

## The Pharisee Heresy: Circumcision for Gentiles in the Acts of the Apostles

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This narrative-critical study of Acts proposes that Luke has deliberately arranged events so that the discussion about circumcising baptised Gentiles is postponed for as long as possible. When the issue does surface, it is raised by a delegation of second-wave Christians from the sect of the Pharisees. These factors combined give the impression that circumcision of Gentiles, a matter long settled by Luke's own day, had never been original, favourable or sanctioned by God or the apostles. By portraying the movement to circumcise Gentiles as belated, extrinsic and pernicious, Luke's representation of difference in the church resembles that of later heresiologists.

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According to Erwin Preuschen, '[Acts] 11.1–18 should be regarded as a parallel narrative to 15.1–29 by whose inclusion ... the author or redactor has made chapter 15 *völlig unverständlich*'.<sup>1</sup> While 'totally incomprehensible' no doubt exaggerates matters, other interpreters have likewise been puzzled over the controversy regarding Gentile admission in Acts 15 given the significance Luke ascribes to the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10 and the subsequent triumph of Peter's speech before the Jerusalem community.<sup>2</sup> If indeed Peter's testimony compelled the gainsayers in Jerusalem to concede that 'God has also given

1 E. Preuschen, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HZNT 4.1; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1912) 69.

2 E. Zeller, *The Contents and Origin of the Acts of the Apostles, Critically Investigated* (trans. J. Dare; London: Williams & Norgate, 1875–6) 278, finds it curious 'how little the idea of Gentile conversion took root in Jerusalem', so much so that Peter, in Acts 15, refers to the Cornelius episode 'as something quite forgotten'. See the similar expressions of incredulity by R. B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles* (2nd edn; London: Methuen, 1904) 162; E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (trans. R. McL. Wilson; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 463; R. I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) 368.

Gentiles the repentance leading to life' (Acts 11.18), and Gentiles received this favour as uncircumcised Gentiles, then the re-emergence of the issue years later in Jerusalem is difficult to explain. 'It might seem', as Barrett sums up Peter's speech at the house of Cornelius, 'that the whole question of the Gentile mission had now been settled, at least in principle.'<sup>3</sup>

Various explanations for the recrudescence of the Gentile question in Acts 15 have been proposed. Some say the outpouring of the Spirit upon Cornelius and his household had been forgotten, such that a 'reminder was in order' when Peter arose in Acts 15.7;<sup>4</sup> yet, one wonders how so spectacular a miracle could have escaped memory.<sup>5</sup> Others suggest that Peter's speech in Acts 11.1-18 fell short of eliciting universal assent, thus leaving behind an unconvinced contingent.<sup>6</sup> Luke hardly suggests as much, however. No rebuttal is reported in Acts 11.18 and it seems as though everyone agrees that 'even to the Gentiles God has granted the repentance that leads to life'. Still others propose a change in leadership, so that the rise of James and other conservatives in Jerusalem following the Cornelius affair explains why the issue had to be revisited;<sup>7</sup> yet, Luke gives no indication that James or his supporters would have been less persuaded than other authorities in Jerusalem by Peter's precedent-setting experience. The notion that James is especially zealous for the Law and reluctant about Gentile inclusion is the result of Galatians, not Acts.<sup>8</sup> Finally, it has been proposed that the Jerusalem Council added official apostolic sanction to the ad hoc event in Caesarea.<sup>9</sup> That God's miraculous intervention would require human confirmation is a reasonable proposition, but it is not clear that the apostles are not included among the Jerusalemites who provide such authorisation already in Acts 11.18.<sup>10</sup>

3 C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994) 543.

4 So B. Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998) 453, who notes that 'perhaps as many as ten years had gone by'.

5 A scenario disregarded by Haenchen (*Acts*, 463) as 'intrinsically impossible'.

6 Most notably, S. G. Wilson, *Luke and the Law* (SNTSMS 50; Cambridge University Press, 1983) 73. See also Witherington III, *Acts*, 362 n. 137; G. Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (NTD 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962) 158.

7 E.g. M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (trans. J. Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 95-8.

8 James gives no indication of desiring Law observance for Gentiles in Acts 21.20-5. Although he takes pride in the fact that Jewish believers remain steadfast to the Law, from Gentiles he expects only what is required by the apostolic decree. See further M. Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 119.

9 E.g. J. Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (NTD 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981) 230; J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998) 538-9; Haenchen, *Acts*, 463.

10 The relationship between the Apostles, the elders and 'those from the circumcision' with whom Peter contends in Acts 11.1-18 will be discussed below.

All these solutions assume that Luke (tacitly) proposes and discards circumcision for Gentile converts in Acts 10.1–11.18, which in turn gives the Jerusalem Council the appearance of redundancy. As Mark A. Plunkett has observed, however, circumcision and obedience to the Law are never mentioned in Acts 10.1–11.18, where the central concerns are rather the outpouring of the Spirit upon Gentiles and the permissibility of social contact between Jews and Gentiles.<sup>11</sup> No one broaches the subject of circumcision – not Peter, his companions, or even ‘those of the circumcision’ who confront Peter in Jerusalem. Indeed, according to Luke, the subject is raised for the first time years later when a contingent of converted Pharisees begins to hassle Gentiles in Antioch, precipitating the Jerusalem Council. Only then does Peter, followed by James, discern the full implications of what had happened in Caesarea. On Luke’s reckoning, the Jerusalem Council does not come to pass because the validity of the Gentile mission as anticipated by the Cornelius episode has been forgotten or challenged, or because it requires apostolic authorisation; rather, the conference meets to consider an *entirely new proposition*: the subjection of Gentile converts to Law and circumcision.

