

**THE THEOLOGICAL AIM
of the
GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE**

*by Don J. McMinn
New Testament Theology
Associate Professor*

OUTLINE

- I. INTRODUCTION
- II. LUKE'S STATED PURPOSE—HIS PREFACE
- III. FACTORS RELATING TO THE PURPOSE
- IV. THE PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO LUKE
- V. THE TWO MOST POPULAR THEOLOGICAL AIMS OF LUKE'S
GOSPEL
- VI. CONCLUSION

I. INTRODUCTION

The Gospel According to St. Luke is a work that commends itself in many ways to a study of its theological aim and meaning. It is the longest book of the New Testament and nearly half of what we find in Luke occurs in no other Gospel. The wider coverage given to the ministry and message of Jesus, especially His parables, is significant. Another important point is that the Gospel is the first volume of a larger work which could appropri-

ately be designated Luke-Acts. This two-volume work, though written in two parts and at different times, should be looked upon as a single work in which the author includes both the work of Jesus and the later ministry of His disciples. That this two-part work is the contribution of one writer is clear from the preface at the beginning of each volume, both of which are written to the same person, Theophilus. Christian tradition and internal evidence favor "Luke the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14), a companion of Paul and a Gentile Christian, as the author of this fuller form of the gospel story.¹ This being true, the fact of Luke's companionship with Paul the Apostle as well as his being a Gentile commend his work to our study. Luke is the only known Gentile writer in the New Testament. One other point of great interest concerning the study of the Third Gospel is that Luke is the only Gospel writer who tells us anything about the situation in which he writes. By beginning with a literary preface (Luke 1:1-4), he tells us much about how he came to write. This preface to the gospel volume should be regarded as a preface to the whole, telling the general purpose of Luke-Acts. The story of the rise and expansion of Christianity is the subject matter of both books, and at the beginning of Acts, the author in good Hellenistic fashion puts a second preface which refers to the first book and briefly recapitulates its contents.² Thus, with these things in view concerning the background of Luke's Gospel and its relevance for our study, we are ready to try to determine its theological aim.

II. LUKE'S STATED PURPOSE--HIS PREFACE

The starting point for understanding the purpose of any writing should be with the author's a stated purpose, if one is given. In the case of Luke's Gospel, this is where we may begin, for Luke has a preface in which he

¹Floyd V. Filson, *Opening the New Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952), pp. 53-54.

²S. MacLean Gilmour, "Luke," *The Interpreter's Bible*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), VIII, 4.

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed. (Luke 1:1-4, ASV).

This preface tells us several things of importance for determining the theological meaning of the Gospel according to Luke. There had been other narratives telling the story of the things "fulfilled among us," but Luke believed that it was good for him also to write another narrative. It is a question of some debate whether Luke classed himself with the eye-witnesses or whether he distinguished himself from them, though the answer may be of little meaning to this study. The answer is to be found in a correct exegesis of the passage mainly, for the meaning of the participle *parékolouthékoti* is important. It literally means to follow alongside or to follow closely. Cadbury says that this word refers to first-hand knowledge, though Luke begins with second-hand reports and only has first hand information in the last part of Acts. This procedure suits the practice of historians.³

Regardless of how much of the story that Luke has personally witnessed, he is dealing with matters of history with a view towards helping Theophilus know "the certainty concerning the things where-in thou wast instructed." From the contents of the work we can surmise what the instruction to Theophilus had been, whether he was a Christian or not. As Stonehouse says, "we may affirm without hesitation that the information conveyed to him had to do with the origin and progress of Christianity."⁴ And in giving his narrative, Luke seems to be aiming at fulness, desiring to make his Gospel as complete as possible. "He has 'traced up the course of *all*

³ Henry J. Cadbury, " 'We' and 'I' passages in Luke-Acts," *New Testament Studies*, III (January, 1957), 128-132.

⁴ N. B. Stonehouse, *The Witness of Luke to Christ*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 33.

things accurately *from the first*' (*an óther pásin*), in order that Theophilus may 'know in full detail' (*epignós*) the historic foundations of the faith."⁵ Whether Luke's avowed purpose was one of confirming the historic foundations of the faith or as Cadbury proposes, "to correct misinformation about Christianity,"⁶ is uncertain, but Cadbury's suggestion seems less acceptable at this point.

