defiled, but as period of public humiliation—a consequence for her offense. Again, as in the Exodus passage about Moses, the terms of clean, unclean, purity, and

¹⁸⁴ Hulse, “The Nature of Biblical ‘Leprosy’,” 93.

defilement do not appear. There is also no term that indicates Miriam's return to a non-leprous condition. The text simply states that she was brought back into the camp after her seven-day isolation was completed (Num 12:15).

The curse David invokes on Joab for the murder of Abner specifies that Joab's household never be without one who is afflicted with *lepra* (LXX 2 Kings 3:29). The curse also includes that there always be one in the household holding the spindle, one who is hungry, and one with an issue, referring to another defiling condition. By virtue of being part of a curse, *lepra* is certainly to be construed as a punishment here. This passage reinforces the idea *lepra* as a defiling condition that would affect the house and household while also being a visible and public sign of the shame of God's displeasure.

Four *leproi* are quarantined outside the gate of the besieged city of Samaria in LXX 4 Kings 7:3-10. Realizing that inside the city is death from famine and that to remain where they are outside the city will also mean sure death, the *leproi* decide to cast their lot with the enemy Arameans. When they arrive at the enemy camp, they discover the Arameans have fled in fear believing God was sending great armies to destroy them. After their initial enthusiastic plunderings of the Aramean goods, the four *leproi* determine that what they are doing is wrong, and if discovered they will be punished, so they report the good news of the enemy departure to the gatekeepers of Samaria. The word spreads and all of Samaria benefits from the plundered enemy camp. There are two aspects of this passage that are noteworthy. First, the *leproi* do not appear to be very ill, having the capacity to and walk to the camp and to be able to eat, drink, and plunder. Second, they seem to anticipate death only as outcomes of the famine inside the city or the enemy attack from without, but not from their *lepra*. After reporting the news of the

empty enemy camp to the city gatekeepers, the story continues without any additional mention of the *leproi* so their status in the community is never clarified. There are a few other interesting resonances between this passage and the Third Gospel. These four *leproi* are Samaritans/Samaritans, as is the feature *lepra*-afflicted man in Luke's special episode of the ten *leproi*. In addition, it is the prophet Elisha who predicts the reversal of fortunes that will come upon this Samaritan city (LXX 4 Kgs 7:1–2), a reversal of fortune that comes at the hands of the four *leproi*.

The final two passages considered here, LXX 4 Kings 15:5–7 and 2 Chronicles 26:16–22, both tell that King Azariah of Judah (called Uzziah in 2 Chron) was struck with lepra by God. The fact that Azariah was afflicted is simply stated in 2 Kings without any commentary. He was afflicted, and because he was so, he had to live in a separate house until his death, and his son, Jotham, served as regent and governed the people. The text of 2 Chronicles elaborates the story, explaining the affliction. The lepra breaks out on Uzziah's forehead as a punishment for having dared to offer incense on the inner altar of the temple, believing it was his prerogative to usurp the power of the priests.¹⁸⁵ Here, too, we are told that he was leprous to the day of his death, with the additional comment that he lived in a separate house because "he was excluded from the house of the Lord" (2 Chron 26:21). It is important to note that the lepra was not fatal; it

¹⁸⁵ Beentjes reads Josephus's version of Uzziah's affliction along with contemporary rabbinic texts, observing the connection made between leprosy and pride and arrogance, and linked also to Miriam's leprosy. He comments on the "moralistic" perspective on leprosy, saying, "This (moralizing?) approach has to do with radical changes in the Israel's socio-historical life. After the catastrophe of 70 c.e., it was impossible to enter the Temple! Therefore leprosy no longer was given a cultic interpretation, but a social one, related to the moral life within the community." Pancratius C. Beentjes, "The Chronicler's Narrative on Uzziah's Leprosy," in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (ed. M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 61-72.

is implied that Azariah lived a long time after being struck with the lepra, nor is there any suggestion that the lepra was the cause of his death.

The text of LXX 4 Kings 5 is one that will be of special importance for this study because it tells the story of how the prophet Elisha cured Naaman, a Syrian general afflicted with *lepra*, a story that Luke places on the lips of Jesus as a sign of the arrival of the “acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:27, 19). This passage will be taken up in greater detail in chapter four, but a few general observations can be made here.¹⁸⁶ First, apparently because Naaman is a Syrian, a non-Israelite, there are no concerns indicated about his ritual purity, potential for defilement, or divine punishment. There is no description of Naaman being unclean; he simply seeks to be cured of his affliction. In this passage, the word clean appears to be synonymous with being healed. Elisha directs Naaman, “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will return to you and you will be clean” (LXX 4 Kgs 5:10) and, after washing in the Jordan, Naaman’s flesh was “returned to him like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean” (LXX 4 Kgs 5:14).

Second, the affliction is not presented as something fatal or even an illness that necessarily interfered with Naaman’s ascent as a mighty warrior. Third, when Naaman approaches the King of Israel carrying a letter from the King of Aram with the request that Naaman be cured, the king of Israel tears his clothes and cries out, “Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?” (LXX 4 Kgs 5:7). The power to cure the affliction is equated with the divine power to give death or life and sets *lepra* apart as a unique illness condition. Similarly, Elisha refuses to receive the gifts Naaman wishes to offer in gratitude for his healing, because to have

¹⁸⁶For a fulsome exegesis of this passage, see Robert L. Cohn, “Form and Perspective in 2 Kings V,” VT 33 (1984): 171-84.

done so would have suggested that it was Elisha's own powers that had effected the cure. Finally, the story ends with a twist. Elisha's servant Gehazi tricks Naaman in order to obtain some portion of the gift declined by his master Elisha. Elisha punishes Gehazi in condemning him and his descendants to bear Naaman's leprosy forever. Gehazi leaves Elisha's presence, "leprous, as snow."

The non-priestly writing about *lepra* is of a different character than it is in the priestly writings. In several of these narratives, it is clear that the affliction is a divine punishment for sin, and it is only God, or a prophet of God, who afflicts and restores. While it seems to be the case that in the history of interpretation of Leviticus, the priestly writings have often been interpreted through the lens of the non-priestly writings, many scholars have made strong cases for not interpreting *lepra* in Leviticus as a sign of sin or divine punishment. In fact, the priestly writings of Leviticus are silent with respect to the etiology of the disease.

It is uncertain if Luke made these distinctions between Leviticus and all the other scriptural references to *lepra*.¹⁸⁷ In both chapters 5 and 17 of his gospel he records Jesus' directions to the *lepra*-afflicted ones to go and make the offerings Moses commanded, signaling the connection to Leviticus.¹⁸⁸ The one LXX narrative presentation of *lepra* he recalls is that from 2 Kings, the story of Elisha's healing of Naaman, one of the stories that does not suggest that *lepra* is a sign of divine punishment.

¹⁸⁷ See Bart Koet, "Purity and Impurity of the Body in Luke-Acts," in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (ed. M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 93-106.

¹⁸⁸ Also signaling that the affliction these people suffer is the same condition as identified in Leviticus.

E. Comparison of *Lepra* in the Ancient Medical Texts and the Septuagint

There are three points of commonality between the LXX presentations of *lepra* and those found in the ancient medical texts: 1) similar descriptions of features of the affliction; 2) a coherent sense of the affliction not being fatal; 3) the presence of forms of *katharizein* and *kathartos*.

Many of the descriptions of both primary and secondary features in Leviticus 13 have parallels in the Hippocratic Corpus: “quick” or “raw flesh,” swellings or “risings” of the skin, and “lower” or “deeper places in the skin” and “sores.”¹⁸⁹ The Hippocratic writings do not present *lepra* as necessarily a fatal disease in and of itself, although, as a therapeutic evacuation, it may be symptomatic of an underlying disease that is fatal. There is no text in the LXX in which a person is reported as having died of *lepra*. Rather, we are told that Gehazi and King Azariah live out their days in a leprous state, the four *leproi* of 2 Kings are not severely limited in their physical capabilities as a result of their *lepra*, and others have their flesh restored to non-leprous conditions. Even the legislation in Leviticus seems inherently optimistic as it presumes the possibility for the healing on which the declarations, rituals, and sacrifices rely.

The terms *katharizein* and *kathartos* appear in both the LXX and the ancient medical texts. In the medical texts, it is clear that the terms are used to characterize the treatment of *lepra* or the actual healing/cure of *lepra*. In Leviticus, the terms bear a strictly cultic connotation, while in the texts in the Pentateuch and the historical writings

¹⁸⁹ Ulc 10.3; Ulc 2.3,6; Aphor. V,45, 65. Cited in Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 154.

the terms often seem synonymous with healing and being healed. Whereas *katharizō* signifies treatment in medical texts, it is a declaration of ritual purity in Leviticus.

Ancient medical texts like those collected in the Hippocratic Corpus serve a strictly medical purpose. They describe illnesses and symptoms, theorize about disease etiologies, and offer prescriptions for remedies and treatments. It would be fair to say that the LXX texts outside of Leviticus 13 and 14 are not at all concerned with *lepra* as a disease, per se, but as a means by which God's power or judgment is demonstrated. Unlike the medical texts, relevant environmental factors are not featured, nor are there any suggestions that a theory of bodily fluid balance is at play. Several texts describe *lepra* by analogy to snow, but the descriptions are not given in the service of diagnosing or confirming the disease presentation as *lepra*. If they consider disease etiology at all, they attribute an affliction with *lepra* to divine punishment, a sign of God's "smiting."¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Bamberger, "Leviticus," 829.

CHAPTER 3: *DEKTOS* and *KATHARIZŌ*

A. Introduction

The thesis of this dissertation is that Luke is doing something remarkable in his narrative presentation of the deliberations among Jewish Christians concerning the place of Gentiles in believing communities and that this remarkable thing is disclosed in the relationship between *dektos* and *katharizō*, words judged to be particularly significant for Luke. The purpose of this chapter then, is to secure the argument that Luke intends the two terms to be mutually interpretive. These two words command attention for several reasons.

First, *dektos* is rarely used in the whole of the New Testament and three of its five occurrences are in Luke-Acts.¹⁹¹ The particular places and ways Luke uses it strongly suggest that it is a word of some significance for him. *Katharizō*, in Acts, appears in narrowly circumscribed ways, and while occurring more frequently in the Gospel, is limited primarily to *lepra*-related passages there.¹⁹² So, apart from each other, each word seems purposefully chosen and amplified in Luke's writing. Second, the two words are closely proximate in passages judged to be among the most significant in the Lukan corpus.¹⁹³ Luke 4 features prominently and significantly in Luke's gospel as the

¹⁹¹ Luke 4:19, 24; Acts 10:35. Other NT occurrences include: 2 Cor 6:2 where Paul quotes Isaiah 49:8 directly: "For he says, 'At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation'"; Phil 4:18, "I have received full payment and more; I am filled having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God."

¹⁹² Luke 4:27; 5:12, 13; 7:22; 17:14, 17.

¹⁹³ Fitzmyer writes, "The Lucan story, transposed to this point in the Gospel, has a definite programmatic character. Jesus' teaching is a fulfillment of OT Scripture—this is his kerygmatic announcement...Luke has deliberately put this story at the beginning of the public ministry to encapsulate the entire ministry of Jesus

programmatic episode articulating the reach and purpose of Jesus' public ministry. Acts 10 is significant as a lengthy and detailed account of the presence of Gentiles in the early Christian community. Third, in both cases *katharizō* elucidates an understanding of *dektos*. In Luke 4, Jesus offers the story of the cleansing of the *lepra*-afflicted Naaman as an example of what the "*dektos* year," or "the acceptable year of the Lord" is going to look like. In Acts 10, Peter interprets a dream in which unclean animals are declared clean to mean that Gentiles are *dektos*/acceptable to God (10:35). Fourth, both words appear in a particular cluster of passages from Isaiah, the message of which echoes throughout Luke-Acts. *Dektos*, in particular, functions as a keyword, linking five Isaiah passages from which Luke draws many words and motifs, passages supplying images unique to his writings and that clearly shape his theological emphases.¹⁹⁴

B. Literary and Theological Parallels in Luke-Acts

The claim that Luke intends the two words to be mutually interpretive proceeds from the broad governing assumption of the unity of Luke-Acts, a unity that is evidenced in shared literary features and theological themes connecting the two volumes. While not completely uncontested, the notion that the same person wrote these two works is largely

and the reaction to it." Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 529. Luke Timothy Johnson writes, "The story of the conversion of the centurion Cornelius with his whole household sets in motion the most critical phase of the expansion of God's people." Johnson, *Acts*, 186. He comments on Luke 4, saying, "The passage is made into a programmatic prophecy which guides the reader's understanding of the subsequent narrative." Idem., *Luke*, 81.

¹⁹⁴ See the chart on page 142 of the Isaiah passages linked by *dektos*. See also, Stockhausen, *Moses' Veil*, for an explanation of "hookwords" as a midrashic exegetical technique, 26-27.

assumed today in New Testament studies.¹⁹⁵ But within the large body of evidence on which stands the relatively unanimous verdict regarding the unity of Luke-Acts are many dimensions to the unity claim. Many scholars have illuminated different facets with different questions about the unity of genre between the two, their narrative unity, literary unity, and theological, or thematic, unity.¹⁹⁶ The claim for unity, therefore, stands on the strength of the variety of evidence as well as on the volume of it.¹⁹⁷ The variegation of evidence is important for this project beyond simply establishing the grounds on which Luke-Acts should be read and interpreted as a two-volume work. Beyond establishing *that* Luke-Acts is a unity, the means and methods on which unity claims are based provide markers of that unity and establish rubrics for testing whether previously unconsidered material confirms or advances the claim. Using those markers and rubrics,

¹⁹⁵ Fitzmyer writes, "The relation of the first volume to the second is admitted almost unanimously today." Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 3. Johnson concurs, "Although ancient manuscripts do not place them together, virtually all contemporary scholars think that the Gospel and Acts were conceived and executed as a single literary enterprise, which they have come to call Luke-Acts." Johnson, *Luke*, 1. Marshall writes, "First, the Gospel of Luke is part of a two-volume work, and it is difficult to write a completely satisfactory or comprehensive introduction to one half of the whole work. Questions of authorship, date, and purpose cannot be adequately handled without taking the Acts into detailed consideration." Marshall, *Luke*, 29. Challenging the prevailing consensus is Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts*. Although I do not agree with their conclusions, the question raised by them is significant for this study insofar as they ask about things present in Luke that disappear from Acts. I ask this question, too—where did the lepers go?—although my final conclusions do not challenge the argument for unity as much as they support it.

¹⁹⁶ This system of ordering borrowed from Kenneth Duncan Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts: Telling the History God's People Intertextually* (JSNTSup 282; New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 36-47. Generally agreed upon evidence that the two works have a single author and a unified plot/continuous story line include: parallel motifs in the two volumes evidenced in their prefaces, accounts of the descent of the Spirit, the ministries of Jesus and the apostles, the journeys of Jesus and Paul, conflicts between Jesus/apostles and religious leaders, trial accounts, and martyrdoms. For more on the evidence for unity see O'Toole, *The Unity of Luke's Theology*, 62-94. For more on the purposes for Luke's writings, see Robert L. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982). For more on the parallels and purposes, see Mattill, "The Jesus-Paul Parallels and the Purpose of Luke-Acts."

¹⁹⁷ Roth would suggest that what I call variegation is in fact an "imprecise common ground" because scholars differ on what they mean by terms like authorship, motif, theme, genre, purpose, etc. and argues that insufficient attention has been paid to constructing a theoretical framework for a discussion of unity resulting in statements about the unity of Luke-Acts "that cannot bear their ontological weight." It is what he claims to do with the methodology of reader-response criticism, connecting literary theory to literary exegesis and making interpretation more persuasive. Roth, *The Blind, the lame, and the Poor*, 14.

it will be shown that *dektos* and *katharizō*, apart and paired, can and should properly be considered as part of Luke's literary and theological design. Both words contribute to the arguments for the unity of Luke-Acts.

Some studies of Luke-Acts treat the literary features of motif, repeated vocabulary, parallel characters and plot, common type-scenes, and foreshadowing that connect the two books.¹⁹⁸ Some scholars distinguish narrative criticism from literary criticism on the basis of the difference between the literary features of the story and the point of view and rhetoric of the narrator, the "what" and the "how" of the narrative. Narrative studies deal particularly with how a story unfolds sequentially and its sense of progression, and therefore highlight the degree to which images and symbols are cumulative over the course of the narrative.¹⁹⁹ Studies with a more theological arc have identified the message of God's universal salvation, an account of the mission to the Gentiles, repentance, and the role of the Holy Spirit as examples (among others) of particularly Lukan concerns that characterize both works.²⁰⁰ While particular works may reflect sharper distinctions between the literary and the narrative features, or differentiate more cleanly the literary motifs from the theological ones, it is more often the case that conclusions about theological emphases are made on the basis of the evidence of literary

¹⁹⁸ Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*; Praeder, "Jesus-Paul, Peter-Paul, and Jesus-Peter Parallelisms"; Talbert, *Literary Patterns*; Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, vols. 1 and 2.

¹⁹⁹ Daryl Schmidt explains, "A narrative study by nature must keep track of an expanding network of contexts when it isolates any one feature for particular attention. For example, first impressions established in the narrative have an ongoing effect throughout the rest of the narrative, even as they are modified and revised. Concrete observations about the unfolding story must also be described in terms that capture some of this nuance. Attending to both of these dimensions is probably the greatest challenge to the interpreter." Daryl D. Schmidt, "Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of Luke" in *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels* (ed. William R. Farmer; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity, 1999), 63-96, here p. 65.

²⁰⁰ For example, see Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars' Press, 1977); Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996).

and narrative features. To that end, I will present a few examples of the kinds of literary features and theological emphases that are commonly accepted as characteristic of Luke's writing and thought and will order them according to those two larger categories, while acknowledging that the distinction is somewhat arbitrary and the boundary between the two fluid.²⁰¹

Literary Features

Parallel scenes, repeating patterns, and points of correspondence have long been noted as a characteristic literary features of Luke-Acts, and have been studied at what might be considered the surface level of the texts (e.g. repeated words, phrases, type-scenes, character types, etc.) as well as for how they disclose deeper structures giving shape to the books.²⁰² Talbert studies the deeper structures with an "architecture analysis" of Luke-Acts, an analysis based in part on studies of classical literature in which formal patterns or architectonic designs have been discerned and determined to control the arrangement of material in larger units.²⁰³ Patterns found in classical texts such as concentric, reverse, and chiasmic patterns, to name just a few, have been recognized as "acoustical analogues" to patterns seen in the visual art of the times. That is to say, classical texts are ordered around the same "law of balance" as that which governs the geometric symmetry of Greek paintings, sculpture, and friezes.²⁰⁴ Talbert sees this same

²⁰¹ I am selecting examples for elaboration here that either by form or content will have direct bearing on the exegetical work of chapter four.

²⁰² For a succinct review of the history of interest, see Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 1-5.

²⁰³ Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 5.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 6. In an unrelated reading with a powerfully related idea, I found that Joel Cohen's observations about poetry and mathematical equations could also apply to our Scriptures. He insists that there are features shared by poetry and applied mathematics, noting that "both mix apples and oranges by aspiring to combine multiple meanings and beauty using symbols. These symbols point to things outside themselves,

principle of balance as governing the shape of large segments of Luke-Acts, and charts the parallels between the Gospel and Acts in substantial detail, a sampling of which follows.²⁰⁵

LUKE

1:1–4 prologue addressed to Theophilus

3:22 Spirit descends in a physical form

4:16–30 Jesus' ministry opens with a sermon with theme of what follows, fulfillment of prophecy

5:17–26 lame man is healed by Jesus

7:1–10 a centurion, well-spoken of by Jews, sends men to Jesus to ask him to come to his house

7:11–17 A story involving a widow and a resurrection

7:36–50 Pharisee criticizes Jesus for being touched by wrong kind of woman

Ch. 24 Conclusion – the ministry of Jesus concludes on the positive note of the fulfillment of scripture.

ACTS

1:1–5 prologue addressed to Theophilus

2:1–13 Spirit fills disciples; accompanied by physical manifestations

2:14–40 apostles'/church's ministry opens with theme of what follows, fulfillment of prophecy

3:1–10 lame man is healed by name of Jesus

Ch. 10 a centurion, well-spoken of by Jews, sends men to Peter to ask him to come to his house

9:36–43 A story involving a widow and a resurrection

11:1–18 Pharisaic party criticizes Peter for associating with Gentiles

Ch. 28 Conclusion – the ministry of Paul concludes on the positive note of the fulfillment of scripture.²⁰⁶

and create internal structures that aim for beauty." Both combine "multiple meanings, economy, pattern, and mystery. In its scientific or practical applications, applied mathematics points to something external. It also alludes to prior mathematics. Its few symbols convey a lot. Its use of symbols often involves internal repetition, symmetry, and chiasmus. It is replete with unexpected truths, unexpected applications, and diverse proofs that illuminate different aspects of a single truth." Joel E. Cohen, "A Mindful Beauty," in *The Best Spiritual Writing 2011* (ed. Philip Zaleski; New York: Penguin, 2010), 30–42, here 30, 35.

²⁰⁵ This analysis of architectonic designs is concerned primarily with style insofar as it shapes the final product by arrangement of larger units of material, especially the whole, but has as an auxiliary concern the interpretation of the significance of style; the analysis focuses not only on textual patterns' analogies found in the visual art of a document's context and roots in a cultural zeitgeist, but asks about the architecture's potential didactic significance—the relation of the meaning to the writing. For Talbert, the detection of these formal structural patterns are important for how they control scholarly subjectivity in redaction critical studies. Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 4. Fitzmyer cautions that Talbert's study, like others of Luke's stylistic techniques and patterns, are "bedeviled by as much subjectivism as the redaction-critical studies they have often sought to curb." Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 5–6. So, too, cautions Bovon, who says, "Each time Talbert decides a balance of the literary units exists, it is always Luke's conscious will and never the product of tradition." François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Thirty-Three Years of Research (1950–1983)* (Allison Park, Penn.: Pickwith, 1987), 65; repr. of *Luc le theologien. Vingt-cinq ans de recherches (1950–1975)* (trans. Ken McKinney; Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1978).

François Bovon illuminates a deep structural feature in his observation that the parable of the prodigal son is “exactly at the midpoint of the gospel” (Luke 15:11–32) just as the council of Jerusalem forms the midpoint of Acts (15:1–35). Interpreting the significance of this stylistic feature, Bovon writes, “Such carefully considered and well-constructed episodes furnish the entire work with a sort of literary synopsis and hermeneutical key, something like *mise en abîme* of recent French criticism.”²⁰⁷

To Darrell Bock, the Gospel appears structured to anticipate Acts with the repetition of the books’ prologues and the similar ascension accounts that close the Gospel and open Acts. He states, “Though each of these connections needs evaluation, there is no doubt Luke intends to show parallels between the time of Jesus and the time of his followers. Both the story and the theology of the two volumes are linked together. To understand the emergence of the church, one must understand Jesus and the plan of God.”²⁰⁸

Talbert delineates the parallels between Jesus’ and Paul’s journeys to Jerusalem as well as those in their arrest and trial reports.²⁰⁹ Bock also notes these along with other Jesus-disciple parallels of healing and being slain. Many scholars have discerned a wide

²⁰⁶ Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 16.

²⁰⁷ François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* (ed. Helmut Koester; trans. Christine M. Thomas; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 3. Heikki Räisänen draws out parallels between the story of the prodigal son and the council of Jerusalem: the son’s return and the news of the conversion of the Gentiles are both received with joy; the older brother and the Christian Pharisees in Jerusalem correspond in their concern for obedience the father’s command and the law of Moses, respectively. Räisänen suggests that prodigal son in the Gospel is a prototype of the Gentiles in Acts 11 and 15. In Acts 11, Peter, having been reproached for having eaten with Gentiles, refers to his experiences in the household of the Gentile, Cornelius, at which point the circumcision party glorify God and conclude that God has granted to the Gentiles “repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18). Räisänen sees a parallel to the prodigal son’s “coming to life again” (Luke 15: 24, 32). Heikki Räisänen, “The Prodigal Gentile and His Jewish Christian Brother: Lk 15, 11-32,” in *Challenges to Biblical Interpretation: Collected Essays 1991-2001* (Leiden: Brill, 2001) 37-60; here 45-46.

²⁰⁸ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke, Volume 1: 1:1-9:50* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 13.

²⁰⁹ Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 16-17.

range of Jesus-disciple parallels. Jesus, Peter, and Paul all heal the paralyzed and lame (Luke 5:17–26; Acts 3:2–10; 8:8; 9:33–35; 14:8–10). Jesus heals the sick and casts out demons and the apostles likewise heal the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits (Luke 4:40–41; Acts 5:16). Both Jesus and Peter raise the dead (Luke 7:11–17; 8:49–54; Acts 9:40). It is recorded that both Jesus and Paul exorcise demons (Luke 8:26–33; 11:14–15; Acts 16:16–18) and teach in the synagogues (Luke 4:16–32; Acts 17:2). Both Jesus and Stephen are martyred. Not only do these parallels appear at the pattern level of the event, but parallel episodes and corresponding figures are often described in the same terminology. For example, both Jesus and Stephen are “filled with the holy spirit,” (*plērēs pneuontos hagiou*; Luke 4:1; Acts 7:55). Corresponding dialogue may also share terminology. At his trial before the council, Jesus responds to a question about his identity as the Christ by saying, “from now on the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God” (Luke 22:69); Stephen, also before a council, announces a vision with the words, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God,” (Acts 7:56).

Robert Tannehill’s idea of “connections” is useful for considering the types of literary features linking Luke with Acts.²¹⁰ Tannehill argues for the narrative unity of Luke-Acts on the basis of “many internal connections between the two,” describing connections in general terms as themes that are developed, dropped, and returned to, and/or as characters and actions resembling those from other parts of the story or from the scriptural story Luke knows and from which he draws.²¹¹ More specifically, connections are emphasized and “supported by clear literary signals, such as the

²¹⁰ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*:1, 3-4.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

repetition of key words and phrases, indicating either that the author consciously intended the connection or that the author's message was bound to certain controlling images which repeatedly asserted themselves in the process of writing."²¹² The salient feature of Tannehill's "connections" is repetition; it is patterns of repetition that draw attention to similarities and differences, guide the reader in making comparisons, and suggest new associations with echoes from more distant parts of the narrative.²¹³

Passages may be connected in one of two ways, either in a progressive sequence such that a narrative line develops toward a resolution, or in an iterative way, with the same theme or circumstance being repeated but without incremental movement toward a climax. Tannehill describes many of the connections in the Third Gospel as iterative because the Gospel itself is episodic, indebted as it is to the synoptic tradition. However, they still contribute to the overall progression of the narrative because each repeated scene extends the narrative with a "new variation to familiar situations and theme."²¹⁴ Whether it is the repetition of words or phrases or similar episodes, repetitive patterns guide the readers in the discovery of expanding symbols and deepening disclosure.

Some examples of repetitive patterns in Luke-Acts include the repetition of the phrase "your faith has saved you" (Luke 7:50; 8:43; 17:19; 18:42), repetitive use of the

²¹² Ibid., 3-4. Tannehill differentiates three levels of "significant connections," the first of which is the primary focus of his work, and that which is drawn upon in this project. The second level of connections are those present at the level of the larger narrative, the reading of which Tannehill says is "an imaginative process" and one that includes "a realm of free play" as readers reconstruct a narrative world that differs from their own. At this level, there might be a large number of possible connections and significances "which the text may suggest but not necessarily emphasize," some of which will likely depart from the author's conscious intentions. Tannehill occasionally considers the second level of significant connections, but only occasionally and when closely related to his more immediate concerns. The third level of significant connections identified by Tannehill but not dealt with in his study are those connections detected by reading with a "hermeneutic of suspicion," that is, those connections "which the author might not acknowledge, connections revealing cultural limitations, unconscious or concealed drives which are not socially acceptable, or ideology which may not stand examination in the light of day." Ibid., 4.