Readers inclined to view Acts as historically reliable might wonder how it is possible that controversy over circumcision and Law observance for Gentile converts did not emerge until the mission of Paul and Barnabas was well under way. Would the issue not have arisen with the very first Gentile converts? Could the earliest leaders of the church really have failed to consider the appropriateness of Law observance when Gentiles first came aboard? While the deliberation over circumcision might well have been part and parcel of the first overtures towards Gentiles (though it might not have been, as I will discuss below), in this narrative-critical study I will propose that Luke deliberately organises his narrative in a way that postpones the discussion of circumcision for as long as possible. By allowing the Gentile mission to reach full steam before introducing the issue of circumcision, and by attributing its emergence to a delegation of second-wave Christians from the sect of the Pharisees, Luke acknowledges the presence in the earliest church of a contingent that favoured circumcision for Gentiles while at the same time delegitimising that movement by portraying it as belated, extrinsic and pernicious. Presumably Luke knows that circumcision for Gentiles had been a pivotal issue in the church’s first decades (even if that debate was for the most part resolved in his own time and place); yet, Luke cannot make it seem as though the wrong opinion in that debate (as he sees it) was ever original, favourable or sanctioned by either God or the apostles.

11 M. A. Plunkett, ‘Ethnocentricity and Salvation History in the Cornelius Episode’, in *Society of Biblical Literature 1985 Seminar Papers* (ed. K. H. Richards; SBLSP 24; Atlanta: Scholars, 1985) 465–80.

### 1. The Cornelius Episode

The idea of circumcising Gentiles never surfaces in Acts 10.1–11.18, where the central concerns are the availability of salvation to Gentiles and the viability of social intercourse between baptised Gentiles and their Jewish associates.<sup>12</sup> These are the two revelations disclosed to Peter. From his mystifying vision on the roof in Joppa he comes to view as mistaken the traditional Jewish scruples regarding table fellowship with Gentiles. No person is to be deemed unclean or impure. From the outpouring of the Spirit upon the family of Cornelius Peter recognises that Gentiles are no less worthy of baptism than are Jews. At no point does Luke intimate that Peter or his travelling companions, the ‘believers from the circumcision’ (10.45), wonder whether these Gentile initiates require circumcision. Nor apparently do ‘the men from the circumcision’ who confront Peter when he returns to Jerusalem. They interrogate Peter regarding his table fellowship with uncircumcised Gentiles, not his failure to circumcise them, and upon hearing of Peter’s marvellous experience they too revel in God’s decision to make baptism available to Gentiles. It never occurs to them that Gentiles might be circumcised or subjected to the Law following baptism. It cannot be said that they *reject* the prospect of circumcision, for to be rejected the thought must first be considered. No one at this stage in the narrative even imagines that circumcision might be necessary.

Nevertheless, interpreters have tended to assume that circumcision is under dispute in Acts 11.1–18, motivated no doubt by Luke’s curious identification of Peter’s accusers as οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς, ‘the men from the circumcision’. Whereas this expression is a circumlocution for ‘Jews’ in Rom 4.12, Col 4.11 and Titus 1.10, most commentators contend that Paul uses it in Gal 2.12 to describe a faction in the church opposed to Paul’s law-free mission among the Galatians and other Gentiles – a ‘circumcision party’, as it is often translated.<sup>13</sup> Were Luke employing the term similarly, he would be suggesting that Peter finds himself in hot water because he failed to circumcise Cornelius; and, accordingly, the ‘circumcision party’ he confronts differs from the ‘apostles and brethren in Judea’ mentioned in the preceding verse.<sup>14</sup>

12 So Plunkett, ‘Ethnocentricity’, 465–79; M. Pettern, ‘Luke’s Great Omission and his View of the Law’, *NTS* 42 (1996) 51. Thiessen (*Contesting Conversion*, 124–40) likewise contends that social intercourse is the principal concern.

13 So J. L. Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 234–40, among the countless others including RSV, NAS, NRSV (‘faction’), NIV (‘group’), NET (‘those who were pro-circumcision’). E. E. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978) 117, proposes that the term in Titus 1.10, as in Gal 2.12, is ‘best understood of a faction of Jewish Christians’.

14 So Witherington III, *Acts*, 362 n. 137; Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 175; Stählin, *Apostelgeschichte*, 158; L. T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 5; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992) 200–1; F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931) 97; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988) 220.

The case for identifying οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς in Gal 2.12 as a ‘circumcision party’ is hardly airtight, however, as Gregory Dix, Richard Longenecker, Walther Schmithals, Bo Reicke, Johannes Munck and others have suggested.<sup>15</sup> Their arguments in favour of rendering οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς as ‘Jews’ rather than ‘circumcision party’, in no particular order, are that: (1) Paul mentions a faction advocating circumcision for Gentiles in Gal 2.2–4 but does not identify them as οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς; moreover, this faction loses the dispute at Jerusalem by dint of the decision by James and the other pillars, and it is unlikely that their influence would have increased so quickly and dramatically that they were able to prevail upon James soon thereafter;<sup>16</sup> (2) Peter would not have feared James or his embassy considering that Peter was also a pillar of the church; furthermore, all the other Jews in the church of Antioch appear to have been on Peter’s side;<sup>17</sup> (3) Paul’s charge of hypocrisy indicates that he believed Peter’s action contradicted his beliefs, a curious indictment of Peter’s separation if he had in fact been persuaded that circumcision of Gentiles was now required;<sup>18</sup> (4) Paul makes no accusation against James, the supposed leader of the ‘circumcision party’;<sup>19</sup> (5) ἡ περιτομή occurs three times in Gal 2.7–9, in each case referring simply to ‘Jews’, not a Jewish faction within the Jerusalem church;<sup>20</sup> (6) Paul’s grammar suggests that the subject of ἦλθον and the object of φοβούμενος are not the same; otherwise, the pronoun αὐτούς would have sufficed in place of τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς.<sup>21</sup>

These arguments establish a viable case for reading οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς in Gal 2.12 as ‘Jews’, or ‘(believing) Jews’ rather than ‘the circumcision party’. In which case, the admonishment delivered at Antioch probably expressed James’ concern that fraternisation between Jewish and Gentile believers had elicited derision from non-believing Jews in Judea (and possibly elsewhere).<sup>22</sup> Not willing to

15 G. Dix, *Jew and Greek: A Study in the Primitive Church* (London: Dacre, 1953) 42–4; R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990) 73–5; W. Schmithals, *Paul and James* (trans. D. M. Barton; London: SCM, 1965) 66–8; Bo Reicke, ‘Der geschichtliche Hintergrund des Apostelkonzils und der Antiochia Episode’, in *Studia Paulina: in honorem J. de Zwann* (Haarlem: Erven F. Bohn, 1953) 176–7. J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (trans. Frank Clarke; London: SCM, 1959) 106–9.

