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## Introduction

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 male 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).<sup>1</sup> 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 the circumcision of Gentile men, and

1. Unless otherwise noted, English translations of the New Testament texts will be taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.; English translations of the Septuagint will be taken from Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Cornelius, the embodiment of the Gentile believer, comes to a clean heart by virtue of God's favor.

The historic 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 sensibilities.<sup>2</sup> 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, Jewish Christians' efforts to secure the boundaries by enforcing strict observance of Jewish identity markers were fueled by deep anxiety.<sup>3</sup> 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 into 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/

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

3. A firsthand account of this meeting is recorded by Paul in his letter to the Galatians (2:1-14).

teacher/healer as its Messiah and Savior; questions perhaps about the character of God.<sup>4</sup>

The author of Luke–Acts,<sup>5</sup> 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. So it is that the theological parameters of the conflict were redrawn around that to which table fellowship and circumcision merely pointed—not what was at issue, but 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 the surface, such language does not actually engage the particularity of the circumcision question. Instead, it answers the other question Luke’s Peter has discerned to be behind the first, one not about a particular ritual practice but rather about making distinctions. Peter’s

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 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 (1976): 567–97, at 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, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 63–97; I. Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 29–35.

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 vision of the sovereign freedom of the God of Israel. The language of cleansing changes the terms of the discourse; indeed, 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 11:4-10) are the only other places in all of Acts in which the language of cleansing can be found. It is this 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. He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." The voice said to him again, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven. (Acts 10:10-16)

Luke makes a momentous hermeneutic shift here. He introduces the language of cleansing within 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:<sup>6</sup>

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 anything 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 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 to any other single event, giving his readers a longer view of the

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

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.

reality of the struggle around identity issues in the first century, and of how long the struggles involved in appropriating new markers and relinquishing the old can be. 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 “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.<sup>8</sup>

The issues of Peter’s time were practices of male 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 was not only about a fundamental belief in the different ontological states of Jews and Gentiles (articulated in Leviticus as being holy) but also about the preservation of the distinctions through rite and ritual as a covenantal responsibility. Therefore Luke sets out to show that

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* (SP5; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 187.

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 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" (15:8-9). But the few words chosen—bearing witness, Holy Spirit, making no distinction, and God's knowing and cleansing of 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 book 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.<sup>9</sup> Among the evidence of a single

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* (HTS; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 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 Press, 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, DE: 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; S. John Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor: Character Types in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 144; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-*

author is how Lukan theological perspectives and ethical directions are expressed consistently and coherently throughout both the Third Gospel and Acts.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, Luke’s construction of “cleansing” is an important object of study, not only because of its 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.<sup>11</sup>

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*.<sup>12</sup> 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;

*Acts* (SBLMS 20; Missoula, MT: 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 Press, 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*, 141–43.

11. Walter Bauer, “καθαρίζω,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker. 3d ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000; hereafter BDAG), 488–89; 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 into 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.



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—commonly known as “the cleansing of the ten lepers” or “the cleansing of the Samaritan leper” (Luke 17:11–19).<sup>13</sup>

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,”<sup>14</sup> at two critical points in the narrative progression: the first is in Luke’s Gospel, in what is widely considered the “programmatic 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; NRSV “the year of the Lord’s favor”). This announcement is received with wonder and welcome until Jesus follows prophecy with proverb, saying, “no prophet is accepted/*dektos* in the prophet’s hometown” (Luke 4:24). To demonstrate the truth of this proverb, Jesus recalls the story of the prophet Elisha’s cleansing of 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

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

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

despite the “unlawfulness” of Jews associating with Gentiles, saying, “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable/*dektos* to him” (Acts 10:34–35). 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.

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.<sup>15</sup> *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.<sup>16</sup>

I am suggesting, therefore, that the power of Peter’s vision and his climactic declaration about the cleansing of Gentile hearts is

15. Luke Timothy Johnson states that “many New Testament citations carry with them associations from their original context and . . . these associations are as important to the meaning and function of the citation as the actual words quoted.” He also identifies as “midrash” what has also been 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,” 1–13 in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts*, eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001).
16. For example, Isaiah 49 contributes “to the end of the earth”; Isaiah 56 contributes references to eunuchs that only appear in Acts 8:26–40; Isaiah 58 contributes the verse embedded in Jesus’ reading of Isaiah 61 by the hook word *aphēsis*; Isaiah 60 again contributes *allogenēs*, a hapax in the NT except for Luke 17:18; Isaiah 61 contributes the text for the sermon in the synagogue, *aphēsis*, and *allogenēs*. See chapter 3 below for a full explication of Luke’s appropriations from these Isaiah texts.

anticipated by Jesus' programmatic sermon in chapter four of Luke's gospel. Luke's narrative focus is on the relations between the Jewish and Gentile believers as they negotiate the identity markers of who constitute the people of God, markers that, in both his Gospel and Acts, account 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 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."

### 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.<sup>17</sup> The link between the terminology of *katharizō* and

*dektos*, such as 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 the continuity are significant in any way.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

17. Jean 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," 46-69 in *Luke and Scripture* (2001).
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, resulting 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 Jesus and the apostles perform. There is considerable overlap, to be sure, in the gospels as well as in the scholarly literature, in the treatment of exorcisms as 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 book 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, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Clinton Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits in the Synoptic Gospels* (WUNT 185; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

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.<sup>20</sup> However, nowhere in Acts is there an account of any of the apostles cleansing a leper, an anomaly that has not been adequately explained.<sup>21</sup> 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: first, because the closest parallel is the cleansing of Gentile hearts, Luke means to suggest that cleansing is an act of divine power; second, because this particular power is not given to the apostles Luke intends to portray it as 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.<sup>22</sup> 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

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). Luke records both Jesus and Paul exorcising demons (Luke 8:26–33; 11:14–15; Acts 16:16–18) and teaching in synagogues (Luke 4:16–32; Acts 17:2).