²¹³ Ibid., 20.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 4.

word *sōtērion* (Luke 2:30; 3:6; Acts 28:28),²¹⁵ and repeated features such as prologues and ascension scenes.

Although there are many, I will give only two detailed examples from Tannehill's work to demonstrate how iterative connections suggest associations and guide readers through expanding layers of meaning. These examples will serve as models for discerning how the *lepra* passages of the Third Gospel and the *katharizō* passages of Luke-Acts are connected in iterative ways and what features suggest associations to other passages thereby expanding the meanings of the terms. These two particular examples also share connections with the *lepra/katharizō* texts, so their content as well as their form is significant for this study.

The first example is the series of passages in which contrasts are drawn between the righteous and the tax collector/sinners (Luke 5:27–32, “the calling of Levi”; Luke 15:1–7, “the parable of the lost sheep”; Luke 18:9–14, “the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector”; Luke 19:1–10). In the first two passages, Pharisees are “murmuring” about Jesus’ practice of eating with sinners (5:30/*egonguzon*; 15:2/*diegonguzon*). In the first passage, Jesus responds by saying that he has “not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance” (5:32), and in the second with a parable that concludes, “there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who need no repentance” (15:7). The same righteous one v. tax collector/sinner contrast reappears in the third passage, but with a significant variation. Rather than being another report of Jesus encountering Pharisees and tax collectors, Jesus here narrates a parable *about* a Pharisee and a tax collector, directing it to those who trust in themselves that they

²¹⁵ This neuter form is found just twice in the NT outside of Luke-Acts in Ephesians 6:17 and Titus 2:11.

are righteous (18:9). The supposedly righteous Pharisee gives thanks to God that he is not like the tax collector while the tax collector prays for mercy because he knows he is a sinner (18:11–13). Jesus’ final statement announces a reversal of status; it is the tax collector who goes home justified (made righteous), “for every one who exalts himself will be humbled but he who humbles himself will be exalted” (18:14). According to Tannehill, this story serves as commentary on the Pharisees and tax collectors in the previous scenes, providing support for Jesus’ acceptance of sinners.²¹⁶ The connections are visually represented in the following chart:

<u>LUKE 5:27-32</u>	<u>LUKE 15:1-7</u>	<u>LUKE 18:9-14</u>
		Jesus tells parable to those who think themselves righteous and despise others about a Pharisee and a tax collector.
Jesus with Levi, a tax collector	tax collectors/sinners draw near to hear Jesus.	
has a meal at Levi’s home	[This man receives/eats with sinners]	
Pharisees and scribes <u>murmur</u>	Pharisees and scribes <u>murmur</u>	Pharisee gives thanks that he is not like the tax collector.
and question Jesus’ eating with sinners and tax collectors	“This man receives sinners and and eats with them.”	The tax collector asks for God’s mercy.
Jesus: “I have not come to call the righteous , but sinners to <i>repentance</i> .”	Jesus: “there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who <i>repents</i> than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no <i>repentance</i> .”	Jesus: the tax collector is justified (made righteous)... ...he who exalts himself will be humbled....

²¹⁶ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*:1, 107.

There are, in fact, three parables introduced by the repeated type-scene motif of murmuring Pharisees in Luke 15:1–2 which further expand the network of connections in the passages discussed above. This series of parables provides another example of iterative connections. The first parable is that of a person who leaves ninety-nine sheep in order to search for one sheep that is lost. Joy in finding that one lost sheep is the image Jesus uses to describe heaven's joy over one sinner who repents, even when there are ninety-nine righteous ones who need no repentance. The second parable is that of the lost coin, with a repeated report of joy over its discovery. Also, Jesus says again, that just like the woman who rejoices in finding the lost coin, "there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (5:10). The third parable in the series is that of the lost son (often referred to as "the prodigal son"). This is a longer and more elaborate narrative, without perfect verbal correspondences to the previous two, but strong thematic ones.

The prodigal son "repents" in the sense of returning to his father with an admission of sin and expressing a need for his father's mercy: "I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:21). He states his intent to say these words in vv. 18–19; they are repeated when he speaks them aloud to his father in v. 21. There is joy and rejoicing over the son's return, expressed by the father who says, "and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry" (Luke 15:23), and "It is fitting to make merry and be glad" (v. 32). Finally, this parable is connected to the previous two by the closer verbal correspondence of something lost being found. The father says of his son, twice for emphasis, "he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24, 32). The three parables are

connected by the images of something lost, and all provide commentary on Jesus' statement of purpose in Luke 5:32 to call sinners to repentance.²¹⁷

The two complexes of passages (sinners v. righteous; parables of lost things found) are further connected to the story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector (Luke 19:1–10) by the repetition of the “grumbling” or “murmuring” that ensues over Jesus' association with a sinner/tax collector (Luke 5:30; 15:2; 19:7). The first passage, the call of Levi, the tax collector (Luke 5:27–32), and the story of Zacchaeus both end with statements of Jesus' purpose: in the first, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32), and in the story of Zacchaeus, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Tannehill suggests that the two passages with purpose statements form an *inclusio* for the complex of connections between them, and thus concludes, “[w]e have similar general statements about Jesus' mission early and late in his ministry which serve to interpret the whole ministry which lies between them. Through repetition and significant placement, the narrator emphasizes that these are important and comprehensive interpretations of Jesus in God's plan.”²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Ibid., 106.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 107–8.

<u>LUKE 5:27-32</u>	<u>LUKE 15:1-7</u>	<u>LUKE 18:9-14</u>	<u>LUKE 19:1-10</u>
tax collector/sinners	tax collectors/sinners	tax collector	tax collector (chief)/ sinner
Pharisees/scribes	Pharisees/scribes	Pharisee	
Jesus has meal with Levi			Jesus has meal with Zacchaeus
murmuring	murmuring		murmuring
righteous v. sinner	righteous v. sinner	righteous v. sinner	
Jesus: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"	Jesus: "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who need no repentance."		Jesus: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
15:4-7 parable of lost sheep	15:8-10 parable of lost coin	15:11-32 parable of lost son	
rejoicing over found sheep joy in heaven over one sinner who repents	rejoicing over found coin joy before angels over one sinner who repents	who has sinned rejoicing over found son there is merry-making over the son who has repented	

The second example illustrating the pattern of iterative connections observed by Tannehill in Luke's writing and thought takes as its starting point Luke 5:17–26, the story of the healing of a paralytic. In this story, Jesus' expressed purpose of releasing those who are oppressed (Luke 4:18, quoting Isaiah 61:1–2 and 58:6) is extended to include the releasing of sins.²¹⁹ This is the first of a series of passages connected by the repeated type-scene of a controversy between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees. His

²¹⁹ Tannehill suggests that the meaning of "release"/*aphesis* for the captives in Jesus' mission includes: 1) release for the economically oppressed; 2) release through healing and exorcism for those oppressed by demons and the devil; 3) release of sins. Ibid., 103; see also 65–66.

power/*dynamis* as well as his authority/*exousia* over demons having already been established,²²⁰ Jesus, in this episode, demonstrates his power to heal and the reach of his authority over sins, effectively connecting healing and release.²²¹

In the next episode, the call of Levi (Luke 5:27–32), the Pharisees oppose Jesus' association with sinners. Here the purpose of Jesus in the Gospel with respect to sins/sinners is further developed, and stated by Jesus when he says, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (v. 32). In the previous episode, Jesus has the power and authority to proclaim the release of sins; here his purpose is specifically articulated in relation to the sinner.

At Luke 7:34 Jesus is identified as the Son of man who has come eating and drinking and who is a friend of tax collectors and sinners, connecting what follows to 5:27–32, the only episode reported to this point where Jesus eats and drinks with a tax collector. What follows is the story of the sinful woman who appears at a meal Jesus is sharing with a Pharisee and who anoints Jesus' feet. Jesus uses the occasion to teach about the relationship between love and forgiveness, and Luke extends the theme of Jesus' authority over sin and his purpose in releasing sin to include the contrasting responses to Jesus' release of sins.

²²⁰ Jesus' power and authority is established earlier at 4:14, "And Jesus returned in the power/*dynamei* of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country," at 4:32, "and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word was with authority/*exousia*," and at 4:36, "And they were amazed and said to one another, 'What is this word? For with authority/*exousia* and power/*dynamei* he commands the unclean spirits and the come out?'"

²²¹ Luke 5:17: "On one of those days, as he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power/*dynamis* of the Lord was with him to heal." Luke 5:24: "'But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority/*exousia* to on earth to forgive sins'—he said to the man who was paralyzed—'I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home.'"

The story of the sinful woman is connected to the story of the healing of the paralytic by the repetition of controversy over Jesus' authority to release sins: "And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, 'Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can release sins but God only?'" (Luke 5:21); and "Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this, who even forgives sins?'" (Luke 7:49). The two stories are also connected by the repetition of the place of faith in relation to Jesus' release of sins: "And when he saw their [the friends of the paralytic] faith he said, 'Man, your sins are forgiven you,'" (Luke 5:20); "And he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven,'" (Luke 7:48) and "he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace,'" (Luke 7:50). The chart on the next page provides a visual representation of these connections.

Tannehill concludes,

The narrator presents an impressive portrayal of Jesus' work of releasing sins by linking scenes related to this theme. These links contribute to the unity of the narrative. They also suggest that Luke's Gospel is shaped to make its impact through a process of emphasis and enrichment which takes place as readers make significant connections among episodes, recalling previous events and comparing them with new events. In this reading process of recall and comparison, new events in the story call forth enriching harmonies from the previous narrative. The narrator encourages this process.²²²

²²² Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*:1, 108.

<u>LUKE 5:17-26</u>	<u>LUKE 5:27-32</u>	<u>LUKE 7:31-35</u>	<u>LUKE 7:36-50</u>
healing of paralytic	call of Levi	Son of Man has come	sinful woman forgiven
opposition from the scribes/Pharisees	opposition from the scribes/Pharisees		
	J. eats/drinks with tax collector	has come eating/drinking	[<i>eating w/Pharisee</i>]
		he is called friend of tax collectors and sinners	woman identified as sinner
J. sees friends' faith			differing responses to Jesus' power and purpose (Pharisee v. woman's love and faith)
Jesus has power to heal authority to release sins	Jesus' purpose is to call sinners to repentance		to woman: your sins are released
			to woman: your faith has saved you

These two examples, in addition to demonstrating how repetitions structure a process of emphasis and enrichment of themes in Luke-Acts, also provide texts that share connections with the *lepra/katharizō* texts to be taken up in detail in chapter four. In particular, three elements of Luke's story of the ten men afflicted with *lepra* will be considered for their connections with the parables of the lost sheep and son and with the story of the sinful woman: 1) the ratio of one man who gives thanks to God for his cleansing to the nine others who do not as a repetition of the one-to-ninety-nine language in the lost sheep parable; 2) the repeated theme of things lost and then found and Jesus'

statement to the Samaritan leper: “Was no one *found* to return and give praise to God?” (Luke 17:18); 3) Jesus says to the Samaritan, just as he says to the sinful woman who anointed his feet, “Your faith has saved you,” (Luke 17:19).²²³

The contrast between the righteous and sinners, the terminology of release/forgiveness, and the phrase “your faith has saved you,” are examples of repetitive patterns of emphasis in the Third Gospel. In addition, the connecting of these patterns with the themes of repentance and things found serves to enrich and extend these patterns. The repetitive appearances of people afflicted with *lepra* and the concomitant repetition of *katharizō* create a similar pattern of emphasis, developed and extended thematically over the course of the two-part work. Through multiple passages containing the term *katharizō*—from its first reference to the cleansing of Jesus and Mary in the temple after his birth (Luke 2:22) to its last reference to Gentile hearts (Acts 15:9)—the theme is extended beyond the cleansing of the *lepra*-afflicted and connected to other prominent themes in Luke-Acts: themes of faith, repentance, salvation, the place of Samaritans, and the activity of Spirit.

The occurrences of *katharizō* found in the stories of men afflicted with *lepra* are iteratively connected, but also expanded and enriched in ways similar to those seen in the stories sharing the tax collector and sinner motif. The first *lepra*-afflicted man is introduced in a story told by Jesus, and related as it is to Jesus’ programmatic sermon, it likely has a paradigmatic function. Luke then uses the received tradition from Mark to

²²³ This phrase also spoken by Jesus to the woman with the twelve-year flow of blood (Luke 8:43) and to the blind man whose sight is restored (Luke 18:35).

make the first presentation of a person afflicted with *lepra* who is cleansed by Jesus.²²⁴ In material Luke shares with Matthew—material judged to be eschatological in tone—cleansed lepers appear in a list of afflicted people Jesus has healed, in answer to the question brought to him by John the Baptist’s disciples, “Are you the one that is to come?” (7:22). Finally, Luke records the story of the ten *lepra*-afflicted men (17:11–19), a story unique to his Gospel but structured like story of the single leper, with some features drawn from the story of Elisha and Naaman, and expanded with significant words, phrases, themes and motifs from other stories that have preceded it. The repetition of patterns initiates the process of “recall and comparison...calling forth enriching harmonies.”²²⁵

Theological Emphases

In this section I will present a sampling of the theological emphases that scholars agree upon as being characteristic of Luke’s writing and thought, and emphases to which this dissertation points.²²⁶ I am particularly interested here in considering work that

²²⁴ Tannehill: “Material shared with other gospels may nevertheless have special importance in Luke. Although Luke 5:17–32 has parallels in both Matthew and Mark, the repeated reminders of these episodes later in Luke testify to their importance.” Tannehill, *Narrative Unity: I*, 109. This is true for the *lepra* episodes, to be sure. The shared material receives different emphases by virtue of where it is placed in Luke’s narrative, how it is expanded, how it serves as the narrative core for a new story, and how it takes on a particularly Lukan cast as it picks up features Luke repeats elsewhere.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

²²⁶ My thesis does not attempt to establish a particular Lukan emphasis/agenda over and against others, and therefore I will not necessarily critique the various answers given to the question of Luke’s theological point. Nor am I arguing that the influence of Isaiah on Luke’s writing/thought precludes the strong influence of other texts. I am concerned here to show that the position I take with respect to Luke’s theological agenda is one that is an established position in the field—that Luke is, in fact, influenced by Isaiah—for the purposes of testing whether Luke’s use of *dektos*, in particular, contributes to that position. For full summaries of the larger questions of authorial intent/purpose, as well as those of Luke’s theological emphases, see the standard commentaries on Luke Bock, *Luke*; Bovon, *Luke I*; Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke’s Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*; idem, *Luke XI-XXIV*; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Johnson, *Luke*.

establishes thematic continuity between the Gospel and Acts on the basis of literary forms and theological emphases that together suggest an intentional design.²²⁷

The idea that salvation is a dominant, if not overarching, theological theme of Luke-Acts is commonly accepted. God's role in salvation, the manner of the announcement of God's salvation, the universal reach of God's salvation, Jesus as both the proclaimer and proclaimed agent of that salvation, Jesus Christ's designation as *sōtēr*/"Savior" (used only in Luke among the Synoptics; also Acts 5:31; 13:23), and the role of the Spirit in the story of God's salvation are related iterations of this salvation theme. Even as the genre features of Luke-Acts along with Luke's own stated purpose suggest this is an historical writing,²²⁸ the form seems to follow his primary function, which is to establish the long historical arc of God's salvific purposes. It is an historical writing with theological purpose; the yield of the theological point can only be revealed through an historical perspective.²²⁹ And so, with a panoramic and sweeping historical view of things, Luke assures Theophilus that the practices and teachings of the church in

See also commentaries on Acts: F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (3d.ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (ed. Eldon Jay Epp and Christopher R. Matthews; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Doubleday, 1998); Beverly Gaventa, *Acts* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003). The primary themes identified include: the role of the spirit, Luke's treatment of eschatology, the picture of Christian discipleship as one where people respond with faith, repentance and conversion, baptism, prayer, reversals of fortune and status, and universal salvation.

²²⁷ Darrell Bock summarizes the literature on the purposes of Luke-Acts and the range of theories represented, which include: to explain why Jesus has not yet returned, to make a defense of Christianity, to make a defense of Paul, to serve as an evangelism tool, to confirm the message of salvation, to be a theodicy of God's faithfulness to Israel, as a sociological legitimation of full fellowship for Gentiles and a defense of the new community as not unfaithful to Rome, as an effort at reconciliation with Judaism by demonstrating that the offer of salvation in Christ is the natural extension of Judaism, to demonstrate God's total rejection of the Jews. Of all the suggestions, Bock sees those centering on God's role in salvation and the new community "as most likely to reflect the key aspects of Luke's comprehensive agenda." Bock, *Luke*, 14.

²²⁸ "it seemed good to me also...to write an orderly account" (1:3)

²²⁹ Fitzmyer writes, "The historical perspective in which Luke has cast the *kerygma* is far more important for Lukan theology than any historical aspects preserved that may be part of the *kerygma*." Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 172.

his day are continuous with the time of Jesus. He tells a history that links the post-apostolic age to a Jesus tradition that is related to the biblical history of Israel.²³⁰

Many scholars would agree that the genre of Luke-Acts approximates Hellenistic historiography, although there is inconsistency among them about definitions and confusion about the relationship between ancient historiography and how we are to understand the historicity of Luke-Acts.²³¹ While the question of historicity falls outside the scope of this project, the discussion of the purposes of the genre is instructive.

Kenneth Duncan Litwak describes Hellenistic historiography in the following way:

Hellenistic historians did not record events of the past out of an academic desire to write history ‘just as it happened’, which is an unattainable goal in any event. Rather, like biblical authors, such as the author of 1-2 Chronicles, Hellenistic historians selectively reported the past in order to accomplish larger goals. These goals include such items as validation of those in the present, giving identity to those in the present, and providing exemplars for those in the present that they might learn from the past. This is not meant to imply that Hellenistic writers ‘revised’ the past to serve their own purposes. It is to say that what an Hellenistic historian recounted, and how he structured the narrative, is not solely or even primarily a matter of artistry. Instead such narratives, including Luke-Acts, have been fashioned to accomplish these and other purposes.²³²

Litwak’s description of historiography draws attention to the aspect of an author’s larger purposes, which he relates to the purposes of the writers of the Scriptures of Israel such

²³⁰ Fitzmyer resists the label of historiography: “Even if we prescind from the almost impossible ideal of objectivity that such a standard [*referring here to Lucian of Samosata’s articulation of the historian’s task: ‘to tell the tale as it happened’*], ancient or modern, implies and grant that history cannot be anything but an interpretation of past events, nevertheless, it must be recognized that Luke’s purpose in recounting the story of Jesus and its sequel is not simply, or even primarily, that of an ancient Hellenistic historian. Herein lies the real difference between Luke the evangelist and both ancient and modern historians. For his historical concern serves a theological end; he sees the ‘events’ that he is to narrate as a fulfillment (Luke 1:1) and this reveals his historical concern as subordinate to a theological one.” Ibid., 16.

²³¹ Nils Dahl describes Luke as “a minor Hellenistic historian, albeit one who dealt with a very special subject matter and who imitated biblical rather than Attic style.” Nils A. Dahl, “The Purpose of Luke-Acts,” in *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), 88.

²³² Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture*, 36-37.

that he can later speak of those same Scriptures as biblical historiography, in which the writings of Luke stand in line.

In the second half of the last century, the question of whether, or to what degree, the theme of promise-fulfillment characterized Luke's basic theology garnered much scholarly attention. Also known as proof-from-prophecy, many scholars considered it the central theological idea of Luke's two-volume work.²³³ Like much of the work on Luke-Acts, there is variegation here, too, in whether the proof and promise were to be found in Old Testament prophecies, or from the scriptures and those of a living prophet, or from Jesus' prophetic words in particular, or in the fulfillment of a prophecy given by an angelic being or the risen Christ. Proof-from-prophecy or promise fulfillment is compelling as an organizing paradigm for the whole of Luke-Acts and it has clarified Luke's interest in various portions of the Scriptures of Israel/LXX and the function of various scriptural citations. It has powerfully established the historical continuity that legitimated the Gentile church as a continuation of Israel.²³⁴ Other dimensions of Luke's theological emphases captured by the promise-fulfillment paradigm include: 1) that history unfolds according to divine necessity; 2) that history's course fulfills oracles, both

²³³ Darrell L. Bock, "Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Luke's Use of the Old Testament for Christology and Mission," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. Craig A. Evans and W. Richard Stegner; JSNTSup 104; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 280-307; Dahl, "The Purpose of Luke-Acts"; Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*; William S. Kurz, "Promise and Fulfillment in Hellenistic Jewish Narratives and in Luke and Acts," in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel* (ed., David P. Moessner; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1999) 147-70; Paul Schubert, "The Structure and Significance of Luke 24," in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann* (ed. W. Eltester; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1957): 165-86; David L. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); Charles H. Talbert, "Promise and Fulfillment in Lucan Theology" in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (ed. Charles H. Talbert; New York: Crossroad, 1984) 94.

²³⁴ See for example, Dahl, who also sees it as functioning to guarantee: 1) that the promises as yet unfulfilled in Luke's time would be fulfilled; 2) that all had happened according to the will of God; and 3) to bolster the Christian position with the argument from antiquity.

written and oral, either through the human beings' understanding or misunderstanding of them; 3) that proof-from-prophecy legitimates individual or religious status.²³⁵

David Pao has clarified the limitations of the promise-fulfillment paradigm in ways that are particularly instructive for this project.²³⁶ First, its strong emphasis on the Christological use of scripture, that is, on establishing the identity of Jesus Christ, has overshadowed other functions such as the ecclesiological shaping of the Christian community's identity. Second, often the studies have focused on the explicit quotations of or clear allusions to scripture without an examination of other ways scripture might be being used.²³⁷ Third, many of the studies, because of the Christological accent, fail to take account of the broader narrative of Acts. Pao discerns a deeper architecture structuring the Luke-Acts narrative patterned on the scriptural story of the exodus, but specifically as the exodus is recast in the Isaiah corpus. Luke-Acts evokes the tradition of the "Isaianic new exodus," and Pao argues that this tradition is the hermeneutical framework in which the two books, especially Acts, should be read.²³⁸ Pao helpfully observes that this framework highlights the ecclesiological function of Scripture in the

²³⁵ Talbert writes that pagan evidence shows that prophecy made by a person or about a person, when fulfilled, legitimated the individual's religious or political status and that it could evoke conversion to the one whose promise was kept; he concludes, "This is the function for which the expression 'proof-from-prophecy' should be used." Talbert, "Promise and Fulfillment," 99.

²³⁶ David W. Pao, *Acts and Isaianic New Exodus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

²³⁷ For examples of studies that look at the deeper story patterning of a Luke's use of scriptural citations, see Thomas Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge: The Elijah-Elisha Narrative as an Interpretive Synthesis of Genesis-Kings and a Literary Model for the Gospels* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2000); Larrimore C. Crockett, "Luke 4:25-27 and Jewish-Gentile Relations in Luke-Acts," *JBL* 88 (1969): 177-83; Craig A. Evans, "The Function of the Elijah/Elisha Narratives in Luke's Ethic of Election," in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (ed. Craig A. Evans and James Sanders; Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 70-83; David P. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989) on how the travel narrative of Luke is patterned on the exodus narrative in Deuteronomy.

²³⁸ Pao defines "evocation" as the manner in which scriptural traditions are recalled in the use of certain key words and suggests that the traditions evoked may be more profound than the content explicitly noted in the quotations or allusions. Pao, *Isaianic New Exodus*, 7.

construction of the identity claims of the early Christian movement.²³⁹ As Isaiah appropriated ancient Israel's foundational story to provide an identity for an exilic community during the rebuilding of a community of God's people, so now Luke appropriates Isaiah's recasting to ground the identity claims of the early Christian community as the true people of God.²⁴⁰

It is well established that Luke's thought and writing show signs of Isaianic influence. Indeed, the literature on Luke's use of the prophecies of Isaiah is contained in a vast body of work on Luke's use of the Scriptures of Israel.²⁴¹ There has been little attention given to Luke's specific understanding of *dektos*, however, and none proposing a relationship between *dektos* and *katharizō*. There are eight passages in the book of Isaiah that include either the term *dektos* or *katharizō*, all of which fall between Isaiah 49 and 66.²⁴² Luke quotes explicitly from the Septuagint text of Isaiah nine times in Luke-Acts,²⁴³ and six of those nine quotations come from this cluster of passages, suggesting

²³⁹ Ibid., 5.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 5.

²⁴¹ In addition to standard commentaries, see also, Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Reading Isaiah in Early Christianity," in *Opening the Sealed Book: Interpretations of the Book of Isaiah in Late Antiquity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); Robert L. Brawley, *Text to Text Pours Forth Speech: Voices of Scripture in Luke-Acts* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1995); Larrimore C. Crockett, "The Old Testament in the Gospel of Luke; with Emphasis on the Interpretation of Isaiah 61.1-2" (PhD diss., Brown University, 1966); Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, eds., *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (Eugene, Ore.; Wipf & Stock, 1993); Bart Koet, "Isaiah in Luke-Acts," in *Isaiah in the New Testament* (ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J.J. Menken; London: T & T Clark, 2005); Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts* (London: T & T Clark, 2008); Pao, *Isaianic New Exodus*; James A. Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," in *Christianity, Judaism, and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, Part One: New Testament (ed. Jacob Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1975); J. Sanders, "Isaiah in Luke," in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Eugene, Ore.; Wipf & Stock, 1993), 14-25; August Strobel, "On the Relation of Isaiah 61:1-2 and Lev 25:10 in Lk 4," *TLZ* 92(1967): 251-254; Robert C. Tannehill, "The Mission of Jesus according to Luke IV 16-30," in *Jesus of Nazareth*, (ed. Erich Grässer, August Strobel, Robert C. Tannehill, Walther Eltester; BZNW 40; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972), 51-75.

²⁴² *dektos* in Isa 49, 56, 58, 60, and 61; *katharizō* is in Isa 53, 57, 66.

²⁴³ Isa 40:3-5 in Luke 3:46; Isa 61:1-2a in Luke 4:18-19; Isa 56:7 in Luke 19:45; Isa 53:12 in Luke 22:37; Isa 66:1-2a in Acts 7:49-50; Isa 53:7-8c in Acts 8:32-33; Isa 55:3 in Acts 13:34; Isa 49:6 in Acts 13:47; Isa 6:9-11 in Acts 28:26-27. There are also by Charles Kimball's count, over 80 allusions in Luke to Isaiah

that Luke's thought was significantly influenced by the prophecies of Isaiah, especially as articulated in these oracles, and that they form part of the architectural framework for his writings.²⁴⁴ It also suggests that *dektos* and *katharizō* in Luke-Acts would be usefully read with an ear for their Isaianic connotations. In addition, these eight passages contain other words and phrases that appear in significant and distinctive ways in Luke-Acts. From this word pool Luke draws the following words and images: *aphesei*/release, *allogenēs*/foreigner, eunuchs (Acts 8), savior/salvation, salvation that reaches "to the end of the earth," and a prominent focus on the reach of God's salvation to the foreigner/the nations (Gentiles).

C. Luke 4 and Acts 10 Linked by *Dektos* and *Katharizō*

"And Peter opened his mouth and said: 'Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any man who fears him and does what is right is acceptable/*dektos* to him'" (Acts 10:34–35). With this statement, Peter advances an interpretation of his vision of clean and unclean animals; God has shown him that he is not to call any one common or unclean (Acts 10:28) and for Peter—at least for the moment—the place of Gentiles in the Christian community is decided according to a new measure of what is *dektos*, what is "acceptable" to God. The implied logic of his interpretation goes something like this: God's partiality toward Israel and Jews had been

texts, although it is to be acknowledged that the definition of an "allusion" is a very slippery thing. Charles Kimball, *Jesus' Exposition of the Old Testament in Luke's Gospel* (JSNTSup 94; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 206–12.

