

## "... with the Women, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and his Brothers" (Acts 1:14)

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Luke notes (Acts 1:14) that in the Upper Room (after Jesus' Ascension) "the women<sup>1</sup>, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" were gathered together with the Twelve Apostles (Lk 6:13); all were persevering together in prayer. After this early notice, one never again reads of Mary, nor are 'the women' mentioned again in Acts. And while James, a brother of the Lord, plays a significant part in Acts (chs. 15 and 21), Acts does not again speak directly of 'Jesus' brothers'. If these people would never again appear in his story, why did Luke include them here?<sup>2</sup> What Lucan purpose might they serve? Several answers suggest themselves.

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1 The Greek text offers two words, to form the two-word phrase 'with women'; however, as Blass, Debrunner, Funk (*A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* [Chicago, 1961]) # 255 indicates, the article can be omitted in prepositional phrases. Thus, what Luke intends here is a reference to *the* women, who I understand, as my essay explains, to be the women first mentioned in Lk 8:2-3, then further mentioned in 23:49, 55; 24:1-11, 22-24. Contra, J. Ruis-Camps, *Commentari als Fets dels Apostòls* Vol 1 (Madrid 1991); the author translates Acts 1:14: "... amb ilurs dones i fills..." He cites Zerwick-Grosvenor, *An Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome 1974), who interpret the phrase as 'with certain women', and thus not a reference to *the women* of the Gospel (e.g., 8:2-3). Also, Manuscript D (cf. A. Merk, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, ed.11 [Rome 1992] 394) offers 'with the women and children', thus, like Ruis-Camps, suggesting that the women are the wives and children of the Eleven.

2 In regard to Lk 8:2-3, L. Johnson (*The Gospel of Luke* [Collegeville 1991], 134 remarks: "With this small note, Luke not only anticipates the critical role the women will play later...but shows a people *in nuce* gathering around the prophet, and sharing their lives and possessions, a picture that foreshadows that of the Galilean community of believers in Acts 1:13-14 and 2:41-47." Certainly this is true, but the question remains, why precisely are these elements, 'the women' and "Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers", to be highlighted in Acts 1:14?

A first response would be that what Luke says at 1:14 is sufficient reason in itself to have these people mentioned here. After all, to know that "the women, Mary and Jesus' brothers are in persevering prayer with the Twelve Apostles" is heartening to the reader and an assurance that all followers of Jesus - not just the Twelve - prayed perseveringly. Particularly is the example of Mary here an encouragement to a Christian's perseverance in prayer.

A second answer introduces the possibility of symbolism. Mary, so crucially central to the birth of the Lord, seems fittingly placed by Luke at the 'birth' of the Christian community.<sup>3</sup> Soon to follow upon this gathering in the Upper Room will be Pentecost, an event often described as the birth of the Christian community; for as Israel had been formally made God's People through the Mosaic Covenant on Sinai (an event which happened 50 days after the flight from Egypt), so Jesus' followers were to be made his community formally with the outpouring of the Spirit (50 days after his death and resurrection). A story does intervene between the mention of Mary and the Pentecost event: a story of the replacement of Judas with Matthias. But this story, it is generally admitted, serves 'only' to establish once again the Twelve, so that they who represent the Twelve tribes (an archaic name, but all the more symbolic) will be at full number for the coming of the Spirit upon the fullness of Israel. Given the function of this replacement-story, one can quite reasonably link the mention of Mary with the inauguration of the Christian community, until now simply waiting, as per the instructions of Jesus (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8), for the promise of my Father (Lk 24:49b).

There is a third answer to the question, why the women, Mary and Jesus' brothers are explicitly named here, and it is this answer I wish to propose at length here. Being at prayer is an indicator of the answer, but by far it is not. Nor is Mary meant to be singled out here. More crucial is the fact that these precise words, 'the women', 'Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers' are used here. The study I propose now will also attempt to answer the subsequent question: why are the women, Mary and Jesus' brothers not mentioned again in Acts? Is there some way of explaining both the presence of all three *personae* and the fact that they appear only once in Acts?

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3 Cf. L. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville 1992), 24: "As Mary has the Spirit overshadow her to give birth to the prophet-messiah (Luke 1:35), so she is present at the gift of the Spirit that gives birth to the Church..."

