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## The Cross and Atonement from Luke to Hebrews

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*Mr Anderson previously contributed an article on 'Theophilus: A Proposal' to the Evangelical Quarterly in July 1997. Here he takes further the question of the significance of the cross in Luke–Acts.*

**Key words:** New Testament; Luke; Acts; Hebrews; cross; priest;

There is a cross in the writings of Luke. Its significance has not been properly understood. In 1930, J.M. Creed made a profound but disturbing observation that in the Gospel of Luke 'There is no *theologia crucis* beyond the affirmation that Christ must suffer. . . .'<sup>1</sup> In 1961 C.K. Barrett made a profound observation that was not disturbing. He said referring to Luke–Acts: 'No Roman official would ever have filtered out so much of what to him would be theological and ecclesiastical rubbish in order to reach so tiny a grain of relevant apology.'<sup>2</sup> This article will also discuss the similarity between the Epistle to the Hebrews and Luke–Acts and the implications of that similarity to the Lucan understanding of the cross.

### I.

The earliest Christians had three different interpretations of the meaning of the death of Jesus. Edward Schillebeeckx has identified them as follows: '1. Jesus died the death of a prophetic martyr; 2. as part

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1 J.M. Creed, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (London, 1930), lxxii. See W.G. Kümmel, 'Current Theological Accusation Against Luke', *Andover Newton Quarterly* 16 (1975), 131–145, espec. 134. Creed's conclusion, based on his resolution of the textual problem concerning Luke 22:19b–20, is that the shorter reading should be accepted as authentic, and I agree with him. Although the commentators agree that the Lucan Jesus celebrates a passover meal and further that the idea of a sacrifice is missing from Luke, no one has previously discussed the significance of Luke not condemning the animal sacrificial system, as did Matthew and Luke. This article, *inter alia*, explains that significance.

2 C.K. Barrett, *Luke the Historian in Recent Study* (London, 1961), 63. This article will explain the significance of these two profound observations for Lucan theology and the proper significance of the cross in the writings of Luke.

of salvation history Jesus' death is included within God's plan of salvation; 3. and, lastly, his death has a saving efficacy. He brings about reconciliation between God and men, in other words he is a sacrifice.<sup>3</sup>

Creed and those who agree with him note that Luke has no equivalent of the ransom saying (Mk. 10:45; Mt. 20:28), nor of Matthew's connection of Jesus' covenant blood with the remission of sins (Mt. 26:28). Luke does not connect forgiveness of sins with the death of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Whether one agrees with Creed, who says that there is no theology of the cross in the Gospel of Luke, or with I.H. Marshall, who asserts that Luke has chosen not to emphasise a theology of the cross,<sup>5</sup> the question remains: why did Luke present his material in this manner?

The observation of Creed is disturbing to all Christians but it need not be. A cursory examination of the four gospels reveals that they are all written around the cross. The four books contain a disproportionate amount of material about the death and resurrection. Everything in each of the four gospels leads up to this momentous event. Depending upon which account you review, one-sixth to one-third of the gospel is devoted to events associated with the passion, and everything else is in some way introductory to the passion of Jesus. Martin Kähler's classic description of the gospels as 'passion narratives with extended introductions' says it all.<sup>6</sup>

If Creed is correct that Luke has no theology of the cross and if Barrett is correct that Roman officials are not the target audience, what is the proper approach to understanding Lucan theology? Initially, Barrett's observation invites us to consider the possibility that Theophilus, the addressee of Luke's narratives, was Jewish or Jewish Christian. This then permits us to change the focus and ask why is it that Paul felt a need to create a theology of the cross and Luke did not. With this change, perhaps we can begin to understand Luke. Why do you need a theology of the cross if you, as a Jew or Jewish follower of Jesus believe that on the Day of Atonement, the sins of the entire Jewish nation are forgiven?

The commentators note the embarrassment that Luke's omission of a theology of the cross creates. Identifying Theophilus as the High

3 E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York, 1979), 274.

4 H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of Luke* (London, 1960), 201.

5 Marshall concludes: 'Luke did believe in the atoning value of Jesus on the cross', citing Lk. 22:19f. and Acts 20:28 (private correspondence with the author); see also *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids, 1970), 175.

6 M. Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historical Biblical Christ* (1896; ET Philadelphia, 1964), 80, n. 11.

Priest provides the basic clue and cipher to Luke's theology.<sup>7</sup> This identification of 'most excellent Theophilus' as the High Priest offers a possible explanation for Luke's lack of atoning view of the cross. Luke is thoroughly Jewish and the earliest Christians considered themselves to be Jews. Clearly such a lack of atoning view represents primitive Christianity. More importantly, Luke, in my opinion, rejected and/or did not develop an atoning significance for the death of Jesus because Luke did not want to equate Jesus with the High Priest. Luke, ever the diplomat, was very careful in his Gospel not to describe Jesus as a prophet greater than Moses. Such a notion would have been very offensive to the High Priest. Three examples should illustrate this point. In describing the Transfiguration only Luke indicates that Jesus, Moses and Elijah appeared together in glory.<sup>8</sup> The Lucan Jesus does not walk on water nor does he curse the fig tree causing it to wilt and die. Luke, as part of his irenic presentation certainly, did not want to offend the High Priest. For this reason, Luke does not develop the substitutionary importance of the cross. The Jews believed that the death of the High Priest had atoning significance. Persons charged with accidental homicide who had fled to a city of refuge were permitted to return home after the death of the High Priest without facing prosecution.<sup>9</sup> The death of the High Priest was regarded as atonement for the innocent blood that had been shed.<sup>10</sup> The doctrine of the theology of the cross replaced both the High Priest and the Day of Atonement.

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7 A man named 'Theophilus' was the High Priest from 37 to 41 C.E. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, xviii, 123; xix 297. The edition of Flavius Josephus' works utilized in this book is the Loeb Classical Library, translated by R. Marcus, H. St.J. Thackeray and L.H. Feldman (London 1926-65); also Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia, 1969), 378; see also R.H. Anderson, 'Theophilus: A Proposal,' *Evangelical Quarterly*, 69:3 (1997), 195-215.

Query: Is the story of Lazarus and the rich man with five brothers (16:28) directed at Theophilus, his brothers and his brother-in-law, Caiaphas, all of whom at one time served as High Priest?

8 Lk. 9:28-36; cf. Mt. 17:1-8 and Mk. 9:2-13.

9 Num. 35:11, 25, 28, 32.

10 Jacob Milgrom in his *JPS Torah Commentary on Numbers* with respect to Num. 35:25 states 'As the High Priest atones for Israel's sins through his cultic service in his lifetime (Exod. 28:36; Lev. 16:16, 21), so he atones for homicide through his death. Since the blood of the slain, although spilled accidentally, cannot be avenged through the death of the slayer, it is ransomed through the death of the High Priest which releases all homicides from their cities of refuge. That it is not the exile of the manslaughter but the death of the High Priest that expiates his crime is confirmed by the Mishnah: "If, after the slayer has been sentenced as an accidental homicide, the High Priest dies, he need not go into exile." The Talmud, in turn comments thereon "But it is not the exile that expiates? It is not the exile that expiates, but the death of the high priest."' [footnotes omitted].

