

THE “FATHERS” MOTIF IN LUKE–ACTS

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Scholars have noticed the subtle shift from “our fathers” to “your fathers” in both Stephen’s speech (Acts 7:51–52) and Paul’s closing “judgment” on Jewish unbelievers in (Acts 28:25). What has remained unnoticed is that these texts participate in a much larger literary motif throughout Luke–Acts. This paper demonstrates the presence of this motif which is one of several ways used by Luke to define who the Messianic people of God are. Moreover, it argues that when interpreted in light of this motif, Acts 28:25 cannot be taken as “final” or as a blanket judgment against the Jewish people in general. Finally, the implications of this paper may point to greater rapprochement between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the Epistles.

Key Words: Luke–Acts, Stephen, Paul, Fathers, Literary motif, redaction criticism

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have long noted that Luke–Acts presents the ἐκκλησία as the “true” or “redefined” people of God.¹ Examples of exactly *how* Luke does this

* This paper is presented in honor of Dr. David Pao, current Chair of NT Department at TEDS. It was in his PhD seminar on Acts that this paper first took shape. His frequent encouragement to think creatively in research is a blessing that will remain for years to come.

1. David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke–Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 171–211; Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the ‘Acts of the Apostles’*, SNTSMS 121 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 129–54; C. K. Barrett, “Luke–Acts,” in *Early Christian Thought in Its Jewish Context*, ed. John Barclay and John Sweet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). This “redefinition” need not be forced into a supersessionist reading.

include the following: 1) the use ὁδός terminology to describe the ἐκκλησία;² 2) the portrayal of the ἐκκλησία as the rightful heir and correct interpreter of Hebrew Bible (HB);³ 3) the portrayal of the Jesus movement as the fulfillment of the prophecies of the HB;⁴ 4) the use of anti-idol polemic;⁵ and 5) the use of the “table fellowship motif.”⁶ While sharing general agreement with these observations, it is the goal of this paper to consider another means by which Luke defines the people of God. We will do this by exploring Luke’s use of what may be called the “Fathers” Motif.

What exactly is the Fathers Motif? In short, Luke intentionally employs terminology throughout Luke–Acts that pertains to ancestry. At the basic level, this terminology is neutral since one’s ancestry is normally not chosen. However, Luke is knowledgeable of two types of Israelite ancestors as portrayed in the HB, those who respond to God in faith and obedience⁷ and those who reject Him and his word.⁸ By shaping this motif throughout Luke–Acts, he portrays contemporaries as being descendants either of the “family

2. David Pao understands this terminology within the framework of the Isaianic New Exodus (*Isaianic New Exodus*, 59–69); cf. Francois Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty–Five Years of Research (1950–2005)*, 2nd ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 362–64.

3. Susan J. Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation and Community Self–Definition in Luke–Acts and the Writings of Justin Martyr*, SNT 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Bart J. Koet, *Five Studies on the Interpretation of Scripture in Luke–Acts*, SNTA 14 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 97–118; Evans and Sanders, *Luke and Scripture*, 171–211; Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, 90–99.

4. Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self–Definition: Josephos, Luke–Acts, and Apologetic Historiography*, NovTSup 64 (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

5. Pao, *Isaianic New Exodus*, 208.

6. David W. Pao, “Waiters or Preachers: Acts 6: 1–7 and the Lukan Table Fellowship Motif,” *JBL* 130 (2011): 127–44.

7. For a recent treatment of its positive use in Deuteronomy, see Jerry Hwang, *The Rhetoric of Remembrance: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation into the “Fathers” in Deuteronomy*, Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Bible 8 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012).

8. This same dichotomy is appealed to by the author of Hebrews as well in chapters 3 and 4. Moreover, it is not exclusive to the Jesus movement since Qumran recognized a similar polarity. E.g., one had to be a member of the community to experience atonement from sin (1QS 2,25—3.12; 1Q14 f8_10.2–9).

of God” or of “that generation” which regularly opposes the work of God. For Luke, the determining factor hinges on one’s acceptance or rejection of Jesus.

To illustrate this, consider Acts 7 where Stephen employs the phrase “our fathers” (οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν) multiple times in his summary of Israelite history;⁹ we have numerous examples of such historical synopses.¹⁰ At first glance, it appears Stephen is attempting to gain solidarity with the audience. Yet, at a key rhetorical turning point that precipitates his death we find the phrase “your fathers” (οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν) used twice (7:51–52) in combination with accusatory labels such as “stiff-necked” and “uncircumcised in heart and ears.”¹¹ Such a juxtapositioning of phrases is potent; if Stephen intended to build solidarity with this audience, why the switch to “your” (ὑμῶν)? If he was not attempting to build solidarity, then what was his intention in using “our” (ἡμῶν) throughout the rest of the speech?

Additionally, although we do not find the same switch repeated by Paul, he also uses the phrase “your fathers” before announcing his “judgment” on the Jewish unbelievers at Rome. Such observations raise further questions: Is this a fragment of stock rhetoric against Jewish unbelievers? Who intends the impact of this phrase, Stephen and Paul or Luke? Who are the “fathers” referred to by the phrase οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν? Is the phrase intended as an anti-Jewish remark?¹² Is it found elsewhere in Luke–Acts, and if so, what literary function does the phrase have?

9. Acts 7:11, 12, 15, 19, and 32. For a comparison of textual variants in Codices B and D related to the personal pronoun, see Philip Maertens, “‘Vos pères’ ou ‘nos pères’: la question de l’appartenance ethnique dans le texte grec du livre des Actes du Codex Bezae (D 05),” *NTS* 58 (2012): 407.

10. For other examples of such summaries, see Deut 6:20–24; 26:5–10; Josh 24:2–13; 1 Sam 12:8–13; Neh 9:6–31; Ps 78:5–72; 105:7–44; 106:7–46; 135:5–12; 136:4–25; Ezek 20:5–29; Jdt 5:6–19; 1 *Macc* 2:52–60; *Wis* 10:1–11:1; *Sir* 44:3–50:21; 3 *Macc* 2:4–12; 6:4–8; 1 *En.* 85:3–90:38; 93:3–10; 91:11–17; 2 *Bar.* 56:2–74:4; 4 *Ezra* 3:4–36; 14:2933; *Sib. Or.* 3:248–94; CD II, 17–IV, 12; Josephus, *J.W.* 5.379–412; *Ant.* 3.86–87; 4.40–49.

11. All translations are the author’s unless otherwise noted.

12. While Bart Ehrman is correct to observe that interpreters should be attentive to the potential impact the social context of scribes may play in transmitting scripture, Philip Maertens demonstrates contrary to his theory that the exemplar to Bezae’s text of Acts shows evidence of Jewish-friendly transmission (Maertens, “Vos pères,” 401–15).

Returning to Stephen’s speech, one could (and should) try to answer these questions by analyzing the phrase in its immediate context. Yet, as David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina point out, “Most readers . . . can observe details much more easily than they can see the major dynamics of broad units, such as the biblical book” and they “often have great difficulty in transcending the details in such a way as to see the whole.”¹³ Examining each pericope in isolation, then, only offers a *partial* response to the questions. Since the phrase οἱ πατέρες is part of a larger literary motif, this invites the exegete to consider its role at the book level, a foundational principle of Inductive Biblical Study (IBS).¹⁴ The reason we are able to apply book level analysis to both Luke and Acts is because scholars believe with good reason that Luke originally completed these two books as a single work and that they were separated sometime after this.