16 Dix, *Jew and Greek*, 42–3; notwithstanding the view of P. F. Esler, ‘Making and Breaking an Agreement Mediterranean Style: A New Reading of Galatians 2:1–14’, *Biblical Interpretation* 3.3 (1995) 285–314, who contends that, in view of ancient Mediterranean pact making, the circumcision faction would have been out for revenge following their humiliation in Jerusalem.

17 Schmithals, *Paul and James*, 66; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 74.

18 Dix, *Jew and Greek*, 43–4; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 74.

19 Schmithals, *Paul and James*, 67.

20 Longenecker, *Galatians*, 73–4.

21 Schmithals, *Paul and James*, 67.

22 That the Jerusalem church did face such pressure from zealous Jews ca. 50 CE and responded with a campaign of Judaisation has been argued by R. Jewett, ‘The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation’, *NTS* 17 (1971) 198–212.

sever ties with the broader Jewish community or to undergo continued persecution, James proposed that the believing Jews in Antioch should no longer eat alongside their uncircumcised associates. Peter and Barnabas and the other believing Jews at Antioch agreed, much to the chagrin of Paul, who recognised that such a separation would propel many Gentiles to become circumcised in order to celebrate the Eucharist with Peter and the other Jews in the church.<sup>23</sup> But such Gentiles were not compelled to be circumcised by a ‘circumcision party’ sent by James to force Peter’s hand. The οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς whom Peter feared were ‘Jews’, not a faction.

If so, then Luke’s using the term to mean ‘circumcision party’ would be exceptional. Such unparalleled usage is not impossible, but the context of Acts 10–11 makes it unlikely that Luke understands οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς to mean something other than ‘Jews’. In the first place, the expression occurs in Acts 10.45, where it undoubtedly refers to the Jewish identity of Peter’s fellow travellers, since the notion of a ‘circumcision party’ makes little sense prior to the baptism of Cornelius. The existence of such a pro-circumcision faction presupposes a mission to the uncircumcised. It could be that such a faction is meant to emerge in the few days separating the baptism of Cornelius from Peter’s arrival in Jerusalem but, if that were so, then using οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς to describe them would place undue strain on readers who correctly understood that expression to mean ‘Jewish’ just a few verses earlier.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, even if Luke does mean to suggest that a circumcision party materialised overnight and he refers to it infelicitously with the same term used for Jews generically in Acts 10.45, there is still the problem of the supposed party’s complaint: it says nothing about circumcision. Peter is accused of eating with uncircumcised Gentiles, and when the party is persuaded by his apology no one suggests that circumcision in addition to baptism would have been in order. It could be argued that the party’s accusation implies its more fundamental concern over circumcision, so that it says table fellowship but it means circumcision.<sup>25</sup> While not an impossible interpretation, it is unlikely that Luke would deal so coyly with the matter of circumcision given how candidly it is addressed in Acts 15. If he wished for Acts 11 to exhibit the

23 It is not clear in Gal 2.11–14 whether Paul is referring to Eucharist meals, ordinary meals, or both. For the range of views, see respectively H. Schlier, *Der Brief an der Galater* (KEK 7; 10th edn; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949) 83; E. De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921) 104; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982) 129.

24 Pervo, *Acts*, 284.

25 R. P. C. Hanson, *The Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 119–20, declares that ‘the discussion in 11:1–18 is about circumcised or uncircumcised persons’ because ‘the subject of table-fellowship was involved with the subject of food regulations, and both with the subject of circumcision’. See, too, S. G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge University Press, 1973) 176.

rejection of circumcision for Gentiles, he would have made it so. Accordingly, οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς in Acts 11.2 should be translated just as it is in Acts 10.45 and everywhere else in the New Testament – as a moniker for ‘Jews’.<sup>26</sup> After the apostles and brothers in Judea learn of the events in Caesarea, a group of Jewish believers confronts Peter on his return to Jerusalem. It is not clear whether this group comprises the apostles and brothers themselves, some portion of them, or their representatives, but in any case the group is not a conservative pro-circumcision faction distinct from the apostles and brothers.

Of course, the question remains why Luke employs this circumlocution for Jews when a reference to ‘apostles’, ‘brothers’ or ‘emissaries’ would have sufficed. Likewise, Luke could simply have spoken of ‘believers’ who accompany Peter to Caesarea in 10.45 because at that point in the narrative Peter’s colleagues are necessarily Jews. Compounding the problem is Luke’s use of the term ἀκροβυστία in the accusation against Peter in 11.3. If the *denotata* of οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς and ἄνδρας ἀκροβυστίαν ἔχοντας are Jews and Gentiles respectively, and the issue at hand is inter-ethnic dining, Luke’s identification of the groups in terms of circumcision calls for an explanation. The simplest solution, as Richard I. Pervo observes, is that Luke has based some or all of this account on Gal 2, in which Paul uses these terms to distinguish between Jews and Gentiles.<sup>27</sup> In this regard, one notes that οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς is not attested in the LXX or inter-testamental literature or in Christian literature outside the Pauline corpus until Justin Martyr, an absence that renders all the more likely the prospect that Luke borrowed the term from Galatians.<sup>28</sup> Otherwise, one is left with the uncanny and unlikely coincidence that Luke and Paul coined the expression independently from one another.

