

The Twelve Apostles: Models For Frontier Missions?

■ Were the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ disobedient to the Great Commission after the Lord ascended into Heaven? What does Luke's *The Acts of the Apostles* teach? A Biola University missions professor challenges us to look again at this frontier mission biblical perspective.

By Harold Dollar

Luke's Purpose in Writing Acts

An interpretation of the early history of Christianity that sees the apostles as disobedient or at least as reluctant to obey the great commission is enjoying popularity among some missiologists.¹ This understanding of the early story of the mission to the Gentiles can be heard occasionally by mission speakers and is now finding its way into print. The argument goes something like this: One reason Luke wrote the book of Acts was to show the unwillingness of the apostles to carry out a mission to the Gentiles in spite of Jesus' explicit commission to evangelize the world. This interpretation is confirmed by the following facts. The first evangelization of Gentiles by any of the apostles occurs some ten years after the giving of the commission (Acts 10). And, even here Peter shows himself reluctant to preach to Cornelius. Also, after the conversion of Cornelius and his household the apostles show no understanding of their call to evangelize Gentiles. Finally, Luke drops the apostles from his narrative and focuses exclusively on Paul who takes the gospel to the Gentiles.

This interpretation of Luke's story of early Christianity, so the argument goes, is confirmed in the letter Paul wrote to the Galatians. Paul reports that he was called to the Gentiles and the apostles were called to the Jews: "they say that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles" (Gal 2:7-8).

What can be said about this interpretation of the role of the apostles in early Christianity? If correct, it would leave the apostles as negative models for frontier missions. This article will challenge this "hidden message" of Acts by showing that Luke presents the twelve apostles as positive and realistic models for those committed to frontier missions. We will begin by examining

briefly the flow of Luke's entire narrative of early Christianity with a focus on the apostolic twelve. Luke's narrative reveals the vital role the apostles play in the mission to the Gentiles. This article will also demonstrate that the mission to the Gentiles occurred through a process. Those committed to frontier missions today will discover the realistic challenge involved in this call through an understanding of this process.

One Book in Two Volumes

An intense study of Luke's writings in the past century has led to the consensus that Luke wrote one book, not two. This book can be called Luke-Acts. Those who interpret one of Luke's volumes must keep in mind the unity and coherence of his narrative. The Gospel of Luke can be adequately understood only when it is recognized that Luke's story does not end with the giving of the great commission as do the other Gospels, but rather with Paul in prison in Rome. Also, any part of volume two (Acts) must be interpreted in light of a story that begins with the visit of the angel to Zachariah in Luke one.²

The Particularism of Luke's Gospel³

Recent studies of Luke's writings have confirmed that Luke-Acts is much more Jewish than previously recognized.⁴ For Luke the entire story of Christianity is rooted in Jewishness. In his first volume he demonstrates that Jesus' entire life, including his birth, ministry and death took place in a Jewish context. The particularism of Jesus life and ministry is striking in Luke's gospel. Luke omits many of the more obviously mission stories found within the other Gospels. Luke follows Mark's Gospel rather closely until Mark chapter seven where Jesus "makes all foods clean" and where he encounters and ministers to a Gentile woman of the Syro-phoenician culture. Further, Luke omits any mention of the gospel being

preached in the whole world until the very end of his gospel (cf. Mark 13:10; 14:9).⁵

How Jesus Challenges Jewish Particularism

This is not to say that Luke does not lay a foundation for the mission to the Gentiles in his first volume. But he does it subtly. Jesus remains within Palestine in the Gospel of Luke. Here Jesus ministers to women, tax collectors, 'sinners', Samaritans and even to a Gentile. But in every instance these are people who are inside Palestine with the Samaritans and the Gentile being very devout and even examples of spirituality (Luke 9:51ff.; 10:25-37; 17:11-19; 7:1-10). The first passage cited shows the Samaritans refusing Jesus passage through a Samaritan village. In this instance Luke recounts the story, not to rebuke the Samaritans, but to show the need of the disciples of Jesus. They want to "roast" the Samaritans in Elijah-like fashion. Jesus rebukes their narrow particularistic worldview.