## II.

Although we do not know how or when the replacement process occurred, a review of one pericope is revealing. The anointing at Bethany<sup>11</sup> is an example where Mark has added High Priestly imagery to the passion narrative. According to Leviticus 8, Moses poured some of the anointing oil onto Aaron's head to consecrate him. Aaron thus became the high priest. In Mark an unknown woman poured anointing oil onto Jesus' head. Aus says this event took place to represent Jesus as the High Priest.<sup>12</sup> Thus it is significant that the head of Jesus is not anointed in Luke. Luke tells the story of the woman who poured oil on the feet of Jesus during his Galilean ministry.<sup>13</sup> The High Priestly imagery is missing from this account. Luke avoids presenting Jesus as a prophet greater than Moses. He also avoids any hints that Jesus is like the High Priest or that Jesus has replaced the High Priest.

Once the replacement process began, it became necessary to anoint Jesus in accordance with scripture. Matthew was probably the first to recognize this need and Mark faced with reconciling Matthew and Luke followed Matthew. Mark has also added High Priestly imagery language to the Lucan account of Gethsemane.<sup>14</sup> As long as the Temple stood, the High Priest was in office, the Day of Atonement was being observed and Judaism recognized the followers of Jesus as Jews there was no need or reason for Luke to proclaim a theology of the cross. Judaism defined atonement to be the reconciliation between God and man through repentance. The role of the High Priest in obtaining that atonement was recognized by Josephus in *Bell.* 4.318 wherein he called the Jews' High Priest 'the captain of their salvation.' Paul redefined atonement to be the reconciliation between God and man through the death of Jesus Christ.

Although some have argued that the inclusion of the Gentiles led to the split between Judaism and Christianity,<sup>15</sup> I believe that the split was caused by the suggestion of Pauline theology that the Temple was no longer necessary. In any event Schillebeeckx has cogently observed: 'The memories of early Christian Jewish traditions preserved in the New Testament are in their very acerbity symptomatic of Christianity in the process of breaking away from Judaism.'<sup>16</sup> Paul effectively replaced the Temple, the High Priest and the Day of Atonement with

11 Mk. 14:3-9; cf. Mt. 26:6-13; Jn. 12:1-8.

12 Roger David Aus, *The Wicked Tenants and Gethsemane* (Atlanta 1996), 112.

13 Lk. 7:36-50.

14 Aus, 108-152. I should note that Aus presupposes the priority of Mark.

15 P.F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge, 1987).

16 Schillebeeckx, 281.

his theology of the cross and he did so long before the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. Many commentators claim that Luke wrote Acts in such a way to make it appear that the inclusion of Gentiles was not a problem. The problem was not the Gentiles but the theology of the cross. This is missing from Luke. However, a close examination of Stephen's last sermon will reveal that many of the other themes of Paul's preaching are included, perhaps to show that Stephen was a forerunner of Paul just as John the Baptist was a forerunner of Jesus. Luke was very familiar with Paul's thoughts as can be seen from Stephen's last sermon. It included the following Pauline themes:

- 1) the faith of Abraham;
- 2) the laws were promulgated through angels;
- 3) the stubbornness of the Israelites, they killed the prophets;
- 4) the Temple not made with hands; and
- 5) a historical demonstration that the great events of the history of Israel occurred outside the promised land.

Many commentators have said Stephen's sermon make no sense. It makes perfect sense. The theology of Second Temple Judaism was based on the land, the law and the Temple. Pauline theology destroyed the tripod. Luke reveals his awareness of Pauline theology with Stephen's sermon. Luke either accurately reports Stephen's sermon, or, if he made up the sermon as many commentators have alleged, he reveals his awareness of Pauline theology. Furthermore, Luke makes a point, although subtle, that would not have been missed by the High Priest. Luke has Stephen bring out Aaron's responsibility for making the idol with the story of the calf<sup>17</sup> demonstrating that high priests<sup>18</sup> from the beginning have been 'wicked tenants.' This is the focal point of the sermon.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is the final part of the unique Lucan triad, the parables having in common the theme of lost and found or recovered. For those who have studied the various implications, it is the story of the ultimate outcast, a person reduced in status to feeding pigs, expressed in the language of economics. Darrell Bock has said the message is that 'absolute reversal results from repentance. . . .'<sup>19</sup>

The story of the 'Good Thief' is another example of a story unique to Luke that had one meaning to the High Priest and another meaning for us. The prophets repeatedly told the people 'repent and be saved.'

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17 Acts 7:40.

18 In Luke the parable is told to the people against the scribes and chief priests (20:9, 19). The judgment is directed against the temple establishment led by the High Priest. There is no parallel to Matthew 21:43 which talks explicitly of the rejection of the Jewish people as a whole.

19 Bock, *Luke, BECNT* (Grand Rapids, Vol. 2 1996), 1320.

The prophets taught that it was never too late to turn from your evil ways. The Good Thief did repent on the cross and the Lucan Jesus said to him, 'Today you will be with me in Paradise.' The High Priest believed that repentance was the key to salvation and therefore would have appreciated this story. It was the ultimate last minute act of repentance. The behavior of the Good Thief was consistent with Jewish belief that even someone who had gone astray could return to the fold of the covenant by repenting. Both the Prodigal Son and the Good Thief had repented.

These stories of the Good Thief and Prodigal Son were omitted by Matthew and Mark because for them the key to salvation was not repentance. The new focal point is the theology of the cross which admittedly is missing from the Gospel of Luke. Although Ravens calls this omission 'an embarrassment,'<sup>20</sup> it would be intellectually more honest to acknowledge that Luke is pre-Pauline and that the doctrine of the theology of the cross represents a later stage of theological development.

Luke stresses more than any other New Testament writer the need for repentance.<sup>21</sup> With Gabriel's announcement about John to Zechariah while he is serving in the Temple, Luke portrays Israel as a people in need of repentance.<sup>22</sup> The need is repeated in the Song of Zechariah<sup>23</sup> and is implied in John's message of repentance.<sup>24</sup>

### III.

Luke's theology of repentance is very Jewish.<sup>25</sup> There could be no remission of sins without repentance. The sacrifices are performed

20 Ravens, *Luke and the Restoration of Israel* (Sheffield 1995), 167 'Luke's lack of atoning view of the cross continues to cause problems for commentators.' For Luke, the way to salvation is through acceptance of the law and repentance.

21 The noun (*metanoia*) or verb (*metanoō*) form appears 56 times in the New Testament. 25 are found either in the Gospel of Luke or the Acts of the Apostles.

Lk. 1:5-25; 3:1-6; 3:10-14; 5:32; 9:24-25; 10:13-15; 11: 29-32; 13:1-5; 15:1-7; 8-10; 11-32; 16:19-31; 19:1-10; 24:47. For Luke, repentance is the summary term for the response to the apostolic message: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 13:24; 17:30; 19:4; 20:21 and 26:20.