Actually, Luke's purpose as stated must find its correct interpretation in a fuller understanding of who Theophilus was, and to whom Luke was writing. Little of certainty may be known about Theophilus, though he must have been a real person. Some say that he was definitely a non-Christian because of being addressed as "most excellent" instead of "brother," or "beloved." However, this thought breaks down in that "Luke seems clearly to use the designation as a recognition of official rank."⁷ But if we follow the usual assumption that Theophilus was a Roman official of some rank who was interested in Christianity, the Lukan writings may be regarded as the earliest apology for the Christian religion. The Acts of the Apostles had this as one of its main motives, but this apologetic intention is not so naturally manifest in the Gospel.⁸ Nevertheless, in the view of Manson, we may think of Theophilus

as belonging to some cultured and earnest circle of Gentile 'God-fearers' who were interested in Christianity, and to whom the evangelist wished to present that religion in the fullest, clearest light, and with the hope of thus commending it to official toleration and respect (Introd., Sect. III). Amid much prejudice and ignorance there was a genuine desire in such circles for solid truth in the matter of religion, in this case

⁵ Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, tenth edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1914), p. xxxv.

⁶ Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1927), p. 315.

⁷ Stonehouse, p. 42.

⁸ William Manson, *The Gospel of Luke in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1930), p. xxi. Also see Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956), p. 41.

for reliable evidence that the Jesus of whom the Christians spoke was 'no mere Jewish Messiah, but a World-Saviour, the founder of a world-religion. Christianity was on its trial, and competing with other religions for a hearing both in the Jewish and in the Gentile worlds.'⁹

Plummer is against the view that Theophilus was a non-Christian and says that "the tone of the Gospel leads us to regard him as a representative Gentile convert, who was anxious to know a good deal more than the few fundamental facts which were taught to catechumens." He goes on to say that Luke had more than just this one person in mind when he wrote, and that the book was written "for the instruction and encouragement of all Gentile converts, and possibly Greek-speaking converts in particular." In such a situation, Theophilus was to be the patron of the book and introduce it to a larger number of readers, possibly having copies made and distributed.¹⁰

III. FACTORS RELATING TO THE PURPOSE

In dealing with the preface of Luke's work, we have been dealing with the writer's conscious purpose. But there is much more that may need to come into consideration before the chief and real purpose is to be known. There are underlying currents in any man's thought that are not obvious in a conscious way, but are unconscious. Circumstances mean a lot, but since the circumstances of the third evangelist are largely veiled from our knowledge, we will have to look upon them as somewhat normal and not causing a pronounced bias.¹¹ In an unconscious way, a writer's personality means a great deal to his work, and its effect is seen in language, style, arrangement, and the total message of the book. Though a great deal is not known about Luke, what is known should fit in with the image of him gotten from

⁹ Manson, p. 3.

¹⁰ Plummer, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

¹¹ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, p. 299.

his writings. In other words, we should not make something out of the Third Gospel that would completely go against the personality of its writer, though we should not make *too* much of his personality in determining the purpose of his work. But the fact that Luke was a Gentile, a physician, and a companion of Paul on missionary journeys leads us to expect certain things from his work and to expect a certain theological aim. What this is will come out later.

The form of Luke's writing is important in determining the aim of his work. His form is narrative, and narrative carries with it the intention of supplying information. Even though it is different from the rhetorical historians of Greece and Rome and the pragmatic historians of Israel, his narrative shares with them the common intention of informing the reader concerning the past. If the story were meant to be an argument, this purely didactic motive as relating to the writer's purpose would have to be accepted as significant. And it should be noted that Luke's work which concerns us was of the special type of literary form that we call "gospel." It has been suggested that certain generic characteristics were established for such a composition at the time which Luke wrote; thus, Luke's purpose in writing the gospel conforms to the standard of purpose set by Mark and others. John's Gospel had this aim expressed; "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." (John 20:31). It appears that all the gospels aimed at creating an admiration or something more than admiration for Jesus, their hero. Luke aligns himself with his predecessors as he says, "It seemed good to me also."¹²

Another factor that must be considered concerns the sources of Luke's material and the use he made of that material. But Luke's own motives can hardly be distinguished from the features of the material that came to him from other sources. It seems that Luke's aim was in agreement with the intention relative to the transmission of the material to him. As Cadbury says, "In the main—it is safe to assume that Luke was carrying forward in his version of events the prevailing motives with which they had been handed

¹² Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, p. 300.

down. His own purposes must have been minor and secondary.”¹³ But what about the material not found in Mark and the Q source and which is peculiar to Luke as a gospel writer? Why does he include this extra material and can a study of his peculiar features indicate his theological purpose?

