

A NEW PLEA FOR AN EARLY DATE OF ACTS

Karl L. Armstrong

McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, ON, Canada

Introduction

Over a century ago, Richard Belward Rackham gave perhaps the best surviving defence for an early date of Acts. Since then, his arguments have been discussed, adapted, challenged and dismissed. Although the present essay goes beyond his original arguments, the title is an intentional reference in appreciation for his pioneering insights that have not been duly considered amidst the ongoing debate. Without diminishing the inherent complexities and additional evidence that has come into play since 1899, Rackham's description is still a helpful summary of the issues at stake: 'If the later date be correct, St. Luke is guilty of nothing less than a literary crime: he excites all his readers' interest in the fate of St. Paul, and then leaves him without a word as to the conclusion.'¹ Given the nature and aims of the narrative (Lk. 1.3), this basic question remains: is the author of Acts guilty of a literary crime? Scholars generally agree without hesitation that he is—*if* a later date is correct.

1. R.B. Rackham, 'The Acts of the Apostles II. A Plea for an Early Date', *JTS* 1 (1899), pp. 76-87 (80). The title of this essay reflects Rackham's. It is a common assumption on all sides of the debate to recognize the hole in the plot at the end of Acts. For example, Parker states, 'we shall have to charge its author with vast and inexcusable ignorance' given the 'host of matters' that 'every intelligent person, and *a priori* careful historian, ought to have known about' (Pierson Parker, 'The "Former Treatise" and the Date of Acts', *JBL* 84 [1965], pp. 52-58 [54]). Alternatively, the 'literary' solution charges the author as 'guilty' of 'historiographical sins'—because he intentionally creates a happy 'fictitious' end that ignores the unhappy events relating to, and following, the narrative (Richard I. Pervo, *Acts* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009], p. 688).

Arriving at a certain date for any historical document or determining that an author is guilty of a literary crime requires a comprehensive examination of the evidence.² A brief lesson from history should be sufficient to illustrate this point. John Adams, the soon-to-be second president of the United States, was given the seemingly impossible task of defending the British soldiers and their captain in the famous Boston Massacre trials of 4 December 1770. They were on trial for their firing into a Boston mob that resulted in five deaths. When the evidence was presented and cross examined, Adams soon proved the innocence of the British soldiers (despite the consensus). The facts revealed how these frightened soldiers were only trying to defend themselves from an assault on their lives—and were certainly not guilty of a ‘bloody massacre’. In the end, the captain was acquitted along with six of the eight soldiers—and two were given a reduced sentence of manslaughter. After weighing the evidence before the court, Adams concludes with these words: ‘Facts are stubborn things; and

2. Acts scholars from the Westar Institute rightly propose that Acts ‘must be interpreted in terms of its historical context’ (caveat 2). Dennis E. Smith, ‘Report on the Acts Seminar’, *Fourth R* 20 (2007), <http://www.westarinstitute.org/projects/the-jesus-seminar/seminar-on-the-acts-of-the-apostles/fall-meeting-2006>. However, while they place great emphasis on the historical context for Acts (and this is voted to be second century), they nevertheless consider Acts as ‘Myth, [which] should not be confused with history’. In response we can note that, first, scholars have demonstrated to varying degrees the general reliability of Acts as a historical document: e.g. Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (trans. J. Bowden; London: Fortress Press, 1979); W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1989); Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989); the large collection of essays in Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (eds.), *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting* (5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993–96); Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the ‘Acts of the Apostles’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Secondly, since a historical context requires datable historical elements, how can the seminar view Acts ‘as myth’ and not ‘history’ (to some degree)? Thirdly, what has the seminar discovered that has proven the ‘mythical’ context of Acts to be in the second century? Evidently one’s view of the date of Acts is directly related to the book’s perceived historical reliability. Stanley E. Porter, *When Paul Met Jesus: How an Idea Got Lost in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 75, 78.

whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.’³

The lesson should be clear and applicable to the task of dating Acts. Regardless of one’s opinion, this debate requires careful consideration of facts and evidence that rises above, and in the end, may differ from one’s own ‘wishes or inclinations’. My concern is that some recent proposals have been presented as conclusive, but, upon examination, exhibit serious problems regarding how these conclusions are drawn.⁴ Methodological weaknesses aside, there is also a tendency in the debate to ignore the valuable argumentation of scholars over the past century and earlier. Having said that, this essay is by no means a panacea, but it should be a wake-up call for those that think this issue is settled—far from it. The aim is not to convince everyone that the date for Acts presented here is ‘definitive’. It is instead the much more modest aim of presenting a new plea to reconsider an early date for Acts.