22 Lk. 1:16.

23 Lk. 1:76-79.

24 Lk. 3:3-14.

25 Ehud Luz, 'Repentance,' in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, ed. Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr, (New York 1987), 785: 'Teshuvah is a central concept in Jewish religious literature and may be said to express the essence of the religious and ethical ideal of Judaism.' It was another great Jewish thinker of the 20th century, R. Joseph Soloveitchik, who said prayer and repentance are the most crucial of religious duties and represent the essence of Judaism.

because God commanded the Jews to do so.<sup>26</sup> The sacrifices were only effective if there was true repentance.<sup>27</sup> When the prophets of Israel directed harsh criticism against sacrifice, their real target was not the sacrificial system as such but insincere atonement and the perfunctory way in which the offering was made.<sup>28</sup>

Jeremias, Marshall and more recently, Bock have each viewed the Lucan Jesus in the 'temple cleansing' episode as criticizing the excessive profiteering of the trade and not the sacrificial system itself. They suggest that the account can be better understood by recognizing that for the convenience of those who came to the temple, the animal vendors provided sacrificial animals that would meet the proper ritual requirements. Jeremias said that 'we are forced to conclude that in the Court of Gentiles, in spite of the sanctity of the Temple area, there could have been a flourishing trade in animals for sacrifice, perhaps supported by the high-priestly family of Annas.'<sup>29</sup> In this same area money-changers exchanged the foreign currency into the half-shekel coin required for payment of the annual temple tax. The animal vendors and money-changers operated in the Court of the Gentiles, that area of the temple where non-Jews were allowed to come to participate in the Temple worship. During the great national feasts, the courtyard must have been over crowded with vendors and money-changers and therefore the commercial activities had converted God's house into a bazaar. Marshall opines that Jesus quoting Jeremiah meant 'that the legitimate sale of sacrificial victims was accompanied by money-grabbing and commercial rivalry.'<sup>30</sup> Darrell Bock explained the act of Jesus as a challenge 'against those who have excessive commercial interest in the temple'<sup>31</sup> and as 'an act against temple commerce, not against the temple directly. It condemns temple practice and thus implicitly calls for repentance.'<sup>32</sup> In Luke, the two verse 'cleansing of the temple' is an act urging reformation.

Luke has no theology of the cross nor does he condemn the animal sacrificial system. The theology of the cross replaced the animal

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26 'All these things must be sacrificed because of the commandment.' Sir. 35:5.

27 Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: I, The Age of Tannaim* (Cambridge Mass. 1927-30), 505; E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London and Philadelphia 1977), 165.

28 Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York 1962), 196, stated: 'For a long time the polemic of the prophets was taken to mean a radical rejection of the cult. In more recent studies it is maintained that the prophets merely criticized the abuse and absolutization of the cult.'

29 Jeremias, 49.

30 I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, 1978), 721.

31 Bock, *Luke, BECNT* (Grand Rapids, Vol. 2 1996), 1572.

32 Bock, 1573-1574.

sacrificial system. Both Matthew and Mark have a theology of the cross and both condemn the animal sacrificial system with Mark's condemnation being stronger and more explicit.

The most remarkable aspect of Luke's Gospel in this regard is that which is omitted from Luke but included in Matthew and/or Mark. As will be shown, these differences are not stylistic. In the story of the 'Call of Levi' there are two significant differences in the response of Jesus to the criticism of the Pharisees about his eating with tax collectors and sinners. In Luke, Jesus ends his remarks with these words: 'I have come to call not the righteous but the sinners to repentance.'<sup>33</sup> However, Matthew concludes: 'Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.'<sup>34</sup> Luke, of course, emphasizes repentance so the first difference is understandable. Matthew however has Jesus quote Hosea, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'<sup>35</sup> In addition, Matthew has repeated this phrase in the 'Plucking heads of grain on the sabbath' story.<sup>36</sup> Matthew, but not Luke, also quotes Jesus as saying, 'I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.'<sup>37</sup> If Hosea condemned the sacrificial system, then Matthew in having Jesus twice repeat the words of Hosea also condemned the sacrificial system.

Throughout the centuries, the cursing of the fig tree<sup>38</sup> has been interpreted by scholars as evidence that Jesus condemned the sacrificial system because the story encircles the cleansing of the temple. The fig tree that the Marcan Jesus cursed in the morning is discovered withered the day after Jesus had cleaned out the temple. From the placement of the stories and the well known symbolic meaning of fig trees, the commentators conclude that the fig tree represents the animal sacrificial system. In a number of fig tree passages examined by W.R. Telford, 'the reason given for God's wrathful visitation particularly concerns cultic aberration on the part of Israel, her running after false gods, or her condemnation for a corrupt temple cultus and sacrificial system (e.g. Jer. 5:17-19; 8:12-23; Hos. 2:11-13; 9:10-17 and Am. 4:4-13).'<sup>39</sup> Thus it is significant that the 'withered fig tree' account is conspicuous by its absence from Luke. In the expanded account provided by Mark we read:

33 Lk. 5:32.

34 Mt. 9:13.

35 Hos. 6:6.

36 Mt. 12:6-7 but omitted in Luke's version 6:1-5.

37 It is on the basis of this latter evidence that Lohmeyer claimed that a deep opposition to the Temple and priesthood could be detected in Matthew.

38 Mk. 11:12; Mt. 21:18-19.

39 William R. Telford, *The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree* (Sheffield 1980), 135.

On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And he said to it, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And his disciples heard it.

And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons; and he would not allow any one to carry anything through the temple. And he taught and said to them, Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers. And the chief priests and scribes heard it and sought a way to destroy him, because all the multitude was astonished at his teaching. And when evening came they went out of the city.

As they past by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots.<sup>40</sup> It is apparent that Mark's version not only is longer in words but in addition contains ideas not included in Luke: 1) no fig tree's withering (11:12–14); 2) no overturning of tables (11:15) (or use of a whip as in John 2:15); 3) no blocking of traffic (11:16); and 4) no mention that the temple is a place of worship for the nations (11:17). In Mark, according to Waetjen, Jesus is closing down the temple as 'he would not allow any one to carry anything through the temple.'<sup>41</sup> The Marcan Jesus 'makes the seemingly senseless act of cursing the fig tree intelligible.'<sup>42</sup> In the last sentence of this cogent paragraph, Waetjen states: 'The cursing of the fig tree symbolizes the condemnation of the temple institution which, as the central systemic structure of Judaism, has been regulating the religious, political, economic and social life of the Jewish people.'<sup>43</sup> Mark has changed the Lucan narrative so that the theological emphasis of the cleansing of the temple is no longer a mere act of reformation but one of judgment.<sup>44</sup>

In Matthew, Jesus answers a question about the greatest commandment.<sup>45</sup> Although the commentators uniformly conclude that Jesus with his answer has done away with the need for sacrifices, the addition Mark makes to this pericope is more pointed: 'This is much more

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40 Mk. 11:12–20.