Thus, this paper shows the explanatory power of combining attention to textual, episodic detail with thematic, book-level analysis. It will demonstrate that Luke employs the Fathers Motif in Luke-Acts as one of the means by which he defines who are the Messianic people of God. First, I will note the assumptions and methodology accompanying and guiding the analysis. Second, I will demonstrate the presence of the motif while explaining how it illuminates the interpretation of the passages in which it is found. Finally, we will draw some conclusions and suggest implications of this research.

ASSUMPTIONS & METHODOLOGY

In an argument of this nature, the literary unity of Luke-Acts is obviously assumed¹⁵ and unfortunately there is not space to respond to

13. *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 80.

14. Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 79–142.

15. This is the majority view. For a discussion of the main approaches see I. Howard Marshall (“Acts and the ‘Former Treatise,’” in *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting* [ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clark; vol. 1 of *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 163–82).

objections.¹⁶ It is important to note that while demonstrating the presence of a motif and arguing for literary unity are two different arguments, the former supports the latter. Second, assuming this unity, it follows that the author will choose when to employ the Fathers Motif and thereby define the identity of the “fathers” to whom he refers.¹⁷ Third, the terminology related to the motif is intentionally used by the author to refer to both *physical* descendants on the one hand and *spiritual* descendants on the other; context will indicate which is in view. The terms “parentage” and “ancestry” are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

Before moving to analysis, we must first define a motif and the criteria used for its identification. A motif may be defined as “a pattern that appears in a written text” and is “made up of a set of *conventions*” that form the expectations of the reader and that lead the reader to realize that *repeated elements are not intended by the author to be understood in isolation* but as a “familiar landscape.”¹⁸ This would fall under “literary observations” in IBS that “may strike the reader as potentially significant in the communication of the sense of the passage.”¹⁹

Horst Daemrich offers the following seven criteria as typifying a motif.²⁰

16. E.g., Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); Patricia Walters, *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts: A Reassessment of the Evidence*, SNTSMS 145 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

17. As correctly noted by Maertens (“Vos pères,” 405).

18. Leland Ryken et al., eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), xv, emphasis original; cf. H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 95–99. For a comprehensive discussion see also William Freedman, “The Literary Motif: A Definition and Evaluation,” *Novel* 4 (1971): 123–31; and Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 111–41.

19. Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 162.

20. He does not specify whether all criteria must be present at the same time (“Themes and Motifs in Literature: Approaches—Trends—Definition,” *German Quarterly* [1985]: 566–75).

SEVEN CRITERIA TYPIFYING A MOTIF	
(1) semblance	must have recognizable traits
(2) positional alignment	shifts the narrative in a new direction
(3) polar dimension	highlights extremes in a given scenario
(4) tension	contributes to the creation of tension and requires reflection on the part of the reader
(5) schematization	creates standardized, repetitive and recognizable characteristics
(6) supporting themes	do not stand alone but are attached to themes
(7) textual organization	“contribute to the textual arrangement” and their “early introduction raises anticipation.”

In short, a motif involves the “major structural relationship” of recurrence that conveys emphasis, thematic development, and descriptive depth and richness.²¹ Yet, the motif is not always repeated verbatim, but rather is strategically located at key places and is integrally connected to the overarching purposes of the text.²²

The criteria we are using for identifying the Fathers Motif is that it must include language that implies parentage (e.g. “fathers” or “sons of”) and occur in a polemical or confrontational context.²³ As with any literary device, there can be “false positives” that do not relate to the motif (e.g., “John, son of Zechariah” in Luke 3:2). Likewise, a seemingly “normal”

21. These three effects of recurrence are described in Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 95.

22. In Daemmrich’s words, “their arrangement, distribution, repetition, and variation . . . guide the reader’s perception of organization and signification” (“Themes and Motifs,” 573).

23. One could also consider the texts dealing with “this generation.” E.g., Luke 7:31; 9:41; 11:29–32, 50–51; 17:25; 21:32. Unfortunately, this article does not include analysis of these due to space.

use of a term may play into the hand of the author developing the motif, while alone not drawing any attention by itself. So, contextual indicators are evidential clues for identifying the presence or absence of the theme in such cases.

2. The Fathers Motif

In the following survey, I identify and discuss those passages meeting the above criteria for the presence of the Fathers Motif, first in Luke then in Acts. This will allow one to see progressive development in the motif. Commentators generally treat these texts as independent from one another or may notice “parallels” between certain characters or phrases, but the presence and significance of the Fathers Motif has not yet been identified to my knowledge.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke 2:41–51

Ancient historians and biographers often provided anecdotal stories about significant people or child prodigies.²⁴ It is clear that Jesus’ wisdom is underscored,²⁵ but this pericope’s connection to the preceding material raises the interpretive question, Why here?²⁶ Fitzmyer finds the pericope “ill-suited” suggesting that it “could be dropped without any great loss to the narrative.”²⁷ But why would Luke needlessly include this section or go to the pains of adding it later as Fitzmyer suggests? Prior to the Temple account, Simeon (2:25–28) and Anna (2:36–38) both prophesy about Jesus. Simeon is specifically “waiting for the consolation of Israel” and was promised that he would not die before he sees the Messiah. Anna joins Simeon “at that very hour” and begins to “speak of [Jesus] to all who

24. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 1st ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Luke 2:41–52; Francois Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1—9:50*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 111.

25. Frédéric Godet, *Commentaire sur l'Évangile de Saint Luc*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Neuchatel: Attinger, 1888), 1:202.

26. Bauer and Traina discuss the importance of this question in ch. 11 “The Survey of Books—as-Wholes” (*Inductive Bible Study*, 126).

27. *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 28 (New York: Doubleday, 1982) 435–36.

were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem” where his parents find him a few verses later. In other words, *the identity of Jesus is being laid out vis-à-vis his ancestry.*

How so? Despite the fact that the readers are aware of the virgin birth (1:26–38) and that Joseph is not technically his “father,” Luke refers to Jesus’ “parents” (2:41, 43, 48), the search among the “relatives” (2:44), and has Mary refer to Joseph as Jesus’ “father” (2:48). Note the confrontational context. Moreover, it is *Mary* who speaks in the place of Joseph which serves to “make the opposition of the two fathers graphic in the dialogue.”²⁸ When juxtaposed with Jesus’ response, “Did you not realize that I must be concerned with the things of my Father?” (2:49), Luke downplays Jesus’ human parentage while elevating his spiritual Father; note also the provoked response (2:50). The importance of this development at the beginning is due to the fact that one’s acceptance or rejection of Jesus is directly related to whether one is “related” to him, not by blood, but by recognition of who he is and obedience to him. This sets the stage for the inadequacy of one claiming Abraham as one’s father.