Little has changed since Hemer’s instructive 1989 work with respect to the ‘huge variety of divergent and often contradictory criteria and arguments’.⁵ Since Pervo turned his attention to this critical subject in 2002, he lamented how ‘very little detailed and penetrating research had been devoted to the date of Acts in recent decades’.⁶ He is also correct in his assessment that the 80–85 CE dating is really more of a ‘political

3. William Gordon, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment, of the Independence of the United States of America*, I (4 vols.; London: Charles Dilly & James Buckland, 1788), p. 296.

4. One notable exception is Keener’s rigorous review (Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*. I. 1–2:47 [4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015], pp. 383-401) and Porter’s condensed but helpful analysis (*When Paul Met Jesus*, pp. 75-79).

5. Hemer, *Acts*, pp. 366-70 (370). Little has changed in this regard, except perhaps the lack of response in recent years from the early and middle groups (pre-90 CE), Keener’s commentary being the only recent and significant exception (that I am aware of). My hope is that this silence is not a case of agreement (*qui tacet consentire videtur*).

6. Richard I. Pervo, ‘Acts in the Suburbs of the Apologists’, in Thomas Phillips (ed.), *Contemporary Studies in Acts* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), pp. 29-46 (30).

compromise' than the result of 'scientific analysis'.⁷ Fitzmyer, who perhaps represents the vanguard of the 'middle ground' date of 80–85 CE, makes the surprising claim that 'there is no good reason to oppose that date, even if there is no real proof for it'.⁸ Furthermore, I also share Tyson's surprise at Fitzmyer's concluding comments that the interpretation of Acts 'depends little on its date or place of composition'.⁹

A survey of the literature shows just how complex this debate is, and decades later, Cadbury's caution is worth repeating:

Is there any other method by which the date of the Gospel and Acts can be fixed? Probably not. At least none has yet been discovered. The extreme limits within which the composition of the two books must fall are c. 60 A.D. or a little earlier, when Paul reached Rome, and c. 150 A.D., when Marcion made use of the Gospel. The two extremes are improbable; but just as there is no decisive proof that Luke was not written before the fall of Jerusalem, there is also none that it was used by any writer before Marcion.¹⁰

This essay will attempt to survey the arguments for each range of dating and 'cautiously' defend an early date based on the cumulative evidence.

7. Pervo, 'Suburbs', p. 31. Pervo concludes: 'Dating Acts in the 80's requires a great deal of explaining away' (p. 46). Acts is far too important a document for anything less than a scientific consideration of facts and evidence.

8. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB, 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), p. 55.

9. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 55; Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke–Acts: Defining Struggle* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), p. 1.

10. H.J. Cadbury, 'The Identity of the Editor of Luke and Acts', in F.J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (eds.), *The Beginnings of Christianity Part I: The Acts of the Apostles* (3 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1922), II, p. 358. Elsewhere Cadbury refrains from picking an exact date for Acts when he claims the evidence is 'equally indefinite, within certain obvious quite wide limits' (H.J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke–Acts* [New York: Macmillan, 1927], p. 327 [360]). Ernst Haenchen (*The Acts of the Apostles* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1971]) does not commit to a date either. Cadbury's upper limit (150 CE) should be reduced accordingly since Roth considers the text of Marcion's gospel to be 'clearly related to Luke and prior to the middle of the second century'. Cf. Dieter T. Roth, *The Text of Marcion's Gospel* (NTTSD, 49; Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 1. Meanwhile this diminishes the feasibility of Tyson's late date range of 100–150 CE (Tyson, *Marcion*, p. 23). His narrowed range of 120–125 CE (p. 78) is problematic on other grounds (cf. note 112 below).

Three Major Factions

When it comes to the date of Acts, there are three main groups to which scholars subscribe (with some overlap): early (pre-70 CE), middle (post-70 CE to around 80 CE) or late dating (90–130 CE).¹¹ Some have dated Acts as early as the late 50s CE (Blass) and as late as the middle of the second century (Townsend). The main criteria in the debate that are repeatedly produced as argument points are the following: (1) the end of Paul's imprisonment (c. 62 CE); (2) the fire of Rome and Nero's persecution (64–65 CE); (3) the outbreak of the Jewish War (66 CE); (4) the destruction of Gaza (66 CE);¹² (5) the 'traditional' death of Paul (67 CE); (6) the fall of Jerusalem (70 CE); (7) the date of Mark;¹³ (8) the date of the third Gospel (after 70 CE or a proto-Luke pre-70 CE); (9) the uncertain lifespan of Paul's companion (and author of Acts) (around 80 CE); (10) the insertion of the 'curse of the Minim' into the Eighteen Benedictions (c. 85–90 CE); (11) the appearance of Josephus's *Antiquities* (c. 93 CE) and/or his entire works (c. 100 CE); and (12) the circulation of Paul's letters around 90 CE.¹⁴