Jesus lays a foundation for a mission to the Gentiles by staying within Palestine and challenging the particularism of the Jewish faith of the first century. The Jewish concern for holiness and purity led them to build such high walls between themselves and sinners that they were unable to fulfill their calling to bless all the nations of the earth.

The model for Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of Luke can be found in the Scriptures. Jesus did not go beyond what is modelled in the Old Testament by such prophets as Elijah and Elisha. These men were called as prophets to Israel but ministered to non-Jews only when they came into contact with them. Jesus did the same. Jesus remains ritually pure while challenging first century Jewish particularism. His explicit call for mission to the Gentiles only occurs in his very final moments with his apostles.

Jesus lays a Foundation for Blessing the Nations

What has Luke accomplished at the conclusion of his first volume? Jesus comes into the world in the stream of salvation history. His birth fulfills Scripture and he is raised as an orthodox Jew. His ministry, while particularistic, calls into question first century Jewish interpretations of particularism. He does this by ministering to women, tax collectors, Samaritans and many others who lived on the margins of first century Jewish faith. The 'marginals' are attracted to Jesus and feel comfortable around him. He, in turn, responds to their needs by forgiving their sins, healing their diseases and confronting their demons. His response to the mainstream of Jewish faith is one of constant confrontation, challenge and rebuke. Thus, in volume one Luke has laid a solid foundation on which a mission to the Gentiles can occur. A process has been set in motion. This process flows out of the story of salvation history found in the Scriptures moving from particularism to universalism.⁶

The Acts of the Apostles

The ministry of the apostles after Jesus' ascension is recounted by Luke in Acts 1:6-7; 8:14-25; 9:26; 9:32-11:18; 12:1-24; 15:5-36. During this time the only ministry to the Gentiles occurs through Peter's ministry to Cornelius (9:32-11:18). Does this not confirm the accusation of those who see the apostles as reluctant to obey the great commission? A closer look at the apostolic twelve will reveal Luke's high regard of their place in the mission to the Gentiles.

Acts 1-6: The Twelve Are Jesus' Successors

Luke shows the apostles extending the mission begun by Jesus. Luke begins volume two by connecting the two volumes and then recounting a second version of the great commission. This second version is given in the context of the apostles' question as to whether Jesus was going to establish the kingdom. Jesus tells his disciples that there will be an indeterminate time period between his ascension and the parousia. This period draws its meaning from the witness that must be carried out to the "ends of the earth."

After Jesus' ascension Luke gives an account of the apostolic replacement (1:12-26). While a great deal of attention is given to the first eleven verses of Acts little attention is given to the final fifteen verses. An understanding of Luke's interest in apostleship is important in seeing the role of the apostles in the mission to the Gentiles. In this pas-

sage we find Luke's core definition of the apostolic twelve.⁷ Only those disciples who have accompanied Jesus from the baptism of John are qualified to replace Judas. This explains why Luke almost uniformly reserves the title apostle for the twelve.⁸

The core meaning of apostleship for Luke is found in the twelve Jesus selected to be with him throughout his earthly ministries. The apostolic twelve must be complete because this group authenticates the new movement begun by Jesus Christ. The apostles extend Jesus' mission. Jesus' mission of teaching and doing the works of God laid the foundation for a new paradigm for mission. The apostolic twelve extend this mission and clarify and confirm this new paradigm (Acts 1:1-5).

Chapters two through five demonstrate that these twelve men are the true successors of Jesus. While all of the early disciples are involved in witnessing to Jesus, Luke makes it clear that the power of Jesus resides in these men in a special way. Peter leads three thousand men and women to embrace the Messiah on the day of Pentecost. This event is not untypical of what occurs throughout these early chapters as Luke shows the apostles preaching to large crowds of Jews as well as to the Sanhedrin.