Luke 3:7–9

John was the first to be introduced by Luke in the “infancy narratives” and here maintains his role as forerunner to Messiah. Note the polemical context. There are two phrases pertinent to our discussion in Luke’s description of his prophetic message and call to repentance. The first is “brood of vipers.”²⁹ By this, John makes an evaluative statement about their parentage *that is based on their past conduct.* That he intended this accusation as a veiled reference to being offspring of the Devil³⁰ may be inferred by his admonition in the second phrase, “do not begin to say to yourselves ‘Abraham is our father.’” Frédéric Godet also notes the “allusion à un autre

28. Bovon, *Luke 1:1—9:50*, 113.

29. “Brood” is defined as the “product of the activity expressed by γεννώ **that which is produced or born**” (BDAG, γέννημα, emphasis original).

30. The plural genitive of source (ἐχιδνῶν) would not conflict with a veiled reference to Satan since it is plural by virtue of its identifying “class” of offspring. Mikeal Parsons et al. call it a “genitive of relationship” (*Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook of the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 105). Mark L. Strauss, “Luke,” in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 355.

père, celui que Jésus désigne expressément ailleurs (Jean 8:37–44).”³¹

What the Temple scene in Luke 2:41–51 implies is now made explicit by John. On this, Fitzmyer does not go far enough: “Lucan concern for the universality of salvation surfaces, as it is made clear that physical descent from Abraham is not the only way that one can become his ‘children.’”³² John’s point *rather* is that it is *not enough* to be a physical descendant of Abraham, which is reinforced by the phrase that follows (3:8), a perspective also shared by Qumran.³³ A true “son of Abraham” is one who walks in the ways of God and is baptized by the one mightier than John. Again, note the provoked response that is L material³⁴ or unique to Luke (3:10–14).

Luke 3:21—4:13

These texts that concern Jesus’ baptism, genealogy, and temptation all relate to his identity as “Son of God.”³⁵ His identity as God’s Son has already been foreshadowed in the Temple scene and he is now officially commissioned to act as the Isaianic Servant, fulfilling the role prophesied by Simeon and Anna.

Luke’s genealogy differs from Matthew’s in placement, form, and content.³⁶ While it resonates with Luke’s theme of Jesus as the cosmic Lord and savior,³⁷ he likely chose the Greco–Roman convention for his

31. Godet, *Commentaire*, 1:210 [“allusion to another father, the one whom Jesus expressly identifies elsewhere (John 8:37–44)”].

32. Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 466.

33. E.g., CD 3:12–20; 4:1–4; 6:1–5.

34. “L material” or “L” refers to texts in the Gospel of Luke that are not found in any other Gospel.

35. David Garland links 3:21–22 with what follows (*Luke*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 165) while Bovon calls 3:21–22 a “transition” and links it with what precedes (*Luke 1:1—9:50*, 119).

36. Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 490–9.

37. Luke’s genealogy is in fact L material. Douglas S. Huffman, “Genealogy,” in *DJG*, 254–59; Garland, *Luke*, 170–71; Strauss, “Luke,” 358; Keener, *Bible Background NT*, Luke 3:23–38; Godet, *Commentaire*, 1:280.

genealogy³⁸ to intentionally emphasize “son of God,” a trait absent from all other known HB and Rabbinic genealogies.³⁹ In the Temptation account (4:1–13), his identity as “Son of God” is twice a source of attack by Satan (4:3, 9). Note the confrontational context. Luke’s point is that the previous two “sons of God,” Adam⁴⁰ and Israel,⁴¹ have both failed.⁴² But now, a new son—the Isaianic Servant⁴³ with whom God is “well pleased” (Isa 42:1)—is “enthroned” in Luke 3:22 as Ps 2:7 is invoked over Jesus.⁴⁴

The importance of Jesus’ identity in relation to the Fathers Motif is precisely that he is the one commissioned to carry out the New Exodus, the salvation of the world from sin. This deliverance is obtained exclusively through the new work of God underway in Jesus. Children of faith understand this, whereas those who merely claim “Abraham is our father” do not.

38. W. S. Kurz, “Luke 3:23–38 and Greco–Roman and Biblical Genealogies,” in *Luke–Acts: New Perspectives From the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* ed. Charles H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 169–87. Keener notes that the Greco–Roman convention went from most recent names to the oldest (Bible Background NT, Luke 3:23–38). Jewish ones, on the other hand, although rare, may do so as well, e.g., 1 Chr 9:14–16. Cf. Bovon’s “apocalyptic” reading of the genealogy (Luke 1:1—9:50, 137).

39. See Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies: With Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus*, 2nd ed., SNTSMS 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 237.

40. Fitzmyer (*Luke I–IX*, 499) follows Johnson (*Biblical Genealogies*, 234–35) in dismissing the Adam–motif suggested by Joachim Jeremias (“Ἀδάμ,” *TDNT* 1:141–43). Jeremias, however, does not make an “elaborate argument” as Fitzmyer accuses. Moreover, Fitzmyer appears to criticize him on the basis of a false dichotomy. Luke’s *possible* dependence on Pauline theology is *not the basis for* Jeremias’ Adam–motif.

41. Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1.

42. That Luke is evoking both Adam’s and Israel’s failures as “son of God” is confirmed by the placement of “Adam, son of God” immediately before Jesus’ temptation as well as the details included in the temptation narrative (40 days, wilderness setting, and citations from Deut 4:4, 8, 12).

43. Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 481.

44. Garland, *Luke*, 169.



Luke 6:21–26

Immediately preceding this text, Jesus has called the twelve disciples (6:13) and a large group from Jerusalem, Judea, and even Tyre and Sidon has gathered (6:17). As mentioned above, “polar dimension” is a characteristic of a motif and a trait present in this text. On the one hand, we have the “Son of Man” and his followers who stand in the prophetic tradition by suffering their same fate (6:22–23). On the other hand, we have “their fathers” who kill the prophets (rejecting God’s word and purposes) while embracing the false prophets (6:26). At issue is one’s ancestry. One is the “inside” group who walk in alignment with God by following Jesus, while the other is the “outside” group, descendants of “their fathers” who reject Jesus and his followers. *Here, the defining feature for one’s ancestry is not the physical line, but whether one receives and obeys God’s word.*

The evidence for this line of reasoning is seen in (1) Luke’s modification of Q⁴⁵ and (2) the additional L material that follows (cf. Matt. 5: 12). First, in Q it is generically “they” who killed the prophets. Luke, however, adds οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν in place of the implied 3rd person subject.

Q 6:23 – οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφῆτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν
L 6:23 – κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ γὰρ ἐποίουν τοῖς προφῆταις οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν

On this, Fitzmyer suggests, “The addition of ‘their fathers’ may have another nuance for Luke: The rejection of the Christian name by descendants of prophet–persecutors undoubtedly insinuates in yet another way the continuity of Christianity with Judaism.”⁴⁶ In line with our argument, this is evidence that Luke is using the Fathers Motif to advance this point.

45. Q is a source hypothesized to have been used by Matthew and Luke in the writing of their Gospels. See John Kloppenborg for a thorough treatment in support of it (*Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000]). Cf. Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2002).

46. *Luke I—IX*, 636. It can no longer be maintained that “Christianity” constituted a distinct religion vis-à-vis Judaism at this early stage.