Hemer notes that despite uncertainty in many of these cases, most of these events are presented as *termini post quem* along with other kinships

11. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 52. Likewise Hemer suggests there are three main camps: (1) early, pre-70 CE; (2) a date around 80 CE; and (3) a date 'near the end of the first century or in the second'. Hemer, *Acts*, p. 373. My dates are borrowed from Hemer, supplemented by Fitzmyer and sometimes clarified by the author. More recently Porter narrows these groups to be around 63 CE (with Paul's imprisonment under Nero), around 85 CE and 'around but no later than' 130 CE. Porter, *When Paul Met Jesus*, p. 76.

12. In Acts 8.26 Hemer explains there is no clear editorial allusion to the destruction of Gaza in 66 CE. Hemer, *Acts*, p. 371 n. 17.

13. Hemer, *Acts*, p. 371. Dating Acts based on Mark alone is too simplistic especially because Acts relates to contemporary events more than 'any other New Testament book' (p. 376). Peterson asks, 'Why must there have been more than a decade between the publication of Mark and the appearance of Luke–Acts?' (David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], p. 5). A mid-date view of Acts (i.e. 85 CE) based on the standard synoptic solution and a relatively late date for Mark is problematic because both are 'far from certain'. Cf. Porter, *When Paul Met Jesus*, p. 77.

14. The criteria here are reproduced from Hemer, *Acts*, p. 371.

with Gnostic writings, the Domitianic persecution, the Pastorals, Plutarch, Justin Martyr or ‘with cultural phenomena exclusively characteristic of a chosen date almost anywhere along the spectrum’.¹⁵ Meanwhile, some scholars argue *against* a persecution setting (Schneider) while others argue *for it* and so place the book ‘before and after the outbreak of a Domitianic persecution’.¹⁶ This essay is far from an exhaustive treatment of all the issues. Rather I will first address five key issues before engaging the three major groups: early, middle and late.

Acts and Josephus

One of the primary issues in this debate rests upon the recurring claim that ‘Luke depends upon Josephus’.¹⁷ Josephus lived approximately c. 37–100 CE. His *Jewish War* was written in c. 75–79 CE while his *Antiquities of the Jews* was written in c. 93–94 CE. His last two works *Life* and *Against Apion* were written shortly before his death. This is a critical matter because 93 CE would be the earliest possible date for Acts ‘if it could be shown that Luke made use of Josephus’s *Antiquities*’.¹⁸ Nearly a century ago, Cadbury indicated that the origins of the hypothesis of a relationship between Josephus and the Lukan writings stem from the writings of J.B. Ottius in 1741 and J.T. Krebs in 1755 CE.¹⁹ During the nineteenth century

15. Hemer, *Acts*, p. 371. I agree with Keener who questions the criteria for dating any document ‘no earlier than its first clear attestation’ (Keener, *Acts*, I, p. 399).

16. Hemer, *Acts*, p. 372. Though many scholars deny this persecution, Hemer finds evidence for it.

17. Hemer, *Acts*, p. 372 (cf. his section on Luke and Josephus pp. 94-99) and C.K. Barrett, *Luke the Historian in Recent Study* (London: Epworth Press, 1961), pp. 75-76. Gasque refers to a number of scholars who have argued this literary dependence since the nineteenth century (Gasque, *History*, 103). More recently, Pervo suggests that Luke ‘made some use of Josephus’ (especially *Antiquities*) and considers this idea ‘deeply compelling and inherently attractive’. Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2006), pp. 149-99 (197).

18. Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), p. xxxii.

19. Cadbury, ‘Identity’, pp. 355-56; I have updated and corrected the names and publishing information: John Baptista Ottius, *Spicilegium sive excerpta ex Flavio Josepho ad Novi Testamenti illustrationem* (Leiden: Joannem Hasebroek, 1741) and

‘the theory evolved that Luke was dependent on Josephus’.²⁰ This theory flourished based on three main passages in Acts: the first one deals with a certain Theudas (Acts 5.36) who led a rebellion of four hundred men;²¹ the second concerns Lysanias the ‘tetrarch of Abilene’ (Lk. 3.1);²² and third addresses the Egyptian who led a revolt of some four thousand terrorists (Acts 21.38).²³

Although this position (classically represented by Krenkel) has repeatedly been discounted by many scholars, Pervo has recently placed it

Johann Tobias Krebs, *Observationes in Novum Testamentum e Flavio Josepho* (Leipzig: Wendlerus Joannes, 1755).