²⁴⁴ Koet notes how often Luke distributes the references to Isaiah between Luke and Acts; an allusion to a text given in the Gospel is often the same text quoted explicitly in Acts. Koet, "Isaiah in Luke-Acts," 99.

recognized in the distinction between clean and unclean animals and the charge to Israel to make many such similar distinctions;²⁴⁵ God removed that distinction in cleansing the animals (and also removed Peter's authority to make the distinction), so that the distinction is no longer efficacious with respect to receiving or standing in God's favor; fear of God and right action are now the markers of one who is acceptable/*dektos*.

The logic works because *dektos* and *katharizō* are terms whose meanings become linked in the course of Peter's interpretations; the language of cleansing is appropriated and bent in new directions. Forms of *katharizō* appear exclusively in Acts in texts related to Peter's vision: the vision report itself (10:15); Peter's first interpretation of the dream as expressed to Cornelius (10:28); Peter's report of the dream to the church at Jerusalem (11:9); and then in his summary statement of conclusions drawn from the dream, "And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed/*katharisas* their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8–9).²⁴⁶ The sole use of the adjective *dektos* occurs in Acts at 10:35, "God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is *dektos* to him," as Peter begins to understand the implications of his vision.

Dektos appears twice in the Gospel where it is also linked to *katharizō*. It is heard first when Jesus reads from the Isaiah scroll in the synagogue, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ... to proclaim the *dektos*/acceptable year of the Lord" (Isa 61:2 at Luke 4:16–20), and then, just five verses later, when Jesus responds to the hopes of those present to do in his hometown the works he performed in Capernaum, "Truly, I say to you, no

²⁴⁵ Lev 20:24–26.

²⁴⁶ Related words: *katherismos* (Luke 2:22, 5:14); *katharos* (Luke 11:41; Acts 18:6, 20:26).

prophet is *dektos*/acceptable in his own country” (Luke 4:24). Giving two examples of prophets who worked miracles outside their own boundaries of country and kin, Jesus then recollects the stories of Elijah who visits the widow of Zarephath and of Elisha, who cleanses a Syrian leper (Luke 4:25–27).

It is Jesus’ second example that is of interest here because of its reference to *lepra* and cleansing. While Luke’s use of *katharizō* in Acts is concentrated in the texts related to Peter’s dream of clean and unclean animals, his use of the term in the Gospel is concentrated in texts about *lepra* and its cleansing. In both books, then, a range of meaning is given to *dektos*—by God’s prophets who cleanse those afflicted by *lepra* and by God who cleanses unclean animals. With closely proximate linkages of *dektos* and *katharizō* at significant points in both the Gospel and in Acts, Luke locates the issue of the acceptability of Gentiles within the wide horizon marked out by Luke 4 and Acts 10 and 15 and establishes *katharizō* as the means of acceptability. It is precisely the language of the purity codes and the cult, with all the power and authority it has to confer status and establish identity that is the language Luke presses into service. It is only the language of the clean and unclean that can fully explain what God has done and can legitimize Gentiles as God’s people. And it is precisely the language of *dektos* and the tradition of the reconstitution of the people of God it evokes that situates cleansing in the larger story of God’s saving purposes.

D. *Dektos*

Scholarly Considerations of *Dektos*

But what really is at the heart of the issue of Gentile acceptability? How should we understand Peter's declaration that anyone who fears God and does what is right is now "acceptable"? Synonyms for "acceptable" in the English language, words like "satisfactory," "tolerable," "adequate," and "worthy of being accepted," certainly seem to fit with a story line in which those who had previously been considered "other" and "outsiders" are now "worthy of being accepted" as insiders. But this interpretation falls short of what *dektos* requires, and what *dektos* and *katharizō* together demand.

There has been limited attention to *dektos* in the scholarly literature of Luke-Acts, and the five studies in which it receives any sustained attention address only its usage in the fourth chapter of Luke's gospel. None consider how its usage in Acts is linked to its appearances in the Gospel in the way required, as was suggested above, by the evidence for the literary and theological unity of Luke-Acts. None explore *dektos* in Acts 10:35 as a literary parallel or as an echo of its use in the Gospel. The following studies by Robert Brawley, J. Bajard, David Hill, James Sanders, and Robert Tannehill all contribute to the discussion in chapter four of Luke 4:16–30 as programmatic in Luke's Gospel and as central for his purposes. Here I focus on how they interpret *dektos* specifically.

1. Robert Brawley

Like many others, Robert Brawley sees Jesus' sermon as programmatic and fixing Jesus' identity as messiah, as spirit-filled and anointed, and as prophet.²⁴⁷ Brawley rejects readings of the axiom, "a prophet is not *dektos* in his own country," that establish parallel relationships between Jesus and Elijah/Elisha such that, by analogy, Nazareth becomes a

²⁴⁷ Robert Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 11-18.

cipher for Israel and Capernaum becomes symbolic of Gentiles. Instead, Brawley interprets the Jesus–Elijah/Elisha relationship as establishing Jesus’ identity as a prophet based on the common experience of not being “accepted” in their home countries. In other words, the stories of Elijah and Elisha are given as examples of the axiom and non-acceptance becomes a criterion for determining who is a prophet. The axiom holds true for Jesus, thus proving his identity; Jesus is not *dektos* that is, not “accepted” in his own country, therefore he must be a prophet.

As Brawley himself says, “[t]he meaning of *dektos* in the maxim is a vital factor in understanding it,” and he asserts that the strongest reading is in favor of its “passive nuance,” that is, “acceptable.”²⁴⁸ He follows the BDAG suggestion that the ordinary usage of *dektos* with respect to human beings is passive and asserts that other evidence in the Gospel similarly “weighs heavily against the active meaning of *dektos*.”²⁴⁹ Thus, Brawley interprets *dektos* in Luke 4:24 to mean that prophets are neither accepted nor welcomed by the people in their countries, are not found worthy of being accepted by those people. Brawley does not consider how *dektos* in Isaiah 61:2 at Luke 4:19 might be

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 14-15.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 15-16. Luke 4:24 is the only citation given in the BDAG as an example of *dektos* used with reference to human beings which, as Hill rightly observes, should give us pause in interpreting it as such. Brawley offers the following support for reading the passive sense: 1) to read *dektos* with an active sense, which he interprets to mean Jesus’ “refusal to offer Nazareth acts of benevolence,” eviscerates Jesus’ career of authenticity; 2) Jesus’ benevolence for his people is clearly expressed in Luke 13:34, “O Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered your children together...”; 3) his assertion that it is thematic in Luke that prophets are unacceptable rather than unfavorable, with a citation of Luke 11:47–51. Points two and three follow from his first point, but both actually falter because his interpretation of the active sense of *dektos* to mean Jesus’ active refusal to act benevolently toward Jerusalem is, in my judgment, mistaken. He asserts without argumentation however, that *dektos* in Acts 10:35 also has the passive meaning. Acts 10:35 however refers to what God finds “acceptable.” Even if we assent to the suggestion that *dektos* is passive with respect to human judgments, the judgment about it being passive in Acts 10:35, where the context is one of divine judgment, would have to be argued.

related to its proximate appearance in 4:24, nor even that it might be related.²⁵⁰ His reading of Luke 4:24 is instead governed by the Markan parallel: “Unless Luke drastically alters the meaning of Mark 6:4, his use of *dektos* in place of *atimos* would favor the passive sense.”²⁵¹ But here I think is where Brawley misses Luke’s point, which is to alter drastically the meaning of the axiom by replacing *atimos* with the very word just sounded in the last line of the Isaiah scroll read by Jesus in the synagogue.

2. J. Bajard

J. Bajard treats *dektos* in service of resolving the apparent incongruity of the responses of the people in the synagogue to Jesus’ announcement of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy—responses that are initially positive and then subsequently hostile.²⁵² His resolution turns on a reading of *dektos* that is governed by its use in the LXX and carries a more active sense, nuanced in the direction of “propitiousness” or “received efficaciousness.”²⁵³ Bajard teases out this nuance by considering how it is that the Hebrew word most often translated in the LXX by *dektos* is *ratson*, meaning “love,” “favor,” or “will.” Noting that *ratson* is a Hebrew noun, he suggests that its replacement by the LXX translators with *dektos*, a Greek adjective, shifted the inflection of *dektos* toward an active sense. For example, Lev 23:11 translates the Hebrew *lirtonekem*, “in view of the favor (of Yahweh) toward you” with *anoisei to dragma enanti kuriou dekon*

²⁵⁰ Brawley acknowledges the eschatological character of *dektos* in Isaiah 61:2, but, unlike the studies that follow, he does not consider the meaning of *dektos* in Isaiah, nor does he consider the Hebrew *ratson* which it renders in the LXX.

²⁵¹ Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews*, 15. Mark 6:4: “A prophet is not without honor/*atimos* in his own country, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”

²⁵² J. Bajard, “La structure de la péricope de Nazareth en Lc 4:16-30: propositions pour une lecture plus cohérente,” *ETL* 45 (1969): 165-71.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 168.

humin. Here the dative *humin* functions as a dative of advantage, such that the adjectival (and more “passive”) sense of *dektos* as “well-received” is attracted to a more active meaning, “well-received *in your favor*.”²⁵⁴

Bajard draws on B. Violet’s analysis of the diverse translations of *ratson* in the LXX,²⁵⁵ which include *charis* (graciousness)²⁵⁶ and *eudokia* (favor or good pleasure)²⁵⁷ in addition to *dektos*. Violet concludes that the words *dektos* and *eudokia* approach being synonyms for *charis* such that Isaiah 61:2 could just as easily have been rendered with *charis* or *eudokia* as with *dektos*. Translations of the Isaiah verse with *charis*, “the year of the Lord’s graciousness” or “the Lord’s benefaction,” or with *eudokia*, “the year of the Lord’s good will” or “the Lord’s favor,” communicate more precisely the active sense that Bajard argues for with *dektos*.

Bajard also comments on the changes made in the logion of Mark 6:4. Of the change of *atimos* (a prophet is not without “honor”) to *dektos* (a prophet is not “accepted/acceptable”), Bajard says:

If [Luke] has taken the pains to change at this point the traditional formulation of the logion (expressed by *atimos* in Mark and Matthew, and by *timein ouk exhei* in John) to take up a word—unknown in the Synoptics—of the preceding context, it is because he wanted to give to the second use of the word the same sense as the first and one must therefore understand as well v. 24: ‘no prophet is favorable in his own homeland,’ by giving to ‘favorable’ its double sense of agreeable to God and of source of blessings.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Bajard observes, “The translators of the LXX, on the other hand, use it 32 times, most often to translate the Hebrew *ratson* (love, favor, will), and its insertion in Semitic structures seems to have somewhat forced the etymological sense to orient it toward a more active sense that we are trying to demonstrate/clarify.” Ibid.

²⁵⁵ B. Violet, “Zum rechten Verständnis der Nazareth-Perikope,” ZNW 37(1938): 251-71.

²⁵⁶ Note that this is the word used by the people in the synagogue in response to Jesus’ reading of Isaiah: “And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious/*charitos* words which proceeded out of his mouth,” (Luke 4:22).

²⁵⁷ H. Conzelmann, “χάρις, κτλ,” TDNT 9:372-402.

²⁵⁸ Bajard, “La structure de la péricope de Nazareth,” 170.

In addition, where the Markan parallel reads, “a prophet is not without honor except in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house,” Luke has omitted the words, “and among his own kin and in his own house.” Bajard interprets this as Luke’s effort to expand the semantic range of *patris* from its narrower sense of Nazareth in v. 23 to its wider sense of Israel in vv. 25–27.²⁵⁹

Bajard concludes that there are no incongruities in the narrative. With the words, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:21), Jesus begins a homily on the text of Isaiah, announcing the fulfillment of the prophecy and the beginning of the year of the Lord. The homily is interrupted when Jesus takes notice of the positive response of those present: “And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’” (4:22). Jesus continues the homily in vv. 23–27, explaining how the scripture has been fulfilled, “clearly indicating that he does not intend to limit his mission to either his city or even his nation.”²⁶⁰ Thus, *dektos* in the saying about prophets at v. 24 opposes the people’s demand for miracles (v. 23) and extends itself in vv. 25–27 with the examples of Elijah and Elisha.²⁶¹ This is what, according to Bajard, provokes the wrath of those present.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid. Brawley says Bajard “envision[s] Jesus provoking his audience by denying them acts of benevolence,” (15) but Bajard’s position is quite close to that of Hill’s on this point, that *dektos* and the examples of Elijah and Elisha are about Jesus’ refusal to limit acts of benevolence, not to refuse to benevolence entirely. In this passage, Jesus is not really even given any time to extend an act of benevolence to Nazareth before he is run out of town. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews*, 15.

²⁶¹ Bajard observes, “To the parallelism of sense corresponds moreover a formal parallelism: (Truly I say to you, v. 24 and, But in truth I tell you, v. 25); it concerns the same idea taken up under another form: Jesus sets his distances concerning his social milieu.” Bajard, “La structure de la péricope de Nazareth,” 170.

²⁶² Ibid.

3. David Hill

Like Bajard, the larger context for David Hills' consideration of *dektos* is the question of the apparent incongruity in the responses of the audience to Jesus' scripture reading and exposition of that scripture.²⁶³ Similarly, Hill's conclusion that there actually is no incongruity in the passage is based on his reading of *dektos* as a key element in the narrative progression, the word on which the story turns.

Hill interprets *dektos* in the last line of the Isaiah prophecy to mean a "year well-pleasing or acceptable *to God*" as well as a year "chosen" by God.²⁶⁴ This reading of *dektos*, Hill maintains, is required by its use elsewhere in the LXX (specifically, LXX Isaiah 49:8 and 58:6). Hill interprets *eniauton kuriou dekon* to mean, "The year that is acceptable to God is the year of favour and active blessing for men."²⁶⁵ The people in the synagogue react positively to Jesus' gracious words, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," because they eagerly anticipate the material signs of this favor. But Jesus greets their anticipation with the saying, "no prophet is *dektos* in his own country," implying that he "will be carrying out a ministry acceptable to God only if he does not confine his work and words to his own people."²⁶⁶ When he further recalls Elijah and Elisha as examples of the *dektos* prophets of which he speaks, the people's anticipation changes to antagonism and wrath.

Hill notes the change in Luke's version of the saying from its parallels in Mark and Matthew, and judges the change from *atimos* the word just used to describe the year

²⁶³ David Hill, "The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth," *NT* 13 (1971): 161-80.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Here Hill follows Grundmann's entry in the *TDNT*. Hill suggests this year of relief and release which Jesus announces to be "like the year of Jubilee" (Lev 25:10).

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

of the LORD to be “surely significant.”²⁶⁷ Hill suggests that *dektos* in the axiom may be open to, if not actually require, the same reading it received in Isaiah 61:2, “a prophet is not acceptable *to God* in his own country.” Hill comments on the entry from the Arndt-Gingrich *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* which specifically identifies Luke 4:24 as the only place where *dektos* seems to mean “acceptable to men,” saying, “elsewhere it is always used of acceptability to God—a fact which should give us pause in interpreting the adjective here.”²⁶⁸ I think Hill correctly observes that because *dektos*, “an almost exclusively Biblical-Greek word,” is elsewhere always used of God, it should be required in this axiom as well.

In Hill’s judgment, Luke is responsible for the introduction of *dektos* into the record of Jesus’ teaching, and thus Luke 4:24–28 represents an early Christian tradition formed around the axiom, offered as an apologia, on the lips of Jesus, for the mission to the Gentiles. But Hill does not read a strict Jewish rejection/Gentile acceptance in Luke’s apology. The stories of the other *dektos* prophets, Elijah and Elisha, are not exemplars of hostility toward or lack of acceptance of the prophets by the widows and lepers in Israel; instead they demonstrate how the larger purposes of God to extend favor and blessing require the activities of the prophets to transcend the limits of their own land and people.

Therefore, *dektos* becomes a key term in the programmatic content of this passage, illuminating two features of Luke’s theology: 1) the gospel of redemption and release will achieve “success” outside the confines of Judaism; 2) the gospel’s rejection by Jews and acceptance by Gentiles do not depend solely on their choice; they belong to

²⁶⁷ Ibid., *contra* Brawley who judged that the *atimos* of Mark should govern a passively nuanced reading of *dektos* in Luke.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

the purposes of God (even so far as its proclaimer is concerned). They are, in fact, part of a Lukan *Heilsgeschichte*.²⁶⁹

4. James Sanders

James Sanders discusses *dektos* in his essay on the midrashic history of Isaiah 61 in the Second Temple Period, through its appearance in Luke 4.²⁷⁰ Sanders, who is primarily exploring hermeneutical axioms operative at the time—eschatological, prophetic, constitutive—considers how *dektos* serves the prophetic axiom he reads in Jesus’ exegesis of Isaiah 61 and the constitutive axiom Luke employs. The incongruity between the people’s earlier and later reactions to Jesus in the synagogue is not an exegetical problem to be solved but a reflection of Luke’s clear intent to stress how it was Jesus’ prophetic critique of the people’s interpretation of Isaiah 61 that so deeply offended them.²⁷¹ The people have interpreted Isaiah’s words, along with Jesus’ announcement of fulfillment, in their own favor; this is indicated by their initially positive response. But when Jesus goes on to read Isaiah through the interpretive lens of the Elijah and Elisha material, their interpretation is disrupted. It is the Elijah and Elisha stories by which Jesus delivers a prophetic critique of the people’s limited understanding of who would receive God’s favor and says, “the year of the End Time is determined by God alone.”²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 170.

²⁷⁰ Sanders, “From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4.”

²⁷¹ Ibid., 101-2.

²⁷² Ibid., 98-99. This prophetic critique, says Sanders, is “an integral part of Luke’s gospel, or perhaps his Jesus sources.” Ibid., 97.

According to Sanders, Luke anticipates the interpretation Jesus gives to Isaiah 61 by way of the Elijah/Elisha stories with the wisdom saying about *dektos* prophets. In his understanding of *dektos*, Sanders hews close to the Hebrew *ratson* and its sense of God's favor and God's agency in extending the favor. But he also allows for the connotation of *dektos* suggested by its use in Luke 4:24, that of one human being's acceptance of another human being. Sanders sees Luke's use of the midrashic technique, *gezerah shavah*, in the narrative progression of *dektos* in Isaiah 61 to the axiom about *dektos* prophets to the exemplars of Elijah/Elisha as such prophets. Thus, *dektos* emphasizes both the "climactic" ending of the citation of Isaiah 61:2 and also the message that it is "not what man has pleasure in, or accepts, but what is acceptable to God that matters in the Eschaton."²⁷³

The axiom, and *dektos* in it, signal that Jesus' hermeneutic of prophetic critique contradicts the hermeneutic axiom governing the people's interpretation, the axiom Sanders calls "constitutive." Sanders writes,

No prophet, that is, no true prophet of the Elijah, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah type is *dektos* by his own countrymen precisely because his message always must bear in it a divine challenge to Israel's covenantal self-understanding in any generation. In other words, a true prophet of the prophet-martyr tradition *cannot* be *dektos* at home precisely because of his hermeneutics.²⁷⁴

In so far as the people's interpretation of Isaiah marshals scriptural authority in service of their own self-understanding, Jesus' interpretation is an unwelcome judgment and challenge to that very understanding.

²⁷³ Ibid., 98-99.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 99.

5. Robert Tannehill

Robert Tannehill recognizes the significance of *dektos* in the larger context of the two-volume work of Luke-Acts, even though his study focuses primarily on the programmatic sermon in Luke 4.²⁷⁵ He takes special notice of the fact that apart from two verses in Paul's letters, *dektos* only appears in the New Testament in Luke and Acts. He marks not only its occurrence in Acts 10:35, but also the significance of its context there, preceding as it does a sermon of Peter's which contains "clear reminiscences of Luke iv 16-30."²⁷⁶

Tannehill considers the question of the origin of the proverb about prophets in their own country, specifically whether it represents a unit of pre-Lukan tradition. However, the origin of the saying is a less important question for him than how Luke uses it in the larger Nazareth sermon narrative, the whole of which Tannehill considers to be a product of Luke's editorial activity. He sees Luke's preference for *dektos* reflecting concerns that Mark's *atimos* does not. So, while Tannehill acknowledges that *dektos* in the proverb at 4:24 is of a "different character" than in the quotation from Isaiah 61, he judges the replacement of *atimos* with *dektos* to be Luke's intentional play on the last word of that prophecy as read by Jesus.²⁷⁷ He remarks, "The use of the same word points up the relation between sharing in the time of salvation which Jesus announces and the acceptance of Jesus himself. Men can only share in 'the Lord's acceptable year' if they

²⁷⁵ Robert C. Tannehill, "The Mission of Jesus according to Luke IV 16-30," in *Jesus of Nazareth* (ed. Erich Grässer, August Strobel, Robert C. Tannehill, Walther Eltester; BZNW 40; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972).

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 57.

²⁷⁷ He is responding to the question of whether *dektos* represents an independent tradition and judges that GospThom and POxy 1,6 give no knowledge about pre-Lukan history of the verses, that those texts are probably dependent on Luke. Ibid.

accept the one who announces and brings it.”²⁷⁸ Jesus is rejected in Nazareth because he announces that others outside those to whom he is most closely related will be the beneficiaries of his work and of God’s favor. The people’s reactions shift from positive, in having understood themselves to be addressed by God’s favor in the *dektos* year, to negative when Jesus suggests God’s favor will reach beyond them.²⁷⁹

***Dektos* in the Septuagint**

Dektos is a verbal adjective of *dechomai* meaning “acceptable, welcome.”²⁸⁰ It is rarely attested outside the New Testament and the Septuagint, Liddell-Scott listing just three occurrences in non-biblical Greek literature.²⁸¹ There are 31 occurrences in LXX: 9 in Leviticus, 1 in Exodus, 3 in Deuteronomy, 1 in Job, 10 in Proverbs, 5 in Isaiah, and 1 each in Jeremiah and Malachi. It appears three times in Sirach.

Walter Grundmann distinguishes two “senses” of the word *dektos* when used in the LXX.²⁸² The first is what we might call the plain sense of the word as understood in the texts of Leviticus where it is most explicitly cultic and describes animal sacrifices.

For example:

If his gift be a whole-burnt-offering, he shall bring an unblemished male of the herd to the door of the tabernacle of witness, he shall bring it as acceptable/*dekton* before the Lord. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt-offering as a thing acceptable/*dekton* for him, to make atonement for him. (Lev 1:3–4)

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 58.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 62.

²⁸⁰ BDAG, 3rd ed., s.v. “δέχομαι”; other connotations include, “take, receive,” “take in hand,” to put up with, tolerate someone or something,” 221.

²⁸¹ list the occurrences given in Liddell-Scott: first century B.C.E.; fourth century A.D. where it has “normal sense” as verbal adjective “accepted or acceptable” (Bajard, 168)

²⁸² W. Grundmann, “δεκτός,” *TDNT* 2:58-59.

Every man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers abiding among you, who shall kill a calf, or a sheep, or a goat in the camp, or who shall kill it out of the camp, and shall not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of witness, so as to sacrifice it for a whole-burnt-offering or peace-offering to the Lord to be acceptable/*dekton* for a sweet-smelling savour: and whosoever shall slay it without, and shall not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of witness, so as to offer it as a gift to the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord; blood shall be imputed to that man, he has shed blood; that soul shall be cut off from his people. (Lev 17:3–4)

Grundmann identifies the second sense of *dektos* as “messianic,” indicated by its use in several passages of Second-Isaiah.²⁸³ For example, in Isaiah 61:2, *dektos* refers to a particular time—“the acceptable year of the Lord”—describing the time as that “of the divine presence” or a time of “divine election and acceptance.”²⁸⁴ It refers to the expected and anticipated arrival of God’s salvation.

Yet Grundmann nuances the first sense, the cultic sense, in two directions. He suggests a range of meaning, an evolution really, from Leviticus, where *dektos* refers quite explicitly to altar sacrifices, to the Wisdom literature where the cultic idea of sacrifice is “spiritualized,” and it is now the acts and prayers “sacrificed” by the righteous that are acceptable to God rather than the grain and animal offerings.²⁸⁵ He characterizes the use of *dektos* in the New Testament letters of Paul as an extension of this spiritualization of *dektos*.²⁸⁶ In the letter to the Philippians, Paul writes, “I have received full payment, and more; I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable/*dektēn* and pleasing to God” (4:18).²⁸⁷ Here Paul appropriates the language of the whole-burnt offerings as a poetic expression

²⁸³ Ibid., 59.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ These are the only other two occurrences of *dektos* in the New Testament outside Luke-Acts.

²⁸⁷ From Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17 passim: “a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.”

of the value of the monetary gifts and love he has received from the Philippians, an acknowledgement of the sacrifice he understands those gifts to represent. Paul writes to the Romans as “a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable/*prosdektos*, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (15:16). Here again Paul employs cultic language—“priestly service” and “offerings” that are “acceptable”—for its rhetorical power.

Grundmann concludes that the cultic connection “is completely abandoned”²⁸⁸ in Acts 10:35 (“but in every nation anyone who fears [God] and does what is right is acceptable/*dektos* to him”). Here, however, I think Grundmann fails to see how Luke’s description of acceptable/*dektos* Gentiles as having hearts cleansed by faith (Acts 15:9) is anticipated by Peter’s interpretation of his dream of clean and unclean animals—the dream imagery itself re-tethering *dektos* securely to the matrix of the cult. Moreover, the different characterizations of *dektos* as “messianic” and “spiritualized” obscure an important dimension of *dektos* more than they clarify it. They are strong theological readings, and, as such, I do not reject them—but wish, for the moment, to suspend them in deference to a different exegetical insight occasioned by Grundmann’s own very instructive distinction between the cultic and messianic connotations of *dektos*.

Bajard notes this same distinction, and explores the messianic sense in his distinction of the “active” sense of *dektos* in passages like Isaiah 49:8 and 61:2, where it means “favorable” and “salvific.” *Dektos* time is the time when something happens, a

²⁸⁸ Grundmann, *TDNT* 2:59.

time of some action—it is the time of saving activity, the time when God’s will is accomplished.²⁸⁹

Therefore, Bajard works with categories of passive and active rather than those of cultic/spiritualizing and messianic.²⁹⁰ Someone or something can be *dektos* in the sense of receiving a judgment of acceptability and being found to be adequate, or can be *dektos* in the sense of being an expression of divine favor, of God’s good will, or well-received as a source of God’s blessing. It is the latter understanding that governs messianic interpretations, and is the sense with which *dektos* in Second Isaiah should be read. This is captured best in those English translations that render Isaiah 61:2 as “the year of the Lord’s favor” (NRSV, NIV) rather than “the acceptable year of the Lord” (KJV, NKJV). And, to the degree that Luke is intentionally invoking *dektos* from Second Isaiah, it is the sense that should govern our interpretation of it in the Third Gospel and Acts, as well.

However, that being said, this translation completely mutes the echo Luke most certainly intends when *dektos* is otherwise translated by “acceptable” in Jesus’ words about a prophet’s reception in his own country (Luke 4:24) and in Peter’s words about God’s impartiality (Acts 10:35). In these places, too, *dektos* must be differently understood, if not differently translated. “No prophet is *a source of God’s blessing, a source of the Lord’s favor*” is a different reading than “No prophet is *well-received*”; “in every nation anyone who fears [God] and does what is right is *a benefaction to God, a*

²⁸⁹ Bajard, 168.