IV. THE PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

The following are the chief passages peculiar to the third Gospel:¹⁴

- chs. 1, 2. Narratives of the birth and infancy of John and Jesus.
- 3:10-14. Questions to the Baptist.
- 4:14-30. Sermon at Nazareth.
- 5: 1-11. Call of Peter.
- 6:24-26. Woes on the rich and the happy.
- 7:11-17. The son of the widow of Nain.
 - 36-50. Jesus anointed by a woman at the house of a Pharisee.
- 8: 1-3. Woman who followed Jesus.
- 9:51-56. Rejection by a Samaritan village.
 - 61-62. “Suffer me to say farewell.”
- 10:17-20. The return of the seventy.
 - 25-37. The Good Samaritan.
 - 38:42. Martha and Mary.
- 11: 5-8. The importunate friend.
 - 27-28. Blessing on the mother of Jesus.
- 12:13-21. The parable of the Rich Fool.
 - 35-38. “Let your loins be girded.”
 - 47-48. Few stripes and many stripes.
 - 49-50. “I came to cast fire on the earth.”

¹³Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, p. 301.

¹⁴J. M. Creed, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1953), pp. lxvi-lxvii.

- 54-57. The face of the heaven and the signs of the times.
- 13: 1-5. Galileans murdered by Pilate; the fall of a tower in Siloam.
- 6-9. Parable of the Fig Tree.
- 10-17. Woman healed on the Sabbath.
- 31-33. "Go hence, for Herod seeks to slay thee."
- 14: 1-6. Dropsical man healed on the Sabbath.
- 7-11. On taking the lowest seat.
- 12-14. Invite the poor.
- 28-33. Parables: on building a tower; on going to war.
- 15: 8-10. Parable of the lost coin.
- 11-30. Parable of the two sons.
- 16: 1-12. Parable of the unjust steward, and following sayings.
- 19-31. Dives and Lazarus.
- 17: 7-10. A lord and his servant.
- 11-19. Ten lepers healed.
- 20-22,28-31. Sayings on the sudden coming of the Son of Man.
- 18: 1-8. Parable of the unrighteous judge.
- 9-14. The Pharisee and the Publican.
- 19: 1-10. Zacchaeus.
- 41-44. Jesus weeps over the city.
- 22: 1-28. (parts). Sayings at the Last Supper.
- 24: 5-12. Jesus before Herod.
- 26-32. The weeping women.
- 39-43. The penitent thief.
- 24:13-35. The appearance on the way to Emmaus.
- 36-43. Jesus appears to the disciples at Jerusalem and eats before them.
- 44-53. The parting at Bethany.

Luke records twenty miracles, and of these six are peculiar to him. Out of twenty-three parables, found in the Third Gospel, eighteen are not found in any of the other Gospels.