Second, the “woes” of 6:24–26 reinforce the point.⁴⁷ “Their fathers” (repeated for the second time) accompanies the transition to the woes. It is also uniquely Lucan material, suggesting that he intends a connection between “their fathers” and the recipients of the woes.⁴⁸ Thus Luke presents this blessing–woe diptych to underscore the “polar dimension” of the motif.⁴⁹

Luke 8:19–21

This text presents a clear juxtaposition of physical parentage with spiritual parentage. Why Luke places this account *after* the parable of the sower instead of before it, as Mark does, is due to the different emphasis of the two authors. Luke is making the point that “one can only define a right relationship with the word of God (8:19–21) after reflecting on the nature of the word (8:4–18).”⁵⁰ Bovon later comments:

In the sequence of the Lukan version, there is a first scene telling the arrival of Jesus’ mother and brothers, who cannot achieve their goal . . . because of the crowds. Two groups are thus juxtaposed. But where the narrative (v. 19) underscores the external obstacles, the message (v. 20) emphasizes the inner purpose. Thus v. 20 does not merely repeat v. 19, but presents the *two possible attitudes with which people can crowd around Jesus*. The first is characterized by “seeing” (v. 20), and the second by “hearing” (v. 21). The first contents itself with the visible figure of the man Jesus on the level of human kinship, and the second recognizes, in the figure of Jesus, a God

47. The editors of *The Critical Edition of Q* note the possibility of Luke 6:24–26 ultimately deriving from Q in the form of a doublet but ultimately decide against this and give it a {C} rating (James M. Robinson et al., eds., *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis Including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas With English, German and French Translations of Q and Thomas* [Leuven: Peeters, 2000], 54–55). Even if it were part of Q, this would only strengthen our point since it would indicate more extensive redaction.

48. Godet, *Commentaire*, 1:434.

49. George Kennedy notes that “Luke maintains a persistent polarization starting in the proem and continuing throughout the epilogue” (*New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984], 66).

50. Bovon suggests that the entire section (8:4–21) develops the theme of the “word of God” that is central Luke–Acts (*Luke 1:1—9:50*, 306).

(or the Word of God) who has graciously approached humankind. *Thus a new definition of family is developed.* The contours of the opposition between spirit and flesh are here illustrated narratively.⁵¹

As in the Temple scene in Luke 2:49, we again find a contrast between physical and spiritual parentage to the point that it does not even matter if one is physically related to Jesus.

Luke 11:14–28

Following the Lord’s prayer (11:1–4) and an exhortation (11:5–13), Luke records an exorcism (11:14–26) that provokes a debate about his identity (11:15–16). The entire pericope is confrontational and polemical. While the episode primarily appears to concern authority, at least three pieces of evidence indicate that parentage is actually in view. First, Jesus interprets this question not simply as one of authority but as one of ancestry when he says “every household divided against household is laid to waste” (17). Moreover, he asks, “if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, then *your sons* [οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν], by whom do they cast them out?” (19).⁵² The proleptic placement of οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν before its clause is a left (dis)located topic that is emphasized and indicates both immediate local *discontinuity* (i.e. to Jesus’ activity and identity) and also discourse *continuity*, here contributing to the Fathers Motif.⁵³ Thus, in Lucan understanding, there are two ancestries represented, that of God and that of Beelzebul. Second, we have Jesus’ response to the anonymous woman who suddenly and oddly exclaims her praise of “the womb” that bore him. She may have been offering a sincere

51. *Luke: 1:1–9:50*, 317, emphasis ours.

52. Fitzmyer notes that “sons of” was metonymy for “member of” on the basis of fictive kinship formed by non-familial groups (*Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 28a (New York: Doubleday, 2000], 922). Cf. Keener, *Bible Background NT*, Luke 11:19. This does not weaken the point we are making, however, as fictive kinship language plays right into the Fathers Motif.

53. For a detailed description of left (dis)location in NT Greek, see Fredrick J. Long, *Koine Greek Grammar: A Beginning–Intermediate Exegetical and Pragmatic Handbook*, Accessible Greek Resources and Online Studies (Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse, 2015), §21.3.

compliment to Jesus⁵⁴ but Luke’s choice of including it at all—for it is inserted between the Q material—and the way Jesus redirects the blessing to Divine Parentage communicates once again that one’s physical ancestry is not sufficient ground to experience the blessing that Jesus brings. One must be “with” Jesus (i.e. follow him) by hearing and keeping the Word of God (11:28).

Luke 11:45–52

The scene changes as Jesus is invited by a Pharisee to dinner (11:37). When confronted by the fact that Jesus does not ceremonially wash before eating,⁵⁵ the scene rapidly turns confrontational as Jesus pronounces multiple woes on the Pharisees and the Lawyers. During this time period, tombs were constructed in memorial of the prophets killed by Israel (11:47).⁵⁶ Jesus, however, turns this gesture of honor on its head calling them descendants of “your fathers” who killed the prophets, i.e. “sons of prophet-murderers.” The parallel is as follows:

<i>Family Ancestry</i>	<i>Rejected Messengers</i>	<i>Rejected Word</i>
“your fathers”	the prophets	repent and return
Jesus’ audience	Jesus and his disciples	repent and return (in Jesus’ name)

What was intended to be viewed as a memorial of honor is actually a memorial to a family line known for their rejection of God.⁵⁷ Because Jesus (and his followers) stand in the tradition of the prophets, their rejection of him is thereby logical.

To verify this, we need only look ahead to Acts 7:58 and 22:20 that describe the murder of Stephen in the same terms. Just as the lawyers here in Luke 7:48 are witnesses (μάρτυς) and approve (συνευδοκέω) of the deeds of “their fathers,” so we find those rejecting the Gospel and stoning Stephen described as οἱ μάρτυρες (Acts 7:58) and Saul approving (συνευδοκέω) of the deed (Acts 22:20). Moreover, Luke’s use of ἀπόστολος in conjunction with προφήτης in Luke 11:49 looks forward to Acts and

54. Keener remarks that “It was customary to praise the child by blessing the mother” as is evidenced in both Greco-Roman and Rabbinic texts such as *Syr. Bar.* 54:10; *m. Abot* 2:8 (*Bible Background NT*, Luke 11:27–28).

55. Cf. Hannah K. Harrington, “Did the Pharisees Eat Ordinary Food in a State of Ritual Purity?” *JSJ* 26 (1995): 42–54.

56. Keener, *Bible Background NT*, Luke 11:46–47.

57. Godet, *Commentaire sur l’Évangile de Saint Luc*, 2:118.

the ministry of the apostles.⁵⁸

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Fathers Motif that begins in Luke's Gospel is made even more explicit in Acts. Like the first chapter of Luke's Gospel, there is a somewhat positive nature to the Fathers Motif in Acts 1 - 6 until Stephen's speech (Acts 7). This change coincides with a fresh offer of repentance following Pentecost. As rejection mounts, however, it takes on a sharply negative tone in Stephen's speech.

Acts 3:11–26

Peter's appeal to appeal to ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν in 3:13 echoes the opening of Luke's gospel,⁵⁹ where the birth of Jesus is understood by Mary⁶⁰ and Zechariah⁶¹ (two witnesses) as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. Peter tells the onlookers that faith in Jesus, who stands in concert with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (or ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν), has accomplished this healing.⁶² Another important dimension to this phrase as it relates to the Fathers Motif is its connection with the Exodus. Acts 3:13 is an inverted citation of Exodus 3:6, 15.