Thus, despite the terms οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς and ἄνδρας ἀκροβυστίαν ἔχοντας, one is justified in supposing that the Cornelius affair, as Luke understands it, has nothing whatsoever to do with the issue of circumcision for baptised Gentiles. The descent of the Holy Spirit onto Cornelius and his family inaugurates the Gentile mission by revealing that Gentiles, no less than Jews, may benefit from baptism. But no one proposes that circumcision would be the logical next step for Cornelius or other Gentile initiates – not Peter, his associates in Joppa, or even his antagonists in Jerusalem. Nor does the issue of circumcision surface during the so-called first missionary journey conducted subsequently by Paul

26 So Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008) 156; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (trans. J. Limburg, A. T. Kraabel, and D. H. Juel; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 86.

27 Pervo, *Acts*, 284. On Luke’s use of Paul’s letters, see below n. 46.

28 On the absence of the expression prior to Justin, see Ellis, *Prophecy*, 116. Joel Marcus, ‘The Circumcision and the Uncircumcision in Rome’, *NTS* 35 (1989) 67–81, contends that περιτομή and ἀκροβυστία may have been epithets thrown at one another by Jews and Gentiles prior to Paul, but he excludes οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς from such usage.

and Barnabas. It is only when that pair has returned to Antioch, after the Gentile mission has been firmly established, that the thought of circumcising Gentiles comes to the fore.

## 2. The Jerusalem Council

Numerous details in Luke's presentation of the Jerusalem Council vis-à-vis the Cornelius affair combine to depict the movement to circumcise Gentile converts as belated, extrinsic and pernicious.

The time frame of the Gentile mission, for example, emphasises that the advocates for circumcision emerge after – indeed, long after – the Gentile mission has received both divine and apostolic approval. In the wake of the Cornelius affair, the Gentile mission begins in earnest and its first phase continues to the end of Acts 14. Luke does not indicate how many years pass before the conservative Jerusalemites begin to hassle the Gentile converts of Antioch, but it must have been several at least. Saul and Barnabas spend no less than a year in Antioch before their first journey (11.26), in addition to the time required for their relief mission to Jerusalem (11.27–30). The first excursion then probably occupies several years. They traverse all of Cyprus (13.6) before visiting Perga, Pisidian Antioch and Iconium, where they stay for 'considerable time' (ἱκανὸν χρόνον, 14.3). Then it is off to Lystra and Derbe and back through the same cities on the return voyage. Seeing that the establishment of churches in these communities does not happen overnight, years must pass before Saul and Barnabas arrive in Antioch. Even then, Luke notes, they remain with the disciples in Antioch for 'no short time' (χρόνον οὐκ ὀλίγον, 14.28) prior to the arrival of the circumcisers. In other words, it is long after the Gentile mission has been initiated, authorised, conducted and established that it first dawns on anyone that circumcision might be appropriate. At the Council, Peter confirms that significant time has passed when he refers to the Cornelius affair as having occurred 'long ago' (ἄφ' ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων, 15.7), a temporal expression that draws attention not only to the time elapsed since the miracle in Caesarea, but also to the fact that 'acceptance of gentiles . . . is also a foundational element of the faith'.<sup>29</sup>

The belatedness of the call for circumcision is further emphasised by the way Luke labels the conservative faction. He first identifies them generically as 'some men from Judea' (τινες ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰουδαίας, 15.1), but then describes them more specifically as 'some men from the sect of the Pharisees who had come to believe'

29 Pervo, *Acts*, 373. See also Barrett, *Acts*, 713–14. M. Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. M. Ling; ed. H. Greeven; London: SCM, 1956) 115, contends that 'the words . . . are certainly spoken with a particular intention and with slight exaggeration, in order to stress the fact that the decision came from God some time ago and was made known to the first of the apostles'.



(τινες τῶν ἄπὸ τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Φαρισαίων πεπιστευότες, 15.5).<sup>30</sup> The perfect participle indicating their conversion contrasts markedly with the present participle of the same verb used to describe the first Jewish believers (2.44), as well as the substantival adjective πιστοί designating ‘those of the circumcision’ at the house of Cornelius (10.45). The latter contrast in particular reveals Luke’s intention to highlight the secondary arrival of the circumcision advocates. It goes without saying that they are not apostles, but they are not formative members of the church either, as were Peter’s companions in Caesarea. They are recent initiates who presumably entered the church after the foundations of the Gentile mission were laid.<sup>31</sup> They ‘had become’ believers, but were not so when the Gentile mission began.

Not only does this contingent enter the fold belatedly, it originates in and maintains some measure of allegiance to a principal antagonist in Luke-Acts, the Pharisees. No one could come away from Luke’s first volume with esteem for the Pharisees. ‘Woefully’ legalistic (Luke 11.37–44), hypocritical (12.1), self-righteous (18.10–11) and infatuated with money (16.14), they continually criticise Jesus for his lax observance of the Law (6.1–11; 14.1), his companions (5.27–32; 7.36–9; 15.2), and his exalted claims (5.17–6; 19.39). As rejecters of ‘God’s plan’ (7.30), they stand outside the circle of Jesus, the apostles and the first believers. It is true that in Luke 13.31 some Pharisees alert Jesus to Herod’s violent intentions, but this single act of kindness hardly balances the otherwise negative, often vicious, portrait of the Pharisees in Luke’s gospel. To some extent, Luke rehabilitates the Pharisees in his second volume, leading some to suggest that the Pharisees appear ‘routinely friendly to Christianity’.<sup>32</sup> As Luke Timothy Johnson has observed, however, the gentler assessment of the Pharisees in Acts is not all it seems when considered in the light of Luke’s use of irony.<sup>33</sup> True,

30 I do not mean to suggest that the groups described in 15.1 and 15.5 are identical, as though the ‘some men from Judea’ had returned to Jerusalem and renewed their objection. But Luke gives every indication that these two groups are related. Both are Judean, no doubt from Jerusalem, and both register the same concern, even if the first group couches it in terms of salvation and the second in terms of necessity. Presumably circumcision (and Law observance) is necessary for salvation, although see Parsons (*Acts*, 210), who suggests that the concern in 15.1 is the salvation of Gentiles while in 15.5 it is social mixing of Gentiles with Jews. For the view here, see Johnson, *Acts*, 260. The two groups are even linked grammatically, as Luke uses the indefinite pronoun to describe them both. On the resemblance of the two groups, see the suggestion of Fitzmyer (*Acts*, 545).