One of the chief characteristics of Luke's Gospel is its stress on Christianity as a world religion.¹⁵ It has a note of universality about it and in it a general missionary interest may be found. Luke saw no limits to the love of God and he seems to stress that the gospel is for all people everywhere. Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus not simply to the Jewish ancestors David and Abraham, as is done in Matthew, but to Adam, the forefather of all mankind (Luke 3:38). All four gospel writers quote from Isaiah 40 concerning the message of John the Baptist, but only Luke continues the quotation to its triumphant conclusion, "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6). The prophet Simeon took the infant Jesus into his arms and declared that he was to be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" as well as "for glory to thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32). The angel told the shepherds that the good tidings of great joy were to be to "all people" (2:10). There is no counterpart in Luke to Jesus' command in Matt. 10:5, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans." Jesus' saying in Matt. 15:24, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," finds no comparison in Luke. The story of the Syrophenician woman whose request Jesus grudgingly granted is in Mark, but not in Luke. At the end of his ministry, Jesus proclaimed the universality of his gospel and the missionary attitude by declaring that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And Ye are witnesses of these things." (24:47-48). At least four of the parables peculiar to Luke have a missionary interest. It is most striking in the parable of the Great Supper (14:15-24), in which there is a great advance in thought and the invitation is extended to be all-inclusive. The three parables in the fifteenth chapter bear directly on missionary endeavor and the introductory verses show how Jesus associated with publicans and sinners. In Luke 10 the story of the sending out of the Seventy, which is different from the previous sending of the Twelve, who went to Israel, seems to suggest that the gospel is for all mankind, which in ancient tradition

¹⁵ Gilmour, p. 7. He emphasizes this point as one of the major interests of Luke rather than as a purpose.

was divided into seventy nations.¹⁶ One other great word of Jesus is found in 13:29: "And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."

In regards to the universality of the gospel which Luke proclaims, he seems specifically to write for Gentiles. There is nothing in his gospel that a Gentile could not grasp or understand. Luke dates the opening events of his story with a Roman date and shows his narrative to be seen in a worldwide situation. His quotations from the Old Testament are few and most of them are found in the sayings of Jesus. Unlike Matthew, he is not greatly interested in the life of Jesus as the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy. Regarding language, he gives the Greek equivalent for Hebrew words, so that a Greek would understand. Some examples are Simon the *Zealot* for Simon the *Cananaean*, *Kanion* for Golgotha, and a term meaning *Master* for the Jewish term *Rabbi*.¹⁷ This combination of non-Jewish would be extraordinary in a treatise written by a Jew or for Jews, but it is quite intelligible in one written by a Gentile for Gentiles.¹⁸

The Samaritan interest of Luke's Gospel is a phase of its universal character, but its importance calls for a separate section. Nowhere in the Synoptics do the Samaritans come into prominence as in this peculiarly Lukan material. Luke 9:51-56 tells of Jesus sending messengers into a Samaritan village, but they were rejected. Jesus rebuked the idea of vengeance on the part of James and John. A Samaritan instead of a Jew was the hero in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (10:30-37). In the story of the healing of the ten lepers, only one returned to thank Jesus and he was a Samaritan (17:11-19).

Luke portrays Jesus as the friend of outcasts and sinners. One thing to note is that he uses the word "sinners" more often than the other evange-

¹⁶ Filson, p. 58.

¹⁷ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke in The Daily Study Bible Series* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), p. xv.

¹⁸ Plummer, p. xxxv.

lists do all together.¹⁹ He alone tells the story of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet and bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair in the house of Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50). Two stories are told concerning tax-gatherers— the one of Zacchaeus (19:1-10), and the parable on prayer involving the Pharisee and the publican (18:9-14).

Sympathy for the poor seems quite clear in the work of Luke, and along with his concern for them is his whole attitude toward money matters. In his giving the Beatitudes, he records Jesus as saying, "Blessed are ye poor," (6:20) instead of "Blessed are the poor in spirit." He alone tells the story of the Rich Man and the Poor Man (16:19-31). He often represents Jesus as taking his illustrations from finance, as in the parables of the Two Debtors, the Rich Fool, the Tower Builder, the Lost Coin, the Unjust Steward, Dives and Lazarus, and the Pounds. Proof-texts for the modern idea of the stewardship of wealth particularly come from Luke.¹⁹

Women are given a special place in Luke's Gospel. The birth and infancy narratives are told from the point of view of the women Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna. Luke tells of the group of women who helped Jesus in his work and supplied the needs of the traveling disciples (8:1-3). From Luke we learn of the widow of Nain (7:11-12), of the sinful woman who anointed Jesus and was assured by him of forgiveness (7:36-50), of the sisters Mary and Martha (10:38-42), and of the women who sorrowed when Jesus was taken to the cross (23:27). The story of the woman who searched for the lost coin is in Luke, and it is only in Luke that we learn of the widow who pestered the unjust judge until he gave her justice (18:1-8). All these stories involving women are found only in Luke.