41 Mk. 11:16.

42 Herman Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power* (Minneapolis 1989), 182.

43 Waetjen, 182.

44 Mark has also changed the Lucan narrative of the rendering of the temple veil in part by changing its position in the narrative so that the torn veil signifies the end of the temple. F.J. Matera states that Luke 'wishes to avoid the impression that the death of Jesus is the end of the Temple and the cult.' 'Death of Jesus According to Luke: A Question of Sources', CBQ 47 (3, 1985), 475.

45 Mt. 22:36–40.

important than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.<sup>46</sup> The animal sacrificial system condemned by Matthew and Mark, but not Luke, was the very basis of the Judaic temple worship.

On the Day of Atonement a sacrifice was offered by the High Priest for the nation. 'The High Priest's service in the Temple was distinguished by the permission he received to make sin-offerings on the inner altar and to enter the Holy of Holies. The offerings were made to atone for his personal sins, for sins in judgment made by the Sanhedrin, and for communal sins. The High Priest's most solemn service was performed on the Day of Atonement. . . . When carried out properly, the service atoned for the sins of the entire Jewish nation.'<sup>47</sup>

On the Day of Atonement, two goats were offered for sacrifice but an arbitrary decision was made between them. The one goat was sacrificed in the Temple for Israel's sin and its blood taken into the Holy of Holies itself. In Leviticus 16:21, Aaron is commanded to lay his hand on the scapegoat and 'confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel.' This confession and transference of sin to the beast is special to this occasion.<sup>48</sup> This goat is then sent out laden with this sin into the wilderness.<sup>49</sup> The purpose of the sacrificial blood is clearly stated:

The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life.<sup>50</sup>

Following the slaughter and the blood-rite, and the burning of the fat portions on the altar, the rest of the flesh is consumed by the priests in the sacred precincts.<sup>51</sup>

The Day of Atonement was then and is for Jews today a time of contemplation, prayer, meditation, stock-taking, repentance and atonement. On this day the entire Book of Jonah was and is read. Jonah was chosen because it illustrates the power of repentance and shows that man can not escape the power and presence of God. Ezekiel had individualized the prophetic doctrine of retribution and with it, its counterpart, repentance. But it was the Prophet Hosea who was the great proponent of the doctrine of repentance. Luke was very familiar with the Books of Jonah, Ezekiel and Hosea. Luke has seized upon the developing consciousness of individual piety of the great prophets of

46 Mk. 12:33.

47 *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* (New York, 1989), 338-9.

48 Two other verses command confession as part of the process of atonement for sin: Lev. 5:5; Num. 5:6f.

49 Lev. 16:7-10.

50 Lev. 17:11.

51 Lev. 6:24-30.

Judaism and utilized these concepts<sup>52</sup> to explain the spiritual dynamics of the kingdom.

#### IV.

If Luke has not condemned the animal sacrificial system and if the Gospel of Luke has no theology of the cross, then what is the unique role of the cross in Lucan writings? Luke claimed to have gathered accurate information so that Theophilus may know the truth. Luke proclaimed the resurrection as a witness and minister of the Word. There can be no greater truth. There is no need to do handstands when Luke has already told us his methodology.

Luke, after writing his gospel, decided to narrate in Acts of the Apostles the story of the early church. Luke tells Theophilus that the early followers of Jesus inspired by the Holy Spirit boldly preached the gospel. Initially, Luke describes the church and its activities centered in Jerusalem and surrounding vicinity. After the Jerusalem Council, Paul and his missionary travels become the focal point of Luke's narration. Therefore it is necessary to look at how Luke assesses the significance of the cross in the Jerusalem community as well as in the Pauline community. The Jerusalem assessment will be based on unique Lucan language. The Pauline assessment will be based on Paul's sermon in Antioch of Pisidia and his last speech prior to his departure to Jerusalem.

The central message of the apostolic kerygma is the death and resurrection as they pertain to God's plan of salvation.<sup>53</sup> On the basis of this death and resurrection, the Jerusalem community proclaimed, in the power of Jesus' name, *metanoia* or repentance and forgiveness of sins.<sup>54</sup> This theology of the Jerusalem community, as shown by Wilhelm Heitmüller,<sup>55</sup> did not include a doctrine of the atonement of the death of Jesus. Heitmüller further established that Paul did not receive his Christianity, including the doctrine of the theology of the cross, from

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52 As noted in fn. 25, two of these concepts are prayer and repentance. The third concept is 'almsgiving' when expressed as a true sacrifice where the donor derives no benefit from the gift and someone in need benefits thereby. The concept of sacrifice was so strong the terminology carried over to almsgiving, prayer and repentance as 'service of the heart' even before the destruction of the Temple.

53 Lk. 24:44-46; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:41 and 13:31.

54 In the speeches of Acts, Luke portrays the death of Jesus as a miscarriage of justice that God reversed by vindicating Jesus at the resurrection. Acts 2:22-36; 3:12-16; 4:8-12; 7:51-56; 13:26-41. In none of these speeches does Luke portray the death of Jesus as an atoning sacrifice.

55 W. Heitmüller, 'Hellenistic Christianity before Paul,' *Writings of St. Paul*, ed. by Wayne Meeks (New York London, 1972), 314, ET of 'Zum Problem Paulus und Jesus,' *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 13 (1912) 320-37.

the Jerusalem community led by James but from the Jewish Christians of the diaspora.

Luke on three separate occasions refers to the cross as a tree<sup>56</sup> and he specially said Jesus was hanged on the tree. Among the gospel writers this peculiar expression is only utilized by Luke. With three references, one can only conclude Luke intends to allude to Deuteronomy 21:22f as did Paul in Galatians 3:13. According to Deuteronomy, '... he that is hanged is under God's curse.' Since the third reference is to words that Luke has included in Paul's sermon which he preached at Antioch of Pisidia,<sup>57</sup> it is proper to ask whether Luke was familiar with Paul's teachings about the cross. A stronger statement about Luke's familiarity with Paul's teachings about the cross can be based upon the words of Paul in Acts 20:28 which will be discussed in the later portion of this argument.

Repetition is utilized on numerous occasions as a literary tool by Luke for emphasis and to note his agreement.<sup>58</sup> If Luke has not intended a reversal of traditional Jewish thinking, there would be no reason for him to remind Theophilus three times about the curse God has placed on the man hanged on a tree.<sup>59</sup> According to G.B. Caird, Luke with his repetition wants Theophilus to know that Jesus has borne the curse on behalf of others.<sup>60</sup> However, it is not clear that Luke intends the death of Jesus to have atoning value. The reversal that has occurred is that a man who according to scripture is accursed, has now, by the power of God, risen from the dead.

