LUKE-ACTS AND THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL*

by

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1. The question

Luke-Acts, more than the rest of the New Testaments writings, with the exception of Rom. 9-11,1 reveals a special interest in the "hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20; cf. 23:6; 24:15; 26:6-7).2 Although for Luke the salvific promises of the Old Testament are to be interpreted in new terms, in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus and of the mission among the Gentiles, nevertheless, these promises are first addressed to the Jewish people. The fulfilment of these promises implies not only the salvation of the Jews together with all the other nations, but also something that specifically concerns Israel as such: the "consolation of Israel" (Lk. 2:25), the "redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk. 2:38), the "glory of your people Israel" (Lk. 2:32), the "restoration of the kingdom for Israel" (Acts 1:6; cf. 3:21; 15:16).3

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3 Those studies which have dealt with this issue include: A. García del Moral, "Un posible aspecto de la tesis y unidad del libro de los Hechos", *EstB* 23 (1964) 41-92; A.W. Wainwright, "Luke and the Restoration of the Kingdom to Israel", © E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1996

Novum Testamentum XXXVIII, 1
Right from the start, either through angels (Lk. 1:16f., 32f.; 2:10f.), or through persons inspired by the Holy Spirit (1:41,67; 2:25,26,27), Luke-Acts announces the birth of Jesus and that of his precursor as the response of the God of Israel to the hopes of the λαὸς. This point of view, which is equated with that of God himself, the narrator clearly makes his own and invites the reader to do the same. ⁴

However, as the story unfolds, the relationship with Israel takes an increasingly dramatic turn. The author’s point of view will become clear only at the end of the work. ⁵ And many interpreters maintain that it reveals itself to be unequivocally anti-Jewish. ⁶

Narrative Criticism, according to many scholars, can be very useful in dealing with this kind of problem ⁷ which involves the interaction of the narrator’s “point of view” and the reader’s reaction. To start a story with an unfulfilled hope or promise is to introduce a deficiency (a manque, to use the terminology of the French

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⁵ “Al no distinguir adecuadamente los exegetas entre el plan global de la doble obra lucana y las opiniones que exponen los sucesivos interlocutores, atribuyen a Lucas una serie de trazos judaizantes que no concordan con la clara tendencia universalista de Hechos”. J. Rius-Camps, De Jerusalén a Antioquia. Génesis de la Iglesia cristiana. Commentario linguístico y exegetico a Hech 1-12 (Córdoba: El Almendro, 1991) 62.