²⁹⁰ Bajard uses the word “active,” in French, *un sens plus actif*, as a contrast to the etymological sense of *dechomai*, received. He does not use the word “passive”; that is the word I use to differentiate the active sense of *dektos* in the sense that it says something about agency/power/activity vs. the sense more tied to the etymological sense, that of a received judgment of being found worthy.

source of divine blessing” is a different reading than “in every nation anyone who fears [God] and does what is right is *satisfactory* to him.”²⁹¹

In most of the Leviticus texts *dektos* describes the sacrifices acceptable to God: whole burnt offerings of unblemished males of the herd (1:3; 22:19); whole burnt offerings or peace offerings to the Lord acceptable for a sweet smelling savor (17:4). Leviticus 22:19–22 lists blemishes that make a sacrifice unacceptable (*dektos* at v. 20; *eisdekton* at v. 21). Here *dektos* is to be understood according to its first, more passive sense—the sacrifices are worthy of being accepted.

This is how it is to be understood in one of Jeremiah’s oracles of doom, when the prophet declares that Israel’s burnt offerings are no longer *dekta*/acceptable nor are its sacrifices pleasing to God (6:20). So also when Isaiah declares, on behalf of the Lord, that the whole-burnt offerings and sacrifices of the foreigner will be *dektai*/acceptable on the Lord’s altar (56:7).

In LXX Exodus 28:34, *dektos* takes a more active meaning as it describes the plate of pure gold, the signet “Holiness of the Lord/*Hagiasma Kuriou*” (v. 32), on Aaron’s mitre: “And it shall be on the forehead of Aaron; and Aaron shall bear away the sins of their holy things, all that the children of Israel shall sanctify of every gift of their holy things, and [the signet] shall be on the forehead of Aaron continually *dektos*/acceptable for them before the Lord.” Clearly *dektos* is not simply adjectival here, but rather its

²⁹¹ It is perhaps a subtle nuance, a fine distinction. But, in addition to missing the active sense of the Greek *dektos* when translated “acceptable,” there is also a vulnerability to the introduction of the evaluative aspect suggested by the contemporary usage of the English word “acceptable.” One need only think of the opposites of the synonyms for “acceptable” given in the Merriam-Webster dictionary to become aware of the dualistic judgments implied by “acceptable” in modern usage: satisfactory (unsatisfactory); tolerable (intolerable); adequate (inadequate); worthy of being accepted (unworthy of acceptance).

meaning is bending in the active direction as the signet on Aaron's mitre comes to represent sacrifices and itself becomes efficacious in bearing away sin.²⁹²

Bajard characterizes the semantic evolution of *dektos* as *la substantification de l'adjectif* in several texts where it carries a nominal sense nearer to "favor," "benediction," or "blessing."²⁹³ For example, in Deuteronomy, it identifies good and pleasing things: "And to Nephtali he said, Nephtali has the fullness of good things/*plēsmonē dektōn*" (33:23); and, "let the things pleasing to him/*ta dekta tō ophthenti* that dwelt in the bush come on the head of Joseph and on the crown of him who was glorified above his brethren" (33:16). Similarly, in one of Elihu's speeches to Job, Elihu describes the mediating function of an angel who offers a ransom on behalf of the suffering and dying, an angel whose prayer is *dekta*/efficacious in redeeming the soul of the suffering one from Hades (Job 33:26).²⁹⁴

Dektos appears ten times in Proverbs, about which Grundmann comments, "The cultic idea is spiritualised in the Wisdom literature and is finally abandoned in consequence of this development. Not sacrifices, but the acts and prayers of the righteous, are desired by God and acceptable to Him."²⁹⁵ Proverbs 16:6–7 is particularly noteworthy for the density of language shared with the texts of interest in Acts 10 and 15 (italicized): "Everyone that is proud in *heart* is *unclean* before God, and he that unjustly strikes hands with hand shall not be held guiltless. The beginning of a good way is to do

²⁹² Bajard, 168.

²⁹³ Ibid., 169.

²⁹⁴ This passage in Job has another interesting resonance with key language and central themes of this dissertation in that the mediating angel is said to "restore the body [of the suffering one] as fresh plaster on a wall, and he will fill his bones with marrow. And he will make his flesh tender as that of a babe, and he will restore him among men in his full strength," (33:24–25, LXX). That the plastering of walls is the same language used of the treatment of "leprous" buildings in Leviticus (14:42–43) seems noteworthy.

²⁹⁵ Grundmann, *TDNT* 2:59.

justly; and it is more *acceptable* with God than to offer sacrifices. He that seeks the Lord shall find knowledge with *righteousness*: and they that rightly seek him shall find *peace*.” So, too, Proverbs 15:8–9, “The sacrifices of the ungodly are an abomination to the Lord, but the *prayers* of them that walk honestly are *acceptable* with him. The ways of an ungodly man are an abomination to the Lord, but he loves those that follow after *righteousness*.” Grundmann also notes a special case of *dektos* in Proverbs 10:24, “The ungodly is engulfed in destruction; but the desire of the righteous is acceptable/*dekete*. Here *dektos* does not translate the Hebrew *ratson*, but rather “formulates an independent thought” that expresses an ideal of piety with no cultic connotation.²⁹⁶

***Dektos* Amplified in Other Isaianic Texts Quoted or Alluded to by Luke**

There are five places in Isaiah where *dektos* appears, somewhat closely clustered in what is known today as Second and Third Isaiah.²⁹⁷ The following table suggests that *dektos* functions like a keyword or bridge-word, making available a pool of texts to Luke from which he draws some of his most prominent themes, images, and vocabulary. By means of these and other Isaianic texts, Luke incorporates Isaianic themes of salvation—as a temporal occurrence, the signs of its dawning, and with clear markers of those to whom it is extended—using the Isaiah texts in “the most innovative way... as a legitimization of the gentile mission as a consequence of Jesus’ mission.”²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Isaiah 49:8; 56:7; 58:5; 60:7; 61:2. *Katharizō* appears in Isaiah 53:10; 57:14; and 66:17; also in this cluster of texts.

²⁹⁸ Koet, “Isaiah in Luke Acts,” 99.

LXX 49:8	LXX 56:7	LXX 58:5	LXX 60:7	LXX 61:2
In a time of favor / <i>kairō dektō</i> and in a day of salvation / <i>sōtērias</i> I have helped you	I will bring them * to my holy mountain... their whole-burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable . <i>dektai</i> on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer <u>for</u> <u>all nations</u>	I have not chosen this fast, nor such a day for a man to afflict his soul [or] spread under you sackcloth and ashes, neither shall you call this fast acceptable / <i>dektēn</i>	...the flocks of Kedar will be gathered and the rams of Nebaioth will come; and acceptable / <i>dekta</i> sacrifices will be offered on my altar	The spirit of the Lord is upon me ... to declare the acceptable year of the Lord/ <i>eniauton</i> <i>kuriou dektion</i>
49:6 quoted directly at Acts 13:47	56:7b quoted at Luke 19:45	inserted in Isaiah 61 as recorded in Luke 4:18–19		61:2 quoted directly at Luke 4:18–19
v.6 It is a great thing for you to be called my servant, to gather up the tribes of Jacob and Israel; I will give you for the covenant of a race, for a light of the nations , that you will be for salvation / <i>sōtērian</i> to the end of the earth. (Luke 2:32; Acts 1:8)	v. 1 Maintain justice and do what is right for my salvation / <i>sōtērian</i> is near to come, and my mercy to be revealed. (Acts 10:35)		v. Be enlightened Jerusalem, for your light is come v. 3 and the nations [will walk] in your brightness v. 18 your walls will be called salvation / <i>sōtērian</i>	
	* them refers to v. 3: to eunuchs and foreigners / <i>allogeneis</i> v. 4 The Lord will give to eunuchs his holy house and and within my walls an honorable place, better than sons and daughters... v. 6–7 The Lord will bring the foreigners to his holy mountain... (Luke 17:18 the leper is a foreigner ; Acts 8:27 eunuch)		v. 10 And foreigners <i>allogeneis</i> will build your walls (Luke 17:18)	v. 5 And foreigners / <i>allogeneis</i> will come and feed your flocks and strangers/ <i>allophyloi</i> will till your land and be your vinedressers (Acts 10:28; only occurrence in NT)
		v.6 release / <i>aphesei</i> the bruised (oppressed)		v. 1 to proclaim release / <i>aphesin</i> to the captives

There are several words in this pool that do not occur in the New Testament outside of Luke-Acts. These, along with the distribution of the references to these texts across the Gospel and Acts, contribute to the case for unity as well as to the case for Luke's intention and design.

For example, Isaiah 61, 60, and 56 all refer to the foreigners, the *allogenēs*.²⁹⁹ The references in Isaiah 56 are especially interesting in that the words given to the prophet are directed to foreigners and eunuchs who join themselves to God, keep the Sabbath, and hold fast the covenant. This term, *allogenēs*, is significant because the only NT use of the term is in Luke's gospel—in Jesus' identification of the Samaritan cleansed of *lepra* who returns to Jesus to give thanks for his healing: "Was no one found to return and give God praise except this *allogenēs*?" (Luke 17:18). Moreover, there are no other references to eunuchs in the NT outside of Acts 8, in the story of the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip.³⁰⁰ The prophet is to tell the foreigners they will be brought to the holy mountain and into the house of prayer, a place that will be called a house of prayer for all nations/*ethnesin*—a term that refers to Gentiles. In addition, their sacrifices will be accepted on the altar/*esontai dektai* (Isa 56:6–7). The eunuch will be given a place of honor in God's house, a place "better than sons and daughters" (56:5). I am struck here by the connection to Mikeal Parsons' suggestion that the eunuch of Acts 8 represents the culmination of Luke's case for the physiognomically disfigured as representing those now "included" in the eschatological community. In addition to the eunuch, two others Parsons identifies in that group are the bent-over woman and short-statured Zacchaeus.

²⁹⁹ BDAG 3rd ed., s.v. "ἀλλογενής."

³⁰⁰ The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53, one of the five explicit quotations of Isaiah found in Acts. See fn. 52 above for the others.

What is remarkable is how Jesus refers to each of them. Of the woman he says, “And ought not this woman, *a daughter of Abraham* whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?” (Luke 13:16). And of Zacchaeus Jesus says, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a *son of Abraham*,” (Luke 19:9). Those who are identified by conventional physiognomic markers, like the eunuch, are identified as sons and daughters; Isaiah says the Lord wills for the eunuch also to be named.

The Lord also says to Isaiah, “Let not the *allogenēs* who attaches himself to the Lord say, ‘Surely, the Lord will separate me from his people’,” (56:3). The description of the Samaritan leper, now identified as an *allogenēs* falling on his face at Jesus’ feet is a powerful image of one no longer separated from the Lord.

A word closely related in meaning to *allogenēs* is the word *allophylos*, often also translated as foreigner, Gentile, or heathen.³⁰¹ *Allophyloi* is ubiquitous in the LXX (occurring 318 times) but only occurs a single time in the NT, and this at a significant juncture in the Peter-Cornelius story. When Peter first arrives at Cornelius’ house, he addresses those gathered saying, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or visit with *allophylō*; but God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean,” (Acts 10:28). The words contributed by the *dektos* texts of Isaiah establish a connection between Cornelius’ household as *allophyloi* and the Samaritan leper as an *allogenēs*, establishing their places in the restored Jerusalem, on God’s holy mountain, and in God’s house of prayer.

³⁰¹ BDAG, s.v. “αλλόφυλος.”

Isaiah 56 has one other significant connection to the Cornelius episode. The passage begins, “Thus says the Lord, maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is near to come and my mercy to be revealed. Blessed is the man that does these things, and keeps these things.” First to be noted is how this is another Isaiah passage where the theme of God’s salvation is sounded. However, there is also the command to “do what is right”/*kai poiēsate dikaiosynēn*. This is significant as one of the attributes that Peter now recognizes to be what makes one *dektos* before God. He says to those gathered in Cornelius’s household: “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and “does what is right”/*ergazomenos dikaiosynēn* is acceptable/*dektos* to him” (Acts 10:35).

While LXX Isaiah 49:8 is not quoted explicitly by Luke, it is a verse that echoes the same theme as Isaiah 61 with its reference to a time of favor/*kairō dektō* and a day of salvation. A verse closely proximate in the same passage, however, is explicitly quoted in Acts. Isaiah 49:6 in the LXX reads: “And he [the LORD] said to me, ‘It is a great thing that you be called my servant, to establish the tribes of Jacob, and to recover the dispersion of Israel; behold I have given you for the covenant of a race, for a light of the nations, that you should be for salvation to the end of the earth.’” This verse is cited by Luke directly at Acts 13:47, when Paul, addressing “the men of Israel and those fearing God” (v. 16), recounts the activity of God throughout the history of Israel from the time of the exodus from Egypt through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul also announces that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to “the sons of the family of Abraham and those among [them] that fear God” (v.26). Luke reports that many Jews and devout converts begged for Paul and Barnabas to tell these things again

on the next Sabbath (v.42). On the next Sabbath, however, when “almost the whole city” gathers together (suggesting that Gentiles are intended as well), some of the people contradict Paul (out of jealousy, Luke reports) and revile them. Paul and Barnabas respond with the quotation from Isaiah 49:6, explaining why it is that they will turn with the word of God to the Gentiles, “For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have set you to be a light for the nations, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth’,” (v.47).³⁰²

The words of the section from which this verse is drawn, 49:1–6, are spoken to Gentiles directly (v. 1: “Listen to me, you islands, pay attention you nations”); they are presented with a message of salvation that will come to them from the “servant” who will be “a light” for them. As Koet rightly notes, “in Isaiah the Servant’s being a light for the gentiles is not at the expense of his mission towards Israel, but an extension of the task.”³⁰³ This is confirmed by another reference to Isa 49:6 very early in the Gospel, at Luke 2:22–34. When the infant Jesus is presented in the temple, Simeon—“righteous and devout and looking for the consolation of Israel”—sees that consolation in Jesus and announces with words from Isa 49:6 that his eyes have seen God’s salvation (v. 30), “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel” (v. 32).³⁰⁴ From Luke 2 to Acts 1 and 13, the reader of Luke-Acts is to know that God’s plan of salvation in Jesus is two-fold: to enlighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of Israel.³⁰⁵

³⁰² The textual form of the verse in Acts 13:47 is in full verbal agreement with Isaiah 49:6 LXX, except for the omission of “I have set you for a covenant of a race.”

³⁰³ Koet, “Isaiah in Luke-Acts,” 93-94.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Isaiah 42:6.

³⁰⁵ Koet writes of Simeon’s pronouncements, that they “are made in the context of law-abidingness. In this way the author suggest that the gentile mission is law-abiding.” Koet, “Isaiah in Luke-Acts,” 94. See also Blenkinsopp, “Reading Isaiah,” 132-33.

Acts 1:8 also alludes to Isaiah 49:6 when the resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples and tells them that they will be his witnesses “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth”/*heōs eschaotu tēs gēs*. Again here there is verbal agreement with LXX 49:6. Jesus gives some specific geographic coordinates to demonstrate that the witness to him, while beginning in Jerusalem, will extend out beyond the territory of Jewish Judea to Samaria and beyond. However, with Isaiah 49 as a subtext or intertext here, it seems likely that Luke intended the nations, the Gentiles, to be signaled here.

A more detailed explication of Isaiah 61 is included in chapter four where it is considered in the context of Jesus’ programmatic sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30). There is one point to make here, however, in service of understanding how Luke’s use of *dektos* is amplified by the Isaianic texts which supply it. Isaiah 61 is quoted explicitly in Jesus’ reading of the Isaiah scroll in the Nazareth synagogue. However, inserted into the text of Isaiah 61 is one line from another Isaiah text, 58:6 (one of the five *dektos* passages), which reads, “to set free the bruised/oppressed.”³⁰⁶ Scholars draw attention to the word, *aphesis*, meaning “release,” “liberty,” or “deliverance,” and how it functions to link the two texts on the basis of shared theme of poverty.³⁰⁷ In Isaiah 58:1–5, the rebellion of Israel is announced, and God, speaking through the prophet, says that Israel has not fasted in an acceptable/*dektos* way, that the oppression of workers, quarrels and fights, sackcloth and ashes have instead all served Israel’s own interests. An acceptable

³⁰⁶ A line is also omitted from Isaiah 61: “to bind up the broken hearted.”

³⁰⁷ Bart J. Koet, “‘Today This Scripture Has Been Fulfilled in Your Ears’: Jesus’ Explanation of Scripture in Luke 4, 16-30,” in *Five Studies on the Interpretation of Scripture in Luke-Acts* (SNTA 14; ed., Bart J. Koet; Leuven: Peeters, 1989). Koet argues that the texts are combined by midrashic technique of *gezerah shavah* and are so linked by the bridge-word *aphesis* for the exegetical purpose of elucidating the theme of poverty, a theme present in both texts. Koet, “Today This Scripture Has Been Fulfilled,” 29-30.

fast, the one that God chooses, is characterized instead by the loosening of the bonds of injustice, in letting the oppressed go free (v.6), in sharing bread with the hungry, giving a home to the homeless poor, clothing the naked, and not disregarding “the relations of one’s own seed” (v.7).³⁰⁸

While *aphesis* may be the bridge-word linking the two texts, I am suggesting that its primary function is to elucidate the character of a time and a fast that is *dektos* to God—acceptable because it involves caring for those in poverty, to be sure, but not restricted to a poverty concern. Linked by *aphesis*, Isaiah 58 and 61 mutually elucidate what makes something acceptable/*dektos* by describing an acceptable fast and the acceptable year of the Lord. In both cases what is *dektos* to God is characterized by deliverance or release from injustice, captivity, oppression, in addition to poverty, bending *dektos* in the direction of its active sense. What makes the time favorable and the fast favorable are actions that extend God’s blessings.

At the risk of straining this passage beyond what it might reasonably be asked to hold, I suggest that to the degree that the *dektos* fast includes “not disregarding the relations of one’s own seed,” there is a word perhaps, for the eunuchs who have been given the name sons and daughters, and for the *allogēnēs* who now also are brought into the family of Abraham/Israel and are to be recognized as “kin.” As the *lepra*-afflicted were put out of sight, so too were the nations hidden from God’s salvation; Gentiles, overlooked as “kin,” are to be recognized as the “relations of one’s own seed” in the eschatological community.

³⁰⁸ The NRSV translation offers “hiding oneself from one’s kin.”

Luke's rare and unusual uses of *dektos* have led to the discovery of a collection of five texts from Isaiah, texts that we can be fairly sure Luke knew and expected his readers to know. With those five texts as intertexts for his use of the word *dektos*, as well as for the Isaianic citations and allusions that are woven between the Gospel and Acts, the meaning of *dektos* becomes amplified in several ways. The Isaianic texts place *dektos* in the large sweep of the story of God's salvation, intended for Israel and extended to the nations. Jesus stands in the lineage, legacy, and heritage of Israel and Israel's prophets, recognized by others as the fulfillment of the prophecy of a "light for the nations" and announcer himself of the arrival of the *dektos* year of the Lord. His works as reported by Luke in the Gospel reflect the Isaianic character of the Lord's favor in his ministry to the poor, the oppressed, the hungry, the outcast, and all those not regarded as the relations of Israel's seed. Luke's telling of the Jesus story as well as the story of the extension of God's salvation from Jesus/Israel out through the Gentiles is marked by Isaianic language of the *allogēnēs*, the *allophyloi*, and the eunuchs. *Dektos* is amplified and expanded to mean—when applied to the year of the Lord's favor, to the prophets who extend that favor, and to the Gentile Christians—that God's salvation is breaking down the boundaries and moving out with an ever-expanding reach.

CHAPTER 4: *KATHARIZŌ* TEXTS IN LUKE-ACTS

A. Introduction

The thesis of this dissertation is that Luke employs the language of cleansing/*katharizō* in his Gospel in service of its ultimate use in his second volume (Acts) to describe the means by which Gentiles have become an authentic realization of God's saving purposes. To be more precise, Luke's understanding of *katharizō* receives a unique articulation in the multiple references to *lepra* and stories of people who are afflicted with it. A closer study of Luke's use of *katharizō* in those *lepra* stories is the primary focus of this chapter. But it is also necessary to take measure of the wider horizon in which *katharizō* appears in the Third Gospel, in those texts where it is not specifically related to *lepra*. What becomes apparent is that it is the multivalence of *katharizō* and the ambiguity of *lepra* that contribute to the potency of the cleansing of *lepra*-afflicted people as an image for the reach of God's salvation. The realities represented by *lepra* and *katharizō* are boundary collapsing realities. *Lepra* is an ambiguous affliction on the boundary of the human body. In Luke's world it might be an indication of the body's wasting, but it could also be a sign that the body was healing—a sign that the body's *pneuma* was evacuating an illness or disease from the inside out. *Katharizō* is a multivalent word in which the connotations for therapeutic interventions restoring wholeness blur with those connotations for restoring ritual purity. *Lepra* and *katharizō*, as terms and as realities, challenge categories and resist dichotomous thinking, and become Luke's perfect symbol for what happens at the boundary between the human realm and the divine. Luke's interest in the cleansing of the *lepra*-afflicted body is less

about the removal of impurity or the healing of an illness than it is about how a body is established as holy and becomes *dektos* for God. It is less about the efforts of the human being to rightly approach the holy than it is about the holy approaching the human. The realities and the ambiguities of *lepra* and *katharizō* allow Luke to say something about salvation, about how it is only the divine *pneuma* that restores wholeness and holiness to all that is common and unclean.

B. *Katharizō* in the Third Gospel

LUKE 2:22 And when the days of their cleansing/*katharismou* were completed according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

Holiness is suggested by the very first appearance of a form of *katharizō* in the Third Gospel which is found not in a *lepra* story but in the account of the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple: “And when the days of their cleansing/*katharismou* were completed according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every male opening a womb shall be called holy to the Lord’),” (Luke 2:22–23). There are some text critical issues associated with this verse, in particular how “their cleansing” is to be understood since it was only the woman who required purification, or ritual cleansing, after the blood flow of childbirth (Lev 12:2–8). The variant readings, “her purification” and “his [Jesus’] purification,” are generally considered scribal efforts to clarify the ambiguity of the text;

“their cleansing” is the best attested reading.³⁰⁹ It is curious that Luke so accurately notes the details of the required sacrifice (a pair of turtledoves or young pigeons), but is unclear about who exactly was to be purified (Lev 12:4 is clear that it is the mother who requires cleansing). But the ambiguity allows the pairing of the rite of purification and the presentation of Jesus and therefore for a proximal connection between *katharizō* and the consecration to holiness.

Raymond Brown suggests that Luke models this presentation narrative on Hannah’s presentation of Samuel (1 Sam 2:1–10), and so, to that end, includes the rite of purification in order to place Mary, Joseph, and Jesus in Jerusalem for the encounter with Simeon and Anna.³¹⁰ I think this is most certainly correct; Anna’s identification of Jesus as the “redemption of Israel” (2:38) and Simeon’s declaration that Jesus is the Lord’s salvation, “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people, Israel” (2:34), are among the grand themes of the Lukan narrative.

But even more is yielded from the parallel presentations of Samuel and Jesus. The dedication of Samuel to priestly service, according to the intent of the Nazirite vows, is the consecration of the child to serve in the realm of the holy. This is what Luke wants to say about Jesus, too, emphasizing the point with his paraphrase of the scripture citation, “Every male opening a womb *shall be called holy to the Lord*” (2:23; Ex 13:2, 12, 15; italicized words are Luke’s innovation),³¹¹ echoing the words of the angel Gabriel to

³⁰⁹ Raymond E. Brown. *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977). Brown takes this to refer to both parents, while acknowledging the difficulty in there being no Jewish tradition for the purification of the father. Brown, *Birth of Messiah*, 436. See also Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 424.

³¹⁰ Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 450.

³¹¹ Ex 13:2: “Consecrate to me all the firstborn; whatever is first to open the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine.” Ex 13:12: “[y]ou shall set apart to the Lord all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your livestock that are males shall be the Lord’s. But every firstborn donkey you

Mary in the announcement of Jesus' birth: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (1:35).³¹²

Luke's pairing of the purification and presentation of Jesus allows *katharizō* to communicate something about holiness. The cleansing required for Mary's parturient impurity is prescribed in the same collection of Leviticus texts as are the requirements for the cleansing of *lepra* of skin, fabric, and houses, and the impurity of genital emissions. The literature on these laws is extensive and the questions and scholarly debates around biblical purity are well beyond the scope of this work. However, three aspects of the literature are relevant and can be assumed. First, purity and impurity in the book of Leviticus are not about physical pollutions (i.e. clean/dirty), nor do they address the state of the soul (i.e. sin, guilt).³¹³ The connotation of impurity represented in Leviticus 11–15 is cultic, meaning neither literal nor entirely metaphorical, but connected to the human body and the human body's relation to the holy.³¹⁴

shall redeem with a sheep; if you do not redeem it you must break its neck. Every firstborn male among your children you shall redeem." Ex 13:15–16: "When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord every male that first opens the womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.' It shall serve as a sign on your hand and as an emblem on your forehead that by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt."

³¹² Fitzmyer says, "Luke plays on the title he gave to Jesus in the announcement to Mary." Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 426.

³¹³ This is not to say that the question of moral purity and impurity is not in the picture; just that it is not the purity which Leviticus addresses.

³¹⁴ As Poorthuis and Schwartz write, "Leviticus envisages precisely a 'religion of the body.'" Poorthuis and Schwartz, *Purity*, 5. For more on the purity codes of Leviticus 11–15 in particular, see Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999); Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and its Place in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999); Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* (SJLA; Leiden: Brill, 1973); John F. A. Sawyer, ed., *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas* (JSOTSup 227; Sheffield, Sheffield Academic, 1996); and of course, the introductions in the standard commentaries on Leviticus.

LUKE 7:22 And when the men had come to him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, “Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?” And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed/*katharizontai*, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.”

In the final analysis, the *katharizō* and *lepra* texts will be considered sequentially, in the order in which they appear in the Gospel and Acts because that is how a reader or hearer would encounter them.³¹⁵ It is the way that the artistry of Luke’s construction can most clearly be seen; it is the way the cumulative effect of the expanding meanings of *katharizō* and *lepra* can be experienced. However, because Luke 7:18–23 is quite likely the passage that governs the imagery and theology of the rest of the related passages, it is necessary to examine it first.

Bart Koet and others suggest that Luke derives the quotation of Isaiah 61 in the Nazareth sermon from 7:22.³¹⁶ Luke then uses Isaiah 61 to shape the narrative of Jesus’ programmatic sermon at the synagogue in Nazareth, which functions as a prophecy,

³¹⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson writes, “The overall structure of Luke’s story is critical to his purpose...telling the story of how God has fulfilled his promises ‘in order’ (*kathexēs*; RSV “orderly account,” Luke 1:3). ‘In order’ is an especially revealing term. The sequence of the story is significant in Luke-Acts to a remarkable degree. How one thing follows after another seems almost as important as the things themselves. This is because the ordered form of memory itself has a convincing quality. If, therefore, the story of Luke-Acts is the means by which his literary theological goals are met, then the story line is equally important for the appropriation of Luke-Acts by theological reflection. The story is the voice of this witness; the story the author tells is itself, as story, a datum of theology.” Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Nashville, Abingdon: 1996), 77.

³¹⁶ Koet maintains that Luke likely derived the Isaiah quotation in Luke 4:18–19 from Luke 7:22, and thus Luke 7:22 is the “source” for the quotation in Luke 4. However, for the readers, Luke 4:18–19 comes first and therefore it becomes the “source” of the allusion in Luke 7. Koet, “Isaiah in Luke-Acts,” 85. For an excellent summary, see C. J. Schreck, “The Nazareth Pericope,” in *L’Évangile de Luc. The Gospel of Luke* (BETL 32; 2nd, enlarged ed.; ed. F. Neirynck; Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 399–471; here 414–17. Marshall argues that both passages can be regarded as original, that it is not necessary that one must be derived from the other. Marshall, *Luke*, 288. Fitzmyer understands Luke 7:22 to be an echo of the quotation of Isa 61:1. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 664.

subsequently fulfilled in the words and deeds of Jesus throughout chapters 5 and 6.