## OPERATIVE PRINCIPLE

Because Luke does not introduce these three elements again in his Acts and because we have become accustomed to thinking of the Gospel of Luke as, from a certain perspective, a preparation for the Acts of the Apostles,<sup>4</sup> I turn to the Gospel to discover what might be Luke's reason for presenting these three elements in Acts (1:14).

## THE WOMEN

'The women' (Acts 1:14) appears to pick up references to the women who followed Jesus. Specifically, I suggest the Gospel text (8:2-3) as key.<sup>5</sup> Here are mentioned first 'certain women', then individuals (Mary called Magdalene, Joanna, wife of Chuza, Susanna) and finally 'many others'; note that they are passing through towns and villages.<sup>6</sup> Reference to this large group of women (and to individuals) appears again at 23:49, where Luke notes that "... and the women who had followed him from Galilee had come to see these things";<sup>7</sup> they are referred to again very soon: "Then following were the women who had accompanied<sup>8</sup> him from Galilee; they had a good

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- 4 Such volumes as that of R. O'Toole, *The Unity of Luke's Theology: An Analysis of Luke-Acts* (Wilmington 1984) and R. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 2 vol. (Philadelphia 1986-1990) are two works among many which show the close literary and theological relationships that exist between the Gospel and Acts. Given the explicit audience of Luke (Theophilus Lk 1:3; Acts 1:1) and the purpose of his volumes (Lk 1:4), one can understand why Luke would expect his reader to understand many elements of Acts in terms of what he had written in the Gospel, what placed there precisely with a view to his second volume.
- 5 Cf. B. Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, 1998), 113: "It is much more natural to assume that Luke means the same women he had mentioned at the end of his first volume... the female disciples (cf. Luke 23:55; 24:1,9,22)." It is not at all clear to me why the author did not include Lk 8:2-3 in his texts.
- 6 There is one central verb in all of Lk 8:1-3: 'to pass through'; the subjects of this verb are three: Jesus, the Twelve and the women. The syntactical union of the three show their union of spirit.
- 7 Now the verb 'to follow along with' is used of the women; it reminds one of the triple usage having to do with criteria for discipleship, in Lk 9:57 'I will follow you...'; 9:59 'follow me...'; 9:61 'I will follow you' - all of which reflect the earlier usage in Lk 5:11: "And having brought the boats to shore, they left all things and followed him." That this technical verb 'to follow' is not used in Lk 8:2-3 is not critical; that Jesus is described as 'passing through' (and the women are so described) would not argue that Jesus was not performing the more technical aspects of his ministry: preaching and working miracles.
- 8 The verb is literally 'to follow down' - here from Galilee in the north to Judaea in the south.

look at the tomb and how the body was laid there, and then prepared spices and perfumes" (23:55-56). Finally, we hear of these women in the presence of young men at the empty tomb, women (some individuals named) who will announce these things to the Eleven and to all the others (24:4-6, 9-11; cf. 24:22-24 and presumably v.33: 'the Eleven and those with them.'

What characterizes these women?<sup>9</sup> Certainly they performed the striking task of informing the Eleven and the rest about the words of Jesus which promised his resurrection from the dead and about the empty tomb which witnesses to it and their vision (24:9-10, 23). But, taking together all that is said about them in the Gospel, I believe the continual importance of the women is their devotion to Jesus and to his ministry. The mention of the women, who followed Jesus, first occurs at a moment (8:2-3) when Luke is clearly dividing those who give themselves to following Jesus and those who hesitate or refuse to do so, even with scorn.<sup>10</sup> These women, like certain other disciples, wander with Jesus, even to Jerusalem when he moves in that direction. Thus, their adherence is total<sup>11</sup> and they are not checked by his death, for they continue to serve him as best they can. No doubt they were a scandal, for women at that time in Palestine did not wander with a teacher; culturally, they were to 'learn from their husbands', as Paul indicates (1 Cor 14:35). Devotion, however, broke these cultural barriers.

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9 "These women (Acts 1,14; cf. Luke 8,2-3; 23:49,55) have the important distinction of being followers and learners during Jesus's ministry", R. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, Vol 1 (Philadelphia 1986), 138. By various precisions, J. Noland (*Luke*, Vol 1 [Dallas 1989]), points up the particular role of the women: "Luke establishes a deliberate parallel between the apostles and the women [Luke 8,2-3]" 365..."Nevertheless, it is an exaggeration to suggest that the women appear on the same level as the men (as Grundmann, 174; Marshall, 316)" 366..."There are good Jewish parallels for women supporting Rabbis and their disciples out of their own money, property or foodstuffs..., but these women are far more intimately caught up in the enterprise in which Jesus is engaged" 367.