31 Indeed, this contrast probably belies the frequent assertion that the group in 15.5 is the same as that in 10.45 or 11.2. See, for example, Wilson, *Luke and the Law*, 72; Witherington III, *Acts*, 362 n. 137; Stählin, *Apostelgeschichte*, 158.

32 J. T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 85. See also R. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 67; Witherington III, *Acts*, 232–4.

33 Johnson, *Acts*, 99–103, 260.

Luke spares the Pharisees from the rancour he expresses in his gospel, but his allegedly generous depiction of them in Acts 5.34–42 and Acts 23.6–9 is not benign. As a leading member of the Sanhedrin, the Pharisee Gamaliel would have been complicit in the condemnation of Jesus (Luke 22.66–73) and was among those who stared obtusely at the man healed by Peter and John (Acts 4.14); moreover, while Gamaliel's 'wait and see' approach to the new movement may assuage the ire of his companions and thwart temporarily the first martyrdom, it also reveals his unpardonable ignorance.<sup>34</sup> What more should Gamaliel need to see in order to know that the apostles' undertaking is indeed 'God's plan' and not the plan of men? The Pharisees of Acts 23 are no less imperceptive. They and their Sadducean foes are whipped into a frenzy by the mere mention of the contentious issue of resurrection and, even though they side with Paul in that debate, their belief in resurrection makes all the more inexcusable (and ironic) their blindness to the resurrection of Jesus.

Granted, Paul identifies himself as a Pharisee (Acts 23.6) and as having lived like a Pharisee (Acts 26.5), a detail Luke knew about from Phil 3.5 or some other source. But Luke's deployment of that detail, like so many others, is strategic. He does not reveal Paul's standing as a Pharisee during the course of Paul's three great missions, nor when he battles the Pharisees in Antioch over the matter of circumcision. Only at the end of his career does Paul's sectarian affiliation emerge, and it does so in a way that calls into question whether Paul continues to embrace his Pharisaic status at that point in his life. In Acts 23.6, Paul's baring of Pharisaic credentials seems little more than a ploy aimed at disrupting the hearing;<sup>35</sup> in Acts 26.5, he speaks of his scrupulous Pharisaic observance in the past tense (ἐζήσῃ), associating it with the time during which he persecuted the earliest believers in Jesus' resurrection. Thus, while it is true that Luke is less negative about the Pharisees in Acts than he is in his gospel, the Pharisees nevertheless remain suspiciously extrinsic to the emerging church. Their proposal in Acts 15.1–5, then, appears correspondingly extrinsic.<sup>36</sup>

The proposal is pernicious, too, which Luke indicates by referring to the Pharisees as ἀἵρεσις, a 'party' or 'sect'. This detail is not necessary. Luke mentions the Pharisees twenty-seven times in his gospel without once characterising them as ἀἵρεσις, nor does he say as much when designating Gamaliel a Pharisee in Acts 5.34. The seemingly superfluous remark in this instance is therefore suggestive. But what does it suggest? It goes without saying that ἀἵρεσις is a notoriously tricky term in early Christian literature because it underwent such

34 Johnson, *Acts*, 103.

35 So Pervo, *Acts*, 574: 'Paul engages in what admirers would have labeled a deft political maneuver and detractors, a cheap lawyer's stunt.'

36 Indeed, the apostles and elders insist in their letter to the Gentiles of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (15.24) that the advocates for circumcision have been operating without their approval.

dramatic development in the first three centuries CE.<sup>37</sup> The term was not value-laden in its original usage, as Marcel Simon explains:

It simply meant, according to its etymology, ‘choice’, and specifically the choice of embracing a particular school of thought. There could be in the Greek, as well as in the Jewish view, depending on the point of view of the speaker, good and bad heresies. But, in principle, they are neither good nor bad, since there existed no universally recognized criterion of authority by which to classify them in two opposing categories and to distinguish truth from error.<sup>38</sup>

Josephus employs the term accordingly in his description of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes as competing schools of thought.<sup>39</sup>

The earliest Christian texts reveal a pejorative sense to the term, however. Paul includes it in the vice list of Gal 5.20 and pinpoints it as a Corinthian shortcoming in 1 Cor 11.19. Titus 3.10 deems an incorrigible αἵρετικόν worthy of expulsion from the community. Second Peter 2.1 warns against false teachers who secretly import αἱρέσεις ἀπωλείας, ‘destructive beliefs’. Ignatius considers praiseworthy the absence of αἵρεσις (Ig. *Eph.* 6.2), which he defines as a foreign plant (ἀλλοτριὰς βοτάνης) in contrast to Christian nourishment (χριστιανῆ τροφῆ) (Ig. *Tr.* 6.1). By the middle of the second century, of course, αἵρεσις would increasingly come to describe supposed perversions of proto-orthodox Christian belief – that is, ‘heresies’ as we now understand the term.