20. Cadbury, ‘Identity’, p. 356. According to Cadbury, it was Keim (and others) by 1878 who ‘adopted this view’ peaking with Krenkel’s ‘classic defense’ in 1894. Cf. Max Krenkel, *Josephus und Lukas: Der schriftstellerische Einfluss des jüdischen Geschichtschreibers auf den Christlichen* (Leipzig: H.A. Haessel, 1894). Krenkel finds 92 passages that are common to Luke and Josephus but not found in the LXX. This ‘huge overkill of the significant’ includes a ‘13-page list of mostly common words which the two writers share with the Septuagint’. Hemer, *Acts*, 372.

21. Any comparison with the account of Theudas in Acts and Josephus’s later account (c. 93 CE) should be considered anachronistic because Acts records Gamaliel speaking about Theudas long before Josephus’s account during 44–46 CE when ‘Fadus was Procurator of Judea’ (*Ant.* 20.97). See I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 122 n. 36. At any rate, the details of the two accounts are different (i.e. Josephus does not mention the four hundred men). Also, Marshall notes that there were many uprisings during this period and it is also possible that each narrates a different Theudas (pp. 122-23).

22. While Leaney was troubled by the reference to Lysanias, Ramsay had already addressed it. Ellis claims that the Abilene inscription that mentions ‘Lysanias the tetrarch’ ‘probably’ dates from 15–30 CE (E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* [London: Nelson, 1966], p. 87; A.R.C. Leaney, *The Gospel According to Luke* [London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966], pp. 48-50; and W.M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915], pp. 297-300).

23. The *sicarii* were bitter enemies of the pro-Roman Jews during the procuratorship of Felix (52–59 CE). That Josephus narrates a similar event (with differing details) only proves that they were both writing about the same event. Cf. F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 3rd edn, 1990), p. 453; M. Smith, ‘Zealots and Sicarii: Their Origins and Relation’, *HTR* 64 (1971), pp. 1-19.

on the table again.²⁴ His arguments rest primarily on two passages (from the earlier three discussed above) where he considers the ‘inaccuracies’ regarding the rebels Theudas and Judas in Acts 5.36-37 and the Egyptian in Acts 21.37-38; he considers them to be a misreading of Josephus’s account.²⁵ Pervo notes that although Krenkel’s method was insufficient, it ‘does not automatically disprove its hypothesis’.²⁶ However, a repeatedly falsified hypothesis does not need a revised method; what is needed is a new hypothesis. Furthermore, despite Pervo’s improved methodology, he has failed to engage adequately the arguments of key scholars (e.g. Cadbury, Foakes-Jackson, Hemer, etc.) who do not subscribe to Josephus-dependency theories.²⁷ Pervo grants only two pages for ‘objections to the proposal that Luke used Josephus’, relying on Ben Witherington’s commentary and a 1980 essay by Heinz Schreckenberg.²⁸

It is also significant that in the very places where Luke and Josephus appear to intersect, they often contradict each other.²⁹ In 1876, Schürer suggested that, ‘Either Luke had not read Josephus, or he had forgotten what he read’.³⁰ If Luke used Josephus, says Hemer, ‘he misused him’.³¹

24. By re-examining Krenkel, Pervo aims to find ‘additional wheat’ from the ‘putative chaff’. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, p. 198 (and Chapter 5).

25. C.K. Barrett (*The Acts of the Apostles* [2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998], II, p. xliii) considers the alleged misreading of Josephus’s account of Theudas and Judas to have ‘little weight’.

26. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, p. 150.

27. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, pp. 149-99. Both Hemer and Cadbury receive only a single passing reference. Cf. Hemer, *Acts*, p. 372. Although Cadbury considers these so-called examples of ‘Lucan errors explained by Josephus’ as ‘very persuasive’, ‘they fall short of demonstration’. Cadbury, ‘Identity’, p. 357.

28. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, pp. 194-96; Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 235-39 and Heinz Schreckenberg, ‘Flavius Josephus und die Lukanischen Schriften’, in W. Haubeck and H. Bachmann (eds.), *Neutestamentliche Studien, Festgabe für K.H. Rengstorf zum 75* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), pp. 179-209.

29. Hemer, *Acts*, p. 372. E.g. Theudas in Acts 5.36, the Egyptian messianic pretender (four thousand followers in Acts, thirty thousand in Josephus), and the Quirinius census. Regardless, Josephus is famous for inflating numbers.