Another way Luke shows the centrality of the apostles is in their teaching. As Jesus was the primary teacher in the Gospel of Luke so the apostles are the primary teachers in the beginnings of Acts. These new disciples "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching." The Jewish authorities are continually upset with the apostles because they are teaching in the temple about the resurrection (4:2, 7, 18; 5:28).

Luke also attributes all of the "signs and wonders" to the apostles in these opening chapters of Acts. "Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles" (2:43). Acts three shows Peter and John healing the cripple at the "beautiful gate." Acts 5:12 says: "The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people." This is followed by an account of people being healed by merely allowing Peter's shadow to fall on them (5:15-16).

The final way that Luke shows the centrality of the apostles is the degree to which the finances of the movement were controlled by the apostles. This is so obvious that an idiom developed which bears this out. The ritual for giving in the early church is described as people bringing their gifts and "laying them at the apostles' feet" (4:35, 37; 5:2). Thus, Luke makes it clear that all

of the leadership power in the early church resided in the hands of the apostles. The first major power-sharing occurs when the apostles turn the finances of the church over to the seven (Acts 6:1-7).

The Transition Period

Luke pulls the apostles off center stage of salvation history after he introduces the Seven in chapter six. From this time on the apostles will share the spotlight with others and finally disappear completely from Luke's narrative after Acts fifteen. What role do they play in Luke's narrative during this transitional period?

Ministry to Samaritans

The next time they appear in Acts is during Philip's ministry in Samaria. Philip has been used to start a large people movement to Christ in Samaria (8:4-13). In this context Luke brings the apostles back into the story. The apostles in Jerusalem send Peter and John to Samaria where they enable the Samaritans in receiving the Holy Spirit. Luke's point is that the gospel extends to Samaritans through the mediation of the apostles. Although Philip was the first to minister to the Samaritans, his ministry is legitimated by the apostles. When the apostles return to Jerusalem they preach the gospel in each Samaritan village through which they pass (8:25).

Peter's Paradigmatic Ministry—Blessing the Nations

The next appearance of the apostles again focuses on Peter's ministry in authenticating the mission to the Gentiles (9:32-11:18). Luke recounts Peter's ministry to Cornelius and his household followed by a "debriefing" in Jerusalem where the entire Jewish church concludes that "God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (11:18). Why do I call this the paradigmatic event in the mission to the Gentiles? There are a number of reasons why this is a decisive event in Luke's narrative of early Christianity. But before preceding with these reasons we need to look at the issue of chronology as it bears on the mission to the Gentiles.

Cornelius' Conversion

Luke places Cornelius' conversion after the conversion of Saul and before the origin of the Gentile church in Antioch. This does not necessarily mean that it falls chronologically between these two events. But unless there is clear proof otherwise Luke's narrative usually follows a chronological order. Philip's ministry (8:4-40), Saul's con-

version (9:1-31) and the mission in Antioch (11:19-30) are tied directly to the death of Stephen (8:4; 9:1; 11:19). Peter's ministry, on the other hand, occurs in an indeterminate period of time. Luke simply says, "As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda." Does this vague reference give any clue as to the time of Peter's ministry to Gentiles?

The impression gained from Acts 9:32-43 is that Peter feels no urgency to return to Jerusalem. This is quite different from what was seen in the first eight chapters of Acts. During this period of time the apostles, and especially Peter, are absolutely indispensable in the church in Jerusalem. Further, Luke notes that in the intensified persecution arising out of Stephen's martyrdom all of the Christians are scattered out of Jerusalem "except the apostles" (8:1). When Philip has a breakthrough in Samaria the news comes to the apostles in Jerusalem. After a very brief ministry in Samaria, Peter and John return to Jerusalem (8:25). Finally, when Saul returns to Jerusalem, three years after his conversion, he meets the apostles (9:27).