The strongest expression of the purpose of God in the cross occurs in the first sermon in Acts. Peter told the men of Jerusalem that Jesus was 'delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God'<sup>61</sup> This is repeated in the prayer meeting described in Acts 4. All concerned 'Herod, Pilate, Gentiles, and Israelites,' the praying group

56 Acts 5:30 (Peter to the council); 10:39 (Peter to Cornelius) and 13:29 (Paul at Ephesus).

57 Acts 13:29.

58 Lucan parallelism and repetition have been discussed since the days of the Tübingen school. Cadbury, Morgenthaler, Mattil, Petersen, Radl, Praeder and Talbert have been among the contributors.

59 Martin Hengel has suggested that Luke 'toned down' the offensiveness of the scandalous death of Jesus to meet his 'apologetic concern.' *The Atonement: The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament* (ET Philadelphia, 1981), 44. Since the death of Jesus on the cross was particularly offensive to Jews, the intended audience of Luke-Acts must be Jewish.

60 G.B. Caird, *The Apostolic Age* (London 1955), 40. It seems to me that it is a valid question to ask whether or not Luke's position in Acts with respect to the cross has changed from his earlier account, perhaps due to his exposure to the teachings of Paul.

61 Acts 2:23.

affirmed 'were gathered together "to do whatever thy hand and plan had predestined to take place."<sup>62</sup> Luke has made it clear that they were agents of God in the enactment of God's will. The cross must be seen as the accomplishment of divine purpose.

As Paul prepared to depart from Ephesus for his voyage to Jerusalem he warned the flock about the dangers they would face. His departing speech included these words:

Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to feed the Church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own son.<sup>63</sup>

Marshall has based his argument for a Lucan theology of the cross in part upon this verse. Unlike Caird's argument where Luke's meaning is not clear, Marshall has based his arguments upon words attributed by Luke to Paul that are unmistakably clear. Luke speaks of the 'Church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own son' which is not far from the image of redemption utilized by Paul.<sup>64</sup>

Lucan writings emphasize the power of God and in that limited sense, Luke is in agreement with Paul's assessment of the power of the cross.<sup>65</sup> Luke uses this terminology more often than any other New Testament writer.<sup>66</sup> He does so to demonstrate the truthfulness of the information Theophilus, the High Priest, has heard about God's recent intervention in human history. God's power is evident in the miracles performed by his representatives and is a validation of their role.<sup>67</sup> One miracle in particular performed by Jesus was most impressive and about which the High Priest was informed. When the temple

62 Acts 4:27f.

63 Acts 20:28.

64 Luke's report (Acts 20:28) is accurate as shown by these examples: In 1 Cor. 6:20 and 7:23 Paul tells the Corinthians 'You were bought with a price.' See also, Rom. 3:25, 'Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood'; Rom. 5:9, 'justified by his blood'; and Eph. 1:7, 'In Him we have redemption through his blood.'

Bart D. Ehrman argues that Luke has eliminated all notions of atonement. 'The Cup, The Bread, and The Salvific Effect of Jesus' Death In Luke-Acts,' *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, (ed. E.H. Lovering, Jr. Atlanta, 1991), 580.

65 1 Cor. 1:18; Rom. 8:11. However, it should be noted that the early Christian kerygma of 1 Cor. 15:4 is based upon the Lucan focus on the third day which is unique to Luke among the Synoptic resurrection portrayals.

66 Luke's interest in power is illustrated by the fact that he uses the noun 15 times in the gospel, 10 times in Acts; the verb 26 times in the gospel, 21 times in Acts; and the adjective 4 times in the gospel, 6 times in Acts.

Luke's focus on the power of God is a strong re-affirmation of traditional Jewish monotheism. Perhaps this strong re-affirmation is a response to Jewish allegation that the followers of Jesus had forsaken Judaism by breaching the boundary markers with respect to monotheism.

67 Acts 14:3; 14:8-11.

guards came to arrest Jesus, Peter grabbed a sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. The Lucan Jesus restored the ear.<sup>68</sup> All of the gospels tell the story of the arrest of Jesus. Only Luke tells about the miracle of the restoration of the ear. Such an outrageous claim could not be made to the High Priest unless it were true. Matthew, Mark and John writing later eliminate all friendly overtures and emphasize hostility to the Jews because Matthew, Mark and John are reacting to their perception of the rejection of Jesus by the Jews.

This miraculous restoration of the ear played the same role as the raising of Lazarus does in the Gospel of John. It was a display of the power of God as a prelude to the resurrection. Paul, like Luke and John, regarded Christ's resurrection as the preeminent display of God's power.<sup>69</sup> But Luke attributes no saving efficacy to the cross. For Luke, by the power of God, Jesus was resurrected from the dead. This divine activity is a consistent Lucan emphasis.<sup>70</sup> Luke stresses God's plan and movement of divine history more than Matthew and Mark. This theme is developed cautiously given the beliefs of the High Priest and the 'marginal status of immortality and resurrection'<sup>71</sup> in the belief structure of first century Judaism.<sup>72</sup>

One can only conclude that Luke has revealed his awareness of Paul's theology of the cross and has accurately reported what Paul said to the church in Ephesus. It does not follow that Luke has substituted Pauline theology for his own. Luke shows his awareness but does not agree.<sup>73</sup> If Luke had employed the literary tool of repetition or had included Pauline language in the body of the text, as opposed to the speeches, one could conclude that Luke agreed with Paul.<sup>74</sup> The

68 Lk. 22:50–51.

69 Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 13:4.

70 Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40 and 13:30.

71 Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (New York 1984), 62. See also H.C.C. Cavallin, *Life After Death: Paul's Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Cor. 15* (1974). As these writers note, Daniel 12:1–3 contains the first explicit reference to resurrection in the Hebrew Bible. The date is 168 BCE or thereabouts.

72 Is Luke, with his numerous references to angels, in addressing Theophilus, the High Priest, a Sadducee who believed in angels, implicitly asserting, 'If you believe in angels, why can't you believe in the resurrection?' In addition, perhaps a theology in transition can be seen by comparing the traditional Jewish expression, 'the resurrection of the righteous' in Lk. 14:14 with the statement made by the Lucan Paul in Acts 24:15 that not only the righteous but also the unrighteous will be raised.

73 Eric Franklin, *Christ the King: A Study in the Purpose and Theology of Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia 1975), 66, concludes that the passage represents 'an accommodation to Paul's beliefs rather than an expression of his own theology.'

74 In this instance and with respect to 'the Temple not made with hands' Luke shows his awareness of the teachings of Paul but does not agree. Luke did not mention again the horrible death of Stephen nor does he repeat the criticism of the Temple.

argument that Luke has changed his position in the Acts of the Apostles is not strong. It is more likely that Luke has acknowledged Paul's view in a way that Luke hopes will not offend Theophilus. Yet it is clear that Luke's treatment of the Cross does not explain how the Cross provides forgiveness. 'The death of Jesus does not have a particular saving significance in Acts.'<sup>75</sup>

The review of the passages upon which a Lucan understanding of the cross is based is now complete. Luke was aware of the different traditions on the meaning of the death of Jesus that had developed among the earliest Christians. Luke has revealed his awareness of the teachings of Paul with respect to the cross.