Luke does not use αἵρεσις in that last sense, as if the Pharisees (or Sadducees in Acts 5.17) represent a Christian heresy in the way that Justin, Irenaeus, Hegesippus or Epiphanius would describe Gnostics or Marcionites; but he does not use it benignly either.<sup>40</sup> For Luke, αἵρεσις seems to bear some of the negative shading ascribed to it by Paul and Ignatius. Consider Luke’s deflection of the charge that the religion of Paul and the Apostles is a αἵρεσις. When Tertullus

37 See H. von Staden, ‘Hairesis and Heresy: The Case of the *haireseis iatrikai*’, in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, vol. 3 (ed. B. F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 76–100, esp. 96–8; E. Iricinschi and H. M. Zellentin, ‘Making Selves and Marking Others: Identity and Late Antique Heresiologies’, in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity* (ed. E. Iricinschi and H. Zellentin; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 3–5; M. Simon, ‘From Greek Hairesis to Christian Heresy’, in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant* (ed. R. L. Wilken and W. R. Schoedel; Théologie historique 54; Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979) 101–16.

38 Simon, ‘From Greek Hairesis to Christian Heresy’, 104.

39 *AJ* 13.171; 18.11; *BJ* 2.119, 166; *Life* 1.10.

40 Pace Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (2nd edn; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003) 288–91, who argues that Luke borrows from Josephus’ description of the philosophical ‘schools’ within Judaism and legitimates the Christian ‘way’ by describing it as one such school. For more on Luke’s use of αἵρεσις, see R. I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge, 2006) 168–9.

fingers Paul as the ‘ringleader of the Nazorean sect’ (24.5), Paul contends that his allegiance is not to a sect, but ἡ ὁδός, ‘the way’ (24.14). According to Luke, Paul serves *the* way, not *a* sect, a distinction exhibiting the sort of universal truth claim which, as Simon observes, makes the classical, neutral meaning of ἀρρεσις impossible. In addition to his claim that the church is considered a sect only in the opinion of others (a claim reinforced by the statement of the Roman Jews in Acts 28.28), Luke intimates that sects are dangerous because they frequently bring about στάσις, the precarious civil strife that ancient communities sought dearly to avoid (e.g. Luke 23.19, 25; Acts 19.40). Two of Luke’s five references to στάσις in Acts come when the principal sects of Judaism, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, try Paul in the Sanhedrin. στάσις also features in Tertullus’ denunciation of Paul’s sectarianism before Felix and it comes about when agitators whom Luke later identifies as Pharisees arrive in Antioch prior to the Jerusalem Council. Sects are dangerous, therefore, because they lead to dissension and disorder; and, accordingly, Luke’s gratuitous description of the Pharisees as a sect in Acts 15.5 further undermines the merit of their proposal.<sup>41</sup> It comes from a ἀρρεσις within the church, not from the apostles.

All told, then, Luke’s narration of the Cornelius episode and the Jerusalem Council combine to portray the movement to circumcise Gentile converts as a belated and precarious development which, although it arises among believers, is suspiciously extrinsic to the apostolic church and receives no endorsement from the apostles or elders themselves.

### 3. The Circumcision of Timothy

The curious narrative immediately following the Jerusalem Council may strengthen the view that Luke has ordered events so that the issue of circumcision does not surface until the end of Paul’s first missionary journey. After the Council concludes and the letter from the apostles is received with favour in Antioch, Paul and his new companion, Silas, pass through Syria and Cilicia and then Derbe and Lystra. In one of the latter two cities lives a reputable disciple called Timothy, whom Paul wishes to include in his ministry. According to Luke, Paul first circumcises Timothy, whose mother is a believing Jew, ‘because of the Jews in that region, for they knew that his father was a Greek’ (Acts 16.3).

At least three questions about Timothy’s circumcision have occupied commentators beyond the expected dispute over its historicity. First is the issue of Timothy’s identity, or at least Luke’s estimation of it. In the 1980s, David Daube and Shaye J. D. Cohen challenged the long-standing view that Timothy would have been considered a Jew, arguing that the principle of matrilineal descent is

<sup>41</sup> So Pervo (*Acts*, 371), who notes that ‘Luke thereby characterizes [the Judean visitors to Antioch] as dangerous outside agitators’.

of later rabbinic origin and would not have been normative in Luke's day.<sup>42</sup> This essay adopts their view without repeating their arguments, all the while conceding that notable commentators continue to insist otherwise.<sup>43</sup> Assuming that Luke considers Timothy to be a Gentile, my interest is in the next two questions: (1) Why does Luke think Paul circumcised a Gentile right after the ruling *against* Gentile circumcision had been promulgated; and (2) Why would Luke report so inconsistent an event at all?

With respect to the second question, it figures that Luke believed Paul had in fact circumcised a Gentile during his career. Perhaps Luke inferred as much from Gal 5.11; perhaps he learned of it from another source he deemed reliable. In either case, Luke considered the circumcision of a Gentile by Paul to be an authentic episode meriting inclusion in his account of the early church. Pressed to include the event, Luke's placement of it is revealing. Note, for example, that he does not have Paul circumcise Timothy (or anyone else) on his initial visit to Derbe and Lystra. It is not until his third sojourn – many years later – that Paul circumcises Timothy, a delay possibly prompted by Luke's desire to keep the cat in the bag, so to speak. Because Luke contends that the issue of circumcision for Gentiles is broached for the first time when the Judaisers descend upon Antioch at the end of Paul's first missionary journey, it would not have been possible for Paul to feel pressure from Jews to circumcise a Gentile before then; nor, heaven forbid (from Luke's perspective), could Paul on his own have thought to circumcise a Gentile, which would make Paul rather than the Pharisees the originator of that misguided idea.

Indeed, 16.1–3 may be the *only* fitting place for the circumcision of a Gentile; any earlier and it would provide an authoritative precedent, any later and it would suggest that Paul disregards apostolic authority. Where it stands, Paul can strive with the Judaisers in 15.2 without appearing hypocritical, while the pressure Paul feels in 16.1–3 is understandable because the apostolic decree has not yet been publicised in the regions into which he is entering. Accordingly, the

42 D. Daube, *Ancient Jewish Law: Three Inaugural Lectures* (Leiden: Brill, 1981) 22–32; S. J. D. Cohen, 'Was Timothy Jewish? Patristic Exegesis, Rabbinic Law, and Matrilinear Descent', *JBL* 106 (1985) 251–68. For further consideration of this position, see C. Bryan, 'A Further Look at Acts 16:1–3', *JBL* 107 (1988) 292–4.