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 Lame, and the Poor*, 26. But Hamm’s work around the symbolic value of the lame in Acts, and the specific attention given to them 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 Lame, and the Poor*, 13.

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 must question whether the people afflicted with *lepra* have a particular function in the Gospel, and if so, how that particular function relates to Acts.

Therefore my thesis 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."<sup>23</sup>

The methodology employed can be broadly identified as a tradition-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 is 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 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

23. Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash*, 2.

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.

### Prospect

The book 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, both 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 a somewhat 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, skin afflictions are most often seen here not as particular diseases in themselves but as symptomatic of other underlying health conditions.

In the mid-places along that continuum are texts in which the condition of *lepra* accrues other meanings: a divine punishment; a contagion, with effects on sacred food that are 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 signify what would be recognized today as Hansen’s Disease. This is followed by an explication of 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 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 in which 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 to show how it is used in all the potentially relevant passages from Leviticus.<sup>24</sup> While the vast majority

24. In addition to Leviticus 13 and 14, specifically devoted to *lepra*, we also find *katharizō* 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.

of occurrences of *katharizō* are found in 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, new hearts and spirits. *Katharizō* also appears in three Isaiah texts (chaps. 53, 57, and 66), none of which Luke directly quotes or alludes to, but that are of interest, nevertheless, for how they fall within a cluster of Isaianic texts Luke clearly knows, and how they contribute 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.<sup>25</sup> The issue facing the early Christian/Jesus movement and the one for which Luke is making an account is precisely this: how the social group emerging from Jesus' earliest followers, with its clearly prescribed 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.

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

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 was 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, his emphasis on those afflicted with *lepra*.<sup>26</sup>

Having established a range of possibilities representing the various ways the affliction of *lepra* was constructed in the first century and

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 writings of Paul by Carol Stockhausen, *Moses' Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), at 26–27. See also Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash*.

having clarified the range of denotations and connotations around the word *katharizō*/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 of them with 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. The first invokes Leviticus 12 and the directions for the 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 because Leviticus 12 and its instructions for parturient impurity is located 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-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.<sup>27</sup> 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 (Mark 7:1–23). This is fully paralleled in the Gospel of Matthew, while only

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

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 Luke's purposes. In the Markan text Jesus declares all foods to be "clean" and lists the impulses "from the human heart" 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.<sup>28</sup>

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 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.

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*, 770-71. 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 also that he did not find Mark's emphasis on the moral dimension of cleansing congenial to his purposes.

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, must now be read for its intratextual 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 are we to wait for another?" and Jesus' response, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them" (Luke 7:18-23; Matt. 11:2-6). Between question and answer Luke inserts a report that Jesus "had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind" (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 include not only the healing of certain body afflictions and conditions but also raising the dead and bringing good news to the poor. The allusion to Isaiah 61 is unmistakable but raises the interesting question of where exactly the lepers come from, 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 that is itself situated in the larger context of the eschatological expectations of Second Temple Judaism.<sup>29</sup> The Isaianic prophecies are interpreted in several of the sectarian writings at Qumran; scholars have studied, for

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

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.<sup>30</sup> 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 similarities to the story of the single leper in chapter 5, 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 point at which several of Luke's other lines of thought converge. 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 *allogenes*, or "foreigner" (Luke 17:18). This is the only place in all of the New Testament where the word *allogenes* is used, but it is even more compelling here because of its appearance in three of the five Isaiah

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.

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 the same statement from Jesus: “your faith has saved you.”<sup>31</sup> This phrase, common to the three stories, requires that 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.<sup>32</sup>

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

The first chapters investigated the ways *lepra* was medically, religiously, and socially constructed in the first century so that it became a salient feature of Luke's Gospel. They also illuminated 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

31. These stories are the woman who anoints Jesus' feet (7:50), the woman with the hemorrhage (8:48, par. Mark 5:34; Matt. 9:22), and the blind beggar near Jericho (18:42; par. Mark 10:52).

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



Gentiles' cleansed hearts in Acts by means of those afflicted with *lepra* in the Gospel, I conclude in chapter 5 with narrative-critical analysis of Acts 10 and 15 read with the analyses of *lepra*, *katharizō*, and *dektos* in view.

In that final chapter I return to a literary analysis of the report of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, Peter's appeal to release male 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.

"Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone 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 that he "should not call anyone common or unclean" (Acts 10:28), and for Peter—at least for the moment—the participation of Gentiles in the Christian community is decided by 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 upon 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 the Holy Spirit. Images and texts influence how Peter perceives subsequent experiences; in an effort to understand and explain those experiences he 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 fully 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,<sup>33</sup> it is more than a description of a 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 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 now lived.

The 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

33. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SP 3; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 9–10.

understanding of the community's origins. In the context of such a Gentile Christian fellowship Luke must have experienced what 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 the community believes actually manifests the very salvation of God—being forgiven by God, having received the Holy Spirit and having been baptized into the community, experiencing love and mercy 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.<sup>34</sup> 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 by which Peter interprets the dream is also analyzed in this chapter, illuminating how Peter's discernment of God's will is informed both by the language and images of the dream and by Peter's experiences of Cornelius and Cornelius's household. Changes in the narrator's details of how Peter recalls and reports the dream, Peter's attributions to the activity of the Holy

34. Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," 92–106.

Spirit, and vocabulary sounding echoes of Isaiah and the Gospel all shape Luke's articulation of the events that 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 cleansed Gentiles all come to symbolize God's restoration to wholeness of individuals and a people.