Those words and deeds are summarized in Luke 7:21 after which 7:22 is the pronouncement, in words now appearing to echo Isaiah 61, of promises fulfilled.³¹⁷ But the connection between Luke 7:22, 4:18, and Isaiah 61 is much deeper than the level of their verbal links. When John the Baptist sends his disciples to Jesus with the question, “Are you he who is to come?” he is asking whether Jesus is the messiah.³¹⁸ Jesus’ response, a catena of signs by which John will know the answer to his question, articulates one shape of messianic expectation in the first century.

Luke 7:22 has a parallel in Matthew 11:5, and so reflects the pre-Synoptic tradition Q source.³¹⁹ Four of the six signs in Q7:22 come from Isaiah 35:5 and 61:1.

Isaiah 35:3–6 contributes the opening the eyes of the blind, the unstopping the ears of the deaf, and the lame walking (“leaping” in LXX Isa 35:6).³²⁰ While the element of the blind

³¹⁷ Marshall notes that chapter 7 of the Gospel marks the turn from Jesus teaching the disciples to “further detail regarding the self-revelation of Jesus to the people.” The central section of the chapter, 7:18–35, forms a commentary on surrounding incidents, making plain that the deeds of Jesus are to be seen as signs of presence of the coming one—what God had promised to do in the last days was being fulfilled. Marshall writes; “characteristic of this era was the gracious intervention of God in the life of his people, answering their needs both physical and spiritual.” Marshall, *Luke*, 276.

³¹⁸ *ho erchomenos* is read as a title, and refers to John’s statement in 3:16, “but he who is mightier than I is coming”/*erchetai*, the same as verb as in LXX Mal 3:1, and alludes to the coming of the Lord’s messenger before the great Day of the Lord (LXX Mal 4:5). Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 472, 666.

³¹⁹ Tabor and Wise maintain that since Luke 7:22 and its parallel in Matt 11:5–6 are nearly identical, minimal redaction is indicated on the part of both writers and therefore their common source clearly reflects a pre-Synoptic formula for identifying the Messiah. James D. Tabor and Michael O. Wise, “4Q521 ‘On Resurrection’ and the Synoptic Gospel Tradition: A Preliminary Study,” *JSP* 10 (1992):149-62; here 159.

³²⁰ Parsons, writing on the healing of the lame man in Acts 3–4, also notes the intertextual echoes between Luke 7:22 and Isa 35:6, and says, “The image is of the restoration of Israel as part of the vision of God as cosmic king. As in Isaiah, the lame man in Acts symbolizes the potential restoration of Israel (cf. Acts 1:6) as part of the establishment of God’s cosmic reign, inaugurated by Jesus and continued through the ministry of the apostles and Paul. In this light it is difficult to resist seeing the more than forty years of the lame man’s illness as symbolic of the exiled and restored Israel.” Parsons, *Body and Character*, 118. Dennis Hamm also argues for the symbolic/metaphorical nature of these individuals and how they are paralleled in paradigmatic ways by new groups in Acts. Dennis Hamm, “Acts 3:1-10: The Healing of the Temple Beggar as Lucan Theology,” in *Bib* 67 (1986): 305-19. *Contra* Roth who denies the use of paradigmatic healing stories in Acts, seeing the healings of the Gospel as having a Christological function that is no longer necessary in Acts. Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor*, 220-1.

receiving sight is thematically connected to Isaiah 35:5, the phrasing, *typhloi anablepousin*, “the blind receive their sight,” is a direct quotation from LXX Isaiah 61:1b and is quoted as such in Luke 4:18.³²¹ The element of good news being preached to the poor is most certainly the contribution of Isaiah 61:1, rewritten so that the pattern of the sayings—noun (recipients)-verb (marker of restoration)—is preserved. The two remaining elements, however, “lepers are cleansed” and “the dead are raised,” have no basis in either of the Isaiah texts.³²²

The Q source has a very close parallel in the Dead Sea Scroll text known as 4Q521, or “On Resurrection.”³²³ Both draw heavily from Psalm 146 and Isaiah 61, but do so in service of describing signs of the messiah and the arrival of the messianic age.³²⁴ Along with speaking of the release of captives, restoring the sight of the blind, and the preaching of glad tidings to the poor, 4Q521 also mentions the resurrection of the dead. Moreover, 4Q521 makes explicit mention of a messiah who will do these things.³²⁵ So, 4Q521 and Q7:22 are closely related, linguistically and thematically, by shared biblical references (Isaiah 61:1 and 35:5–6, and Psalm 146:7–8), yet remarkably, not one of those

³²¹ So also does the blind man in Luke 18:43 “receive sight”/*aneblepsen*. This phrase is not present in the MT or any manuscript of Isaiah at Qumran. G. J. Brooke, “Shared Intertextual Interpretations in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament,” in *Biblical Perspectives: Early Use and Interpretation of the Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceeding of the First International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 12-14 May, 1996* (STDJ 28; ed., M. E. Stone and E.G. Chazon; Leiden, Brill, 1998) 35-57, here 80.

³²² Other possible allusions include Isaiah 29:18: “And in that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, and they that are in darkness, and they that are in the mist; the eyes of the blind shall see”; Isa 35:5, 6: “Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall hear. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart...”; also in Isaiah 35 are other key terms used elsewhere by Luke: references to the fainthearted (v. 3), clean and unclean ways and people. Isaiah 26:19: “The dead shall rise, and they that are in the tombs shall be raised...”; also Psalm 146:7-8: “The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.”

³²³ Collins, “The Works of the Messiah” 110-12, 162; George J. Brooke, “Luke-Acts and the Qumran Scrolls: The Case of MMT,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 158-76; Tabor and Wise, “4Q521,” 150, 158-62.

³²⁴ Collins, 99.

³²⁵ Ibid., 98.

biblical passages makes any mention of the raising of the dead. The raising of the dead thus becomes “a most interesting linking parallel between 4Q521 and the early Christian Q source”—the resurrection of the dead being a marker of the messianic age and of the messiah himself in both texts.³²⁶ John Collins concludes: “There is good reason to think that the actions described in Isaiah 61, with the addition of the raising of the dead, were already viewed as ‘works of the messiah’ in some Jewish circles before the career of Jesus.”³²⁷

Collins goes further, however, to say that rather than a royal messiah who was expected to restore the kingdom of Israel, these “works” are indicative of a prophetic messiah of the Elijah type, an anointed prophet and agent of the works of God.³²⁸ These works characterize a prophetic messianic identity by attributing to the messiah the capacity to raise the dead, heretofore a power that was God’s alone. This capacity is not present in Psalm 146 or Isaiah 61, but is suggested by the Elijah/Elisha narratives.³²⁹ Tabor and Wise suggest that these messianic works probably reflect a belief in Jesus and John as having fulfilled the mission of eschatological Elijah/Elisha figures (who raise the

³²⁶ Tabor and Wise, “4Q521,” 160-61.

³²⁷ Collins, 112

³²⁸ Ibid., 112. Collins reads 4Q521 as concerning the return of Elijah as the “messiah” whom heaven and earth obey and in whose time the sick are healed and the dead are raised. The expectation of Elijah as the forerunner to the messiah is not attested in Jewish texts before rise of Christianity and the notion of his return as the precursor of the messiah may well have been a Christian development. Ibid. 104-6. See also, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “More about Elijah Coming First,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 295-6.

³²⁹ Collins argues that since these works are typical of what was attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, 4Q521 strengthens the case that the epithet “anointed” or “messiah” could have been attached to him because of his words and deeds. Ibid., 110. He also claims that the parallel in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke supports a view of Jesus as a prophetic rather than a royal messiah. Ibid., 99. But see Talbert who argues for Luke’s presentation of a Davidic Messiah in chapters 1–3 of the Gospel. Charles Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts in Its Mediterranean Milieu* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 65-66.

dead and heal a leper), a belief that merged with the prophecy of Mal 4:5–6 in which Elijah was predicted to appear before the day of the Lord.³³⁰

Luke's Jesus, the author of the Q source, and the writer at Qumran all draw on the same biblical texts to describe the eschatological age, and based on 4Q521, also share the same technical list of criteria of the messiah. It seems clear that Luke cast his gospel in terms of the common elements contained in Q7:22 and 4Q521; their themes run through his gospel.³³¹ Evidence of the influence includes: the prominence given to Isaiah 61:1–2b, a focus of both texts; the “remarkable concatenation” of Isaiah 61 with Elijah's raising of the dead and Elisha's cleansing of a leper in Luke 4:16–30; the story of the cleansing of ten lepers, unique to Luke; Jesus raising the dead son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11–19), also unique to Luke, and placed immediately before the Q saying; and Jesus straightening those “bent double” (4Q521, line 8) with yet another story unique to his gospel, an account of a women oppressed by Satan and released through healing (13:11–16).³³² For Luke, these activities are nothing less than the signs of both the messiah and the messianic age.³³³

³³⁰ Tabor and Wise, “4Q521,” 160.

³³¹ This is not to say that Luke was directly influenced by 4Q521 or any other specific writings that are part of the Dead Sea Scrolls collection, only to say that he is influenced by a set of ideas, present at the time, which also found expression in the writings at Qumran.

³³² Ibid., 161–2. Luke introduces the passage in which John's disciples carry the Baptist's question about Jesus' identity to him with this sentence: “The disciples of John told him of all these things,” (7:18). What are “all these things?” Immediately preceding this passage is the story of the raising of the widow's son at Nain (7:11–17) and the healing of the centurion's servant (7:1–10). The first is clearly patterned on Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (LXX 3 Kgs 17:17–24). Noteworthy is this report on the crowd's reaction: “Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet as has arisen among us!’ and ‘God has visited his people!’” (Luke 7:16). The story of the centurion foreshadows Acts 10:35, where the centurion, Cornelius, like the centurion here, was highly regarded by the Jewish nation.

³³³ Tabor and Wise, “4Q521,” 162. The works or signs reflect an understanding of Jesus and John fulfilling the mission of the eschatological Elijah/Elisha figures (who raise the dead and heal a leper) together with the prophecy of Mal 4:5–6 predicting that such a figure would appear in the last days. Ibid., 160.

LUKE 4:27 And many lepers were in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet, and not one of them was cleansed/*ekatharisthē* except Naaman the Syrian.

As suggested earlier, it is the messianic expectation of 7:22, eschatological and prophetic in character, which governs Luke's portrayal of Jesus and Jesus' life and works. The pronouncement made by Jesus to the disciples of John the Baptist in 7:22 is foreshadowed in Luke 4 with Jesus' programmatic sermon at the Nazareth synagogue; the sermon, set at the head of Jesus' ministry, establishes the purposes, motifs, and interpretive keys for the rest of Luke-Acts. Here the elements of the messianic expectation—the prophesy of Isaiah, the criteria for identifying the messiah, and the particular signs of the raising of the dead and the cleansing of lepers—are all present in a narrative in which Jesus reads Isaiah 61, announces its fulfillment, and recalls for his hearers the works of Elijah and Elisha. And then Jesus performs those very signs: as the narrative progresses from the Nazareth sermon to the reply to the Baptist, Jesus cleanses one afflicted with *lepra*, heals a paralytic, raises a widow's dead son, and gives sight to the blind. Luke's purposes are made plain: in bridging the span between chapter 4 and chapter 7 with stories of dead being raised and *lepra* cleansed by prophets, he establishes the prophetic character of Jesus' program, of Jesus' identity as messiah, and of the messianic age.

That Luke sees Jesus as the fulfillment of the expectation expressed in Isaiah 61 and Luke 7:22 is evident in the precisely articulated material spanning the two texts. But

most significant is Luke's move to emphasize that the age of which Jesus is messiah is Isaiah's *dektos* year of the Lord. The works of the messiah in 7:22 become signs of the *dektos* year of the Lord through the material spanning chapters 4 and 7 of his gospel. Jesus announces the *dektos* year of the Lord. In response to his hearers' anticipation of the fulfillment, Jesus delivers an axiom about how prophets are not *dektos* in their own countries, noteworthy for the change in terminology from its parallels in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. To sharpen the point, Jesus gives examples of two of Israel's greatest prophets who extended God's favor beyond Israel to Zarephath and Syria—Elijah, who raises the dead, and Elisha, who cleanses the *lepra*-afflicted. Jesus is saying that the prophet of the *dektos* year will do what Elijah and Elisha did, will do what Isaiah prophesied. So Jesus not only announces the arrival of the *dektos* age prophesied by Isaiah, but does the works that establish him as its messiah.³³⁴

Much has been said about Luke 4:16–30 as a “rejection” pericope—and it is true that Jesus is rejected by the end of it.³³⁵ Jesus' word that God's favor will extend beyond Israel evokes the rejection, and in this way Luke is able to account for the existence of a Gentile church with a Jewish messiah. But that is not all Luke is up to here. Although Elijah and Elisha extend God's favor to people outside of Israel, they themselves are not

³³⁴ Jeffrey Siker considers the Elijah/Elisha stories recounted here as key to understanding the Isaiah reading because they demonstrate that Gentile inclusion and Gentile mission actually find their start at the beginning of Jesus' mission to the Jews. I am not sanguine that inclusion and mission are the proper terminology from Luke's perspective. I think Luke is working toward another end here, one that dissolves boundaries rather than accounts for how a group moved from one side of a boundary to another. Siker's reading of Elijah and Elisha is not incorrect, but fails to account for 7:22 and the prophetic character of the messianic expectation it expresses. Siker also fails to take into account the function of *dektos* for Luke. Jeffrey Siker, “First to the Gentiles,” *JBL* 111(1992): 73-90; here 74.

³³⁵ Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 529; Hill, “The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth,” 161-80; Sanders, “From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4,” 61-69; Tannehill, “The Mission of Jesus,” 51-62. The tone of the Matthean and Markan parallels conveyed by prophets being “without honor” in their home country often influences the reading of Luke's *dektos*, such that it is read as “not accepted,” that is, a synonym for “rejected.”

rejected for doing so. Therefore, the functional analogy between Jesus and Elijah/Elisha does not work on a shared feature of rejection. This is where it becomes clear that *dektos* is intended to carry an active sense. The point of the proverb is not that prophets are not accepted and therefore rejected, in their own countries; that point is that prophets will not be conduits of God's favor only in their own countries.

The details of the Elijah/Elisha stories in LXX 4 Kings provide relevant intertextual connections for understanding Luke's emphasis on *katharizō* and *lepra*. The story of the cleansing of Naaman's *lepra* in LXX 4 Kings 5 is an important intertext for illuminating Luke's purposes with *katharizō* and *lepra*. First, cleansing appears to refer to the restoration of unhealthy skin to a healthy condition. Naaman's *lepra*-afflicted skin was restored to that like "the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean" (LXX 4 Kings 5:14). There is no apparent social stigma; he is portrayed as a person of considerable stature in the king's army. There are no clues that he bears it as a divine punishment. It does not appear as a condition considered contagious or even particularly severe; Naaman's leadership in the army and his family life is unimpeded by the affliction. As he is not an Israelite, there are no cultic implications, no isolation requirements, no sacrifices to be made. That he is healed from a distance is best read as a marker of the power of God and Elisha to heal *lepra*, a power not localized to the touch or even the presence of the prophet.³³⁶

There are indications in this story that the healing/cleansing of *lepra* was a power understood to be held only by God or by God's prophet. The king of Israel receives

³³⁶ It is possible that in the separation Elisha keeps from Naaman, and in giving the directions for Naaman's cleansing from a distance, there is a vestige of a concern for ritual defilement. After Naaman's flesh has been restored, he stands before Elisha, in Elisha's presence. Also to be noted here is the similarity to the healing of the centurion's servant of a "deathly illness" from a distance (Luke 7:7–10).

Naaman who comes to him bearing a letter of introduction and gifts from Naaman's lord, the king of Syria. The letter reads, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy," (LXX 4 Kgs 5:6). The king of Israel responds by rending his garments and saying, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?" (5:7). In suggesting that he do what would obviously be outside his power to do, the king of Israel assumes the king of Syria "seeks an occasion with him" (5:7; NRSV "picking a quarrel"). The response of the king of Israel implies that he understands the cleansing of *lepra* as a sign of God's and only God's power. This is later confirmed when Elisha refuses the gifts sent from the king of Syria, saying, "As the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing" (5:16): it is God who cleansed Naaman, not Elisha.

But perhaps the most important aspect of the king of Israel's lament is that he characterizes the power to cure *lepra* as the power to give death or life. Since there are no other signs in the story that Naaman's *lepra* is a life-threatening condition, that the king of Israel's belief that the power to cure it is in fact the power to give life or death is significant. The salient feature of *lepra* here is its appearance of death or wasting, in spite of the fact that Naaman's life did not appear to be substantially compromised by the affliction. The curing of *lepra* gives life; the failure to cure it is to give death.

Finally, in being cleansed of his *lepra*, Naaman comes to know several things that suggest this story influences Luke's telling of the cleansing of the ten *leproi*. First, Naaman comes to know there is no God in all the earth except in Israel (5:15), a God whose favor, nevertheless, is not limited to those of Israel (although Naaman takes the earth of Israel, presumably as a way to carry the power of God back with him to Syria

[5:17]). Second, it is the power to cleanse *lepra*, in particular, that evokes Naaman's confession that there is no other God in all the earth. So the story is, in this way, about the power of this particular work of God to convert Naaman to the monotheistic worship of God and to elicit Naaman's pledge of devotion in becoming a servant of Elisha.

At the story's end, Elisha's servant Gehazi swindles Naaman of the treasures brought for the king and then lies about having done so. Gehazi is punished by Elisha, receiving Naaman's *lepra*. Elisha announces, "Therefore the *lepra* of Naaman shall cling to you, and to your descendants forever" (LXX 4 Kgs 5:27). While there are no clues that Naaman was afflicted with *lepra* for punitive reasons, Elisha's solemn declaration and the multi-general consequence make it clear that the *lepra* is given to Gehazi as a punishment. God's prophet has the power to afflict as well as to cleanse, and giving punishment appears as of a piece with giving death.

LUKE 5:13 And he stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying, "I will, be clean"/*katharisthēti*. And immediately the *lepra* left him.

In between chapters 4 and 7 of Luke's gospel is another episode where *katharizō* is prominent. It the first account of Jesus healing someone afflicted with *lepra* in this Gospel (Luke 5:12–16). Jesus touches a man "full of" *lepra*, commands him to be clean, and sends him to the priests for evidentiary purposes and to make offerings for his cleansing.

The story follows closely the form of the healing narrative or miracle story and is paired with another healing story immediately following it, Jesus' healing of a

paralytic.³³⁷ Fitzmyer characterizes it as a story that “concentrates on the miracle that Jesus performs on behalf of a poor social outcast in of a Palestinian Jewish town,” one that is only “loosely connected with the development of [Luke’s] Gospel.”³³⁸ Johnson judges that with this story Luke heightens the impression of Jesus as that of the Hellenistic thaumaturge.³³⁹ Marshall acknowledges the possibility of connections between this episode, the Elisha parallel, and the fulfillment of the promises of the messianic age, but directs his attention primarily toward the question of the episode’s historicity and on the miraculous nature of the way those blessings are brought by Jesus.³⁴⁰

However, because of the other references to *katharizō* that have preceded this one in Luke’s gospel, i.e., Jesus’ consecration in the Temple and the Elisha/Naaman story as a sign of the *dektos* year of the Lord, this story, received from the Markan tradition, serves other purposes in addition to establishing Jesus’ power to heal. In cleansing the man’s *lepra*, Jesus is established as not just any healer, but as a prophet-healer, in the manner of Elisha. Because of the previous announcement of the *dektos* year, and the description of how that time would be recognized vis-à-vis Elisha, this work is, first and foremost, a sign of the eschatological new age. It is also Luke’s first narration of a “work of the

³³⁷ Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 572-6; Marshall, *Luke*, 199-201.

³³⁸ Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 572.

³³⁹ Johnson, *Luke*, 95. So also Pesch, who says the story is a traditional miracle story with no identifiable historical features, and can be accounted for in terms of a belief in Jesus as the eschatological prophet and the desire to present him in terms of a Hellenistic thaumaturge superior to Elisha. Pesch, *Taten*, 78-80, cited in Marshall, *Luke*, 207.

³⁴⁰ Marshall gives much attention to the question of the historicity of this account, concluding “there is good reason to believe that this is a historical example of the kind of healing which Jesus was known to have performed.” Marshall, *Luke*, 207-8.

messiah,” his first move to establish Jesus’ messianic identity in a way congruent with the prophetic character of the messianic expectation of 7:22.³⁴¹

The man “full of *lepra*” falls on his face³⁴² before Jesus and begs, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean/*me katharisai*.”³⁴³ Jesus stretches out his hand, touches the man, and says, “I am willing. *Be made clean*.” Luke reports, “And immediately the leprosy left him.”

There are several significant differences to be noted from the synoptic parallels of this passage. First, Luke omits the words “was cleansed,” in conjunction with “the *lepra* left him,” which in the parallels indicates either the man (Mark) or the *lepra* (Matt) was cleansed. Despite the cultic markers of priests and offerings that Moses commanded, *ekatharisthē*, as used by Matthew and Mark, more surely refers to the therapeutic intervention or miracle that results in the *lepra* condition being healed, i.e., removed.

³⁴¹ Bovon concurs, “the earliest community understood the healings, particularly those of lepers, as the whole work of the Messiah and a legitimating sign of him (cf. 7:22). Since the leper, after the healing, is immediately reintegrated into the people of God, the Christians also recognized their own soteriological existence in this story.” Bovon suggests this is true also of the lame man in 5:17–22, and sought the functional setting of these stories perhaps in the baptismal instruction of the earliest community. Bovon continues, “It is out of the question that Luke failed to recognize this christological feature and this ecclesiological component.” François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* (ed. Helmut Koester; trans. Christine M. Thomas; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 174.

³⁴² Not “kneeling”/*gonupetōn* at his feet as in Mark 1:40. Fitzmyer says the phrase, “falling on his face,” is a phrase borrowed from the LXX, and is a gesture of reverence without any necessary religious connotation.” Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 574.

³⁴³ Fitzmyer interprets the reference to Jesus’ will while also drawing an interesting parallel to the Elisha story, apparently on the basis of Elijah “willing” Naaman clean over the distance: “He insinuates that Jesus can cure him by an act of his will alone. Recall the OT story of the cure of the leper Naaman by ‘the prophet of God in Samaria’ (2Kgs 5:3 LXX),” Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 574.

Matthew 8:3

And immediately

his leprosy

*was cleansed/**ekatharisthē***Mark 1:42**

And immediately

the leprosy

left him and he

*was cleansed/**ekatharisthē***Luke 5:13**

And immediately

the leprosy

left him.

This seems especially clear in Matthew where the word “cleansed” is the primary indicator of the change in the *lepra* condition. Mark describes the change by saying the *lepra* left him and, with the conjunctive *kai*, concludes then that the man was cleansed.

The structure of Mark’s report has symmetry to it, a rhythmic pattern on forms of *katharizein*:

If you want, you can make me clean. (1:40)

I will, be clean. (1:41)

and the leprosy left him and he was made clean. (1:42)

Perhaps Luke’s omission of the second clause, “and he was made clean” is in service of a cleaner style, eliminating a redundancy if the two statements—that the leprosy left the man and that he was cleansed—both referred to the healing of the condition.³⁴⁴ But I am more inclined to think that Luke intends to disrupt Mark’s symmetry. By saying only that “the leprosy left him,” Luke distinguishes the words used as indicators of the restoration of the man’s skin from the words used as evidence of the ritual implications of the restoration. Moreover, Luke does not explain for the reader what happens as a result of the *lepra* leaving the man as Mark does. Instead there is a gap, leaving the reader to

³⁴⁴ Neither Marshall, Fitzmyer, nor Johnson comment on it.

determine—and interpret—what has happened. Would Luke’s readers “see” the man as “clean” in the way that the priests will, in the way the Samaritan leper sees himself, or the way that Peter will see Cornelius?

The terms drawn from Leviticus 13 and 14, *lepra*, *katharizein*, the priests, and the reference to “what Moses commanded” situates this story in the cultic/ritual realm (Lev 13:3, 10, 13; 14:1–32).³⁴⁵ The reference to Moses’ commands for an examination of the leprous person by a priest, the offering of birds, the sprinkling of the blood of the bird and water, and then the pronouncement of cleanness (Lev 14:3–7) makes plain the distinction between cleansing as the cure of *lepra* and cleansing of the *lepra*-afflicted person in the ritual pronouncement sense. The pronouncement of “clean” could be made over a person who still had signs of *lepra* on the skin. That is to say, *lepra* could persist on the skin (or the house), but as long as there was no indication of movement or spread, the person (or building) could still be declared “clean.” Therefore, when Luke says of the afflicted man, “immediately the *lepra* left him,” he is reporting that Jesus has made a complete therapeutic intervention which will result in the newly non-leprous skin to be pronounced ritually clean. The words and touch of Jesus occasion the disappearance of the *lepra*, which, as disappeared, allows those present, and the reader, to presume that a pronouncement of “clean” will follow from the priests. Jesus gives the imperative to be

³⁴⁵ Jesus says to the man, “Go show yourself to the priest...as a proof to them/*autois*,” (5:14; Mark 1:44). Johnson comments on the Greek word rendered “proof,” saying, “*martyrion* could mean as a testimony to the priests that the man was clean, or as a witness against whoever objected to Jesus as miracle-worker. Neither option is entirely satisfactory.” Johnson, *Luke*, 92. Marshall writes: “Ultimately the cure of the man and its attestation by the priest was to serve ‘as a testimony to them,’ i.e., to be evidence to the people of the messianic act of God in Jesus.” Marshall, *Luke*, 210. Fitzmyer calls it “a difficult phrase” and asks whether the *autois* refers to “the priests” or to “the people,” and whether *martyrion* means “proof” that the *lepra* is gone, or “testimony” that Jesus’ power has cured the condition. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 575. Fitzmyer also notes how the command suggests Jesus’ compliance with the Mosaic law, and that while being derived from Mark, it suits Luke’s emphasis on the continuity of the Christian community with its Mosaic roots: “This emerges more clearly in Acts, but there is a trace of it here.” Ibid., 572.

clean and simultaneously heals/removes the leprous condition, immediately qualifying the person for the priestly declaration of ceremonial cleanness. Cleansing as healing and cleansing as pronouncement are neither synonymous, nor can they be distinguished; they are juxtaposed—two sides of the lexical coin.³⁴⁶

The cleansing language, however, remains connected to the priests' pronouncement. Luke is careful to parse the terminology in this episode in service of establishing Jesus' fidelity to the Mosaic Law. Jesus neither challenges the practices of sacrifices and offerings, nor the priests, nor the purity system itself. In so doing, Luke establishes this religious system as that which sets the norms and confirms human reality. At this point in the narrative progression, Jesus is established as the representative of the divine reality, the messianic age, the *dektos* year of the Lord, but also one who recognizes the authority that sets the cultic norms relevant for human reality and for integration into the (ritual) community.³⁴⁷

Another significant difference in Luke's narrative from its Markan parallel is in how the afflicted person is named or identified. Where Mark refers to him as a leper, Luke identifies him as a man "full of *lepra*." The phrase "full of"/*plērēs* is frequently used by Luke,³⁴⁸ and while it may reflect his "fondness" for the term, his stylistic

³⁴⁶ Bovon wrestles with the historical/symbolic and medical/socio-religious dichotomies posed in particular by the ambiguity of *lepra* and *katharizō*, saying, "It is up for discussion whether Luke represents Jewish background of 5:12–16 in purely historical way or whether he is letting something of new Christian interpretation be heard through these Jewish expressions. On one hand, he alters practically nothing of the Markan account, but on the other hand does not understand this story of Jesus in purely historical sense. In association with 4:27, the healing of the leper is component of Jesus' messianic mission. As a physical miracle and a social reintegration simultaneously, it is, like the miraculous catch of fish in 5:1–11, a sign of the divine economy and incorporation into the church." Bovon, *Luke 1*, 176.