58. But see Luke 6:13; 9:10; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10.

59. Conrad Gempf rightly notes that speeches in antiquity "are the compositions of the author, but at their best are representative of the speaker, the situation and of the contents of the original." Thus, Luke's voice is being heard in "Peter's" speeches ("Public Speaking and Published Accounts," in *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clark, vol. 1 of *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 299).

60. Luke 1:55: καθὼς ἐλάλησεν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν, τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

61. Luke 1:72: ποιῆσαι ἔλεος μετὰ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν καὶ μνησθῆναι διαθήκης ἁγίας αὐτοῦ. Zechariah first prophesies in light of God's visitation (1:68) and the raising of the horn of salvation "in the house of his servant David" (1:69), and then prophesies over his son John (1:76–79).

62. Fitzmyer concludes: "With this OT allusion Luke stresses the continuity between historic Israel and the new Christian movement" (*The Acts of the Apostles* [AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998], 285); cf. Daniel Marguerat, *Les Actes des Apôtres (1–12)* (CNT 5a; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2007), 128.

Acts 3:13 – ὁ θεὸς Ἀβραάμ καὶ ὁ θεὸς Ἰσαὰκ καὶ ὁ θεὸς Ἰακώβ,
 ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν
 Ex 3:6, 15 – ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν,
 θεὸς Ἀβρααμ καὶ θεὸς Ἰσαακ καὶ θεὸς Ἰακωβ

Moses was concerned that the Israelites would not know who he was nor why they should listen to him. His instructions were to tell them that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had sent him. The Exodus text thus aligns this “new” leader with the purposes of God. Luke’s appropriation of it here in Acts does likewise. They, like Moses, are agents in effecting the New Exodus that Jesus continues to carry out through the healing of this man.

Additionally, later in the speech (3:25) Peter tells the audience that they are “sons of the prophets and of the covenant” (οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῆς διαθήκης), which God has given “to your fathers” (πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν). The rhetorical shift felt here contrasts with the Gospel of Luke where the Jewish leaders were “sons of prophet-murderers” (Luke 11:47–52) and serves a double emphasis: (1) to convince the audience that the Jesus movement is the fulfillment of their Jewish heritage (i.e. Abrahamic covenant)⁶³ and (2) to persuade them that as heirs of the prophetic tradition⁶⁴ they should accept this proclamation of good tidings.⁶⁵ The audiences’ and the rulers’ “ignorance” (3:17) that caused this sin can now be overcome by God’s grace in this fresh offer of forgiveness in Jesus name (cf. Luke 23:34). The

63. Qumran also spoke of their community members in a similar way (1QM 17:8; 4Q501 1 i 2; 4Q503 7–9 iv 3; CD 12:11).

64. It is technically incorrect to speak of the audience as sons of (=members of) the prophets since one had to be a prophet to belong to the group (cf. 1 Sam 10:10–12; 19:24; 1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1). Thus, Eckhard Schnabel refers to them as metaphorical “heirs” (*Acts*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 219). Cf. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 291. Keener curiously does *not here* maintain that “sons of” equals “members of” as he does in Luke 11:19 (*Bible Background NT*, Acts 3:24–26). In light of the quote from Joel 2:28–30 “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” in Acts 2:17, every Jesus follower becomes a “son” or “daughter” of the prophets. It is unclear why I. Howard Marshall maintains that “sons of the prophets” is not OT language” in light of the references above (“Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007], 548).

65. Keener remarks accordingly that, “they will act as descendants either of the prophets . . . or of their killers” (*Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: 3:1—14:28* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013], 1119).

consequence of refusal is to be cut off from the Messianic people of God (3:23). Despite the interruption by the Jewish leaders, Luke notes that many who heard the message believed (4:4).

There is one further evidence that Luke is drawing upon the Fathers Motif here and that concerns Barabbas, whose name ironically means “son of the father.” Peter does not name Barabbas but only refers to him as “a murderer” (3:14) drawing a contrast between the “destroyer of life”⁶⁶ and the “Author of life” (3:15).⁶⁷ In so doing, he contrasts the two ancestries: that of God and that of those opposed to God, and probably Satan is in view.

As evidence of Luke’s intentionality here, consider that in the Gospel accounts involving Barabbas, Mark mentions that he is a murderer but consistently refers to him by Barabbas (three times) throughout the pericope (15:6–15). Matthew (27:15–26) not only follows Mark in referring to him by name (five times), but does not even bother to mention that he is a murderer, preferring the epithet, “notorious prisoner.” Luke (23:18–25), although he mentions his name once, refers to him as a “murderer” twice.⁶⁸ What is Luke’s intention here? In light of the Fathers Motif, it may be summarized as this: *The “sons of prophet-murderers” welcome not the Messiah but, in line with their parentage, a murderer!* For the moment, however, all of this was done in ignorance⁶⁹ and can be remedied if they will only realize that they should be “sons of the prophets” and so now welcome their Messiah (Acts 3:20). Read in light of his quotation of Hebrew Scripture that combines Deut 18:15–16a, 19, and Lev 23:29 (Acts 3:23), Peter is saying that despite their involvement in Messiah’s death, they can remain as members of the people of God, yet their refusal of him now would equate to their removal from the Messianic people of God.⁷⁰

66. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 286; Schnabel, *Acts*, 209.

67. The precise meaning of ἀρχηγός is not clear here, though author or originator of life seems best to stand in contrast with “murderer” i.e. a destroyer of life. Other translations use Author (NIV84, DOUAY), Originator (NET), Prince (NASB, NKJV, WEB, NEG).

68. Matt 27:26 “Then he released for them Barabbas.” Mark 15:15 “So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas.” Luke 23:25 “He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder.”

69. Fitzmyer notes the presence of the motif of ignorance in the speeches of Acts (3:17; 13:27; 17:30) (*Acts*, 287). Elsewhere in Luke–Acts we could add Luke 2:43; 12:48; 19:44; 20:7; Acts 7:18; 12:9; 19:32; 23:5.

70. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 290.

Acts 5:27–32

In 5:30 we find the same phrase used as in 3:13, ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν. On its own, we might be inclined to view this as simply traditional language as in 3:13;⁷¹ however, as we have seen thus far, there is more attached to the phrase for Luke. In light of the polemical setting,⁷² “our fathers”—which as we know from 3:13 refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and invokes the Abrahamic covenant—is again appropriated to the Jesus movement. This was a key foundation for its validity when it was first prophesied by Mary (Luke 1:46–55) and Zechariah (Luke 1:68–75). The ancestral recipients of the Abrahamic covenant are the “fathers” of the Jesus movement, whereas the “fathers” of those who reject Jesus are of a different type.

Additional evidence that Luke is appealing to the Fathers Motif can be adduced from the broader context of ch.5 as well. We note the initial response of the leaders: “When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them” (Acts 5:33). What other response could one expect from those whom Luke labels as “sons of prophet-murderers” (Luke 11:47–52)?⁷³ Moreover, Gamaliel’s comments (Acts 5:38–39) are also pertinent, “if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” One can easily note the polar dimension of motif development here. Although we have no reason to believe that Gamaliel was having second thoughts about the Jesus,⁷⁴ he nonetheless leaves open the possibility that God *may* be behind the movement.⁷⁵ On this several commentators believe that Gamaliel’s advice is guided by Deut 18:20–22 (on the testing of a prophet).