## V.

But the task is not yet complete. Many commentators and scholars have noted that Luke has made more references to the Jerusalem Temple than any other New Testament writer. Not only does this finding reinforce the conclusion that Theophilus to whom Luke addressed his Gospel is the High Priest, it also provides a possible clue as to the identity of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>76</sup> As noted previously Luke has no theology of the cross because he believes that the death of the High Priest has atonement value. The author of Hebrews expressed his belief that the death of the High Priest has atonement value in these words: 'Therefore he [Jesus] had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people.'<sup>77</sup> Paul could not have written these words. His theology of the cross eliminated the need for a high priest, temple and the Day of Atonement. Rather than adopt Pauline terminology, the unknown author reached the same result by making Jesus Christ the High Priest that he might make a sacrifice of atonement for the people. The designation of Jesus Christ as the High Priest is the most distinctive theme of Hebrews and it is central to the theology of the book. The author of Hebrews uses the term 'priest' fourteen times. No other New Testament writer has it more often than Luke's five times. This author uses the term 'high priest' 17 times.

Many writers have noted that Luke's view of the activities of Paul is different than Paul's description of his own activities. The commentators have also said Paul could not have performed a Nazarite vow<sup>78</sup> with

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75 Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis, 1993), 113.

76 Barnabas, Paul, Luke, Apollos, Silas and Priscilla has been mentioned as candidates. Heb. 2:17.

78 Acts 21:17-26.

its obligation to offer an animal for sacrifice. These writers have drawn the erroneous conclusion that Luke is inaccurate.<sup>79</sup> Daniel Boyarin is one of several Talmudic scholars who have recently examined Paul's writings. Boyarin concludes 'Paul lived and died convinced that he was a Jew living out Judaism,'<sup>80</sup> thus lending credence to Luke's account. Therefore, it is more likely that Luke's description of such events means that he has identified himself, not with the community of Paul but rather, with the Jewish Christian communities.

One such Jewish Christian community is described in the Epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>81</sup> The readers were largely second generation followers of Jesus.<sup>82</sup> They had been believers for some time<sup>83</sup> and had been formerly fervent in their faith<sup>84</sup> but were now discouraged. They faced opposition from their Jewish families and friends and hostility from Gentile authorities. Perhaps this community recognized the logical inconsistency of a belief in the animal sacrificial system and a theology of the cross that does not replace the animal sacrificial system. However one must concede that at times religious beliefs are logically inconsistent.<sup>85</sup> Several writers have commented upon the ambivalence shown by Luke towards Jerusalem and the Temple.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps, this ambivalence is a recognition and reflection upon a theology in transition. The existence of that belief structure may have been a source of anomie to the Jewish Christian community. The epistle was intended to enable the persecuted, disappointed, wavering, immature Jewish Christians to withstand the onset of persecution, to hold fast to their hope and to keep their faith.<sup>87</sup> The Jewish background of these converts enabled them to appreciate the priestly Christology advanced by the author. Publication of Hebrews probably occurred shortly before the destruction of the Temple but certainly after the realization that the split between Judaism and Christianity was permanent.<sup>88</sup>

79 A number of recent books have demonstrated the historical accuracy of Acts: C.J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen 1989); *Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, ed. R. Bauckham, v. 4, 1995.

80 Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew* (Berkeley 1994), 2.

81 Although there is no mention of the Gentiles in Hebrews, James Moffat, E.F. Scott and Gerhardous Vos have argued that the Epistle is addressed to Gentiles.

82 Heb. 13:7.

83 Heb. 5:12.

84 Heb. 10:32-34.

85 However, it is my opinion that modern exegesis appears to share the assumption of modern theology that religion is a rational matter.

86 Esler, 133; Joseph B. Tyson, *The Death of Jesus in Luke-Acts* (Columbia, 1986), 107.

87 Heb. 3:6, 14; 10:23.

88 Hugh Montefiore, *A Commentary on The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York 1964), 3, has noted that it is inconceivable that the author of Hebrews could have written after 70 C.E. with such indifference as to what actually happened.

The purpose of the discussion with respect to the unknown author of Hebrews and his theology is to show the role of Lucan theology in the development of the theology of the cross. Although no commentator has previously discussed the Jewish belief of atonement relating to the death of the High Priest in connection with the theology of the cross,<sup>89</sup> it is clear to me that Luke has deferentially acknowledged the importance of that belief to his thinking. Thus Luke either has no theology of the cross or has not emphasized that aspect.

After the crucifixion and resurrection, the followers of Jesus participated in the rituals and festivities of Judaism relating to the Day of Atonement. 'The Palestinian local churches continued to observe the sabbath and keep the law; they considered themselves to be a fraternity inside Jewry.'<sup>90</sup> Daniélou has shown that 'Jewish Christianity is a *theologia gloriae*, in which the accent is placed on the victory of Christ and its cosmic efficacy.'<sup>91</sup>

The suggestion of Käsemann that *theologia gloriae* displaced *theologia crucis*<sup>92</sup> fails to recognize the atoning value that Jews placed on the death of the High Priest. When this belief is properly understood in its historical context, there can be no dispute that the early Palestinian Jewish followers of Jesus attempted to retain this belief. For instance, Esler states: 'It is indeed, very difficult to imagine how a theory of atoning death of Jesus, already present in Paul and Mark and, indeed, in pre-Pauline and pre-Markan traditions,<sup>93</sup> could have arisen among Jews who preserved close links with the sacrificial cult.'<sup>94</sup> Later Esler opines that the exclusion of Greek-speaking Christians from the temple 'may have led them actually to forsake attendance at temple services and even to develop a theology which attributed to Jesus, rather than the sacrificial cult, the central role in forgiveness of sin.'<sup>95</sup> Thus, Esler has cogently shown how the theology of the cross may have developed out of acts of exclusions directed against Greek-speaking Christians.

89 Except for minor references no one has discussed the possible influences of the Jewish High Priest on New Testament theology. Roger David Aus has probably prepared the most complete discussion to date but he does not discuss the death of the High Priest. *The Wicked Tenants and Gethsemane* (Atlanta 1996) and works cited therein at 67, fn. 10.

90 Schillebeeckx, 234.

91 Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (translated and edited by John A. Baker, London and Chicago, 1964), 265.

92 *New Testament Questions of Today* (English translation of *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen II*, Göttingen, 1965, 2nd ed.), 22. According to Kümmel, 132, Käsemann first expressed this idea in 1949 at a lecture he gave.