10 Thus, Luke has introduced the women at a juncture (ch 8) which lies between the description of those who are for and those who are against, those who reject and those who follow John the Baptist and Jesus (7:18-35), and the parable which interprets them, 'the Sower went out to sow the seed...' (8:4-15; include 16-18).

11 And their conduct in following Jesus is all the more dedicated for its being scandalous: Lk 8:2-3 points to "...a recollection about Jesus which differed radically from the usual understanding of women's role in contemporary Judaism", J.Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, vol 1 (AB 28; Garden City 1981) 696.

## MARY

Similarly, when we turn to read in the Gospel about 'Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers', we find a similar emphasis on discipleship.

Though I am concerned in this article with Gospel material that touches directly on Acts' formal phrasing 'Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers', I should look for a moment at what might be gleaned for my purpose from a consideration of Mary alone. There are two aspects in her regard which I wish to underline.

1. In what is traditionally called the Annunciation story, Mary finishes the direct-address dialogue with Gabriel by words which indicate obedience to the Lord. Her words are indeed such that one understands her obedience to be total. At the same time, her obedience here is the beginning of a long process of learning. At no point in Luke's work is Mary finally seen as one who understands all that God asks of her; hers is an obedience which is thorough, even while she does not fully comprehend all aspects of her calling. Because of this situation, tradition has over centuries perceived a Lucan intention here, that, while Mary should certainly be understood to be an individual (as unique as any other human being), Luke wants her perceived symbolically, that is, she is the symbol of every faithful disciple and, indeed, of the faithful Christian community as a whole. Mary's life is not shared by others, but her discipleship reflects discipleship for ever afterwards, and is the model for all who, while not understanding fully, follow whole-heartedly.

2. The Annunciation story is traditionally understood to reflect the literary form of Annunciation, a form discernible in the Old Testament and elsewhere in the literary world probably known to Luke. But the fact of the reply by Mary to Gabriel, a reply which effectively finishes the dialogue between them and their encounter, is an element which lies outside the characteristics of an Annunciation form. Actually, the last words of Mary suggest not so much an Annunciation form, but a Mission form. That is, all things considered, Lk 1:26-38 might well be as much a missioning of Mary as an announcement to her of what God reveals to her. And some scholars have concluded that indeed these Lucan verses are a mixed form, sharing elements of the Annunciation and Missioning forms. Thus, the traditional Annunciation story can be seen in scholarship today

also as a call story, in which a high point is reached with Mary's expression of willingness to follow God's will. Again, we note the stress on fidelity, on obedience to the word of the Lord which this mission form emphasizes.

## MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS, AND HIS BROTHERS

But perhaps the most revealing story about discipleship in relation to my essay is that of Lk 8:19-21. Here we find the terms which are reflected almost perfectly in Acts 1:14: '... his mother and his brothers' (8:19); '... your mother and your brothers' (9:20); '... my mother and my brothers' (8:21). Indeed, in the three sentences which make up this pericope, the formula '(his, your, my) mother and (his, your, my) brothers' is read three times. Not only is this formula fixed and underlined, it is central, by virtue of its continual presence, to the story.

The attitude of Luke to these personages of this story (8:19-21) is not always understood well. Because of its general affinity to the Marcan story about Jesus' mother and brothers who want to see him (Mk 3:31-35), the Lucan story is presumed to reflect the attitude of Mark toward Mary and the brothers. But the two stories are not in agreement in this matter.

### MARK 3:21, 31-35

For Mark, the motive for the coming of his mother and his brothers to Jesus seems to be found in the earlier, brief notice: "and family members<sup>12</sup> left to get hold of him, for they said he is out of his mind" (Mk 3:21). Within a short (literary) time, then, Mark tells the reader that Jesus' mother and brothers have come (3:31); they are calling (3:31) for him from outside the house (for they cannot get through the crowds present [as in 3:20]), and wanting to see him (3:32).

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12 Perhaps Mark's 'those related to him' - usually interpreted finally (under the influence of 3:31) as including his mother and his brothers - is a delicate formulation to avoid a direct statement that Mary thought Jesus to be 'out of his mind' (3:21)? Mark's formulation makes it difficult to identify with exactness who said 'he is out of his mind'. Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 723: "Many commentators have related these Marcan verses - and rightly so - to 3:31-35; these 'his own' have to be understood as Jesus' 'natural family'. Much more (painfully) cautious is C.F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (TPINTC; London 1990) 377: "Mark's *hoi par' autou* [3, 21] 'his friends' (...but Bauer suggests 'family' or 'relations')" and later: "...a visit of his family [Mark 3, 31] (possibly the same persons [as in 3, 21])..."