³⁴⁷ Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 177.

³⁴⁸ Luke 4:1/Jesus—full of the holy spirit; 5:12/full of *lepra*; 6:3/choosing the seven—full of the spirit and of wisdom; 6:5/Stephen—full of faith and of the holy spirit; 6:8/Stephen—full of grace and power; Acts 7:55/Stephen—full of the holy spirit; 9:36/Tabitha—full of good works and acts of charity; 11:24/Barnabas—full of the holy spirit and of faith; 13:10/Elymas—full of deceit and villainy; 19:28/silversmiths—full of rage),

preference, it may also suggest that Luke sees *lepra* as more than an affliction.³⁴⁹ Jesus, now “full of the holy spirit” (4:1) meets the man who is “full of *lepra*.” He touches the *lepra*-afflicted man and speaks a word, carried on his breath.³⁵⁰ Both allow Jesus’ *pneuma* to move into the afflicted one through the *poroi* of skin and nose/mouth. The extension of Jesus’ *pneuma hagiou* corrects the imbalance of humours, such that the *lepra* leaves, or evacuates, the *lepra*-afflicted one. From a medical perspective, this description would cohere, would be plausible to the ancient mind—it is a holy *pneuma* that can effect this kind of change in the *lepra*-afflicted body.³⁵¹

The opposition of clean and unclean in the purity matrix Luke establishes sets the stage for the point Luke is really pursuing. When Jesus, full of the *pneuma hagiou*, meets the man full of *lepra*, the divine reality is introduced to the human reality, the power of

³⁴⁹ Marshall counters the suggestion that Luke uses *plērēs* to heighten the miracle of the leper’s healing by saying, “The phrase is due rather to Luke’s fondness for *plērēs* (4:1; Acts, 8x) coupled with the influence of the LXX (2 Kgs 7:15; Is 1:15),” Marshall, *Luke*, 208. It seems to me that Luke’s fondness for *plērēs*, given the many ways he uses it with reference to being “full of” the spirit, power, faith, and grace, is related to how *plērēs* works in service of his intention to demonstrate the effects of the power of holy *pneuma* in people who are “full of” that spirit and power. Here in Luke 5:12, it suggests a confrontation between the one *plērēs lepras* and the one *plērēs pneumatōs hagiou* (4:1).

Clinton Wahlen thinks *plērēs lepras* is consistent with Luke’s preference to avoid characterizing people by their disease and writes, “Luke eschews the one-word labels for people which are so prevalent in Matthew and Mark, speaking instead of ‘a man who was paralyzed’ (5:18, 24), a ‘mother’ who ‘was a widow’ (7:12), ‘ten leprous men, (17:12), ‘one who was blind’ (18:35); ‘the man from whom demons had gone,’ (8:35). I am inclined to agree with Wahlen, in part because the descriptions are consistent with Weissenrieder’s observation that Luke makes the healing of illness conditions plausible for his readers. Luke does not diminish the miraculous nature of Jesus’ healings and restorations, but reports the conditions in a way that would be coherent with an understanding of the restoration of balance by the presence of a healing *pneuma*. The healed conditions, death, *lepra*, blindness, paralysis, would still be considered great and miraculous healings, as healings that can only be accomplished through the divine or holy *pneuma*, and therefore say something important about Jesus’ *pneuma*. But more importantly, I think Wahlen intuitively senses something about Luke’s inclination to say that a person is not to be identified as his disease or her condition. This is consistent with Luke’s overall message of God’s impartiality and supported by the notion that Luke was trying to subvert physiognomic markers. It seems clearly intended by the symbolism of Peter’s dream of clean and unclean animals. Clinton Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits in the Synoptic Gospels* (WUNT 185; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 150.

³⁵⁰ Bovon interprets Jesus’ reaching forth his hand in the soteriological category of the LXX, where the Lord often stretches out his hand to his people and the help becomes concrete in his touching. Ibid. Fitzmyer is restrained in interpreting the healing power of Jesus’ touch, stating, “Luke does not use here the technical Greek verb for imposing hands.” Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 574.

³⁵¹ Johnson, *Luke*, 92.

the holy moves into the realm of human authority represented by the *lepra* and the priests' authority to pronounce on it.³⁵²

In this episode, the restoration of afflicted skin is associated with cleansing of ritual impurity, as indicated by Jesus' instructions to go to the priest. It is paired with the next episode in which the restoration of the paralytic's mobility is associated with the forgiveness of sins (Luke 5:17–26).³⁵³ The two appear linked by form as miracle stories/healing narratives, but the primary connection between the two is that they are the first “works of the messiah” (cf. 7:22: lepers are cleansed; the lame walk) performed by Jesus in the span between Luke 4:16 and 7:22. With each story, Luke begins to expand the significance of these works, and of the new age. The cleansing of the *lepra*-afflicted moves into the realm of holiness; the healing of the paralytic expands to mean the release from sin.

LUKE 11:37 Now you Pharisees cleanse/*katharizete* the outside of the dish, but the inside of you is full of robbery and wickedness. You fools! Did not the one making the outside also make the inside? But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you. (11:37–41)

The fifth occurrence of forms of *katharizō* appears in the context of a controversy with a Pharisee over Jesus' failure to observe the practice of washing hands before a

³⁵² Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 177–78.

³⁵³ Marshall says the healing of the leper is called a cleansing following OT terminology and hence the church will have seen this as a symbol of spiritual cleansing from sin which can be effected by Jesus. This is implied in the narrative that follows this episode. I am not so sure that Luke's readers would have been reading the cleansing in a spiritual sense (if that is who Marshall means by the “church”). That conclusion forecloses a reading informed by all the knowledge about *lepra*, healing, the *pneuma*, etc. that Luke's readers might have brought to this text. Luke is making a clear distinction between the two narratives: the point of the story about the *lepra*-afflicted man is a point about ritual cleansing and status before God; the second, the story of the paralytic, is about the release from sins. The messiah has many works to do. Marshall, *Luke*, 207

meal. This passage is one of only two in Luke's gospel where a form of *katharizō* is not associated with *lepra*, the other being the purification at the temple in Luke 2. It is significant in the progression of passages because it is disconnected from the realm of healing miracles. Luke shifts its use from referring to the cleansing of the external presentation of *lepra* on the skin to a referring to the cleansing of the interior and exterior dimensions of cups. The context of the ritual washing of hands and utensils before meals secures it plainly to the purity realm, although it is the washing of hands before the meal that is the contested point between Jesus and the Pharisee.³⁵⁴ The ritual washing of the human body serves as the source field in Jesus' analogy and, via the shared correspondence of the act of cleaning surfaces, is mapped to cups and dishes. The power of the analogy is thereby in how it opens up the cleansing of both exterior and interior surfaces. Jesus uses the relationship between the inner and outer surfaces of the cup and dish to speak analogously to the relationship of the inner and outer dimensions of the human person; Luke modifies his construct of "cleansing" to include an interior dimension.³⁵⁵

The cup becomes symbolic of the human person: the cup's exterior surface representing visible, external behaviors; the cup's interior representing dispositions or intentions. It is at this point that the inner/outer dichotomy could give way to a moralistic interpretation of what constitutes the "inner," but a measure of restraint is called for. To be sure, Jesus critiques Pharisees and lawyers on the incongruity he perceives between

³⁵⁴ Luke uses the term *baptizō* for the ritual "dipping" that effected the transition from the unclean to the clean. Jesus did not perform this ritual washing upon entering the Pharisee's house, initiating the controversy. Johnson, *Luke*, 188.

³⁵⁵ Johnson: "The shift from the surface of vessels to the interior of persons is not entirely without strain." Johnson, *Luke*, 188.

their inner intentions and their practices, externally presented and publically witnessed.³⁵⁶

While the sayings about cleansing the outside of the cup and dish work in service of this critique, Luke is doing something more than reconstructing “cleansing” to refer to moral purity.³⁵⁷ He is, in addition, locating cleansing in God’s realm, and highlighting practices which advance God’s favor/*dektos*.

Two features of this passage unique to Luke’s presentation clarify this point. First, Jesus asks of the Pharisee, “Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?” This reference to the vessels’ maker shifts the discussion of washed bodies and cleansed cups from the human realm into God’s realm. Fitzmyer writes that God himself, whom Luke elsewhere calls “the knower of hearts,” would see the greed and wickedness within.³⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that one of the references to God as a “knower of hearts” is in Acts 15:8, in the same passage as the last occurrence of *katharizō* in Luke-Acts, in Peter’s final appeal to the Jerusalem Council for the release of Gentile believers from strict obedience to the Law of Moses.³⁵⁹ Peter says this: “And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8–9).

³⁵⁶ Not all the practices themselves are disparaged or rejected. Jesus does not suggest that tithing is to be rejected, for example (Luke 11:42).

³⁵⁷ Johnson notes how Jesus’ polemic against the Pharisees follows the conventions of ancient rhetoric between Hellenistic philosophical schools as well as between different parties in Judaism, rhetoric characterized by slander, accusations of “false philosophers,” and the opponents’ interest in “quibbles and trifles rather than the weightier matters of virtue.” Johnson, *Luke*, 192. Consistent with a central theme of Johnson’s interpretation of Luke, he reads the possessions language (i.e., “give that which is inside as alms”) as symbolic of internal responses. I think Johnson rightly emphasizes the response here, over and against a judgment about moral impurity, especially as he then also reads *krisis* in v. 42 as “doing justice,” noting that in the rabbinic tradition, “doing justice” was equivalent to sharing possessions. Ibid., 189–90.

³⁵⁸ Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 945. Johnson: “The point is that persons are responsible to God ‘the maker’ for their internal dispositions as much as for outward appearance.” Johnson, *Luke*, 189. So, too, Marshall, who says this clause, unique to Luke, “stresses that the inside is as important as the outside. The sense is: ‘Did not he (the potter or God) who made the outside also make the inside (and therefore you must cleanse both)?” Marshall, *Luke*, 495.

³⁵⁹ This phrase, “knower of hearts,” appears also in Acts 1:24 and 16:15.

Second, only Luke's Jesus gives this instruction, "But give for alms those things which are within"—literally, "the inner things of you"—and then and behold, everything is clean for you," (Luke 11:41).³⁶⁰ This verse, without parallel in Matthew or Mark, reflects Luke's emphasis on the right use of material possessions, particularly as indicated by his emphasis on alms and almsgiving.³⁶¹ Unlike Matthew's Jesus, Luke's Jesus does not give instructions about the kind of cleansing or washing that can be performed by human hands. Luke's Jesus has a different idea about how things are made clean. Matthew affirms the value of practices and disciplines for creating an inner purity from which congruent outward practices will issue such that the Pharisees' external appearance will also be clean: "first cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside may also be clean" (Matt 23:26). This instruction to cleanse the inside of the cup is given directly to the Pharisees themselves, such that the work (i.e., practices and disciplines) of this cleansing remains in the hands—and agency—of the Pharisees.

Luke's Jesus refrains from using cleansing/washing language, and instead gives instructions for giving alms. In so doing, Jesus deemphasizes the role of human agency in the cleansing while emphasizing how all things, inner and outer, are under God's realm and authority.³⁶² Fitzmyer paraphrases it nicely in this way: "Give away the contents of the cup or platter as alms to the poor, and thus cleanliness will be achieved in every way; greed and wickedness will not only be washed out of one's life, but even that status

³⁶⁰ Marshall provides the range of interpretations: "so far as what is inside is concerned, give alms," "give alms from the heart," "Give the contents (of a literal vessel) as alms." Marshall, *Luke*, 495.

³⁶¹ For more on Luke's emphasis on the right use of material possessions, wealth, and money, see Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 247-51; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (SBLDS 39; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977).

³⁶² Outside the purity realm, this is made plain in the healing of the paralytic where the restoration of paralyzed limbs and the forgiveness of sins are under God's authority: "'But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins'—he said to the man who was paralyzed—'I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home,'" (Luke 5:24).

before God that ritual cleanness was to achieved will be gained—‘all will be clean for you.’”³⁶³ A compelling aspect of Fitzmyer’s paraphrase is how it clarifies the coherence of Luke’s description with ancient medical thought about *lepra* as an evacuation of another condition of ill health or disease (here understood as greed and wickedness) and how the movement is from the inside of the body outward.

The direction to give “for alms those things that are within” is also unique to the Third Gospel and foreshadows the piety of Cornelius who is visited by an angel of God because his “prayers and alms had ascended as a memorial before God” (Acts 10:4), behaviors that occasion Peter’s observation that God shows no partiality and any one, in any nation, who fears God and does what is right is acceptable/*dektos* to him (Acts 10:35).

One further comparison with the parallel passage in Matthew (23:25–26) is instructive.³⁶⁴ The passages are similar insofar as both Matthew and Luke present Jesus as calling the Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers to inner disciplines and dispositions that are congruent with outer practices and public presentations. In both Gospels, Jesus critiques the Pharisees’ focus on practices that they believe make them appear clean, judging such cleansing to have had little effect on the purity of their interiors. Jesus’ first words to the Pharisees are the same in each Gospel: “[Y]ou cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish (Matt: plate) but inside you are full of extortion and wickedness (Matt: rapacity)”

³⁶³ Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 945. Note also the coherence with medical thought about *lepra*, that as it represents an evacuation of another condition or disease, the movement is from the inside of the body outward, where it appears on the surface/skin.

³⁶⁴ I am focusing here on the Matthean parallels to the cup/dish analogy and the series of “woes” that follow. The contexts for these are different in each Gospel. For a full discussion of sources, ordering of various source materials, etc., see Marshall, *Luke*, 490-93.

(Luke 11:39; Matt 23:25).³⁶⁵ However, the character or substance of the incongruity is differently nuanced by each gospel writer.

Matthew's Jesus elaborates the cup and dish analogy with additional inner/outer comparisons. For several "outer" descriptions, Matthew includes an "inner description," and then follows with an explanation to clarify the analogy and make plain his point.

Two examples will suffice:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful [outer description], but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness [inner description]. Explanation: So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. (Matt 23:27–28)

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous [outer description], saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets' [description of inner justification]. Explanation: Thus you witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. (Matt 23:29–31)

By contrast, Luke's version is more spare, describing the outer practice or presentation, but with little additional ornamentation and little or no commentary on the interiors of the Pharisees or lawyers: "Woe to you, for you are like unmarked graves which are not seen, and men walk over them without knowing it"; "Woe to you! for you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses and consent to the deeds of your fathers." Luke's Jesus is critiquing the behaviors and practices of the Pharisees and lawyers, but not with Matthew's intent to highlight that

³⁶⁵ Or, perhaps, as Marshall observes, Jesus is "suggesting that the Pharisaic ritual of *only* washing the outside of a man is as foolish as only washing the exterior of a dirty vessel. The vessel may be full of unclean things." Marshall, *Luke*, 494.

which we see in Matthew's use of the words hypocrites and hypocrisy (23:23, 25, 27, 28).

There is a passage from Mark's Gospel which shares substantial amounts of material with Matthew, but which Luke has largely omitted. In the Markan material, it is Jesus' disciples who eat with unwashed hands and Jesus is called upon by Pharisees and scribes to make an account for why his disciples do not live "according to the tradition of the elders but eat with hands defiled" (Mark 7:5). Mark's Jesus attacks the hypocrisy of Pharisees who give lip-service to God but whose hearts are far off, quoting the words of Isaiah 29:13 to condemn their confusion and hypocrisy in claiming a divine authority for precepts of human construction. On the question of defilement, Jesus says, "Do you not see that whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and so passes on?" And, "What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery... All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man" (Mark 7:18–23). There is an editorial comment included parenthetically at 7:19: "Thus he declared all foods clean."

Luke must omit this verse, as well as most of the Markan material, for several reasons. First, it is not Luke's purpose at this point to be leveling a critique of hypocrisy at the scribes and Pharisees, and even the Isaiah quotation is of a different character than the Isaiah texts Luke most frequently draws upon. Second, Jesus' declaration about clean foods brings to a premature conclusion the development of Luke's motif of divine agency and prerogative with respect to cleansing. Third, it relates the language of cleansing to foods, which detracts from Luke's focus on relating cleansing to people. It also

undermines the power of the symbolism of the clean/unclean animals in Peter's vision later in Acts 10. Finally, it is clear that Mark has a more pessimistic view of the human heart in his identification of those things coming from the human heart as being defiling. Luke's focus on the issue of alms, symbolic of generous internal response, has the power to purify from the inside out.

LUKE 17:14

And as entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they happened to be made clean/*ekatharisthēsen*. (17:12–14)

The final Gospel occurrence of the *katharizō* terminology is found in the account of Jesus' encounter with ten *lepra*-afflicted men (Luke 17:11–19); it is also the final mention in Luke-Acts of *lepra*. Jesus passes the *leproi* on his way to Jerusalem, passing through the territory between Samaria and Galilee. The *leproi* call out to him for mercy and Jesus responds with the instruction to go and show themselves to the priests. Luke writes, "And as they went, they happened to be made clean/*ekatharisthēsan*. But one of them, seeing that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks" (v. 14–16). This one that returns is a Samaritan, a foreigner, an *allogenēs*, to whom Jesus says, "Rise and go your way; your faith has saved you" (v. 19).

Luke, having first connected non-Israelites, *lepra*, and *katharizō* in the story of Elisha and Naaman in the passage that established the "program" for Jesus' ministry, now begins to bring that ministry to its conclusion with a story so strikingly similar that some

scholars have suggested Luke composed this story on the pattern of the Elisha narrative.³⁶⁶ This seems quite likely. However, this story is also very similar, in both form and content, to that of the single *lepra*-afflicted man in Luke 5. The similarities demand a comparative reading; contrasts between the two bring into relief the special emphases Luke has been developing.

Luke 17:11–19 can be divided in two sections or scenes (11–14; 15–19).³⁶⁷ The first scene most clearly resembles Luke 5:12–16, with the form of a healing narrative and sharing the same cultic features (the command to go to the priests; the appearance of *ekatharisthēsan*) that combine and contribute to the ambiguity of *katharizō* Luke is exploiting. The second scene focuses on the response of one of the ten *lepra*-afflicted men who returns to Jesus with loud cries of thanks and praise. There are features here consonant with the Elisha/Naaman story, including a non-Israelite who is afflicted, communication between the afflicted and the man of God taking place over a distance, the return of the cleansed one with expressions of praise and thanksgiving, and finally, words of dismissal given by the man of God. However, Luke is not simply linking the two scenes as if he were stringing together two beads. Instead, the story from Luke 5 is

³⁶⁶ W. Bruners. Die Reinigung der zehn Aussätzigen und die Heilung des Samariters, Lu 17, 11-19: Ein Beitrag zur lukanischen Interpretation der Reinigung von Aussätzigen (FB 23; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977). Cited in D. Hamm, “What the Samaritan Leper Sees: The Narrative Christology of Luke 17:11-19,” CBQ 56 (1994): 273-87, here 274, fn. 2. Hamm summarizes the elements common to both narratives: the location (Samaria), an initial communication over a distance, a return, a praising of God on the part of the one healed, thanksgiving, emphasis on the healed person as a foreigner, and, finally, a dismissal. Hamm, “What the Samaritan Leper Sees,” 274.

³⁶⁷ Fitzmyer describes the two parts as a miracle-story and a pronouncement, with the miracle subservient to the pronouncement “which contrasts gratitude and ingratitude, Jews with a Samaritan, and the sight of faith with the miracle itself.” Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1150. Weissenrieder sees the division but rejects the interpretation, suggesting instead that the two parts come together in a central theme, the ability to see the divine reality, to observe the kingdom of God. Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 184-5.

embedded in the Elisha/Naaman story and in this way the features of each blend so that the new story is more than the sum of those two parts.


Jesus' command to the ten *leproi* that they go and show themselves to the priests recalls the same command to the one full of *lepra* in Luke 5, and highlights the ritually unclean dimension of the men's condition. But unlike the story in chapter 5, here there is no verbal command to "be clean." In this way Luke alters the form of the healing narrative. There is no specific word, act, or gesture that occasions the healing—no touch or command—nor is there is any description of how the healing occurs (i.e., "the leprosy left him" as in Luke 5:13). According to the text, the afflicted simply are cleansed/*ekatharisthēsan* as they walk away.

Luke also alters the healing-cleansing sequence. According to Leviticus, there could be no pronouncement of "clean" without a preceding cure (or verifiable arrest of the development) of the symptoms. But Luke changes the order of the relevant terms. The *leproi* are not first healed and then sent off to be pronounced clean by the priests; rather they are cleansed as they walk away. It is then, after the *leproi* are said to be cleansed, that the Samaritan sees that he too "was healed."³⁶⁸ Healing and cleansing could be read as synonyms, absent of any ritual connotation.³⁶⁹ Or, the *leproi* could have

³⁶⁸ Several manuscripts read "cleansed" rather than "healed": D 892. 1424 and a few Latin and Syriac versions.

³⁶⁹ This is precisely how Marshall reads it: "The use of *ioamai* demonstrates the meaning of *katharizō* in v. 14." Marshall, *Luke*, 651. Again, making a decision one way or the other about whether *katharizō* means healing or purifying is a false choice; it is precisely because it can mean both, one implying/assuming/presuming the other in the cultic realm that it has such potency for Luke. In addition, as noted above, Luke's interest in *lepra* is less a purity concern than the necessary vehicle for establishing the opposition between divine and human realms of authority, and for being the best physical symbol for the movement of the *pneuma hagiou* and the establishment of holiness. It is not hard for me to imagine that there is some intention or irony in Luke's reversal of the healing-cleansing sequence: that whereas healing of *lepra* would lead to a pronouncement of ritual cleanness according to the Torah, here the status change implied by cultic cleanness reverses the sequence, that in being cleansed/purified the Samaritan recognizes the healing that Jesus is soon to call "salvation."

been cleansed/healed so completely that they most certainly will be pronounced cleansed/ritually pure. Luke may be suggesting that the Samaritan sees it just this way—the *lepra* has left him and so he sees for himself that he will qualify for a positive priestly pronouncement.

LUKE 5:12-16	LUKE 17:11-17	LXX 4 Kings 5:1-19
	Jesus and the <i>lepra</i> -afflicted are between Samaria and Galilee	
Jesus is approached by a man “full of <i>lepra</i> ”	Jesus is met by ten <i>leproi</i> who stood at a distance	Naaman goes from Syria to the King of Israel, in search of the prophet who will heal his <i>lepra</i> .
When he saw Jesus, he fell on his face begging him, “If you will, you can make me clean.”	The ten <i>leproi</i> call out to Jesus, “Have mercy on us!”	
Jesus say, “I will; be clean.”		
Jesus tells the man, “Go show yourself and make the offerings Moses commanded for your cleansing.”	Jesus tells the men, “Go show yourselves to the priests.”	Elisha sends message from inside the house to Naaman standing at entrance, “Go wash in the Jordan.”
The <i>lepra</i> left him. 	As they were going, they were cleansed.	His flesh was returned to him like that of young boy.
	One of them turned back ... and fell on his face at Jesus’ feet; praises God with a loud voice, gives Jesus thanks.	Naaman returns to the man of God and stands before Elisha. “I know there is no other God; please accept a present.”
	Now he was a Samaritan. Jesus says, “Was no one found to return except this foreigner?”	
	Jesus says to the Samaritan, “Rise and go your way.	Elisha says to Naaman, “Go in peace.”

But this is where the ambiguity of *lepra* and *katharizō* begins to give way to something of stunning clarity. Although Luke uses both healing and cleansing language seemingly interchangeably, what is actually happening here is that the distinction between the two is collapsing. J. D. M. Derret says that Luke understands cleansing as a ritual act of “eschatological and social, not medical significance,” and that in altering the healing-cleansing sequence, Luke shows how Jesus could ritually cleanse the afflicted men “with the actual, physical healing being merely incidental.”³⁷⁰ I do not think this is quite right. Derret has simply transferred the authority to declare a person clean from the priests to Jesus, an interpretation constrained by a medical/religious polarity. This dichotomy collapses in Jesus’ statement to the Samaritan, “your faith has saved you.”³⁷¹ Luke does not see cleansing as a ritual act of eschatological significance in the way Derret describes; it is an act of eschatological significance only because it is no longer a ritual act performed in the human realm. Luke has reconstructed the term cleansing to refer to what happens when one is in the presence of God, breathing in the *pneuma hagiou*, having God’s holiness extend into one’s commonness and uncleanness. It is an experience of eschatological significance, an experience—in all its dimensions and in all its fullness—of God’s salvation.³⁷²

³⁷⁰ J. D. M. Derret. “Gratitude and the Ten Lepers.” *DownRev* 113 (1995): 81.

³⁷¹ BDAG 3d ed., s.v. “σώζω.” “Saved” can mean: 1) to preserve or rescue from natural dangers and afflictions (e.g., death, disease, situations of mortal danger); 2) to save or preserve from eternal death, and in this way, often, in the Christian literature, is an act of God or Christ. Luke 17:19 is often translated, “your faith has made you well,” which is not an inaccurate translation, given that *sōzō* can refer to the rescue from disease. However, given Luke’s emphasis on salvation and Christ as *sōtēr*, the emphasis on *sōtērion* in the Isaiah texts that shape Luke’s theology, and Luke’s persistent exploitation of terms that admit of multiple meanings, I think it is best to read *sōzō* as “your faith has saved you” here. The *lepra*-afflicted man has experienced salvation in all ways—in the healing of his affliction, in being healed/cleansed by Jesus’ *pneuma hagiou*, in his recognition of Jesus as God’s agent of wholeness and holiness.

³⁷² Bovon characterized all the Gospel occurrences of *katharizō* as carrying “its Jewish meaning.” He characterizes it in Acts 10:15, 11:9 and 15:9 as carrying a Christian, spiritualized meaning. Thus, he

At least three aspects of this story suggest this is so: the features of the Samaritan's response to Jesus; Luke's identification of the Samaritan as an *allogenēs*, a foreigner; the words of Jesus' dismissal, "your faith has saved you." In addition there are several features of the story which draw in threads of other Lukan motifs, not related specifically to *lepra* or *katharizō*, but which open up the eschatological context which they now serve.

First, the Samaritan's response. Dennis Hamm suggests that since all ten *leproi* were healed and all could be expected to have "seen" that they were, Luke is implying that the Samaritan leper "saw" something in a way that the others did not. Hamm concludes that what the Samaritan leper saw was the presence of the reign of God in the person and action of Jesus.³⁷³ Hamm arrives at that conclusion by way of his study of Samaritans and their worship spaces. But his conclusion is not far removed from the one drawn here. Jesus' response to the disciples of John the Baptist at 7:22, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard...lepers are cleansed," is about the recognition of a sign or work of the messiah. The Samaritan, in seeing himself healed, recognizes a work of the messiah. This is clearly indicated by his response: he returns to Jesus, glorifying God, thanking Jesus, and throwing himself at Jesus' feet. Luke's description of the Samaritan's behavior has several markers of it as an act of worship, including his prone posture and the choice of verb, *eucharisteō*, for his giving thanks to Jesus.

distinguishes the two meanings as a Jewish one understood ritually by Luke, and a Christian one understood personally. Bovon concludes, "It is important that at this stage of the Christian faith, its identity can be expressed in a new understanding of its Jewish mother tongue." I do not disagree with his conclusion, but as this dissertation demonstrates, the distinction is not to be so sharply drawn between *katharizō* in the Gospel and Acts.

³⁷³ Hamm, "What the Samaritan Leper Sees," 286.