93 Esler's footnote 106 states: 'Mk. 14:24; 1 Cor. 15:3.'

94 Esler, 158.

95 Esler, 159.

On the basis of these remarkable findings Esler concludes that Luke tried to relate the ambivalence that God-fearers experienced in entering the temple to the experience of Luke's community 'with a very mixed nature of individuals who comprised its membership.'<sup>96</sup> For Esler, Luke 1) 'could trade upon the affectionate memory by setting his gospel more closely than any of the others in the Temple'; 2) provide 'veiled recognition of the mission to the Gentiles' and 3) illustrate that 'continued devotion to the temple cult and to the Messiahship of Jesus were fundamentally incompatible.'<sup>97</sup> Yet Esler does not tell us what are the beliefs of Luke's community.<sup>98</sup>

No commentator has previously discussed the significance of Luke having no theology of the cross. As previously noted, initially its absence provided the clue as to the identity of Theophilus. Esler correctly recognized that the early Christians because of their close links to the sacrificial system were unlikely to develop a theology of the cross. The Jews and early Christians believed that the death of the High Priest had atoning significance. The death of the High Priest was regarded as atonement for the innocent blood that had been shed. As long as the Temple stood, the High Priest was in office, the Day of Atonement was being observed and Judaism recognized the followers of Jesus as Jews there was no need or reason for Luke to proclaim a theology of the cross and in fact, Luke has no theology of the cross. Esler has proposed that it was the acts of exclusions directed against Greek-speaking Christians that were the impetus to the development of the theology of the cross. The doctrine of the theology of the cross replaced both the High Priest and the Day of Atonement.

Therefore it can be said that Esler has accurately depicted the beliefs of a segment of the community. But Luke does not identify with that segment and Luke's overall presentation has been to demonstrate that Stephen and his group are a distinctive minority among the followers of Jesus. Jewish Christians, like Judaism, welcomed Gentiles but did not actively recruit Gentiles. The only mass conversions reported in Acts are of Jews.<sup>99</sup> In the thirty years covered by the Acts of the Apostles, only a small number of God-fearing Gentiles, exemplified by Cornelius, became followers of Jesus.<sup>100</sup> James addressed Paul

<sup>96</sup> Esler, 220.

<sup>97</sup> Esler, 163.

<sup>98</sup> Esler makes it clear in his introduction he has no intention of discussing the religious beliefs as he intends to rely solely upon his analysis of 'the social and political circumstances of Luke's community.' 2.

<sup>99</sup> Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7; 9:42; 12:24; 13:43; 14:1; 17:10 ff.; and 21:20.

<sup>100</sup> The story of the conversion of the jailer and his family (Acts 16:29-34) is the only reported conversion of a true Gentile in all of Acts. The other conversions involved God-fearers. This conversion contains no references to the beliefs or activities of the jailer prior to his conversion.

on his arrival in Jerusalem: 'You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. . . .'<sup>101</sup>

Luke does not again mention Stephen and his horrible death. Luke can not ignore that the event happened. In fact, this event prompted Luke to write to Theophilus, the High Priest in an effort to reconcile differences.<sup>102</sup> Esler's theory although compelling is not definitive primarily because Esler has failed to recognize the true significance of the absence of an explicit theology of the atonement with respect to the cross.

The doctrine of the theology of the cross is mutually exclusive with the Jewish doctrine of salvation. Not only are the doctrines mutually exclusive; adherents of one doctrine could not in the first century share the religious experience with adherents of the other doctrine. If the only difference between the two faiths had been the rules of table fellowship observed by Judaism, adherents could share the religious experience but not share meals. Therefore the table-fellowship rules that preclude Jews eating food that is not kosher by itself would not be socially disruptive. This is not to say that these table-fellowship rules were not the cause of the split between Judaism and Christianity but does suggest the unlikelihood of its being the cause. This inability to share religious experiences among members of the same religious community can be divisive. Therefore it is unlikely that Jewish followers of Jesus could co-exist in the same community with followers of Jesus not formerly Jewish as postulated by Esler.

Even after the destruction of the temple when synagogues replaced the temple, co-adherents could not share the religious experiences. A person believing that Jesus died on the cross as a ransom for his sins can not participate in the services for the Day of Atonement. A Jewish follower of Jesus who had not accepted the doctrine of the cross, received by Paul sometime after the crucifixion and further developed by him,<sup>103</sup> could continue to share religious experience with other Jews. According to Lawrence H. Schiffman, Judaism did not develop rules that excluded Jewish followers of Jesus until the Bar Kokhba revolt early in the second century C.E.<sup>104</sup> The believer in the minority segment of the religious community, all of whom are followers of Jesus, would experience anomie.<sup>105</sup> The Epistle to Hebrews describes such a

101 Acts 21:20.

102 This theory is more fully developed in my article 'Theophilus: A Proposal,' EQ 69:3 (1997), 195-215.

103 1 Cor. 15:3-4 is the earliest creedal formula statement of this belief. Commentators date 1 Corinthians 55 C.E.

104 Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Philadelphia and Jerusalem, 1994), 407.

105 Wayne Meeks has suggested that in Acts there are 'gentiles whose adherence to the synagogue testifies to some kind of dissonance in their relation to their society.' *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven and London, 1983), 73.

situation experienced by Jewish followers of Jesus. The unknown author of Hebrews offered a solution to these 'orphans' that made the doctrine of the theology of the cross palatable to them. He suggested that Jesus was the new High Priest.

This discussion about the divisive impact of the teaching of the doctrine of the theology of the cross on Jewish followers of Jesus conclusively establishes the need to consider this particular religious belief when discussing the possible first century 'social and political circumstances of Luke's community.' This discussion demonstrates the unlikelihood that the absence of the theology of the cross was not a factor. On the contrary, it was the central divisive issue not only between Jewish Christians and Judaism but also between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.

The concept of anomie can best be explained by using a 20th century example. In Pennsylvania and many other states, the legislatures had enacted laws requiring mandatory bible reading and prayer sessions for all public schools. These laws have been declared unconstitutional because they violated the First Amendment freedom of religion clause of the United States Constitution. Compelling non-Christians and certain Christians to participate in religious exercises at the start of the school day creates unnecessary social pressures upon them bringing their family religious values into conflict with the values of the community. Justice William Douglas of the United States Supreme Court recognized the cruelty imposed by the so-called excusal provision. He said 'even devout children may well avoid claiming their right and simply participate in exercises distasteful to them because of an understandable reluctance to be stigmatized as atheists or nonconformists simply on the basis of their request. Such reluctance to seek exemption seems all the more likely in view of the fact that children are disinclined at this age to step out of line or flout "peer-group norms."'<sup>106</sup> On the next page of the opinion, Justice Douglas quoted another court that said 'the excluded pupil loses caste with his fellows, and is liable to be regarded with aversion, and subjected to reproach and insult.' Adults would face the same social pressure to conform their religious practice but their response would be different. They would withdraw from the group and if sufficient numbers share their views, they would form a new group. Esler's theory about the 'mixed' composition of Luke's community is utopian in theory and questionable in practice.