Moving forward to Acts 11:30 we note that when Barnabas and Saul take a offering from the Antiochean church to the Jerusalem church they give the money to the *elders*. This passage along with Peter's statement after his escape from prison to give a message to James may indicate that there has been a leadership change in Jerusalem during this time (12:17). It seems that the apostles (at least Peter) are no longer functioning as resident leaders in the church in Jerusalem. While Jerusalem may remain their headquarters the apostles no longer seem to have the responsibility of daily leadership. It seems that now demonstrated that the apostles were leading the church after Saul's return to Jerusalem, but were not leading the church when Barnabas and Saul took the gift to Jerusalem.

Returning to the indeterminate "as" in Acts 9:32, it now seems apparent that Peter is engaged in some kind of itinerant ministry outside of Jerusalem and is no longer involved in the leadership of any local church. Barnabas and Saul visited Jerusalem around A.D. 46 and were launched on the first mission trip soon after their return from Jerusalem. Saul's visit to Jerusalem after his conversion probably occurred around A.D. 36 to 38. Thus Peter's mission to the Gentiles can be dated with some degree of confidence to around A.D. 40.

If this is correct then the first datable instance of direct ministry to Gentiles by the church occurred some ten years after Jesus gave the great commission to his apostles.

Breaking Out of Particularism

The manner in which Peter's mission to the Gentiles occurred seems to confirm the view of those who see the apostles as reluctant in fulfilling the

Peter's understanding was that a mission to the Gentiles would violate his commitment to God and would render him unclean in the eyes of God. Finally, this bold apostle who preached to thousands on the day of Pentecost; this man who preached Christ as the only saviour to the Sanhedrin, even at the risk of his life, does not know how to respond when a packed room of Gentiles are eagerly hanging on to his every word.

great commission. Let us review briefly how this mission unfolded, looking at it from Peter's experience. Peter is staying in the home of a tanner in Joppa when he has a vision of a sheet let down out of heaven (10:9-23). He looks in the sheet and sees various kinds of unclean (to a Jew) animals. A voice tells him to kill these animals and eat them. He refuses but the vision repeats itself three times. As he is reflecting on this vision the Holy Spirit tells him: "Simon, three men are looking for you. . . Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them" (10:19-20). He invites these Gentiles from Cornelius into the house and the next day they start out for Caesarea (30 miles away).

When they arrive, Cornelius falls down before Peter. Peter lifts him up and going into Cornelius' house Peter finds a large group of people gathered. Peter says to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean" (10:28). Peter's final words of his opening statement indicate that he still does not understand what God is doing: "May I ask why you sent for me?" From these statements by Peter we learn the following things. First, Peter's commitment to Christ and leadership of the messianic movement, which has included a ministry to Samaritans, has not disturbed his Jewish orthodoxy. Second, ten years after the giving of the great commission Peter has no intention of leading a mission to the Gentiles. Third, it was Peter's un-

derstanding that a mission to the Gentiles would violate his commitment to God and would render him unclean in the eyes of God. Finally, this bold apostle who preached to thousands on the day of Pentecost; this man who preached Christ as the only saviour to the Sanhedrin, even at the risk of his life, does not know how to respond when a packed room of Gentiles are eagerly hanging on to his every word.

Cornelius then tells Peter of his own personal vision and concludes his story by saying: "Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us" (10:33). Finally, Peter begins to preach the gospel to these Gentiles. But before he can finish the message the Holy Spirit falls on the entire group and they began to speak in tongues and praise God. After baptizing these Gentiles, Peter stayed with them for a few days.

The Risk of Blessing the Nations

News of Peter's experience precedes his arrival back in Jerusalem. When he arrives the "circumcised believers criticized him and said, 'You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them'" (11:2-3). There are two questions that need to be addressed here: Who are the "circumcised believers" and, Why are they concerned about the problem of eating rather than the conversion of Gentiles? These men who criticize Peter are none other than his fellow-apostles and the entire church in Jerusalem. Some would like to interpret this phrase as referring to some Pharisaic party in the church in Jerusalem. That this is not the case can be proven in at least two ways. The first proof can be found by comparing this expression with that found in Acts 10:45 where the identical expression is used. Luke refers to those Jews who accompanied Peter to Cornelius' house as "circumcised believers." In the context of the salvation of the Gentiles, Luke deliberately uses the more emotive term for these two different groups. He calls Jews "the circumcised" and Gentiles "the uncircumcised" so as to convey the full impact of what occurs.