43 The most compelling argument, as noted by Pervo (*Acts*, 388), is that Luke mentions the Gentile identity of Timothy's father in v. 3, as though this identity was determinative of the way in which Timothy would have been viewed. Accordingly, Conzelmann (*Acts*, 125) acknowledges that Luke should have mentioned Timothy's Jewish mother in v. 3 rather than his Gentile father. Among those who still contend that Luke sees Timothy as a Jew, see I. Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in its Diaspora Setting* (BIFCS 5; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996) 15–17; Parsons, *Acts*, 222; Johnson, *Acts*, 284; Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 304; Witherington III, *Acts*, 474–5. Following F. W. Horn, 'Der Verzicht auf die Beschneidung im frühen Christentum', *NTS* 42 (1996) 479–505, Thiessen (*Contesting Conversion*, 121–2) contends that Timothy's status is ambiguous.

circumcision of Timothy constitutes a pardonable breach of the apostolic decree insofar as it ultimately serves to disseminate the decree, just the scenario described in 16.4–5.<sup>44</sup> Even still, Luke adds another detail to mitigate the embarrassment caused by Paul's apparent volte-face. Not only does he circumcise a Gentile under duress, and to prepare for journeys into realms as yet unfamiliar with the apostolic decree, but he also circumcises a Gentile who is not totally a Gentile. Luke mentions Timothy's Jewish mother in order to identify Timothy not as a Jew, but as a Gentile with a link to the Jewish people; and, as such, Paul's decision to circumcise him may appear less hypocritical than it would had Timothy had no Jewish parentage at all.

Of course, Luke's effort to mitigate the embarrassment of the circumcision by placing it strategically, including the element of duress, and identifying Timothy's mother as a Jew, raises the question of why Luke chose to mention the circumcision of a Gentile at all. Why not just leave it out? Again, I do not think that Luke would have considered omission a viable option. Whether on the basis of Gal 5.11 or some other testimony, Luke believed that Paul had indeed circumcised at least one Gentile during his ministry, and he therefore felt compelled to include such an incident in his narrative. Indeed, one might go beyond the circumcision of Timothy and ask why Luke failed to omit all controversy whatsoever in his second volume, be it over circumcision or any other issue, seeing that the resulting narrative would be all the more irenic. Surely Luke recognised that such omissions would violate the integrity of his work, so he included the potentially embarrassing details he believed were historical but he manipulated them – or 'emplotted' them, as theorists of historiography would say – so as to cohere with his historical programme.

In this sense, Luke's treatment of Paul's circumcision of a Gentile resembles the manner in which he includes, but softens, other Judaising controversies he probably uncovered in Paul's letter to the Galatians. For example, he includes a contest about Gentile circumcision between Paul and unnamed Jerusalemites in Antioch but he situates it *before* the Jerusalem Council in order to forestall the impression that the apostolic ruling at the Council lacked decisiveness. Peter's role in the conflict has also been elided. On the other hand, Barnabas' role in the conflict, and his subsequent estrangement from Paul at Antioch, has been preserved, but Luke has disentangled their breakup from the issue of circumcision by making it rather one about the loyalty of John Mark. In like manner, I am arguing, Luke felt compelled to report Paul's circumcision of a Gentile, but he did so a way that coordinated that event within his overall strategy for dealing with Gentile circumcision in the earliest church.

44 John Chrysostom views the circumcision of the Gentile Timothy similarly. See Cohen, 'Was Timothy Jewish?', 255; J. Garroay, 'The Law Observant Lord: John Chrysostom's Engagement with the Jewishness of Christ', *J ECS* 18 (2010) 613.

#### 4. The Pharisee Heresy

Thus, three crucial events in Acts – the conversion of Cornelius, the Jerusalem Council and the circumcision of Timothy – have been arranged and described strategically by Luke so that circumcision never appears to have been an authentic part of the Gentile mission. None of the original apostles or their associates ever thinks to circumcise a Gentile, and once a faction of Pharisaic converts belatedly proposes the idea it is promptly and unanimously rejected by the leadership in Jerusalem. When the quasi-apostle Paul follows the Pharisaic course by circumcising a Gentile, it is a partly Jewish Gentile whom Paul circumcises under duress and the ad hoc decision is never repeated.<sup>45</sup> This representation of circumcision in the early church is calculated and deliberate.

Luke treats circumcision in this manner because he is constrained by two competing interests. On the one hand, he cannot ignore the issue of circumcision for Gentiles if he has any intention of being faithful to facts (as he understands them). The letters of Paul demonstrate unmistakably that circumcision was a key matter of dispute in the early church and, whether or not Luke had access to these letters, he must have known the central place of the circumcision question in the period he was depicting.<sup>46</sup> His portrayal of the Jerusalem Council as the only grand convocation of the early church reveals as much. Yet, from Luke's retrospective perch the issue of circumcision had to be dealt with delicately. In his own community the matter had presumably been settled – perhaps long settled – in favour of not circumcising, and therefore Luke wished to represent that approach as the authentic, apostolic position. The pressure to do so would be even more intense if, as John Gager has most recently suggested, Luke or his community was under attack from Law-observant Christians – perhaps

45 The apostolic status of Paul in Acts is a long-standing interpretive issue. The criteria for apostleship set forth in Acts 1 – namely, that the number of apostles must be twelve and that each of the twelve must have participated in Jesus' ministry – precludes Paul from being considered an apostle; yet, Paul and Barnabas are called apostles in Acts 14.4, 14. For a discussion of this problem and the various proposals for resolving it, see A. C. Clark, *Parallel Lives: The Relation of Paul to the Apostles in the Lucan Perspective* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001) 136–49; G. Klein, *Die Zwölf Apostel: Ursprung und Gehalt einer Idee* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961); Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2006) 70–2.