30. Emil Schürer, ‘Lucas und Josephus’, *ZWT* 19 (1876), pp. 582-83.

31. Shared content is not enough. See, for example, Hemer, *Acts*, pp. 372-73; Schreckenberg, ‘Flavius Josephus’, pp. 179-209 and W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the*

Likewise, for Fitzmyer, the idea that ‘Luke would have read or used Josephus’ writings is highly speculative and improbable; none of the evidence for it is convincing.’³² Longenecker as well remarks that arguments for dependence on Josephus have been ‘fairly well demolished by a number of comparative writers’.³³ Therefore, it seems wise to remain critical of claims that Acts is dependent upon the late first-century works of Josephus.³⁴

Acts and Paul

Where many scholars do not find clear evidence that Acts is dependent on Paul’s letters, Pervo has recently argued against the grain.³⁵ Like Acts and Josephus, this issue is an old one. While Cadbury’s decided opinion is that Acts is not dependent on Josephus, ‘the same may be said for the letters of Paul’.³⁶ More recently, Porter expresses the difficulties with such dependency theories: ‘Acts makes *no clear reference* to knowledge of, and

New Testament (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1975), p. 132. Gasque (*History*, pp. 179-80) conveys that Foakes-Jackson ‘disfavors the Josephus theory very strongly’. F.J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (MNTC; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1931), pp. xiii-xv. Ehrhardt refutes the notion of Lukan dependence as well and calls Josephus ‘undoubtedly both dishonest and slipshod’. Arnold Ehrhardt, *The Framework of the New Testament Stories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), pp. 85-86.

32. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 53.

33. Cf. Richard N. Longenecker, *The Acts of the Apostles* (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, 9; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), p. 323; Bruce, *Acts*, pp. 10, 43-44. Recently, Keener also finds dependence on Josephus ‘highly unlikely’ while noting Pervo’s concession that a mistaken reference to Theudas might be as old as the 60s CE. Cf. Keener, *Acts*, I, p. 394 and Pervo, *Dating Acts*, p. 310.

34. Pervo admits that proof of dependency is impossible. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, p. 198.

35. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, pp. 51-147. Earlier Conzelmann remarked that it is ‘almost inconceivable ... that the author of Acts knew nothing at all about the letters’. Cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, p. xxxiii. Meanwhile, Parker remarks that the later we date Acts the ‘more inexplicable becomes its ignorance of Paul’s own letters’—and the list of examples of this ignorance ‘could be extended almost indefinitely’. Parker, ‘Former Treatise’, p. 54.

36. Cadbury, *Luke–Acts*, p. 327.

hence use of Paul's letters.³⁷ Perhaps the heart of the methodological problem with such literary dependency scenarios is summed up here:

The same fallacy regularly inheres in the argument from vocabulary, whether employed by Krenkel to show Luke's knowledge of Josephus, or by Hobart and others to prove that the evangelist was a physician. While he undoubtedly has much in common with the diction of the Septuagint, Paul, Josephus and the medical writers and many other bodies of Greek writing taken one at a time, these facts give little clue to his individuality of speech.³⁸

To make a valid dependency argument, it is not enough to draw upon similar vocabulary—it may only prove that Paul and the author of Acts spoke the same language.

In Pervo's voluminous study, he concludes that the 'cumulative evidence that Luke made use of Pauline letters is rather persuasive'.³⁹ Pervo, in Chapter 4 of his book (pp. 51-147), shows many detailed comparisons between Acts and Paul's letters.⁴⁰ The following are some passages that are worthy of further analysis: Acts 9.23-25/2 Cor. 11.32-33 (p. 60); Acts 9.21; 22.3/Gal. 1.13-14, 23 (p. 74); and Acts 2.33/Gal. 3.14/Eph. 1.13 (p.

37. Cf. Porter, *Paul in Acts* (repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), p. 206, emphasis added. Barrett considers the apparent failure of Luke to use Paul's letters as a 'serious matter' for a date of 90 CE—especially where *1 Clement* (c. 96 CE) refers to some. Barrett, *Acts*, II, p. xliii. Keener observes that most scholars, including himself, reject this dependence. Keener, *Acts*, I, p. 399.

38. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, p. 219 (see also pp. 118-22, 219, 273, 338 and 358). Cadbury claims the 'agreements in vocabulary are not striking but commonplace' (p. 118). Cf. Jacques Dupont's comments in *The Sources of Acts: The Present Position* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964), p. 86. Krenkel (*Josephus und Lukas*) and W.K. Hobart (*The Medical Language of St Luke* [London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1882]) share the same fundamental error. Krenkel refers to words and phrases used by both writers 'but fails to show that the same words and phrases were not used by other writers'. Gasque, *History*, p. 104.

39. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, p. 145.

40. Pervo claims that Acts 'exhibits knowledge of 2 Corinthians (or at least a fragment thereof), Romans (8 references), 1 Corinthians (14 references), Galatians (25 references), Ephesians (19 references), and 1 Thessalonians (13 references)'. Pervo, 'Suburbs', pp. 33-34 and *Dating Acts*, pp. 139-43 and pp. 320-21.