71. Ben Witherington interprets the phrase simply as “the God of the Jews” (*The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 232). Cf. Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary: Acts*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 256.

72. Marguerat notes the inversion of the normal order of resurrection/crucifixion for emphasis sake (*Actes 1–12*, 195).

73. David Moessner argues that Luke views Jesus, Peter, Stephen, and Paul as “Deuteronomistic rejected prophets” whose fates end in persecution and death (“‘The Christ Must Suffer’: New Light on the Jesus–Peter, Stephen, Paul Parallels in Luke–Acts,” *NovT* 28 [1986]: 220–56 at 227)

74. Schnabel, *Acts*, 317–18; Keener, *Acts 3:1—14:28*, 1229–30.

75. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 341; Arnold, *Acts*, 259; Schnabel, *Acts*, 318.

Acts 7:1–60

Stephen's speech⁷⁶ is replete with the language of the Fathers Motif and its polemical nature ultimately leads to his death. He refers to τῷ πατρὶ ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ in 7:2; he repeats οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν eight times;⁷⁷ he cites the phrase ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων σου, ὁ θεὸς Ἀβραάμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ" (7:32) while quoting Exod 3:15; and he mentions οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν twice in 7:51–52. The obvious challenge is determining the significance of each phrase. However, there are at least three reasons that suggest that Luke skillfully uses this language as part of the Fathers Motif.

First, Thomas Römer and Jean–Daniel Macchi confirm that when Stephen refers to “fathers” he does not generically mean “all our Israelite ancestors.”⁷⁸ Bart Koet also notes, “In Israel’s history there are, thus, two trends: a positive one which is modelled upon the promise to the fathers and a negative one, modelled upon their obduracy.”⁷⁹ Stephen first appeals to “our father Abraham” (7:2) who is for Luke the “ideal father;” i.e. he who responds by faith to God’s word and who receives the covenant of promise that forms the basis for this Jesus movement.⁸⁰ He then explains that Abraham begat Isaac who begat Jacob, the father of the patriarchs. Why does he include this brief linear genealogy that would be common knowledge to his audience?⁸¹ Following genealogical conventions,⁸² he

76. Cf. n. 59.

77. Acts 7:11, 12, 15, 19, 39, 44, 45 (twice).

78. “Luke, Disciple of the Deuteronomistic School,” in *Luke’s Literary Achievement*, ed. C. M. Tuckett, JSNT Sup 116 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 186.

79. *Five Studies*, 132–33.

80. For Luke’s appeal to Abraham as the recipient of the covenant of promise and “ideal father,” see the following: Luke 1:55, 73; 13:16, 28; 16:22–24; 20:37; Acts 3:13, 25.

81. We did not find any commentator exploring the function or significance of the genealogy. The most common explanation (if one is provided) is to speed along to Joseph. E.g., Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 181.

82. Robert R. Wilson, “Genealogy, Genealogies,” *ABD* 2:929–32; J. W. Wright, “Genealogies,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 345–50.

does so to introduce and discuss the “persons” of interest, οἱ πατριάρχαι. But, from 7:9 on, “our fathers” does *not* generically refer to the Israelite ancestors beginning with Abraham but instead *delineates a particular subgroup of Israelites*.⁸³ Thus, in 7:11, 12, and 15, the πατριάρχαι of 7:9 are referred to as οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν, a group that *excludes* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁸⁴ This bifurcation continues throughout the passage as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob cannot be included in the group of “our fathers” who (1) were forced to expose their infants in Egypt (7:19), (2) refused to obey Moses (7:39), and (3) served other gods despite possession of the Tabernacle (7:44) and Temple (7:47). For Stephen, “our fathers” in this context represents a specific group from which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are intentionally excluded.

Second, Stephen is careful to differentiate how he speaks of Abraham, the leaders God raised up, and “our fathers.” What does Stephen say about them? Abraham is one who obeyed (7:3–4, 8⁸⁵) by faith though he did not receive “a foot’s length” of the promise nor even have a child at the time the promise was made (7:5). The implication is that Stephen’s audience has at their disposal far more than Abraham did and yet they do not believe. In Acts 7:9, the patriarchs are identified as Jacob’s sons and those whom Stephen uses to describe his audience’s true (spiritual) ancestry.⁸⁶ The audience’s “fathers” were jealous (ζηλόω, cf. Acts 17:5) of God’s appointees (7:9, 27, 35), rejected them (7:9, 27, 35), never understood His work (7:25), refused to obey (7:39), and turned to idol worship (7:39–43) all despite having God’s presence among them (7:44–50). This is the reason they are

83. So Koet, *Five Studies*, 132–33. Wilson helps to clarify an important point: While it is true that the singular function of the linear genealogy in the HB is to “ground a claim to power, status, rank, office, or inheritance in a an earlier ancestor,” it is also true that, “just as a genealogy can take on new functions as part of a larger narrative, so also *a narrative can help to interpret a traditional genealogy*” (“Genealogy, Genealogies,” *ABD* 2:931–2, emphasis mine).

84. Bruce Malina incorrectly assesses this text (*Social–Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008] 59–60). We are not arguing that they are not physically related but that “our fathers” as used in 7:9–16 is spiritually oriented and does *not* include Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

85. Note that Stephen connects circumcision, rightly, with the Abrahamic covenant.

86. Conzelmann notes that Luke’s readers must have been familiar with the patriarchal review such that “The purpose is not to report the events, but to interpret them” (*Acts*, 52).

both “stiff-necked” and “uncircumcised in heart and ears.” Richard Pervo notes that “‘Uncircumcised’ (v. 51) recalls v. 8 (covenant of circumcision)”⁸⁷ which underscores once again that they are not of the “ancestry” of Abraham but from that of “their fathers.” In contrast, the leaders appointed by God grow in favor and wisdom (7:10, cf. Jesus in Luke 2:40, 52), lead God’s people to salvation (7:14, cf. Luke 5:32), are mighty in word and deed (7:22, cf. Jesus in Luke 24:19), are rejected by the people (7:9, 27, 35, cf. Jesus in Luke 18–25), and perform signs and wonders (7:36, cf. Jesus in Acts 2:32; 4:30). The main point of Stephen’s review then is not on God’s work or presence outside the land of Israel⁸⁸ (though it does not exclude that element), but on demonstrating that *those opposed to the Jesus movement are living up to their pedigree*.⁸⁹ *The focus is people not places*: “The purpose of Stephen’s recent indictment of their ‘ancestors’ becomes obvious as Stephen climaxes the challenge that they have repeated their ancestors’ crime of rejecting a deliverer.”⁹⁰

Third and finally, Luke fashions Stephen in the role of a prophet and the leaders as “sons of prophet-murderers.”⁹¹ He accomplishes the latter through (1) calling them as such (7:52), and (2) narrating the murder of Stephen (7:54, 57–58). Note that they were enraged (*διαπρίω*, cf. Acts 5:33), stopped up their ears in the spirit of Isa 6:8–10, and that they, like their pagan counterparts in Ephesus (19:28), “cry out” (*κράζω*) with a loud (*μέγας*) voice at the offense taken over their idol (*χειροποίητος*), the

87. *Acts*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 192.