Perhaps their 'standing outside' (3:32) is meant to suggest their misunderstanding about Jesus. In any event, the impression given by Mark's data, with emphasis on the designation of those who are seated listening to Jesus as 'my mother and my brothers' and with the generalization that "anyone who does the will of God (3:34), that person is my mother and brother and sister" (3:35) - the overall impression is that Mark does not think of Jesus' mother and brothers as disciples of Jesus. (Indeed, Jesus' first visit to his hometown of Nazareth [Mk 6:1-6] shows what difficulty those related to Jesus had in assessing him correctly.)

### MARK COMPARED TO LUKE 8:19-21

In the world of biblical studies today, it is generally (though not universally) agreed that Luke read Mark and indeed borrowed a good deal of the Marcan materials for his Gospel, not least of which materials are the pervasive chronology and geography of the story. In Luke (8:19-20) we do read that Jesus' mother and brothers came, were blocked by the crowd and sent a message that they would like to see Jesus. And we do find an answer from Jesus (8:21) which reminds one of at least a part of his answer as given in Mark (certain words of v.34). However, there are differences between Mark's and Luke's renditions of this event, and they add up to a great difference.<sup>13</sup>

1. There is no generalizing: "whoever does the will of God is my mother and brother and sister" (Mk 3:35). Obviously, Mark wanted these words as a lesson here for his reader; Luke ignores these words - does Luke not have another way of teaching this lesson?<sup>14</sup>

2. Mark says only that Jesus' mother and brothers stood outside and sent a messenger to him calling for him (probably to come to them). There is no reference to a crowd which was blocking their way to Jesus. Luke corrects this description of things: he says explicitly that

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13 In what follows I accept, with a point added here or there, the interpretation of Lk 8:19-21 proposed by Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 725.

14 "All these passages (8,21.15.18) emphasize the fact that those, those alone, belong to Christ's true family, who not only hear the message but also live in accordance with it", W. Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Luke* (NTC; Edinburgh 1979), 435; the understanding of Lk 8:19-21 in this essay does not agree with Hendriksen's view, a view shared often in the history of interpretation. The point of difference lies in the fact that Hendriksen does not see that Jesus is directly praising his mother and brothers for their consistent hearing of the word of God and doing it.

Jesus' mother and brothers wanted to reach Jesus<sup>15</sup>, wanted to join (v.19) Jesus. Thus, for Luke the mother and brothers of Jesus want to join with him, and not, as Mark has it, want to take him, for fear of his mind, from those seated around him. Mark and Luke present two different attitudes towards Jesus in this event.

3. Luke simply does not repeat what Mark had noted earlier in his story at 3:21, having to do with Jesus being out of his mind. But note that the criticism of Jesus by lawyers from Jerusalem, presented by Mark immediately after this assessment of Jesus by family members, is picked up by Luke and repeated – not in Lk 8, but much later, in Lk 11:14-24, when Jesus is far from Galilee. Luke knew Mark's story well, but he eliminated a notice that suggested that Jesus' family considered Jesus to be out of his mind.

4. Jesus' words in regard to 'my mother and my brothers' (Lk 8:21), and the sentence they introduce, are quite different from what we have in Mark (3:34). First, Jesus does not indicate in Luke that those seated around him are his mother and brothers. In the generalization to follow, Jesus expands the family to include sister (Mk 3:35); Luke has no remark about 'sister'. Luke eliminates any reference to those seated around him. Secondly, a very reasonable reading of Jesus' answer (at Lk 8:21) is this, that 'my mother and my brothers' is put first in the sentence in order to make the reader understand who are the ones who hear and do the word of God.<sup>16</sup> In other words, Jesus' mother and brothers: these are the ones who certainly hear and do the will of God.<sup>17</sup> Thus, syntactically, 'these' is the subject of the verb 'are'; the content of 'these' is 'my mother and my brothers'. The subsequent 'those hearing the word of God and doing it' is predicative, meant to describe the mother and brothers of Jesus. This description of these

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15 It seems too soon and imprecise at v.19 to translate the two words, 'to him', by 'to (see) him'; cf. Hendriksen, *Luke*, 435. Such a translation does not explain well enough why, in Luke, Mary and Jesus' brothers come to him.