Luke's Gospel is the Gospel of joy and praise. The birth of Jesus resulted in the angels' song of praise to God (2:14) and after the shepherds had paid their visit, they returned to their homes "glorifying and praising God." (2:20). Not only is joy seen in the lives of those who find new life in Jesus, but heaven and God himself share in the joy over one sinner that repents and finds a new life (15:7, 10, 24, 32). The Gospel ends with the disciples

¹⁹ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, p. 260.

returning to Jerusalem “with great joy” and being continually in the temple “praising and blessing God.” (24:52-53). Luke might be called the hymn-writer of the New Testament, for three great hymns that churches have sung throughout the ages are found only in Luke. They are *The Magnificat* (1:46-55), the *Benedictus* (1:68-79), and the *Nunc Dimittis* (2:29-32). The phrase “praising God” occurs more often in Luke than in all the rest of the New Testament put together.²⁰ Truly, the radiance in Luke’s gospel is a lovely thing.

The domestic tone in Luke’s Gospel is quite accented. Jesus is seen most in his social intercourse with men. He is seen partaking of a meal in the house of Simon, in that of Martha and Mary, in that of a Pharisee, in that of a leading Pharisee on the sabbath, when the Pharisees were denounced, when the dropsical man was healed, after His walk with the companions to Emmaus, in that of Zacchaeus. There is a quiet and homely setting in a number of his parables, e. g. the Good Samaritan in the inn, the Friend at Midnight, the Woman with the Leaven, the Master of the house rising and shutting the door, the Leaven, the Woman sweeping for the Lost Coin, and the Father welcoming the Lost Son.

More than any of the other Evangelists Luke brings before his readers the subject of prayer. Jesus is seen in prayer at the great moments of His life, of which seven are recorded only by Luke. Jesus prayed at His baptism (3:2); before His first collision with the Pharisees (5:16); before He chooses the Twelve (6:12); before the first prediction of the Passion (9:18); at the Transfiguration (9:29); before teaching the Lord’s Prayer (11:1); and upon the cross (23:40). The parables which assure answers to prayer—the Friend at Midnight and the Unjust Judge—are peculiar to Luke. In the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican the difference between real and unreal prayer is illustrated (18:11-13).²¹

Prominence is given to the work of the Holy Spirit in Luke, who has seventeen references to the Spirit as over against twelve by Matthew and

²⁰Barclay, p. xvi.

²¹Plummer, pp. xlv-xlvi.

six by Mark. Especially are the references frequent in the introductory chapters concerning the birth of Jesus (1:41, 67; 2:25-27). The ministry of Jesus is permeated by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Being "full of the Holy Spirit" after His baptism and "led by the Spirit into the wilderness," he took up his ministry "in the power of the Spirit" and "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit" as he carried on his work (4:1, 14; 10:21). Jesus instructed his followers that they were to carry on His work in the power of the same Spirit. John the Baptist had promised that the Christ would give the Spirit, and the risen Christ points forward to the realization of that promise (3:16; 24:49). This emphasis of the Spirit in Luke's Gospel prepares for the story of The Acts, in which the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit are so prominent.²²

There is no particular Christological theory represented in the Third Gospel, for Luke followed his sources in the main. The fundamental affirmation is that Jesus is the Christ foretold by prophecy. However, only in Luke among the Synoptics is the term *O Kurios* used for Jesus, and its occurrences are confined to narratives or to editorial introductions peculiar to that Gospel. Also, the only time in the Synoptics that Jesus is referred to as Saviour (*Sotér*) is in the angelic message to the shepherds in Luke 2:11. In fact, the word occurs only one other time in the Synoptics (Luke 1:47) where it refers to God.²³

Having surveyed the characteristics of the Gospel according to Luke and thought more deeply about their theological meaning and overtones, we are again brought face to face with the question of the theological aim for the writing of Luke's Gospel.

V. THE TWO MOST POPULAR THEOLOGICAL AIMS OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

Among several different purposes that have been set forth for Luke's

²² Filson, p. 61.