The second proof that this phrase "circumcised believers" refers to ordinary Jewish Christians, including the apostles, is found in the entire context of the story. Did Peter willingly and of his own initiative take the gospel message to Cornelius and his household? Luke makes it emphatically clear that Peter is an orthodox Jew who does not

intend to defile himself by going into a Gentile home. If Peter had been in Jerusalem and the apostle John had been directed to Cornelius the first person who would have confronted John would have been Peter.

The second question has to do with the issue of eating with Gentiles. Why was the Jewish church so concerned about Peter eating with Gentiles? It seems the bigger issue was the salvation of the Gentiles. While salvation is the bigger issue in the long run, the question of ritual purity had to come first. Historically the Jews were required to eat only certain foods. To deliberately eat foods disallowed by God was a sin of the worst kind, because it was an act of testing God. Thus, for orthodox Jews, Peter's act of deliberately eating with Gentiles called into question Peter's salvation. And with this Peter agreed. Only God's sovereign actions of giving him visions, speaking to him through the Holy Spirit and pouring out the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles while he is still preaching can assure him that the rules for biblical orthodoxy are being changed. When Peter explains all this to the Jewish church they agree with him that God intends the Gentiles to be saved without going through the Jewish requirements for conversion. Gentiles are saved *qua* Gentiles.

A Hidden Peoples Ministry

The final contribution of the apostles in the mission to the Gentiles recounted by Luke occurs in Acts 15.⁹ This contribution comes in the form of a confirmation of Peter's ministry above. If this meeting took place around A.D. 49, as most suppose, then it comes almost a decade after Peter's mission to Cornelius. Obviously the rapid influx of Gentiles into the church has led to intensive debate over the theological validity of a "law-free" mission to the Gentiles. The church has met to discuss and make a final decision on whether Gentiles can be saved without circumcision and keeping the law of Moses. After intense debate Peter makes the first major contribution toward a resolution of the question (15:7-11). He reminds the delegates and participants of how "God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe." He concludes from this incident that the Holy Spirit made the Gentiles clean and that salvation was by grace.

Barnabas and Paul's testimony confirms Peter's conclusion, and with this

James agrees by announcing that Gentiles do not have to be circumcised. This decision is formalized by a written statement and sent to the Gentile churches by delegates from Jerusalem. "The apostles and elders, your brothers, to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia" (15:23). With this decision it seems that Luke "dismisses" the apostles from his narrative (Acts 16:4).

Paul did not begin the mission to the Gentiles, he walks into the stream of this mission. This mission originates in the Old Testament, continues through Jesus and is carried forward by the apostles and the Hellenists. Paul meets the apostles soon after his conversion, is brought into this stream through Barnabas who comes out of the church in Jerusalem, and is set apart by the Holy Spirit to accompany Barnabas on the first centrifugal mission to deliberately take the gospel into the Greco-Roman world.

Conclusion

What can we conclude about Luke's view of the apostles in relationship to the great commission? Are they obedient or disobedient? This survey of Luke's narrative demonstrates that the apostles play a crucial role in the mission to the Gentiles. The following are some of the conclusions reached by this study.

1. *The Apostles Stand in the Stream of God's Mission to the Unreached*

One of Luke's purposes in writing his two-volume narrative of early Christianity is to demonstrate that God willed the salvation of the Gentiles. The Gentiles become part of God's people without having to become Jewish. Jesus' mission was to lay the foundation for the mission to the Gentiles. Jesus' ministry, according to Luke, took place within the particular. He was an orthodox Jew who carried out his mission in Palestine. He challenged the first century interpretation of particularism by constantly going to those who lived on the margins of Judaism. He disturbed those of his day by calling for a loving response to those who were not living up to the standards advocated by the Pharisees. He left his disciples with the challenge to remain in Jerusalem where they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit for a worldwide witness.