88. The view of J. Julius Scott, Jr., “Stephen’s Defense and the World Mission of the People of God,” *JETS* 21 (1978): 131–41. Keener notes that this is a significant element to the speech, but also recognizes the “rejected ruler” motif is also dominant (*Acts 3:1—14:28*, 1345, 1362, 1364, 1373, 1392, 1399–1401, 1403).

89. Pervo observes, “It appears normal for God’s people to oppose the prophets” (*Acts*, 180).

90. Keener, *Acts 3:1—14:28*, 1423.

91. So Pervo, *Acts*, 192. Cf. Luke 13:34–35 where Jerusalem is referred to by Jesus as “the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!” He grimly adds “your house is forsaken.” That the leaders did not keep the Law (7:53) is demonstrated by the fact that they murdered Jesus to whom the Law testified (7:52).

Temple (7:48).⁹² They have once again rejected the deliverer–redeemer raised up by God and stand stubbornly against His new work in Jesus. That Stephen is a prophet is evidenced by (1) his prophetic stance in identifying them as “stiff-necked”⁹³ and “uncircumcised in heart and ears,”⁹⁴ and (2) by his “vision”⁹⁵ in which he uses the stock prophetic phrase ἰδοῦ, θεωρέω (a common feature in Daniel’s visions⁹⁶ as is the title τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), and τοὺς οὐρανοὺς διηνοιγμένους (cf. Ezek 1:1).

Thus, Stephen’s speech robustly brings together some important elements of the Fathers Motif, i.e., Abraham as “ideal father,” the polarization of “ancestries” (Abraham vs. the obdurate), and the centrality of following Jesus over being physical descendants of Abraham. While some have noted this polarization they have not understood its relationship to the Fathers Motif throughout Luke–Acts.

92. Schnabel disputes the view that χειροποίητος indicates idolatry (*Acts*, 384–6). Pao has sufficiently demonstrated the presence of the anti-idol polemic (*Isaianic New Exodus*, 206–8). He rightly observes (n. 74) that the accusations are leveled against the *people*, not the Temple. Thus, the “Hellenistic” versus “Judaistic” Christianity theory is suspect wherein the former supposedly viewed the move from Tabernacle to Temple as a mistake (c.f. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 383–84; Pervo, *Acts*, 191; Scott, “Stephen’s Defense,” 133–34). The Temple is an idol only to the people who prefer allegiance to it over the Messiah. Cf. Keener, *Acts 3:1–14:28*, 1405–6, 1417.

93. Exod 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut 9:6, 13.

94. Lev 26:41; Jer 6:10; 9:26.

95. Schnabel notes the error some make (e.g., Tannehill) in thinking that 7:56 is somehow disconnected from the main speech (*Acts*, 362). It is *Luke* who interrupts Stephen to make an editorial comment (7:54–55). In light of the thrust of the speech 7:56 is the climax of Stephen’s argument about the identity of Jesus. Whether it is “an alternate state of consciousness” is difficult to say (Malina, *Book of Acts*, 60).

96. Dan 3:27; 4:13; 7:2, 4, 6–7, 9, 11, 13; 8:15.

Acts 28:23–28

The ending of Acts has always troubled interpreters, but this is generally based on the assumption that the focus was on Paul.⁹⁷ Luke 1:79, 2:32, 24:47 and Acts 1:8 all anticipate the spread of the word to the “ends of the earth,” which, as Pao has demonstrated, is equivalent to “the Gentiles.”⁹⁸ Now that the Gospel has reached “the end of the earth” (i.e. Gentiles) and that it has finished its “conquest” of the Roman world,⁹⁹ Luke has finished his task.¹⁰⁰ In this light, the final occurrence of the Fathers Motif and its prominent place at the end of Acts should not be surprising. In keeping with his missional practice of “to the Jew especially, and also to the Gentile” (Rom 1:16) throughout Acts, he goes first to his people. In what ways does the Fathers Motif manifest itself here?

First, we can again discern the polar dimension in Luke’s description that “some were being persuaded” (7:24) while others “were disbelieving”; the two “ancestries” are again made manifest. Second, Paul’s “judgment”¹⁰¹ is leveled *against those who disbelieved*, not against the Jewish people as a whole.¹⁰² That is, Paul’s use of *your fathers* must refer to a subgroup or he would be included in his own judgment and elsewhere in Acts, he is

97. Armin Baum raises some new objections arguing on the basis of ancient historiographical conventions that should be taken seriously. However, he assumes too much regarding the fate of Paul after his trial and posits a “martyrdom culture” on the part of his readers (“Rhetorik des Schweigens? Der unvollständige Schluss der Apostelgeschichte (Act 28, 30–31) im Licht antiker Literaturtheorie und historiographischer Praxis,” *ETL* 88 [2012]: 95–128).

98. *Isaianic New Exodus*, 91–96. But cf. Schnabel, *Acts*, 79–80.

99. Pao, *Isaianic New Exodus*, 147–80.

100. Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 205–30.

101. “In the LXX version this passage is not a judgment, but a description of the obduracy of the fathers” (Koet, *Five Studies*, 138; cf. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 790–91). Marguerat describes it as “the author’s theological diagnosis about the relation between Church and Synagogue” (*First Christian Historian*, 221).

102. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 790–91; Koet, *Five Studies*, 132–33; Graham N. Stanton, “Stephen in Lucan Perspective,” in *Studia Biblica 1978: Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors*, ed. Elizabeth A Livingstone (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1980), 345–60.

perfectly comfortably in identifying with his ethnic identity as Jewish.¹⁰³ As has been made clear by the previous survey, however, Paul (or rather perhaps Luke¹⁰⁴) has in mind not physical ancestry, but spiritual. Since this critique of “unbelievers” has its roots in the Jewish prophetic tradition it can not be taken as anti-Jewish.¹⁰⁵ Like Stephen’s speech, those who believe in Jesus as Messiah are “sons of Abraham.” Those who reject Jesus as Messiah are like the leaders of Luke 11, “sons of the prophet-murderers.”¹⁰⁶ This suggests that it is incorrect to conclude that Paul is issuing a blanket judgment against Jews collectively¹⁰⁷ or that Luke is anti-Jewish.¹⁰⁸

103. Although Simon Butticaz finds Pauline hope for Israel to be presented as a “bare minimum” by Luke, he uses the phrase “holy remnant” to describe those Jews who believe in Jesus (“Has God Rejected his People?” (Rom 11:1). The Salvation of Israel in Acts: Narrative Claim of a Pauline Legacy” in *Paul and the Heritage of Israel: Paul’s Claim Upon Israel’s Legacy in Luke and Acts in the Light of the Pauline Letters*, ed. Daniel Marguerat et al., LNTS [New York: T&T Clark, 2012]), 158, 164.

104. Cf. n. 59.

105. Butticaz’s observation on this point is spot on. Not to mention that Qumran was equally critical of their own people and would not be viewed as anti-Jewish (*L’Identité de l’église dans les Actes des Apôtres: de la restauration d’Israël à la conquête universelle*, BZNW 174 [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011], 468).