Luke's theology is very Jewish as was the theology of the earliest Christians. Luke has a favorable view of the Temple but more importantly does not condemn the animal sacrificial system nor does he

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106 Douglas, concurring opinion, *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*, 93 S. Ct. 1560, 1607, 1608 (1963).

abrogate any of the special laws as they pertain to the Jewish followers of Jesus.<sup>107</sup> Matthew and Mark modify this theology in many ways. At the same time that Paul is developing his theology of the cross and commending the Judean church as a model, he is objecting to the followers of Jesus observing certain Hebraic practices.<sup>108</sup> Schillebeeckx observed: 'The memories of early Christian Jewish traditions preserved in the New Testament are in their very acerbity symptomatic of Christianity in the process of breaking away from Judaism.'<sup>109</sup> Perhaps Schillebeeckx was referring to the theology of the cross which Paul developed. Pauline theology effectively destroyed the need for a Temple, High Priest and Day of Atonement and this occurred before the destruction of the Temple. This teaching resulted in the followers of Jesus being excluded from the Temple and synagogues. Riesner has shown the accuracy of Acts with respect to the existence of synagogues prior to 70 C.E.<sup>110</sup> Gaston has demonstrated how the Jews utilized the allegation regarding the destruction of the Temple in the period preceding the destruction of the Temple to harass the followers of Jesus.<sup>111</sup> By the time Paul wrote Romans the climate had changed considerably. In fact the schism may have occurred. If Matthew and Mark wrote after this date, they in altering Luke, were reacting to the break that had occurred.<sup>112</sup> Prior to the break the early Christians emphasized their continuity with Judaism. After the break they distanced themselves from 'those Jews' who were hostile to the Romans. They also felt the need to distance themselves from Jerusalem.

As a result of these political and theological developments, these

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107 Virtually all 20th century Christians agree that the sum total of all the teachings of Paul and the gospel writers have eliminated the need to observe the commandments relating to the sacrificial system. This article relates solely to the teachings of the Lucan Jesus in its first century context.

All Jews agree that prayer has replaced the sacrificial system as 'service of the heart'.

108 1 Thes. 2:14; Gal. 2.

109 Schillebeeckx, 281.

110 R. Riesner, 'Synagogues in Jerusalem,' in *Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, ed. R. Bauckham, v. 4, 1995; see Acts 15:5 for reference to synagogue.

111 Gaston, *No Stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem* (Leiden 1970), 156.

112 Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit* (Göttingen, 2nd rev. ed. 1966) asserted that Matthew's community had made a definite break with Judaism. Strecker assembled an imposing list of evidence: Matthew speaks of 'their' scribes (7:29) and 'their' synagogues (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54). In comparison to parallel in Luke and Mark, Matthew intensifies polemical references to the Pharisees (see 15:12-14; 23:25-26). The title 'rabbi' which is often used in Mark to refer respectfully to Jesus (Mk. 9:5; 11:21; 14:45), is found in Matthew on the lips of Judas (26:25, 49). The disciples are warned not to take on the title 'rabbi' (23:7-8). These are clear signs of alienation from Pharisaic Judaism.

sorely tried Jewish Christians faced peculiar circumstances. These Jewish Christian communities were orphans—stranded from Judaism—and they were uncomfortable associating with and engaging in religious services with Gentiles. These communities are the recipients of the Epistle of Hebrews.

## VI.

The Epistle synthesizes the atonement beliefs of Judaism, Luke-Acts and Pauline theology by providing that Jesus Christ is the new High Priest. Why does the author of Hebrews equate Jesus Christ with the Jewish High Priest? Because the recipients of the Epistle are Jewish followers of Jesus and believe that the duties of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement and his death have atoning value. They perhaps were disturbed by the implications of Lucan and Pauline theology. They are comfortable with the theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews because its inclusive approach using imagery drawn chiefly from the Levitical cult and Day of Atonement meant that they are no longer orphans. The replacement process which began when the story of the unknown woman who anointed the feet of Jesus in Galilee was altered is now complete and the story of the origin of the New Testament doctrine of atonement has been told.<sup>113</sup>

The following factors suggest there is a relationship between the Gospel of Luke and the Epistle to the Hebrews:

1) Theophilus, the High Priest, is the addressee of Luke's Gospel; 2) Luke does not condemn the animal sacrificial system; 3) there is no theology of the cross in the Gospel of Luke; 4) the community that received Hebrews were Jewish Christians who believed in the Temple, High Priest and the Day of Atonement and 5) the Epistle to the Hebrews has made Jesus the High Priest. Twenty years later the audience that favorably received the Gospel has a dilemma. They are twixt and between the demands of Judaism and a desire to be ardent followers of Christ. Paul's Letter to the Romans has failed to heal the split. Although Luke intended Acts of the Apostles to be his second irenical appeal, it has been unsuccessful.

The author of Hebrews has brilliantly rescued the orphans. This is central to Hebrews. Only a person enamored by the Jewish High Priest could equate Jesus Christ with the High Priest. However, it is not necessary to identify Luke as the author of Hebrews to make the point that Lucan theology with its focus on repentance, the High Priest and the

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113 Hengel, *The Atonement: The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament* (ET Philadelphia, 1981), did not consider the belief structure relating to the death of the High Priest.

Day of Atonement is addressed to the High Priest. Nor is it necessary to establish the link to show the 'step progression' method<sup>114</sup> from the limited atonement value in Judaism and Lucan theology of the death of the High Priest to the unlimited atonement value in Hebrews of Jesus Christ as the High Priest. The doctrine of the theology of the cross provided no comfort for the Jewish Christians who clung to the Levitical cult and the Day of Atonement.

Admittedly, there are disputes not only as to the identity of Theophilus but also as to the identity of the author of Hebrews. However, this article has shown that when the Epistle to the Hebrews is examined alongside Luke-Acts, there is further support for the identification of Theophilus. More importantly, this analysis has contributed to the Lucan understanding of the cross. This understanding has been made possible by the identification of 'most excellent Theophilus' as the High Priest who served from 37 to 41 C.E. Luke has written a masterpiece that delivers an irenic presentation of the proclamation of the gospel of the Jewish Christian community specially crafted with the beliefs and sensitivities of the High Priest in mind.

Jesus, a man without sin, died on the cross that he might experience in death the results of sin—separation from God—that we—all of us—might turn from sin. The message of repentance is ever present in the Lucan writings. More importantly, Luke has proclaimed that the message that Jesus was hanged on a tree and on the third day rose again from the dead is factually accurate. The proclamation of the Resurrection, an event in which Jesus and his ministry are fully vindicated by the power of God, is the essence of the Lucan understanding of the cross. The death of Jesus, in and of itself, has no meaning for Luke.

### Abstract

This article, as a follow up to 'Theophilus: A Proposal', explains the significance of Luke's having no theology of the cross (or why he has de-emphasised it) and the meaning of the cross for Luke. In addition the article traces the development of a limited atonement doctrine in Judaism to an unlimited doctrine in the Epistle to the Hebrews and explains why it was necessary to make Jesus the High Priest. Finally, this article explains how Luke cautiously drafted his masterpiece with the beliefs and sensitivities of the High Priest in mind. Each of the issues addressed covers matters not previously discussed in the literature.

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114 G.A. Krodel, *Acts* (Minneapolis, 1986), 281, claims that 'Luke never says everything at once, but expands and unfolds earlier themes as he moves step by step from one episode to another.'