Jesus' post-resurrection conversation with his disciples, the selection of a replacement for Judas, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the preaching and healing of the apostles proves that they are

the true successors of Jesus. Nowhere does Luke hint that the apostles are disobedient to the great commission. Jesus' command for them to begin in Jerusalem does not suggest a limited time frame. When Luke talks about the large number of people converted (3,000, 5,000 men, multitudes), he shows the apostles healing the sick and casting out demons and tells of their bravery in persecution (even to death), thereby demonstrating that they are doing the works of Jesus. Luke sees the apostles fulfilling the role God called them to do.

2. *The Culture-free Mission to the Unreached can be Traced to the Apostles*

A second reason Luke wrote his two volume narrative was to refute the view that Paul was working contrary to the ministry of the apostles. The ministry to the Gentiles was a matter of debate and questioning throughout the first century and it would be a serious misinterpretation of Luke's narrative to view Paul as the one who opened this ministry. Rather, Luke writes in no uncertain terms that the door to the Gentiles was opened by the apostles, and Peter in particular. Paul is not an aberration in the church, and in spite of his accusers, is not responsible for turning this messianic movement away from Jewish Particularism.

It seems clear that Paul did not begin the mission to the Gentiles, but rather walks into the stream of this mission. This mission originates in the Old Testament, continues through Jesus and is carried forward by the apostles and the Hellenists. Paul meets the apostles soon after his conversion, is brought into this stream through Barnabas who comes out of the church in Jerusalem, and is set apart by the Holy Spirit to accompany Barnabas on the first centrifugal mission to deliberately take the gospel into the Greco-Roman world. Paul's role in continuing this mission to the Gentiles becomes the focus of Luke's narrative, especially after Acts 16:4, but it is portrayed as the legitimate extension of the foundational work begun by the apostles.

3. *Reaching the Unreached is a Process*

What we learn from Luke's narrative is that God works as he always does. Just as it took Abraham, Moses and David many years to understand God's plan for them even though he told them explicitly at the beginning, so it takes the apostles a long time to understand God's desire for a law-free mission to

the Gentiles. Indeed, it took a good many years of ministry before the apostles finally understood the clear implications of the great commission.

In this respect it is interesting to note that when Peter defends his mission to the Gentiles in Jerusalem he never once refers to the great commission (11:1-18) Why? Simply put, the great commission did not play any explicit role in this mission.¹⁰ We should keep in mind that the passages of the great commission found in the gospels, were written well after the mission to the Gentiles had taken place. In fact, the mission to the Gentiles was the determinate in the apostles remembering what Jesus had said. Standing so close to the resurrection and the crushed hopes of Jesus not establishing the kingdom, it is understandable that the apostles could not "hear" Jesus' commission. When this is coupled with the orthodoxy of Jesus' life and ministry, the absence of any abrogation of the importance of circumcision and the keeping of the law, it is very understandable that the great commission was incomprehensible to the disciples when Jesus gave it.

The apostles, then, were slow to become involved in a mission to the Gentiles, not out of disobedience, but out of an emerging new paradigm of universalism. As this new paradigm unfolds they show themselves obedient. The mission to the Gentiles would never have occurred without them. They extended the mission began by Jesus. They opened the door to the Gentiles and affirmed the mission to the Gentiles as the will of God. As to whether the apostles ever became missionaries to the Gentiles Luke never comments, but the traditions of the church regarding the ministries of the apostles would seem to confirm that they were obedient to the great commis-

sion.

4. *Positive Models for Frontier Missions*

The twelve apostles provide a positive model for frontier missions today. Most churches today are trapped in a particularism that blinds them to the urgency of reaching those who have never heard the gospel. This mission of turning the church toward the unreached may involve a lengthy process. There are many possible roles for individuals and churches to play in this mission effort.