77).⁴¹ In Tannehill's review he addresses some of Pervo's risky methodological assumptions.⁴² First, that the author had access to Paul's letters (or was familiar with Paul's thinking and theology) is not a new supposition. Second, what is the evidence for dating the circulation of Paul's letters so late (100 CE)?⁴³ Porter, building on the earlier work of Trobisch, claims this late date is 'arguably wrong' based on his study on the gathering of Paul's letters.⁴⁴ Regardless, Tannehill rightly concludes that the 'supposed date of a Pauline letter collection cannot determine the date of Acts'.⁴⁵

Consequently, even if, as Pervo alleges, that Acts is influenced by Paul's letters, this can not *a priori* push the date of Acts further into a late first- or early second-century date for two major reasons. First, it is entirely possible and reasonable that the author of Acts was influenced by Paul, his thought, vocabulary and theology, and secondly, even if it could be proven that the author of Acts relied upon Paul's letters, it is entirely possible that this could have happened long before 100 CE and perhaps as

41. R.C. Tannehill, review of *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2006), by R.I. Pervo, in *CBQ* 69 (2007), pp. 827-28 (827). Other 'parallels' seem baseless, such as highlighting 'circumcision' in Acts 10.45; Gal. 2.12; Rom. 4.12; Col. 4.11; and Tit. 1.10. Cf. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, p. 91.

42. Tannehill, review of *Dating Acts*, pp. 827-28.

43. Richard Pervo, 'The Date of Acts', in Dennis Edwin Smith and Joseph B. Tyson (eds.), *Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2013), p. 5. Although I appreciate the efforts of the Acts Seminar, their conclusion that 'Acts is later than 100' CE (because of Paul's late letter collection of the same date, along with a theory of literary dependency on Josephus [93/94 CE]), lacks evidence (also p. 5). Refer to their color-coded system (similar to the Jesus Seminar) that dates Acts (via Westar Seminar Fellows) by giving a red (probable) vote that 'Acts was written in the second century CE' (p. 6). That Acts was written before 70 CE or 'in the last quarter of the first century CE' (p. 6) is given a black vote (improbable).

44. Stanley E. Porter, 'Paul and the Process of Canonization', in Craig A. Evans and Emanuel Tov (eds.), *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), pp. 173-202.

45. Tannehill, review of *Dating Acts*, p. 828. Pervo claims that the author of Acts had access to a Pauline collection that was not available until 100 CE.

early as the 60s CE.⁴⁶ Therefore, a dependency on Paul's letters in Luke–Acts is entirely compatible with an early date.

Foreshadowing and Silence

Fitzmyer suggests that Luke failed to account for Paul's death because it was foreshadowed (cf. Acts 20.25, 38; 21.13).⁴⁷ He further explains that the 'best way to account for Paul's ending where it does' is that the readers of Acts 'knew the rest of Paul's story'.⁴⁸ This seems speculative especially in light of Rackham's still valid point: 'It seems incredible that if S. Luke had known it, he should have not mentioned it'.⁴⁹ Elsewhere Rackham remarks how from Acts 19.21 onwards matters have been 'working up to a crisis':⁵⁰

46. See Pervo's section on Acts and Galatians in *Dating Acts*, pp. 73–96. If Paul's undisputed letters were written in the 50s CE, and no later than his death (somewhere between 64–68), how realistic is it to expect a letter like Galatians to circulate for 40–50 years before the author of Acts became aware of it and used it? Gamble affirms the often 'rapid and wide circulation' of Christian texts. See Harry Y. Gamble, 'The Book Trade in the Roman Empire', in Charles E. Hill and Michael J. Kruger (eds.), *The Early Text of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 23–36 (33).

47. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 52. Bruce says when Luke 'wrote, he probably knew' that Paul's Miletus prediction (Acts 20.25) 'had come true'. Bruce, *Acts*, p. 10.

48. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 52. Fitzmyer refers to Hanson whose view was earlier championed in 1913 by Bartlet. See Bruce, *Acts*, p. 535; V. Bartlet, 'Two New Testament Problems. I. St. Paul's Fate at Rome', *Expositor* 8 (1913), pp. 464–67. Bartlet assumed that Luke's readers were already aware of the consequences of persecution under Nero. See also G.W. Trompf, 'On Why Luke Declined to Recount the Death of Paul: Acts 27–28 and Beyond', in Charles H. Talbert (ed.), *Luke–Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), pp. 232–34. Trompf modifies Bartlet's earlier theory and argues for a deliberate ending to Acts. These theories break down, arguably, because 'Paul's whole progress from Corinth to Jerusalem reads in Luke's account like a march to martyrdom' (G.H.C. Macgregor, *Interpreter's Bible. IX. The Acts of the Apostles, the Epistle to the Romans* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1952], p. 350).