16 Traditionally, this structuring of a sentence is usually referred to as *casus pendens*. For a variety of ways of understanding Lk 3:21, cf. Evans, *Luke*, 378.

17 Note the objection of Nolland (*Luke*, 395): "But there are no definite articles with these nouns [mother, brothers] despite the possessive personal pronouns ('my'); so surely it is best, as in Mark (4:35), to take the phrase as a predicate..." But a perfect example of an anacoluthon or 'casus pendens' WITHOUT DEFINITE ARTICLE is Jn 1:18: "(the) only-begotten God, he being in the bosom of the Father, that one made (God) understandable." Thus, Nolland's argument is not convincing.

persons is put in the form of participles with demonstrative pronouns to indicate that their listening and doing are characteristics of them; they habitually listen and obey. Finally, the point of Jesus' remark is that his listeners (and Luke's readers) can find examples of discipleship in Mary and Jesus' brothers: these are those who characteristically hear and do the word of God.<sup>18</sup>

We hear no more of the 'mother and brothers of Jesus' in the Gospel of Luke; as noted earlier, we will read something about women who followed Jesus to Jerusalem, eventually involved in witnessing to his resurrection.<sup>19</sup>

## FROM DATA TO CONCLUSION

What I have attempted to show by the above presentation is that the phrase of Acts 1:14, 'women, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers', while appearing only once in Acts, has roots, by virtue of similar terminology (women, mother of Jesus, his brothers), with texts in Luke.<sup>20</sup> The question arises then: is it not reasonable to think that Luke expected his reader to understand the formula in Acts 1:14 in terms of that formula as it appears in the Gospel? <sup>21</sup> My hypothesis is precisely that: Luke expects us to understand 'women, Mary, the

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18 Cf. Johnson, *Luke*, 133: "...Luke ... avoids any implication that Jesus' family was hostile to him, or he to them." As well Nolland, *Luke*, 393: "...and even the verses he [Luke] does take up [from Mark] no longer contain in their Lukan form any suggestion that Jesus' family is outside the believing community."

19 Witherington, *Acts*, 113, notes: "The early church involved both the family of faith and the physical family of Jesus, the latter of whom had joined Jesus' followers, presumably as a result of the Passion and Easter events". If Witherington means to guess when Mary and Jesus' brothers finally physically joined with the Twelve, he may well be right that this joining together occurred after the Resurrection. But, in accord with my understanding of Lk 8:19-21, I add that the physical family of Jesus as identified in these verses was even then a part of the family of faith, and not only became such after the Passion and Easter events.

20 When commenting on 'the brothers' at Acts 1:14, I. H. Marshall (*The Acts of the Apostles*, [Leicester 1980], 62) identifies them by Mk 6:3; 7:3-5. It would seem more appropriate to link these people of Acts with Luke's own prior work, specifically with Lk 8:19-21.

21 Hendriksen, *Luke*, notes at Acts 1:14: "In fact, subsequently both the mother and the brothers of Jesus came to believe in him as their Savior", 436. But there is no way of telling in Luke's two volumes when these people "came to believe in Jesus as their Savior"; why this comment is attached to Acts 1:14 is unclear from Hendriksen's commentary.

mother of Jesus and his brothers' (Acts 1:14) as they were described in the Gospel.<sup>22</sup>

What is common in the Gospel to all three of these elements is discipleship. I have noted the particular type of calling Mary received, and commented briefly on the implications of her calling. Fidelity, obedience is at the core of her response: she is the handmaid of her Lord. Associated with her, however, in the story of the adult life of Jesus are 'his brothers'. In the one story in which they appear together, they are praised for their willingness to 'hear the word of God and do it'; they are offered as models of discipleship to those seated around Jesus to learn.

The women are described as those who travel with Jesus, thus very literally followers of Jesus; they also devotedly care for Jesus (Lk 8:3), even to assuring him a proper burial. Part of their discipleship will be carrying the news of Jesus' resurrection to the Twelve and those gathered with them.