Peter's "conversion" provides a model for missionaries today who are concerned for those who are unreached. Peter went through a major paradigm shift in his ministry to the Gentiles.¹¹ This involved a long process but was absolutely essential for Jews to evangelize Gentiles. Equally the church missionaries today may also need go through a long developmental process in effectively reaching the hidden peoples of our world. ■

Notes

¹See Don Richardson's article, "The Hidden Message of Acts" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, revised edition, 1992), pp. A-110-120. The "hidden message" of Acts is Luke's intention to show that God bypassed the apostles because they would not go to the Gentiles. Richardson's opening sentence in the article says: "Hundreds of millions of Christians think that Luke's Acts of the Apostles records the 12 apostles' obedience to the Great Commission. Actually it records their reluctance to obey it" (p. A-110). Commenting on the apostles' ministry in Jerusalem another writer asks this question: "... if you look at Peter's ministry in Jerusalem (as seen in Acts 1-9), what rating would you give him on a scale

of one to ten? Seven? Ten? God probably gave him a rating of about two." See Bob Sjogren's *Destination 2000: Moving the Church into the 21st Century* (Pasadena: Frontiers, 1990).

²See Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*. (London: SPCK, 1958).

³The word particularism refers to the cultural and religious distinctiveness of Israel. God willed that the Jewish people become particular. The Jews erred (as most people do) in over-emphasizing their particularity, thus building needless barriers between themselves and the Gentiles.

⁴Jacob Jervell's studies of Luke-Acts have been especially forceful on this point. See his study on *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).

⁵Harold Dollar, *A Biblical-Missiological Exploration of the Cross-Cultural Dimensions in Luke-Acts*. (San Francisco: Mellen Press, 1993), esp. pp. 25-34.

⁶*Ibid.*, Dollar, pp. 35-61

⁷F.F. Bruce, *A commentary on the Book of Acts in The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 39-48.

⁸*Ibid.*, Dollar, pp. 188-220.

⁹While the story of the martyrdom of James and the escape of Peter recounted in Acts 12 is important for giving a glimpse at the church in Jerusalem it does not seem to advance Luke's major thesis of tracing the mission to the Gentiles.

¹⁰Harry Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*. (London: Lutterworth, 1961).

¹¹For some indication of this process see H. Dollar, "The Conversion of the Messenger" in *Missiology*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, January 1993.

Harold Dollar is associate professor of missiology in the School of Intercultural Studies at Biola University. He and his wife Sharon reside in Whittier, CA.

A Critique by Hans M. Weerstra

The article by Harold Dollar is a welcome contribution as it relates to the biblical undergirding of frontier missions. The frontier mission movement should be totally grounded in the Word of God and be exploring and understanding in an ever growing sense the biblical foundations for frontier missiology. It is critical to establish sound biblical moorings for what we do in frontier missions. Dr. Dollar speaks to this challenge. His article highlights the need for a sound biblical basis and thus provides an invaluable service, taking us back to the sure foundations of God's Word for the frontier mission

task and challenge.

The Crux of the Matter

In a brief and critical response to the article, I would begin with what seems to be the crux of the matter. It is the basic question regarding the paradigm of particularism and universalism discussed in Dollar's article. In footnote 3 the author defines particularism as that which refers to the cultural and religious distinctiveness of Israel. God willed that the Jewish people become particular. The Jews erred (as most people do) in over-emphasizing their particularity, thus building needless barriers between

themselves and the Gentiles." In this light it must be noted that many in the frontier mission movement, including those who contribute articles in the popular *Reader Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* are those who by and large have seen a new light. They no longer see the particularism of the Old Testament with a universalistic unfolding in the New. It is a hermeneutic of the Bible, what Dr. Hessburg calls "a missionary pre-understanding of the Scriptures, Old Testament and New Testament alike. (See his excellent article in Volume 10, No 1 January 1993 issue of *Missiology*, pp.