49. R.B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Exposition* (London: Methuen, 9th edn, 1922), p. li.

50. Rackham, 'Plea', p. 78.

St. Paul is arrested: we are taken minutely through the first stages of his trial; the end is at hand, his doom is to be decided—and the story suddenly breaks off. What was the fate of St. Paul? There is not a word to say. The martyrdoms of St. Peter and St. Paul must have been to Christians all the world over among the most exciting events of the Church's history: yet St. Luke, writing at or for Rome, keeps silence. There is not only no description of the martyrdom ... but there is not even a single anticipatory hint or allusion to the fate of St. Paul.⁵¹

Why would an author be content to foreshadow Paul's death (or 'invert' his trial) when elsewhere the founder and followers of the Gospel story have already been presented in their suffering and death as heroes and examples to follow in Luke–Acts and other New Testament writings?⁵² Rhetorical explanations for the narrative's silence remain unproven and should not be considered decisive. In order to discount an early dating of Acts it seems reasonable to expect more compelling reasons (and motives) for these theories.⁵³

The Fall of Jerusalem: Dividing the Early and Middle Groups

Just before engaging the three major groups, it should be noted that the first two groups (early and middle) are inclined to place a higher value on the historicity of Acts. These two groups generally view the author in some way as an associate of Paul. Late dating advocates tend to place a lower historical value on Acts and consider the author as a 'redactional theologian' while connecting their dates with dependency on Josephus, changing relations between Jews and Christians (via the curse of the Minim), Domitian's persecution or 'cultural or theological kinship to

51. Rackham, 'Plea', p. 78.

52. Marguerat's assumption that Luke is using a rhetorical procedure (narrative suspension) for the end of Acts is speculative: 'Luke wishes to reinterpret the memory of the apostle's martyrdom, by inverting the structure of the expected trial (Acts 27–28), and to ensure the perpetuation of his missionary work in the present.' Marguerat, *Historian*, pp. 229–30. Marguerat's use of narratological criticism leads him to conclude that the Acts narrative is 'intentionally ambivalent' (p. 230). Arguably, however, Acts is anything but ambivalent, whether in events or speeches; the narrative is intentionally filled with trials, suffering, martyrdom and miracles.

53. See also Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB, 31; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 53–54.

various features of a later date'.⁵⁴ The key divide between the early and middle groups rests on the relationship between the third Gospel and the fall of Jerusalem (pre- or post-70 CE). Those who argue for a date after the fall of Jerusalem claim that Lk. 21.20-24 shows a 'post-70 editing of Mark'.⁵⁵ However, the prediction of Jerusalem's destruction as a *vaticinium ex eventu* is not decisive—especially given the city's history.⁵⁶

Although the silence of Jerusalem's destruction in Acts does not prove an early date, Dodd's essay in particular, along with Rackham, Torrey and Hemer, has successfully challenged this criterion that supports a post-70 CE date as too simplistic.⁵⁷ The prophetic language of the third Gospel is very telling starting with the widespread LXX usage of ἐρήμωσις (destruction/desolation) in Lk. 21.20 and as part of the phrase, τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως 'the Abomination of Desolation' (Mk 13.14). Dodd argues that Luke (in 21.20) wished to modify Mark's usage here 'because it would be unintelligible to the public he had in view'.⁵⁸ For this period, this is a natural choice for any Greek speaking Jew or Christian.⁵⁹

54. So Hemer, *Acts*, p. 373.

55. Hemer, *Acts*, p. 374. Although many scholars point to Luke's 'redaction' of Mk 13.14 in Lk. 21.20, one could argue that the core 'prophetic' description is common to all three synoptic Gospels. For example, the phrase λίθον ἐπὶ λίθον (stone upon stone) found in Lk. 19.44 occurs in Mk 13.2 and Mt. 24.2.

56. Fulfilled prophecy carries a significant literary force in the ancient world. The author would have been much more explicit if he had knowledge of the events (as shown elsewhere). See Hemer, *Acts*, p. 375 and Porter who wonders 'if the account were written after the fact', would it 'have been written in such a veiled way?' Porter, *When Paul Met Jesus*, p. 78. Bock is equally skeptical of dating Luke 'on the basis of eschatological texts'. Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), p. 27.