He “fell on his face” implies a posture of worship, and is the same phrase describing how the *lepra*-afflicted man in Galilee responded at the sight of Jesus (Luke 5:12).³⁷⁴ Being at someone’s feet is a way of acknowledging authority, and is the gesture made by the Gerasene demoniac (Luke 8:35), by Jairus when he pleads for the life of his dying daughter (8:41), by Mary who attends to Jesus’ teaching while her sister Martha is busy with serving (10:39), and by Cornelius before Peter in recognition that Peter is a disciple of Jesus whose presence in Cornelius’s home has been divinely orchestrated (Acts 10:26).

The word *eucharisteō* means to give, render, or return thanks.³⁷⁵ It occurs five times in Luke-Acts (Luke 18:11; 22:17; 22:19; Acts 27:35; 28:15), and each time is in the context of a prayer of thanksgiving being offered to God. Hamm concludes on the basis of this pattern of usage that Luke intends something more than the gratitude of one human being to another. As there is no other use of *eucharisteō* in the New Testament in which someone other than God is receiving the thanksgiving, it is entirely plausible that Luke intends the connotation of worship in the thanksgiving of the healed Samaritan leper.³⁷⁶

Finally, the Samaritan returns to Jesus, “glorifying God”/*doxazōn ton theon* (v. 15). This is precisely the response made by the shepherds after hearing the angelic announcement of the birth of the messiah; the paralytic, when healed, goes home glorifying God (5:25); those who witness the paralytic’s healing glorify God (5:26); the

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 284. The leper in Luke 5:12 similarly “fell on his face” as he pleaded for Jesus to make him clean. As noted in footnote 33 above, Fitzmyer reads respect for authority in the term, but no religious connotation.

³⁷⁵ BAGD, 3d. ed., s.v. “ευχαριστέω.”

³⁷⁶ Hamm, “What the Samaritan Leper Sees,” 284.

bystanders who witness the raising of the son of the widow of Nain also respond by glorifying God (7:16); it is the response of the bent woman made straight (13:13) and of the blind man of Jericho when he receives his sight (18:43).³⁷⁷ It appears three times in Acts, most significantly for this study at Acts 11:18, where it is the response of the brethren in Jerusalem to Peter's report of the Holy Spirit falling on Cornelius's household. Peter asks how he could withstand God when God had given the same gift to the Gentiles as had been given to the Jewish believers, and his brothers, first silenced, then glorify God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life."

All three aspects of the response—falling prostrate, giving thanks, and glorifying God—signal the Samaritan's recognition that beyond healing, beyond cleansing, he has found himself in the presence of the holy.

The second aspect of this text that suggests Luke's use of *katharizō* as the means of salvation is the description of the Samaritan leper as a foreigner, an *allogenēs*. By making the *lepra*-afflicted one an *allogenēs*, Luke transforms the meaning of cleansing beyond ritual purity (the *allogenēs*/Gentiles were not unclean by nature; also remember Naaman) and the healing of an affliction (although physical restoration is implied in the works of the messiah and the multivalence of *sōzō/sōtēria*/salvation). In using the term *allogenēs*, Luke secures the literary identification of Gentiles with *leproi*. This is the only occurrence of *allogenēs* in the whole of the New Testament, about which Hamm makes this important observation:

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 283. It is worth noting that all of the Gospel occurrences, save the announcement of the birth of the messiah, are in response to healings that are specifically given as the works of the messiah in Luke 7:22.

A *hapax* in the NT, and found nowhere outside of Jewish literature, *allogenēs* is the very word used in the famous inscriptions on the balustrade around the temple in Jerusalem marking the line between the Court of the Gentiles and the sacred area accessible only to Jews. The inscriptions, in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, forbade access to any *allogenēs* under pain of death...for Jesus to refer to this Samaritan at his feet as “this *allogenēs*” is to suggest that this person, who belongs to the group included among those officially excluded from the worship space in Jerusalem has, ironically, found the right place to glorify God.³⁷⁸

I think Hamm’s conclusion is correct, but for reasons that go further than the appearance of *allogenēs* on the temple balustrade. While it is possible that Luke knew about the inscription on the balustrade, I am completely confident that he knew the prophecies of Isaiah, where the term *allogenēs* is found in the Isaianic texts that include the word *dektos* and are either alluded to or quoted directly throughout Luke-Acts.

Therefore, when Jesus refers to the Samaritan leper as an *allogenēs*, Luke is gathering up all that he said and intended and signaled about *katharizō* and *lepra*, and is locating it in the body of the *allogenēs*, a body to whom God has spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

I will give to the *allogenēs* that attach themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants and handmaids; and as for all that keep my sabbaths from profaning them and that take hold of my covenant; I will bring them to my holy mountain, and gladden them in my house of prayer: their whole-burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be *dektos* on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations. (LXX Isa 56:6–7).

With this story of a *lepra*-afflicted *allogenēs*, Luke associates the concept of cleansing with salvation. To the Samaritan’s response of worship, praise, and thanksgiving, Jesus responds by saying “Rise up and go; your faith has saved you”/*hē*

³⁷⁸ Hamm, “What the Samaritan Leper Sees,” 284-5.

pistis sou sesōken se (Luke 17:19). Luke reports Jesus saying this just three other times in the Gospel: to the “sinful” woman who anoints Jesus’ feet with oil (7:50), to the woman who touches the fringe of his garment and is healed from a hemorrhage (8:48), and to the blind man healed at the roadside outside Jericho (18:42). All four initiate their contact with Jesus, and either by virtue of his forgiveness, his healing, or by the imperative to be cleansed, each is transformed in the encounter with him.

Jesus tells the Samaritan to “Rise up and go.” It is ambiguous at this point whether the Samaritan is being told again to go to the priest for the cleansing rites and offerings or if he is simply being told to go on his way. Luke has exploited the ambiguity of cleansing through these texts to include the internal and the external, and in so doing has made it salvific—holding together both the healing and cultic dimensions. He has established that the pronouncement of cleanness is a right and authority held only by God. It is plausible then that Luke concludes that the evidentiary function performed by the priests for the first leper cleansed in chapter 5 has now been assumed by this leper who “sees” for himself the transforming power of God in his life through the person of Jesus. Since, in this story, all ten lepers experienced physical healing, the experience of the tenth leper that leads to his salvation must have something to do with his recognition that the presence of Jesus is the place to acknowledge the work of God.³⁷⁹ The meaning of salvation must be understood here as larger than deliverance from the disease of leprosy since all ten received that. The tenth leper “sees” his cleansing and recognizes his deliverance from alienation and death and this is the salvation offered by Jesus.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 285.

C. Luke 9:1-6: A Place Where Luke Has Omitted the Cleansing of *Lepra*

Before considering the *katharizō* passages in sequence in order to track how Luke works to reconstruct the *lepra* illness and to expand the meaning of *katharizō* throughout his writings, there is one other passage that must be remarked upon briefly. This passage has parallels in the other Synoptic Gospels, but where Mark and Matthew include references to *lepra* and *katharizō* Luke has omitted or suppressed them. Since Luke has a demonstrated interest in these words, places where it appears he may have left them out are worthy of some attention.

The synoptic parallels of the commissioning of the twelve disciples suggest an interesting redaction on Luke's part.

Matthew 10:1, 8

And he called to him
his twelve disciples

and gave them authority

over unclean spirits,
to cast them out,

and to heal every disease
and every infirmity.

[Jesus charged them]
Heal the sick, raise the
dead, cleanse lepers, cast
out demons.

Mark 6:7

And he called to him
the twelve,

and began to send them out
two by two,

and gave them authority

over the unclean spirits

Luke 9:1–2

And he called
the twelve together

and gave them power and
authority

over all demons

and to heal diseases,

and he sent them out to
preach the kingdom of God

and to heal.

Matthew specifically writes that Jesus commanded the disciples to “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse/*katharizete* the lepers, and cast out demons” (Matt 10:8).

According to Mark, Jesus gave the disciples “authority over the unclean spirits” (Mark 6:7). Luke similarly reports Jesus as giving the disciples “power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases” and that “he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal” (Luke 9:1–2). All three gospel writers record the power to deal with demons or unclean spirits; only Matthew and Luke specify the power to heal. Luke’s attention to healing and to “demons” rather than “unclean spirits” alongside the absence of any mention at all of the *lepra*-afflicted eliminates all references to cleansing. These omissions reinforce the distinction between healing and cleansing, and confirm that, according to Luke, the power to cleanse was not given to the disciples.³⁸⁰

D. A Sequential Reading of the *Katharizō* Passages in the Third Gospel

Earlier in chapter three, I introduced Robert Tannehill’s ideas about analyzing the iterative connections in the *lepra* and *katharizō* passages of Luke’s gospel. The salient feature of those connections is repetition: the repetition of words and phrases suggesting an author’s conscious intent to make the connections transparent and to encourage

³⁸⁰ There is an interesting midrash on the idea of God’s “entitlement” to pronounce on leprosy. “We have learnt in the Mishnah: One is entitled to examine for [and pronounce on] any leprosy except his own leprosy. R. Meir said: Not even for the leprosy of one’s relatives. Who then examined the leprosy of Miriam? If you should say it was Moses who examined, why, a non-priest may not examine for leprosy. If you should say it was Aaron who examined her, why, a relative may not examine for leprosy. [The answer is]: The Holy One, blessed be He, said: ‘I am a priest, I shut her up and I shall declare her clean.’ This is indicated by what is written, *And the Lord said: ...let her be shut up without the camp seven days, and after that she shall be brought in again...and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again* (Num.xii, 14 f.). Since it is the case that the people [halted and journeyed] with the *Shechinah*, it follows that the *Shechinah* waited for her.” H. Freedman and M. Simon, ed., *Midrash Leviticus Rabbah* (London: Soncino, 1961), 196, XV, 8-9.

connected texts to be mutually interpreted; patterns of repetitions that draw attention to similarities and differences, guiding the reader in making comparisons and discovering new associations; the repetition of characters or characters' actions that resemble and recall those from other parts of the story or from the larger scriptural story the author knows. Tannehill's axiom that repetitive patterns guide readers in the discovery of expanding symbols holds true for much of Luke's writing, and most certainly holds true for the repetitive patterns created around *katharizō* and *lepra*.

With Tannehill's ideas of connections in view, I will therefore briefly review the *lepra* and *katharizō* passages in Luke's gospel, in the sequence in which they occur. I will summarize the main contributions of each to Luke's construct of cleansing, and highlight how Luke guides the reader in discovering the expanding and deepening symbols of *lepra* and *katharizō*.

A form of *katharizō* appears first in Luke 2, at the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple at the time of Mary's cleansing. Related to the instructions for parturient impurity in Leviticus 12 and paired with Jesus' dedication, the sense of *katharizō* as it is connoted in chapters 10–15 of Leviticus is firmly established. The scene is one of Jesus being brought into the presence of the holy and being consecrated to God as holy. So while there is an impressive ritual and cultic *gravitas* to the scene, the emphasis is not on human uncleanness or any particular ritual to remove it (even Mary is no longer technically unclean forty days after childbirth). Instead, *katharizō* is paired with Jesus' consecration in service of establishing two aspects of Jesus' identity, that of his holiness ("as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord'." [Luke 2:23]) and also that he is recognized as salvation (Simeon says,

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation... a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people, Israel.” [Luke 2:29–32]).

When *katharizō* next appears, it is in the context of Jesus’ sermon in the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:16–30). In this passage it becomes linked to both *lepra* and to *dektos*. In so many ways this passage sounds the key notes that will be played throughout the rest of Luke and Acts. First, *katharizō* is specifically connected to *lepra* in the story Jesus tells of Elisha the prophet who cleansed Naaman the Syrian of his *lepra*. Elements of that story from 4 Kings are repeated in the healing of the centurion’s servant (Luke 7:1–10), the healing of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11–19), and in the story of Cornelius and Peter (Acts 10), such that the larger scriptural story of Israel’s great prophets, Elijah and Elisha, is repeatedly recalled. The cleansing of *lepra* as a sign of God’s power in the prophet and as a power akin to the power of giving life and taking it away are intertextual echoes from 4 Kings that shape subsequent stories and supply details in the Lukan narrative.

The Elisha/Naaman story is told by Jesus in Luke 4 as a proof of the axiom, “No prophet is *dektos* in his own country.” The axiom is linked by the word *dektos* to Jesus’ reading of Isaiah 61 and his announcement of the arrival of the *dektos* year of the Lord, expanding *dektos* to mean that the favor of God will be extended to Israel, but also beyond, by means of God’s prophets. The passage itself emphasizes the role of the prophets as agents of God’s favor, but that role is now connected by *dektos* to a larger complex of Isaianic texts in which the *kairō dektō*, the restoration of Jerusalem, is celebrated, the role of the nations and the *allogēnēs* is specified, and all will be a sign of God’s salvation extending to the ends of the earth.

The Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus in his baptism (3:22); Luke then reports that Jesus enters the wilderness, full of that holy spirit/*plērēs pneumatos hagiou* (4:1) and returns to Galilee in the power of the spirit/*dynamei tou pneumatos* (4:14). The presence of that spirit is confirmed, scripturally, when Jesus' reads from the Isaiah scroll, in the Nazareth synagogue, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," (Luke 4:18; Isa 61:1). Isaiah's announcement—and Jesus'—of the *dektos* time is the announcement of the favor of God entering the human realm in a particular way, inaugurating a time of "reversals" of fortunes and of roles. Shaped by his reading of Isaiah, Luke interprets that reversal in terms of the movement of the holy spirit. From the moment of Jesus' baptism, Jesus lives into the holiness to which he was dedicated as an infant. Jesus becomes the point at which the holy spirit/*pneuma hagion* enters the human realm, the place on the boundary where the spirit can enter. Every subsequent encounter reported by Luke is of the divine realm meeting the human realm at the boundary; every encounter reported is of the *pneuma hagion* penetrating and permeating the *pneuma* of the human realm.

When *katharizō* appears in the healing of a man afflicted with *lepra* in Luke 5, it carries the meaning that *katharizō* and *lepra* together have in Leviticus 13 and 14, in the context of what is required in order to approach the holy. Luke employs cleansing language in a way that confirms the priests' authority to issue the pronouncement that one is clean, but in doing so he confirms the two realities that meet in this passage—the human and the divine, the common and the holy. In the human realm, the priests have the authority to examine and make the distinctions between clean and unclean and to prepare people to approach the realm of the holy, but they have no power to heal or cleanse. In the divine realm, Jesus has the power to heal and to make clean; he also has the power to

extend the holy to the people. Luke is aided here by the ambiguity of *katharizō*, doing double duty as a cultic term and as a medical term of healing intervention.

In addition, this story of Jesus healing a *lepra*-afflicted man now follows, in narrative sequence, the story of Elisha cleansing Naaman of his *lepra*, a repetition inviting comparisons between Elijah and Jesus, affirming Jesus' identity as a prophet of God in this work of cleansing, and further securing the idea that the power to cleanse *lepra* is God's power.

Katharizō and *lepra* appear again in Luke 7:22, in a catena of signs recognized as the "works of the messiah"—the blind are given sight, the lame are able to walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news preached to them. In the narrative span between this passage and the programmatic sermon of Luke 4, Luke has recorded stories of the *lepra*-afflicted being cleansed, a paralytic walking, and a dead man being raised. So, when Jesus answers the question of whether he is the one "who is to come," that is, the messiah, with the list of the signs, it is clear that Luke is establishing Jesus as the messiah. Jesus has done those very works that identify him as such.

The references to lepers being cleansed and dead men being raised extend the repetitive pattern of the stories of the great prophets Elijah and Elisha. Details of these intertextual stories find their way into Luke's report of Jesus raising the dead son of the widow of Nain and the centurion who demonstrates a faith greater than that which Jesus has found in Israel. The latter story reaches back to Naaman even as it extends the pattern ahead to Cornelius.

Finally the catena of signs includes giving sight to the blind and preaching good news to the poor, both of those repeating the words in the prophecy of Isaiah 61 as read in Luke 4, hold together the whole complex of signs that the *dektos* the year of the Lord has arrived, and that Jesus is its messiah.

Katharizō appears in Luke 11, in a passage not related to *lepra*, but supplying several distinct aspects of the term and thus extending the reader's understanding of it. First, in contrast to its parallel in Matthew's gospel (Matt 23:25–26; Luke 11:37–41), Luke does not give new instructions for the ones performing the action of cleansing. (Matthew's Jesus says, "First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside may be also be clean," v. 26.) What is implied is that the physical washing of hands and cups and plates does not address one's inner life which was also created by God and worthy of attention. Instead of an instruction given in the metaphorical language of washing dishes, Luke's Jesus exhorts the Pharisees to give alms for cleansing. Rather than repeating a note that has been sounded earlier, this note on alms—and in particular as Luke relates it to cleansing—will be echoed later in Acts in the description of Cornelius who gives alms and whose heart is cleansed by faith.

Luke 17, the cleansing of the 10 *lepra*-afflicted men, is the culminating point for many repetitions of vocabulary and themes. Again the healing of *lepra* by Jesus is a repeated pattern, but now, beyond establishing him as the prophet-messiah, his is a decidedly divine presence, confirmed by the Samaritan leper's responses of worship and praise and glorifying God. The command to "go show yourselves to the priests" invites the comparison with the story of the cleansing of the *lepra*-afflicted man in Luke 5, but highlights how the realm of divine authority has extended over the span of the Gospel

such that these cultic features are somewhat de-emphasized here. This story also recalls the story of Elisha and Naaman, and Naaman's response of conversion and commitment to the God of Israel. It repeats the pattern of non-Israelites being benefactors of God's salvation, even as it prepares for another repetition and expansion of the theme in Cornelius the centurion who will receive the Holy Spirit and be identified as "clean." Jesus' words to the Samaritan leper, "Your faith has saved you," are repeated here for the third time in the Gospel connecting this story to the story of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet and was forgiven, and to the woman with the hemorrhage who touched Jesus and drew his power into her; they also reach ahead to the story of Jesus giving sight to a blind man—the last of Jesus' healings in the Gospel and where he will speak these words for the last time. The last two healing stories in the Gospel are, significantly, those among "the works of the messiah" and become connected to faith and salvation. This language will connect the gospel and Acts as it reaches ahead to the story of Cornelius whose heart has been cleansed by faith.

E. *Katharizō* in Acts

There are just three occurrences of forms of *katharizō* or *katharos* in the book of Acts, and all are found in Peter's dream or passages where Peter describes or explains that dream.

First, Peter, hungry and waiting for lunch, has an ecstasy come upon him in which the heavens open and a great sheet descends carrying all sorts of animals, reptiles,

and birds. A voice commands Peter to slay something and eat, but Peter refuses because he has never eaten anything common/ *koinon* and unclean/*akatharton*. The voice comes again commanding, “What God has cleansed/*ekatharisen* you must not call common.” This is repeated three times and the sheet is taken up into heaven (Acts 10:10–16). The symbolism of the dream returns *katharizō* to the semantic realm of the cult, Leviticus 11, the command to Israel to make distinctions, and the purity codes established for approaching the holy.

Luke uses dreams and visions as vehicles for messages from God or God’s representatives. That Peter’s vision is accompanied by “a voice from heaven” further establishes its authority as a divine irruption.³⁸¹ God, who commanded the distinctions recorded in Leviticus 11, removes those distinctions in this visitation to Peter. The voice from heaven nullifies the distinctions and withdraws from Peter the responsibility and obligation of making them. Whereas the instructions of Leviticus 11 provided the means by which humans could be prepared to approach the realm of the holy, here the holy—in the dream and in the cleansing—enters the human realm. The heavenly voice tells Peter he must not “call” common or unclean that which has been cleansed, a reminder that calling, declaring, and naming are the limited powers of the human realm. However, God has not simply declared or called the animals clean, God has accomplished the cleansing itself: “What I have made clean, you must not call common or unclean” (Acts 10:15). This passage sets cleansing under God’s authority and establishes it as an act of God’s power, impartiality, and sovereign prerogative.

³⁸¹ John B. F. Miller, *Convinced that God had Called Us: Dreams, Visions, and the Perception of God’s Will in Luke-Acts* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 202-16.

Later, Peter is summoned to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile centurion. Peter tells those gathered there, “God has shown me that I should not call **anyone**/*anthrōpon* common or unclean” (Acts 10:28). Peter interprets the symbolism of common and unclean animals to mean human beings, and indicates that he is surrendering what had been his authority in the human realm to make these kinds of distinctions.

Finally, to the participants of the Jerusalem council Peter declares, “And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing/*katharisas* their hearts by faith, he has made no distinction between them and us” (Acts 15:8–9). This reference to cleansing links Peter’s appeal to the act of God’s cleansing indicated by the heavenly voice in the dream. The reference to the Holy Spirit recalls Peter’s witness of the Holy Spirit being poured out on Cornelius’s household with Peter’s proclamation of the *kerygma* of Jesus Christ. Luke establishes an identification of cleansing with the movement of the spirit.

In Acts 15:8, Peter also says that God testified to the hearts of the Gentiles, *emartyrēsen*, by giving them the Holy Spirit, thereby cleansing their hearts. The use of *martyreō* here echoes *martyrion* in Luke 5:14, where the *lepra*-afflicted man was commanded by Jesus to give offerings as proof or testimony for his cleansing. The narrative transfer of the prerogative to declare clean in the human realm to the prerogative of God in the divine realm to make clean is completed here.

The process by which Peter comes to interpret his vision as being about people rather than animals will be treated in detail in the next chapter. At this juncture, just a few points will be noted. First, the authority given to Jesus alone to cleanse in the Gospel is claimed by God alone in Acts. Peter’s interpretation of the animal symbolism of his

vision to mean Gentiles results in his conclusion that since God has cleansed the Gentiles there is no longer any basis for the distinctions between Jew and Gentile. This highlights Luke's explanation of the underlying meaning of the arguments about circumcision and dietary restrictions and of the fundamental anxiety for Jewish Christians in the community: there is no longer the "unclean" from whom the Jews must keep themselves separate. Ultimately, Peter's theological warrant for the inclusion of Gentiles is that Gentile hearts have been cleansed by faith in Jesus Christ, and therefore Gentiles are holy and participate in being holy for God.

CHAPTER 5: READING THE PETER-CORNELIUS STORY AGAIN

“THEIR HEARTS WERE CLEANSED BY FAITH”

A. Introduction

Peter’s appeal to the Jerusalem Council that Gentile believers not be bound to the requirement of circumcision (and the Torah obedience implied) in order to identify fully with the Jewish movement that proclaimed the resurrected Jesus of Nazareth as its messiah was what prompted this dissertation. Peter’s appeal was stated on these grounds: “God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit” and “made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8–9). The original question of the dissertation focused on Peter’s appeal as a distillation of a dream he had had earlier of clean and unclean animals and asked how it was that “cleansed hearts” carried the weight of Peter’s appeal.

The answer given in this dissertation is that the language of “cleansing” receives a particular articulation in Luke’s gospel by means of multiple references to those afflicted with *lepra* such that it functions to link the *lepra*-afflicted with the Gentile believers across the two volumes of Luke-Acts. Ancient medical understandings of the body and illness, of disease etiologies and healing, and of the functions of the *pneuma* in and around the body allow for interpretations of Lukan *lepra* passages that break through the “either/or” question of whether those passages are to be read as healing narratives or as commentary on Jewish purity laws. Luke’s emphasis on the spirit, when considered in ways closer to the ancient understandings of the *pneuma*, suggest that “both/and” readings are indicated, and perhaps even intended by Luke. The *pneuma* is a mechanism

in both the etiology as well as the healing of *lepra*. Luke sees *to pneuma to hagion* as the power for the holiness which all purity rites and practices are intended to preserve.³⁸² It is in allowing Luke his first-century understanding of the *pneuma* that one can appreciate his effort to exploit the ambiguity of both *katharizō* and the *lepra* affliction in service of his accounting for the presence of Gentiles in the plan of God's salvation.

In what ways do Luke's use of cleansing language and the *lepra* stories in the Gospel prepare his audience for the story of Peter's vision and his interpretation of it to mean that God was making no distinction between Jew and Gentile? Primarily, the language and stories served to help Christians, both Jew and Gentile, overcome the biggest hurdle to understanding the Gentile presence, that of the command to keep separate in order to be holy for God.

We should not underestimate the power of this command. In Israel's Torah, God is recorded as saying:

I am the Lord your God; I have separated you from the peoples. You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; you shall not bring abomination on yourselves by animal or by bird or by with which the ground teems, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine. Lev 20:24-26.

³⁸² Richard P. Thompson, "Gathered at the Table: Holiness and Ecclesiology in the Gospel of Luke," in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament* (ed. Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 76-94. Thompson argues that in spite of the few occurrences of holiness vocabulary in Luke's gospel, the concern for holiness is intrinsically related to the purity concerns expressed in the controversies over the boundaries of table fellowship occurring between Jesus and the Pharisees in Luke's meal scenes. This intrinsic relationship between purity and holiness is at the heart of Leviticus 11-15, and so is expressed also in Luke's attention to the *lepra*-afflicted and the symbolism of clean and unclean animals in Peter's vision. Thompson, "Gathered at the Table," 77-79. See also, Craig L. Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness: Jesus' Meals with Sinners* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

For generation upon generation Israel understood itself to be a holy people by virtue of the distinction God made between it and all other nations. The laws of Leviticus ordered the lives of the ancient Israelites and first-century Jews; they defined the people's identity as set apart as holy by God; they defined the covenantal responsibilities of keeping separate and clean to be holy for God.³⁸³ That being said, it can strain the imagination of the modern-day Christian to appreciate fully what was at stake in Peter's statement to his Jewish Christian brothers at the Jerusalem Council that God was not making a distinction between Jew and Gentile. It strains the imagination to appreciate fully the threat and anxiety attendant to those deliberations. It certainly must have strained the imaginations of those early Christians.

But the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles was able to imagine it all. To be sure, Luke saw quite clearly the profoundly deep nature of the dilemma. Luke Timothy Johnson captures the tension:

The struggle Luke seeks to communicate to the reader is the process of *human* decision-making as the Church tries to catch up to God's initiative. And it is precisely this struggle that gives the narrative its marvelous tension. The reader is a privileged observer, knowing far more than the characters about what God wills and what God is doing. But the reader is also drawn sympathetically into the poignancy of the human confusion and conflict caused by God's action. The struggle of Peter and his fellow believers to understand what God is doing works subtly on the reader, shaping a sharper sense of the enormity and unprecedented character of the gift.³⁸⁴

³⁸³ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), here 149-83, "Clean and Unclean: Understanding Rules of Purity"; de Silva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity*, 269-77.

³⁸⁴ Johnson, *Acts*, 187. Mikeal Parsons offers a different entry point to the important same insight about the difficulties of the struggle for Peter and Jewish Christians in "Nothing Defiled AND Unclean': The Conjunction's Function in Acts 10:14." *PRSt* 27 (2000): 263-74.

Therefore Luke sets out to interpret the story of Jesus and the church to both Jewish and Gentile Christians in a way that expresses the extension of salvation to the Gentiles as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel rather than as a violation of any principle of holiness or distinction. Luke accomplishes this in a dramatic fashion in Acts 10–11 with a vision of animals God declares to be clean. Peter interprets this vision about clean and unclean foods to be symbolic of clean and unclean people.³⁸⁵ Readers are prepared for this because the *lepra* stories of the Gospel were all about people. The vocabulary of cleansing prominent in stories of unclean people facilitates the connection.³⁸⁶

When Luke's audience hears the voice of God say to Peter, "What God has cleansed, you must not call common or unclean," they already know from Jesus' activity in the Gospel that it is God's will and God's prerogative to cleanse the unclean. When Peter is directed by the Holy Spirit to preach to Cornelius, a God-fearing, devout, pious, and generous Gentile, the readers already know from Jesus' words in the Gospel that it is a generous, just, and thankful heart that makes one *dektos* to God. When Peter is called to speak the words by which Cornelius and his household will be saved, they already know that faith in Jesus is salvation.³⁸⁷ Through the *lepra*/cleansing stories in Luke's gospel, Luke's Gentile audience is prepared for the full impact of God's declaration that

³⁸⁵ For general treatments of Luke's purposes in Acts and of the relevant texts in Acts 10, 11, and 15, see Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (ed. Eldon Jay Epp and Christopher R. Matthews; trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. G. Buswell; New York: Harper & Row, 1961); Beverly Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003); Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971); Johnson, *Acts*.