106. Marguerat observes that Paul’s use of the “Holy Spirit” in speaking to “your fathers” implies that he continues to speak to their descendants, i.e. Paul’s audience (*Les Actes des Apôtres (13–28)*, CNT 5b (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2015], 385–86).

107. Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 224–26. Cf. Pervo, *Acts*, 681, 685; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 227–28; Joseph B. Tyson, “Rejection By Jews and Turning to the Gentiles: The Pattern of Paul’s Mission in Acts,” in *Luke–Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives*, ed. Joseph B. Tyson (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 124–37; Simon Butticaz, “Has God Rejected his People?,” 148–64; Robert C. Tannehill, “Rejection By Jews and Turning to the Gentiles: The Pattern of Paul’s Mission in Acts,” in *Luke–Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives*, ed. Joseph B. Tyson (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 83–101.

108. Jack T. Sanders, “The Jewish People in Luke–Acts,” in *Luke–Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives*, ed. Joseph B. Tyson (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 51–75. To be fair, his designation of Luke’s stance toward the “Jews” is that they are “the villains.”

CONCLUSION OF THE FATHERS MOTIF IN LUKE-ACTS

Now that our survey of the Fathers Motif in Luke–Acts is complete it is appropriate to revisit the criteria of a motif as they compare to our findings. They are as follows:

- (1) Semblance We find the use of similar vocabulary or phrases related to the issue of ancestry that has recognizable traits. Examples include “our fathers,” “their fathers,” “your fathers,” “sons of,” etc.
- (2) Positional alignment The motif nearly always occurs in a confrontation or polemical situation in which a response is sought.¹⁰⁹ In the case of John the Baptist’s ministry, and Peter’s and Stephen’s speeches in particular, there was a definite shift in the narrative.
- (3) Polar dimension This was perhaps the most significant characteristic of our findings; there are always two “ancestries” in view.
- (4) Tension Luke’s employment of this motif was intended to cause the reader to reflect at length as to who comprised the people of God. This reflection is provoked by the use of the terms mentioned above in conjunction with the polemical context.
- (5) Schematization The amount of repetition speaks for itself.
- (6) Supporting themes This motif is associated with several themes in Luke–Acts. Examples include salvation, the acceptance or rejection of the Word of God, reversal of expectation, repentance–conversion, the restoration of Israel, God’s purposes, the

109. A notable exception is the “Sermon on the Plain” where the audience was presumably all “insiders.”

Holy Spirit, the inclusion of the Gentiles, and the Isaianic New Exodus.

- (7) Textual organization This motif is introduced as early as Luke 1 in Mary and Zechariah’s prophecies regarding Jesus, although these passages were not treated on their own. The motif also occurs significantly at the inauguration of Jesus’ public ministry in Luke 3. It reoccurs throughout Luke–Acts and then occurs prominently at the end of Acts.

4. CONCLUSION

We began this study by considering Stephen’s and Paul’s curious use of “your fathers,” wondering who they might be and the significance of the terminology. As we have shown, their occurrences fit into a larger literary motif. While I have touched on particular ways that the Fathers Motif enlightens our understanding of Luke–Acts, I would like here to highlight four particularly important ways this study may impact Lucan studies.

First, Luke is very careful to distinguish between two sets of ancestors: the “ideal fathers” (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and the “fathers” who continually resist God’s word and appointed leaders. When Luke uses “your fathers” or “their fathers” or related terminology he is always referring to a specific subgroup of Jews who resist God. When he uses “our fathers” or related terminology, only the context indicates whether he has in mind this former group or that of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *Interpreters must pay attention to this distinction to correctly understand what Luke is communicating.*

Second, because of its association with the theme of the identity of the Messianic people of God, this Fathers Motif is an objective tool used by Luke in framing his definition. Luke makes clear from the beginning of his Gospel that association to Abraham by physical descent alone is insufficient for salvation and that the Gentile mission was always God’s plan.

Third, with regard to Luke’s “verdict” on the Jewish people, this motif demonstrates that it is in no way “final” nor is it a blanket judgment on the Jewish people in general.¹¹⁰ Rather, he portrays the Jewish unbelievers

110. Buttica also challenges the “finality” of this “judgment” but neither does he conclude very much either: “the pronouncements [of judgment] should not be overdrawn, but neither should they be underestimated” (“Has God Rejected his People?” 163).

as cutting themselves off from God's people (e.g., Acts 3:23, 13:46). The book certainly ends in tension about the general fate of the Jews or Jewish Nation, but interpreting the meaning of that tension depends on its connection to the larger literary motif.

Fourth, Luke does not portray the Jesus movement as ultimately Gentile. "The reader is not encouraged to repudiate his or her origin, but rather to rediscover it as a lost origin."¹¹¹ Luke's posture toward the Jewish people includes a call to embrace the faith of Abraham and abandon the obduracy that characterized "their fathers." He does not call them to leave their Jewish identity, but to experience its fullness in the Messiah. These observations move us forward in answering Pervo's provocative question, "if those to whom the promises were addressed have said no, can the Jesus movement be legitimate?"¹¹² We may respond that Luke's use of the Fathers Motif is in part his answer to that question¹¹³ because *the Jesus movement includes Jewish people and always intended Gentile inclusion*. The rejection of *some unbelieving* Jews and the inclusion of *some believing* Gentiles does not equate to "Jewish rejection." Furthermore, "Jewish rejection" in the collective sense is anachronistic to apply to the period of Luke's writings.

5. IMPLICATIONS

The following are a few modest implications of these findings. First, Luke's emphasis on Abraham as "ideal father" and the primacy of the Abrahamic covenant has a striking resemblance to Paul's "Abrahamic logic" of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (e.g., Romans 4). Additionally, we can identify a connection between Luke's relativization of physical ancestry and Paul's assertion that "a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit" (Rom 2:29). Moreover, this relativization through the Fathers Motif appears to be his more sophisticated way of stating John's phrase, "You are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). Without denying differences in theological perspectives among NT writers, these similarities offer clear points of contact between them. Finally, with regard to the status of ethnic Israel, the Fathers Motif suggests that there may not

111. Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 152.

112. Pervo, *Acts*, 681, n 10.

113. "Identifying themes and motifs can help enormously in establishing what a work is about and where its focus lies, and that in turn can be used to eliminate some interpretations and to lend support to others" (Abbott, *Narrative*, 95).

be such a wide gap between Lucan and Pauline theology on this point.¹¹⁴ Pervo, following Conzelmann, suggests, “the contrast between Luke and Paul could not be stronger. Both sought to explain why most Jews had said ‘no’ to the message. For Paul this rejection was provisional; Luke viewed it as final and the grounds for the existence of (in modern terms) a separate religion.”¹¹⁵ While there is no disputing that the Judaism and Christianity *eventually* became separate religions, this present study provides significant counter-evidence to Pervo’s analysis that Luke viewed things as “final.” Furthermore, recent scholarship has pushed the so-called separation much later than Luke’s time.¹¹⁶

114. See Buttica’s cautious conclusions on this and other ways the Paul of Luke and the Paul of the Epistles share points of contact (“Has God Rejected his People?” 158–63).

115. Pervo, *Acts*, 685; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 227–28.

116. E.g., Becker, Adam H. and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds, *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007); James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 2006).