²³ Creed, p. lxxv.

work, there are two that seem to be most popular. One of these is that the Gospel was written as an apologetic or polemical work. Gilmour in *The Interpreter's Bible* discusses two aspects of this purpose. First, he contends that Luke wished to show that Christianity was not a subversive sect. Christianity was in a struggle to obtain legal status as Judaism had made every effort to repudiate it. Also, Roman officials were beginning to recognize that this new religion was not just another form of Judaism. This apologetic idea is supported by the following: Jesus had deliberately demonstrated political loyalty in the incident of the denarius (Luke 20:20-26). In the trial of Jesus, Pilate asserted on no less than three different occasions that he found no basis for a criminal charge against Jesus. After examining Jesus, Herod also found no grounds for legal action. Luke shows that the Jewish leaders frame charges against Jesus (23:2) and that the responsibility for his death rests with them and their followers. While Jesus is hanging on the cross, instead of Roman soldiers mocking Jesus, it is the Jews who do (23:35). Also, in support of the apologetic purpose is the claim put forth by some scholars that a major purpose for the Book of Acts is apologetic.²⁴

Another aspect of the apologetic purpose proposed by Gilmour is that "Luke wished to support the claim that the church had superseded the synagogue as the true Israel and was entitled to the recognition and protection that the state had heretofore afforded Judaism."²⁵ The basis for this lies in the affirmations that Jesus is the Christ foretold by prophecy. This is apparent in the birth narratives, especially the songs by Mary and Zacharias (chap. 1). Since the Jews had rejected the salvation of God, the Christian church had entered into possession of all the privileges that had formerly been the Jews. Christians were not to be looked upon as apostates from Judaism.

The second popular purpose set forth for the writing of the Gospel according to Luke involves the didactic and evangelistic aims. Taylor's view

²⁴ Gilmour, pp. 5-6.

²⁵ Gilmour, p. 7.

is that Luke was first and foremost a historian and that he wrote to confirm and strengthen his readers in their faith as suggested in the preface (Luke 1:1-4).²⁶ But as a gospel writer and transmitter of "good news," does not Luke intend more than confirming believers? As the Book of Acts tells the story of the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman world, Luke in the Gospel sets forth the historic foundations of Christianity as a world religion and anticipates the acceptance of the Gentiles.

Manson lends a strong voice to the view that the theological aim for the Gospel of Luke is evangelistic as opposed to polemical. He believes that if the apologetic intention were admitted, a number of features would more easily be explained in the Gospel. However, he suggests that an apologetic interest "forms but an under-current or sub-intention of the work." Furthermore, he declares:

The evangelist's main purpose is to present the facts of Christianity so as to serve the religious end which gives these facts their real significance in history. When therefore we speak of Luke as historian we must do so in the sense required by a proper respect for his evangelistic aim. . . . He is not primarily a historian but an exponent of the gospel' in history.²⁷

VI. CONCLUSION

Having considered various factors related to the theological aim of the Gospel according to Luke, the conclusion is that this Gospel was written as history with an evangelistic aim--to show Jesus as the universal Saviour and Lord. This aim is very much in accord with the universal aspects seen in Luke's record in relation to the Gentiles, the Samaritans, outcasts and sinners, the poor and women. The stress on the Holy Spirit in Luke's Gospel presupposes his ultimate ministry without geographical boundaries after

²⁶ Vincent Taylor, "Gospel of Luke," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), vol. 3, p. 181.

²⁷ Manson, pp. xxi-xxiii.

the ascension of Christ. As volume one of Luke-Acts, the purpose of the Gospel finds its corollary in the Book of Acts, if it be true that Acts was written to show how Christianity spread from Jerusalem to Rome.

This writer fully agrees with Geldenhuys and Manson that Luke wrote especially to Gentiles with a didactic and evangelistic purpose.

He wrote with the object of convincing, converting, saving and spiritually edifying his fellow-men. What he puts before us is not merely "the reasonableness or the truth of ethical and spiritual ideas, nor even the holiness and beauty of a life, but the testimony of a religious society to One in whom redemption has been experienced, and for whom faith, obedience, love and worship are unqualifiedly claimed."

The Gospel was written "out of faith for faith" in order to hold up Jesus as Lord and Redeemer.²⁸

²⁸Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956), p. 42. Manson, p. Xii, is quoted.