46 The use of Paul's letters by Luke is another long-standing interpretive issue. The consensus that Luke did not use them has been seriously put to the test in recent years. The starting point for discussion in this regard is now Pervo (*Dating Acts*, 51–147), who draws upon the contributions of Morton Enslin, 'Once Again, Luke and Paul', *ZNW* 61 (1970) 253–71; see also W. O. Walker Jr, 'Acts and the Pauline Corpus Reconsidered', *JSNT* 25 (1985) 3–23; M. D. Goulder, 'Did Luke Know Any of the Pauline Letters?', *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 13 (1986) 97–112; L. Aejmelaes, *Die Rezeption der Paulusbriefe in der Miletrede (Apg 20:18–35)* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1987); H. Leppä, 'Luke's Critical Use of Galatians' (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2002).

those Christians whose traditions underlie the Pseudo-Clementine literature – who would have maintained that uncircumcised Gentiles remain unsaved.<sup>47</sup> In either case, Luke had to represent the movement to circumcise Gentiles as a real and historical, but also illegitimate, development within the church; hence his portrayal of the movement as the belated and pernicious innovation of Pharisaic converts.

Does that mean Luke's representation is historically inaccurate? Not necessarily. Contemporary historians working from sources which Luke also probably used – most notably, the epistles of Paul and the works of Josephus – have offered a spectrum of opinions regarding 'what really happened' with respect to the debate over circumcision for Gentiles in the early church.<sup>48</sup> On one end of the spectrum, Paula Fredriksen contends that Gentiles were initially admitted into the *ekklesiai* on the same terms on which they had long been admitted into synagogues; that is, as uncircumcised Gentiles in the capacity of adherents or God-fearers.<sup>49</sup> Only at mid-century, she suggests, when the on-going delay of the Kingdom of God prompted some members of the church to press for conversions to Christianity-qua-Judaism, did the notion of circumcising Gentiles surface. Thus, her reconstruction resembles Luke's. On the other end of the spectrum, however, Douglas A. Campbell holds that already the earliest missions to Gentiles demanded circumcision; indeed, even Paul 'preached circumcision' at that early stage, and hence his curious admission at Gal 5.11.<sup>50</sup>

The point of this essay is not that the latter end of the spectrum is correct and therefore that Luke has subverted historical truth. Nor is it that Fredriksen, and thus Luke, have it right. I simply propose that Luke be reckoned alongside Fredriksen, Campbell and all other historians who do their best to reconstruct the earliest decades of the church on the basis of sources. Luke did not know precisely how and when the notion of circumcising Gentiles entered the church, and his assessment of the sources was shaped, as it is for all historians, by assumptions about how history works. For Luke, the apostolicity of correct doctrine was an undeniable fact of paramount importance. If his community was not circumcising

47 J. Gager, 'Where Does Luke's Anti-Judaism Come From?', in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity* (ed. E. Iricinschi and H. Zellentin; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 207–11.

48 The use of Josephus by Luke is yet another controversial matter. For the most recent and compelling argument in favour, see again Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 149–99.

49 P. Fredriksen, 'Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2', *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991) 532–64. For similar views, see J. D. G. Dunn, *Beginning From Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009) 438–46; H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 256–63.

50 D. A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009) 154–8. As a forerunner of this view, Campbell credits T. L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).



Gentile converts, and what they did represented for Luke the opinion of the apostolic church, then surely circumcision cannot have been original or apostolic. It must have been a belated and extrinsic phenomenon.

In this respect, the logic and strategy guiding Luke's reconstruction of a prototypical circumcision faction resembles the line of attack that would be employed by the mid to late second-century heresiologists to deal with real but supposedly illegitimate developments within the church. The 'ecclesiastical position' on heresy, famously so dubbed by Walter Bauer, would emphasise the purity of the doctrine revealed by Jesus to the apostles and the corruption of that pure doctrine by misguided elements *within* the church.<sup>51</sup> 'Unbelief, right belief, wrong belief' was understood as the sequence leading to heresy.<sup>52</sup> Luke's representation of the Pharisees fits that paradigm, as the Pharisees progress from consummate unbelievers to believers (although that transition is not narrated), only to fall into incorrect, non-apostolic belief by introducing circumcision for Gentiles. Indeed, the curious temporal expression Luke puts in Peter's mouth at the Jerusalem Council, ἄφ' ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων (Acts 15.7), indicates that, in the opinion of the apostles, acceptance of Gentiles without circumcision was, as Pervo puts it, 'a foundational element of the faith'.<sup>53</sup> The challenge to that doctrine initiated by a band of former antagonists was a mistaken innovation dismissed swiftly with the unanimous consent of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15.22, 25).

Luke may have preceded the age of heresiology by a generation or two, and there is nothing to suggest that he was familiar with the ecclesiastical meaning of the term 'heresy' that eventually emerged, but his representation of difference within the church resembles that of later polemicists to the extent that the title 'proto-heresiologist' might not be off base; and, if Luke is a proto-heresiologist, then perhaps a proto-heresy is the 'Pharisee heresy', the belated, erroneous, pernicious notion that Gentiles should be circumcised, which on Luke's reckoning was swiftly purged from the apostolic church.<sup>54</sup>

51 W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (trans. Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins; ed. R. Kraft and G. Krodel; 2nd edn; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971 [1934]) xxiii.

52 W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, xxiii.

53 Pervo, *Acts*, 373. See above, n. 29.

54 For a related, but different, notion of Luke as a proto-heresiologist, see Tyson (*Marcion and Luke-Acts*), who argues that Acts (and canonical Luke) were completed around the time Marcion came to prominence and aim to empower proto-Orthodox Christians in the controversy with Marcion and his followers. Tyson is of course reformulating the position put forth by his teacher, John Knox, in *Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1942).