## ACTS

The formula 'women, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers' (Acts 1:14) receives its intelligibility from what the Gospel has already reported to the reader about, on the one hand, 'women' and, on the other hand, 'Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers'. Discipleship is at the heart of these persons. What Luke intends to convey to his reader, then, is that there are gathered at the beginning of his story in Acts those who we know to be faithful, obedient disciples of Jesus. They include the Twelve (for the moment the Eleven), who have been with Jesus from his baptism and are particularly witnesses of his resurrection (Acts 1:21-22).<sup>23</sup>

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22 "Aber in diesem Zug haengt in Wirklichkeit ein erbauliches Interesse: Das Jesu Familie von Anfang an zu seiner Gemeinde gehoert hat, is gerade ein Teil des erbaulichen Bildes, das man sich spaeter von dieser Fruehzeit gemacht hat", E. Haenchen, *Die Apostlegeschichte* (Meyerkommentar; Goettingen 1977), 161.

23 Luke will soon speak of 'approximately 120 persons'; they are present at least for the replacement of Judas and for the Pentecost (1:15). They include not only 'women, Mary... and his brothers', but also heretofore unmentioned persons, Matthias and Joseph (of Arimathea [Lk 24:50]?); we should probably also include in the 120 persons the two disciples who encountered Jesus on the way to Emmaus and that group contained in the description: 'the Eleven *and those with them*' (Lk 24:33). It is upon these people that the Spirit will be poured out, to make them 'prophets' (Acts 2:17,18) (who will 'speak about the wonderful works of God' [Acts 2:11]). They will form part of the group so highly praised in Acts 2:43-47). Finally, at least one

In drawing the reader's attention to persons who are already known by virtue of a Gospel formula to be disciples of Jesus, Luke has established a continuity between Gospel and Acts, between the life of Jesus, who had faithful disciples and many of the same who will form the new, but still veteran corpus of the spirit-guided discipleship. What was valid in the Gospel remains valid in this new situation; what is needed for these disciples is only the power of the Spirit, for intelligence and courage in hearts already faithful and obedient. One can return to the Gospel always, to read about this fidelity and obedience. And one knows just what kind of group made up those who began, under the Spirit, this new form of discipleship.

That 'women, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers' are not individuated again in Acts is of less importance than one might think. Though we will read of the Twelve, who of them is actually identified again in Acts? Though we will read of the foundation of communities, who of the founders are identified in Acts? Indeed Acts is a book of witnessing, from Jesus and about Jesus (Acts 1:8). But, while individual witnesses, such as Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul, are scattered through Acts with significant roles to play, we cannot deny that the Christian community in its own way gives witness, without identification of individual members. The players in the story of Acts enter and exit as Luke thinks best. He thought it best that 'women, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers' appear only at Acts 1:14. Apparently he thought that such an appearance would be sufficient to bring from the Gospel the discipleship he treasured and placed at the disposition of the Holy Spirit poured out by Jesus upon those who had manifested the characteristics of discipleship, fidelity and obedience, that should characterize his community, those to be newly strengthened by the gift of the Spirit.<sup>24</sup>

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'brothers of Jesus', James, will appear again in Acts, as a person of major importance in the Jerusalem Christian community (Acts 15:13,19: "Therefore I decide ..."; 21:18).

24 'Mary, the mother of Jesus' might be a person from whom one would expect 'more' in Acts; at the same time, one might wonder about her need of the Holy Spirit. To answer briefly: on the one hand, Mary's only act of discipleship in the Gospel was her absolute fidelity to the will of God, a fidelity which never included travelling with Jesus in his public life or demanded manifestation to Jesus' public; on the other hand, while privileged beyond understanding in being the mother who conceives by the Holy Spirit and the Power of the Most High, she is constantly portrayed as not comprehending all that that conception involved and thus as in need of further enlightenment. True to this Gospel picture, then, is her reception of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost for new enlightenment and her own type of witness: fidelity and obedience in relative hiddenness.

Ultimately, every observation of Luke in Gospel and Acts should help Theophilus (Lk 1:3; Acts 1:1) understand the reliability of what he has been taught (Lk 1:4). There are many things we can assume Theophilus to know before his reading of Luke's work. But to read of the strength and perseverance of disciples of Jesus should help Theophilus better understand the reliability and value of the faith he has embraced. In particular, Theophilus can profit from hearing how those who faithfully, obediently followed Jesus in his public life reach fullest discipleship through the transforming gift of the Spirit: disciples, each in his and her own way, become intelligent and courageous witnesses from and about Jesus. It was from these disciples that a chain of witnesses reached Theophilus and brought him Jesus; it is all of these disciples who show him the strength and fidelity of a disciple in the following of Jesus, he who leads to life (Acts 3:15).