³⁸⁶ But certainly the symbolism of the unclean animals is not benign. "Israel's attainment of holiness is dependent on setting itself apart from the nations and the prohibited animal foods. The dietary system is thus a reflection and reinforcement of Israel's election," Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 725.

³⁸⁷ John Kilgallen, "Clean, Acceptable, Saved: Acts 10," *ExpTimes* 109 (1998), 301.

all things are clean, that they are *dektos* to God, and that they are held in the expansive reach of God's salvation.

B. Acts 10, 11, and 15: Peter's Vision and Interpretation

A narrative critical approach to the Peter-Cornelius complex of texts reveals Luke's hand in shaping the presentation of Peter's interpretation.³⁸⁸ At pains to explain how it is that the separation of Jew and Gentile as written into God's covenant with Israel no longer orders the community, Luke speaks through Peter, a Jewish Christian, who declares the divine warrant for the inclusion of the Gentiles, giving an additional measure of authority to the word.³⁸⁹ Writing through Peter also reveals Luke's awareness of the anxiety and angst attendant to these changes.

The context in which Peter receives his vision is a time in which the followers of Jesus, replete with all manner of Gentiles—Romans, Samaritans, Ethiopians—as well as Jews, are living into a new reality. Actually, they themselves are becoming a new and living reality, and one that presents some challenges to Peter. Peter's own identity and self-understanding as a follower of Jesus is seamlessly contiguous with his identity as a Jew, a child of Abraham, and an heir to the sacred texts of Torah and the prophets. Peter bears in his very being the legacy of all that defined Israel—and Israel in its relationship to God—a legacy Peter shared with Jesus. But Peter lives in a time when growing

³⁸⁸ Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*; Kurz, "Effects of Variant Narrators in Acts 10-11," *NTS* 43 (1997): 570-86; Ronald Witherup, "Cornelius Over and Over Again" *JSNT* 49 (1993): 45-66.

³⁸⁹ Johnson, *Luke*, 9-10.

numbers of people who have not historically had a share in the legacy are having their identities and self-understandings transformed by a belief in Jesus as the messiah of Israel who is also the *sōtēr*, the savior of all the nations. The markers of identity are shifting so it is a time of anxiety for people like Peter. The ambiguity, the mixed nature of reality, threatens not only their identity, but presents a tremendous risk—the risk that in new perspectives and practices they will be unfaithful to their covenant with God.

In that ambiguous, anxious, and threatening context, Peter's experience of the Spirit's prodding, his experience of synchronicity between the Spirit's direction and his perplexing vision, some time given over to pondering, and a day's travel with the servants of Cornelius, all become lenses through which he draws meaning from and gives meaning to the dream.³⁹⁰

The move from Peter's invoking the clean/unclean distinction when presented with the heavenly vision to his declaring that there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles can be traced in his statements of self-reflection as well as those in which he interprets his vision. The movement is shaped by the synchronicity of events with Cornelius, and confirmed by appearances of angels and the Holy Spirit. Details related to the timing of events, the presence of angels and voices from heaven, and direction from the Holy Spirit all contribute to Luke's intention to show that the dissolution of distinctions between Jew and Gentile is God's work.

Peter's experience can be tracked as follows:

10:17: Peter is “greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision.”

³⁹⁰ For a survey of possible interpretations of the dream symbolism, especially those that hew more closely to representations of the historical issues of table fellowship, see Chris A. Miller, “Did Peter's Vision in Acts 10 Pertain to the Men or the Menu?” *BSac* 159 (2002): 302-17.

10:19–20: Peter is still thinking about the vision when the Spirit speaks to him and gives him directions to go with the servants of Cornelius. The Spirit says, “Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation; for I have sent them.”

10:22: Cornelius’ servants tell Peter that Cornelius summons him at the direction of a holy angel.

10:28: Peter tells the gathered at Cornelius’ house, “God has shown me that I should not call anyone common or unclean.”

10:32–43: Cornelius tells Peter that they will listen to all that the Lord has commanded Peter to say, and Peter begins to speak saying, “I truly understand that God shows no partiality...” Peter shares the *kerygma* of Jesus Christ.

10:44–49: The Spirit falls upon the Gentiles, and Peter says, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” The presence of the Spirit, the speaking in tongues, and extolling of God by the Gentiles confirms Peter’s interpretation.

11:12: Peter recounts his vision to the apostles and brothers in Jerusalem, recalling the synchronous arrival of Cornelius’s men from Caesarea immediately at the end of his vision. He tells the apostles and brothers, “The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us.” Here Peter does not accurately repeat the words spoken to him by the Holy Spirit (as reported by the narrator), but recalls them in a way altered by an interpretation of his vision that has evolved and matured over the course of the narrative.

11:14: Peter also reports that Cornelius had been told by an angel that Peter would give a message by which Cornelius and his household would “be saved.” This is also not consistent with what the narrator first reported, that “the angel told him to send men to Joppa and bring back Simon” (Acts 10:5). Again, Peter interprets his experiences to illustrate that God desires salvation for the Gentiles.

15:8–9: Peter tells the participants of the Jerusalem council, “And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith, he has made no distinction between them and us.” Peter’s vision has become a lens by which he interprets the significance of the falling of Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles.

Peter’s vision has both visual and auditory/linguistic components.³⁹¹ He sees a large sheet filled with animals and reptiles and birds descending from heaven; he hears a command to sacrificially slay one of the creatures and eat it, and when he objects because he recognizes that the creatures are not of the kind acceptable for sacrifice, he hears more words: “what I have called clean, you must not call common.”³⁹² Both the image and the language are heavily freighted because they are markers of a defining feature of Peter’s Jewish self-identity and worldview: God’s command recorded in Leviticus 20 to keep separate, the command to make the very distinction Peter has just tried to make.

³⁹¹ Francois Bovon, “These Christians Who Dream: The Authority of Dreams in the First Centuries of Christianity,” in *Studies in Early Christianity* (WUNT 161; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003): 153-4. Miller, *Convinced that God had Called Us*, 202-16.

³⁹² Parsons argues for a reading of the conjunction “and” at Acts 10:14, “nothing defiled and unclean,” because Luke intends for his readers to understand “defiled/common” as referring to Jewish Christians who are defiled by association with Gentiles and “unclean” as referring to the Gentiles who are by nature unclean. Parsons, “‘Nothing Defiled AND Unclean’,” 264-7.

Peter's reaction to the dream does not come as a surprise. The narrator reports that Peter is "inwardly perplexed," sometimes translated "greatly puzzled" or "utterly confused" by what the vision might mean. The dissonance he experienced had to be extraordinary. The voice in the dream is suggesting that the very thing that defines Peter's being and personhood, his rubrics—and his authority—for making distinctions between the clean and unclean, the holy and the common, is not reliable, that how he sees the animals in the sheet, how he describes them, how he names them, is, from the heavenly perspective, no longer accurate.

And so, according to the narrator in verse 19, Peter ponders the vision. And then, while he is pondering and being inwardly perplexed, the Spirit informs him that three men have come looking for him and that Peter is to go with the men, who have been sent to Peter by the Spirit.

When Peter arrives at Cornelius's household with these men, he seems compelled to account for what would be recognized as his "unlawful" behavior of visiting with Gentiles. Peter explains to those gathered at Cornelius' house that, "God has shown me that I should not call **any man** common or unclean," (10: 28b). The words "common or unclean" make it clear to readers that Peter is referring to his vision, even though he does not tell those in Cornelius' household how this new knowledge has come to him, nor does he ever disclose to them the details of the dream. And it is also clear to us that Peter has made a bold interpretive move in the intervening verses—interpreting the command to not call certain animals, reptiles, and birds common or unclean to mean that he is not to call any human creatures, in particular, common or unclean.

Peter asks why Cornelius has sent for him, and is told that Cornelius has had his own vision, a visitation by an angel of God who directed Cornelius to send for Peter. The synchronicity of the double-visions is not lost on Peter. He sees that the same Spirit that directed him was also directing Cornelius—without distinction—and he perceives that all are now together in Cornelius’s house for the purpose of hearing Peter’s proclamation of the gospel of Jesus. Peter begins his speech with these words: “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (10:34–35). The intervening experiences of traveling with Cornelius’s men and hearing of Cornelius’s angelic visitation shape how Peter continues to give and take meaning from his vision: the terminology of clean and unclean disappears, and the specific words of the heavenly command, “what I have cleansed you must not call common” gives way to description of God’s character as impartial. In addition, as the language of clean and unclean disappears as the marker of acceptability to God, Peter replaces it with the new markers drawn from his experience of the Spirit-affirmed-and-confirmed Cornelius: the fear of God and right works (10:35). The meaning of the dream is taking on a life within Peter now, expanding from animals to people, from clean and unclean to making no distinctions to God’s impartiality to what is *dektos*.

Peter’s new insights do not go unchallenged and are held under the bright light of scrutiny and criticism when the apostles and the brothers in Judea demand to know why he went to the uncircumcised and had table fellowship with them (Acts 11:1–3). Peter responds by recounting all the events that led up to his visit to Cornelius’s house. He recalls his vision in all its original detail; he notes the synchronicity of the end of the

dream with the arrival of Cornelius's men; he reports the direction he, Peter, received from the Holy Spirit to go with the men; he describes what happened when he arrived at Cornelius's household—the conversations, the preaching about Christ, the falling of the Spirit; and then, finally, the conclusions he has drawn. He lays out the sequence of events almost as if by walking his brothers in Judea through the same sequence, by letting them hear what he heard and letting them see what he saw, they will, by their own discernment, arrive at the same conclusions. But a comparison of Peter's report in chapter 11 with the narrator's description of the same events in chapter 10 shows some significant changes: changes reflecting the meaning Peter gave to those events as he viewed them through the lens of his dream-vision; changes revealing the meaning Luke wishes to shape.³⁹³

In 10:3–5, an “angel of God” comes to Cornelius and directs him simply to send for Peter. When Peter arrives, Cornelius says to him, “I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, **to hear all that you have been commanded** by the Lord,” (10:33). Peter preaches the good news of Jesus Christ to Cornelius his household when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon them, manifest in their glossolalia and praise to God (10:46). However, when Peter later recounts this event to the apostles, his retrospective accrues some new details. He reports that Cornelius said he had been told to summon Peter, because “he (Peter) will declare to you a message by which you **will be saved**, you and your entire household” (11:14). The description of the message as one by which they will “be saved” is a change from the earlier reports of the narrator. After the fact of the pouring out of the Holy

³⁹³ See Kurz, “Effects of Variant Narrators,” and also Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 73-110 (chapter 6: “Narrators in Acts”).

Spirit, Peter sees that his summons to the home of Cornelius was intended to bring the good news of salvation in Christ.

Peter's report of the directions given to him by the Holy Spirit (11:12) also differs from how the interaction between Peter and the Holy Spirit first took place as presented by the narrator in 10:19–20. The narrator reports that while Peter was puzzling over his vision, the Spirit said to him, "Look, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down, and accompany them **without hesitation**, for I have sent them." When Peter recounts this to the apostles, he says, "The Spirit told me to go with them **making no distinction**," (11:12). This is inaccurate with respect to the authoritative perspective of the narrator—but it does reflect the meaning or intention Peter retrospectively attributed to the Spirit's direction. The direction of the Spirit frees Peter from any hesitation in going to Cornelius, which Peter, in light of his vision, now understands as the freedom to relate to the Gentiles without concern for traditional distinctions.

Peter's interpretation, evolving over the course of the narrative and confirmed by subsequent and intervening events, persists and gives a particular shape to what he remembers and how he remembers it.

There is just one more place where Peter's dream is invoked, and it is at the climax of the controversy about Gentile circumcision, several chapters later in Acts. Chapter 15 is a report of the minutes of the Jerusalem Council, at which, at least according to this account, a primary agenda item is a decision about the necessity of circumcision for Gentiles in the Christian communities. Peter speaks to the question, saying, "And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed

their hearts by faith,” (15:8–9). This passage, several chapters and many life experiences removed from Peter’s original vision, no longer references the dream at all. There are now just vestiges of the dream in Peter’s propositional statements that Gentile hearts have been cleansed, that God makes no distinction, and that the Holy Spirit has been given to the Gentiles. The dream itself is no longer the warrant and Peter’s initial perplexity has been replaced by decisiveness and certainty; a tentative insight expands to a developed claim about God’s activity. The dream-vision, initially a divine irruption into Peter’s life, became a lens through which he perceived subsequent events and experiences of Cornelius and of the Holy Spirit. Filtered through the matrix of the familiar language of purity and covenantal relationship with his God, unfamiliar experiences and relationships returned new insights to him and issued forth from him in familiar words with expanded meanings, words with which he named and made sense of a changed worldview.

C. Acts 10, 11, and 15: Luke’s Vision

When Luke writes the book of Acts, it is about two decades later than the story time of Peter and Cornelius and at least a decade beyond Rome’s destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple. It is some years into the reality of clear demarcations between Judaism and Christianity. The reality in which Luke lives is one that stands historically closer to the other side of the Jew-Gentile controversy; his context is farther out on the trajectory that is moving away from it in time. Luke’s lived experience is of a whole host of Christian churches that are thriving and flourishing and in which the

controversies around the distinctions narrated in the Peter-Cornelius episode were not likely the most pressing matters of the day.

Yet Luke gives the question more time and narrative detail than any other event in Acts. He portrays the evolution of Peter's understanding in several stages, punctuating it with multiple interactions with Cornelius, and the apostles in Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit. The lengthened narrative gives a longer look at the reality of the struggle around identity issues in the first century, and more than a passing glance at the reality of how long the struggles can be when one is appropriating new identity markers and relinquishing the old. It is a more "historical account" of the process, but one which has several features that reveal the consistency and coherency of Luke's theological purposes. Changes made between the narrator's initial reports of Peter's vision and experiences with Cornelius and Peter's subsequent recounting of the vision and those experiences put two of Luke's primary emphases on Peter's lips and link the Peter-Cornelius complex to those same emphases in the Gospel.

Making No Distinction

The first change noted is in Peter's recollection of the Spirit's instruction to accompany Cornelius's servants back to Cornelius's house. The narrator reports that Spirit told Peter to go with the men "without hesitation" (Acts 10:20). Later, when Peter recounts those instructions, he reports that the Spirit instructed him to go with the men, "making no distinction," (11:12). Making distinctions is a predominant emphasis of Luke's throughout the Gospel and Acts, recognized in allusions to the distinctions required by Leviticus 11 (clean from unclean animals), chapter 13 (*lepra*-afflicted skin

from skin that is not), and chapter 20 (Israel from the nations), in the echoes of Isaianic intertexts of an inclusive eschatological community, and in the entire pattern of Jesus' life and ministry wherein Jesus repeatedly rejects the distinctions separating insiders from outsiders, the socially acceptable from the social outcasts (some signaled by Luke as those distinguished on the basis of physiognomic markers), the righteous from the sinners, the clean from the unclean, and those inside Israel from those without. Making distinctions is a predominant emphasis of the Peter-Cornelius complex, a point returned to three times: 1) in Peter's recollection of the Holy Spirit's instructions; 2) in Peter's first articulation of his interpretation of the dream: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality," (Acts 10:34a); 3) in Peter's appeal to the Jerusalem Council: "And God who knows the human heart...made no distinction between us and them," (Acts 15:8–9).

Of course, the most dramatic statement on the theme of making distinctions is the dream itself and its deeply symbolic contents. It has been called an allegorical vision, one that does not seem to make much sense in and of itself, and the highly symbolic character of it will necessarily admit of many possible interpretations. The passage may preserve an early reference to the issues around table fellowship, or it may simply be a literary device to advance a certain plot line. Indeed Luke does not do here what he has done elsewhere in demonstrating the reach of God's involvement in human history; the dream is not one in which God gives straightforward directions. The voice from heaven could have said, like the angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Peter, go tell everyone I said it's time to let go of this business about circumcising Gentiles. And by the way, you let go of it, too." If Luke was concerned to focus just on God's activity, the dream could have been less allegorical. Peter could have had a vision about eating dinner at Cornelius's household.

Peter could have responded, “Oh, no, Lord, for I have never eaten with a Gentile” and the voice from heaven could have said, “What dinner parties I have arranged, the guest lists you must not alter.”

Why does Luke present such a highly symbolic, allegorical dream? I think it is because the dream reveals something about Luke’s analysis of what is central to the controversies about the Gentiles in Christian communities. It is not about the rite of circumcision—otherwise the dream could have been about circumcision. Instead, it is about what the ritual of circumcision simultaneously represents and establishes. It is not about regulations restricting table fellowship —otherwise the dream could have been about dinner parties and guest lists. Instead, it is about the anxiety engendered for Jewish Christians like Peter in relinquishing those regulations.

I think Luke saw quite clearly the profoundly deep nature of the dilemma—that the commitment to identity markers that set apart, draw distinctions, and keep separate were not only about a fundamental belief in the different ontological states of Jews and Gentiles but also the preservation of the distinctions through rite and ritual, through marks in the flesh, as a covenantal responsibility. Therefore, Luke sets out to show that the extension of salvation to the Gentiles was not a violation of any principle of holiness or distinction. By making the subject of Peter’s dream creatures whose ontological status could not be changed, Luke went to the heart of the matter. Unclean animals couldn’t be made clean by any human initiative—not by any rite of purification, not by any mark in the flesh. Being unclean was simply their ontological state of being. The symbolic power of this dream is how it locates ontological distinctions squarely in the realm of God’s

power and prerogative, while denying any power to confer ontological status to those rites and rituals established in the realm of human initiative.

“He will declare to you a message by which you will be saved.”

Another change is noted in how the interpretation of Cornelius’s request to hear from Peter what the Lord had commanded was recalled by Peter as a request to deliver the message by which Cornelius’s household would be saved. The general theme of salvation in Luke-Acts was established in chapters 1 and 2 of the Gospel, and, particularly relevant here is how it was sounded in Simeon’s proclamation that he had seen the salvation of God in Jesus, a light that would be revealed to the Gentiles (Luke 2:20–32). Peter’s proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord of all (10:36), anointed with the Holy Spirit (v. 38), raised by God three days after his death (v. 40), made manifest to many (vv.40–41), judge of the living and the dead (v. 42), and bearer of forgiveness of sins (v. 43) reveals Jesus as God’s salvation to the Gentile Cornelius and his household. That the Gentile household has been enlightened by this revelation is indicated by the falling of the Holy Spirit on it (v. 44); that they have been saved is confirmed by the witness of Peter to their speaking in tongues and extolling God (v. 46).

This is the message by which they are saved. The sign of this salvation is that the Holy Spirit falls on those who heard the word (v. 44) and is poured out on the Gentiles (v. 45). It is this experience to which Peter refers when he testifies before the Jerusalem Council that Gentile hearts have been “cleansed by faith,” (Acts 15:9). This is most certainly suggested by the linking of “cleansing” to the water imagery used to describe the movement of the Holy Spirit, falling and pouring out. In the Gospel, it was the

movement of the *pneuma* of Jesus that made for no distinction between the cleansing and the healing of *lepra* that was a sign of salvation, and expressed by Jesus to the Samaritan leper, “your faith has saved you,” (17:19). Here, too, it is the Holy Spirit, as *to pneuma to hagion*, that effects the cleansing that makes for a wholeness, that confers a status, that is salvific.

D. CONCLUSION

I have been fascinated with Luke’s focus on the affliction known to him as *lepra*, fascinated with the number of places in his gospel where *lepra* features prominently, fascinated by an interest that moves Luke to make more references to people afflicted with *lepra* than he does to people afflicted with any other illness or physical impairment. It has seemed to me a curious thing and I have been struck by the aesthetics of this focus. Blindness and paralysis make for powerful stories and elegant interpretations. It is a great miracle when Jesus heals someone who is blind, and the restoration of sight becomes a beautiful image for the capacity to see rightly, to see truth, to see God. It is a great demonstration of healing power when Jesus heals someone who is paralyzed, and the restoration of mobility becomes a wonderful metaphor for the capacity to move purposefully in the world, to be free from the bondage of sin and evil, to be able to act with personal agency and with mercy, justice, and love. Even the reactions these stories evoke—in figures within the stories and in readers of the stories—are welcome feelings of thanksgiving, charity, advocacy, and mercy. Luke reports these kinds of healings,

beautifully describing their power and glory; he deftly opens hearts to deeper experiences of thanksgiving and love. But not without repeatedly resetting readers' sights on the *lepra*-afflicted ones, and on an affliction that evokes the more unpleasant reactions of anxiety and recoil.

In the book of Leviticus, a guide is given to the priests for verifying the presence of *lepra*. The issue was never one of disease or the contagiousness of *lepra* as a disease. Rather the issue was with the appearance on the surface of the body that the body was somehow breaking down, as if the body might be dying or decaying. It was the specter of death in the appearance of decay and deterioration that precluded one from entering into the presence of the Holy God. The biblical rules about *lepra* were designed to keep any aspect of death from coming into contact with the holy, and so potent was the taboo around the dead and dying, so potent was the fear of contagion— not of the disease as disease, but as an impurity from which the holy must be protected— that the appearance of decay on the surface of the body necessitated the removal of the afflicted to the far reaches of their communities, out to the borders beyond the boundaries of communal life.

It is what happens at these boundaries that is of particular interest to Luke.

This is clear throughout the Gospel and Acts as Luke's Jesus permeates the boundaries that separate the rich and poor, the righteous and the sinner, the insider and the social outcast, those in power and those powerless. It is clear as Jesus permeates the boundaries of Samaria and Galilee and as the apostles push through the borders of cities and regions around the Mediterranean basin. It is clear as the Holy Spirit permeates the boundaries of language and ethnic identity. It is clear as Peter permeates the boundaries between Jew and Gentile.

Luke is in pursuit of what happens at boundaries, and he goes after it relentlessly with the stories of people whose skin, whose bodily boundaries, appear to be breaking down at the surface. Robert Brawley wrote about the many oppositions present in Luke's gospel, oppositions that Brawley represents visually with a slash mark, a keystroke "boundary," such that we see the various oppositions represented in this way: blindness/sight, sin/virtue, lost/saved, unbelief/faith, heaven/earth, clean/unclean. He writes of these oppositions in Luke-Acts that they represent a "cosmic struggle between God and the powers of evil" and that "the human body is the battleground."³⁹⁴ Nowhere is the symbolism of the conflict at the border more profound than in the body of the *lepra*-afflicted. But the contest waged on the body of the *lepra*-afflicted seems to be less about the struggle between God and evil than it is about the contested boundary between the holy and the unclean, and between the heavenly realm and the human realm. The *lepra*-afflicted body symbolizes this contest in particularly profound ways because it was the one affliction that posed the most serious threat to the realm of the holy, from the perspective of the human realm. The contested boundary between the human realm and the divine realm, according to Luke, was one of authority and prerogative, and it played out on the battleground of the *lepra*-afflicted body as the priestly obligation and authority for declaring someone ritually clean came into contact with Jesus' power to make clean.

This is clear in the contrast between the two gospel stories where Jesus heals the *lepra*-afflicted. In the first, which occurs at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Jesus meets an individual full of *lepra* who requests to be cleansed of the affliction. Jesus touches him, heals him, and sends him off to the priests, who, according to the Law of Moses,

³⁹⁴ Robert L. Brawley, *Centering on God: Method and Message in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 183.

will examine him and issue the formal declaration of his purity, announcing his official return to life in the community and participation in worship. Jesus' power to make clean is confirmed—and the man has his life restored in its fullness. But in that story there is not yet a change to the boundary of the human realm. The man's restored skin allows him to return to the community, but the boundary around that community remains intact; it is still held in place and secured by the presence of priests—with their authority to examine, and their authority to allow entrance or to return the man back to the border of town.

In Luke's last *lepra* story which occurs at the end of Jesus' ministry, something much different happens. It is significant that the ten *leproi* are found in the border region between Samaria and Galilee. This border was a rabidly contested religious and ethnic boundary; a boundary that had become fixed in history with an intense animosity that had long separated Samaritans and Jews. But in Luke's story, that fixed boundary has broken down; the border has become a liminal space, ambiguous and undefined—embodied by the people occupying it, an apparently mixed group of *lepra*-afflicted Samaritans and Jews. In Luke's telling, the space itself is established as the threshold to something new, a place where these *lepra*-afflicted ones live together in a new kind of group, now identified not by ethnicity, geography, or religious tradition but by their shared suffering and isolation—and in having bodies that appear to be breaking down. In that liminal space between Samaria and Galilee, the breaking-down-ones have already been living into a new kind of community. Moreover, in Luke's telling, the boundary between the heavenly realm and the human realm has also given way; the healing, the cleansing, the being seen by Jesus as “clean,” the *allogenēs* seeing himself restored, the unfettered

praise and thanksgiving offered to God at the feet of Jesus are now all held together as the salvation which God had promised.

Luke and his readers know they are living beyond the threshold and in a time when the boundaries between Jew and Gentile had already broken down, but Luke is intent on shaping their understanding of the space in a particular way. Both the symbolic content of Peter's dream and the whole Peter-Cornelius complex represent, from Luke's perspective, the liminal space wherein what had once been was being transformed into what will be (and in Luke's moment, had perhaps come to pass). Peter and Cornelius walked together through the liminal space. In the dissolution of old boundaries, God had created an altogether new people with an altogether new identity – not identified by ethnicity, geography, or religious tradition, but by their shared experience of the Holy Spirit which had fallen on all, impartially, cleansing hearts and permeating each with a spirit of holiness.

Luke understood the body as many ancients did, as being of a piece with the elements of the universe around it. He saw the border of that body, the skin, as the point at which what was harmful or destructive would evacuate the body but also the point at which the *pneuma* could enter and restore balance—health and wholeness—to the elements. As Luke conceived Jesus' power to heal *lepra* as a function of Jesus' divine *pneuma*, a holy *pneuma*, the *lepra*-afflicted bodies were not only restored to a state of physical health but also to a state of holiness thanks to his *pneuma* having entered. It is only the *lepra*-afflicted body that could represent the breaking down of identities and boundaries that keep people separate; only the *lepra*-afflicted body that could represent the response of retreat and recoil and anxiety in the face of the threat of those dissolving

borders; only the *lepra*-afflicted body, which could represent the restoration of a body to wholeness and to holiness.

Ironically, the *lepra*-afflicted are not mentioned anywhere in Isaiah. And yet I believe Luke saw the *lepra*-afflicted body through the worldview shaped by his reading of the Scriptures of Israel, in general, and of Isaiah, in particular. Where the purity codes of Leviticus prepared human beings to approach the holy, Isaiah's announcement of the *dektos* year of the Lord signaled that the holy had approached the human, and had done so in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom the holy resided while he was on earth. With every contact Jesus had with an ill, disabled, or otherwise afflicted human body, he stepped onto the battleground, extending his spirit, restoring wholeness and holiness, and embodying the salvation promised in Isaiah's prophecies. He was the messiah of the *dektos* time, understood in its active sense, extending God's favor and blessings and spirit to those who then extended it to others as well. Luke's vision of the *lepra*-afflicted body is one that is cleansed on the inside, with flesh restored to that of a new being, made *dektos*—transformed as agents of God's favor into the world, with a holy *pneuma* that would permeate all boundaries and bring salvation to the ends of the earth. This was Luke's conviction about the Christian movement—that the *dektos* year of the Lord was extending to the ends of the earth through the whole and holy bodies of the *lepra*-afflicted and the Gentiles.

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