57. C.H. Dodd, 'The Fall of Jerusalem and the "Abomination of Desolation"', *JRS* 37 (1947), pp. 47-54. Curiously, while Dodd dates Mark to 'the period before the war of A.D. 66-70' he dates the third Gospel after the fall (p. 47). Still, Hemer (*Acts*, p. 375) claims the 'fundamental argument for making a dogma of that dating' has been 'sufficiently' disposed. See also C.C. Torrey, *The Composition and Date of Acts* (HTS, 1; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), pp. 69-70. It is surprising that Pervo (*Dating Acts*) did not once engage Dodd's landmark article in his entire volume.

58. Dodd, 'Jerusalem', pp. 48-49.

59. Dodd, 'Jerusalem', p. 49. Dodd further cites several key passages where variants of this word are found in the LXX (i.e. Lev. 26.34, 35; 2 Chron. 30.7; 36.21;

The military operations described in Lk. 19.42-44 are ‘no more than the regular common-places of ancient warfare’.⁶⁰ The prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem is simply a reflection of the earlier LXX account of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege in 586 CE (and the siege of other cities as well).⁶¹ Some of the exact military words that Luke uses are found in the LXX of Isa. 29.3; 37.33; Ezek. 4.1-3; 26.8; (the siege of Tyre) 21.22; Jer. 41.1; 52.45; and 1 Macc. 15.13-14.⁶² Furthermore, Josephus’s later account describes some very specific ‘eye-witness’ details that go far beyond Luke’s simple description—such as the inner-Jewish faction fighting inside the walls, the ‘horrors of pestilence and famine’, cannibalism and the fire that destroyed the temple and a large part of the city.⁶³ Lastly, it is worth reflecting on Dodd’s comments here:

It appears, then, that not only are the two Lucan oracles composed entirely from the language of the Old Testament, but the conception of the coming disaster which the author has in mind is a generalized picture of the fall of Jerusalem as imaginatively presented by the prophets. So far as any historical event has coloured the picture, it is not Titus’s capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, but Nebuchadnezzar’s capture in 586 B.C. ... Therefore, in the Lucan oracles the prototype of coming disaster is the

Jer. 4.7; 1 Esd. 1.55; Jdt. 8.22; 1 Macc. 1.54; etc.). While there are some 23 references in the LXX, only three are found in the New Testament. Curiously, they are the synoptic ‘desolation’ passages (Mk 13.14; Mt. 24.15; and Lk. 21.20).

60. Dodd, ‘Jerusalem’, p. 49.

61. Luke’s phrase in 19.44, *καὶ ἔδαφιοῦσίν σε καὶ τὰ τέκνα σου*, is ‘commonplace of Hebrew prophecy’ (Dodd, ‘Jerusalem’, p. 50) and has intriguing parallels in the LXX with Hos. 10.14 and 14.1; cf. also Nah. 3.10; Isa. 3.25-26; Ps. 137.9 (136.9 LXX); Mk 13.17; Lk. 21.23.

62. Dodd, ‘Jerusalem’, pp. 50-51 (cf. p. 50 n. 6). The earlier and basic use of *χάραξ* (‘stake/barricade’) in Lk. 21.20 is especially noteworthy because: (1) this is the only occurrence in the NT; (2) the LXX always uses this form (with 13 references); and (3) Josephus (cf. *War* 5.269) uses the more ‘correct’ Hellenistic form *χαράκωμα* (‘palisade’). C. Xenophon, *Hell.* 5.4.39 and *Anab.* 5.2.26.

63. Dodd, ‘Jerusalem’, p. 49. Josephus reports how those who were ‘under seventeen years of age were sold for slaves’ (*War* 6.418). For the accounts of cannibalism, see *War* 6.204-205; 2 Kgs. 6.24-31 and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV* (AB, 28a; New York: Doubleday, 1985), p. 134.

Babylonian capture of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., in Mark its prototype is the sacrilege of Antiochus in 168-7 B.C.⁶⁴

Acts and the Comparable Age of its Variants

In another essay, I examined the manuscript record for the end of Acts (28.11-31) in light of the unique transmission history of its texts and made a discovery that should be considered additional evidence.⁶⁵ The purpose of the study was to understand the significance of the variants in relation to the often debated and yet ever present ‘Western’ tendencies. It was argued that these variants provide additional evidence in support of E.J. Epp’s proposition that the Alexandrian and Western textual families are comparable in age, but also decidedly earlier than previously thought.⁶⁶ At present, there remains a lack of consensus concerning theories of what came first and how the texts of Acts developed.⁶⁷ Even among pro-Alexandrian scholars, there are those who suggest that the Western text has its roots in the early second century (or earlier).⁶⁸

64. Dodd, ‘Jerusalem’, pp 52-53.

65. Cf. K.L. Armstrong, ‘The End of Acts and the Comparable Age of Its Variants’, *FN* (forthcoming).

66. Text critics in the early twentieth century, and in recent times, are confident in the early second-century origin of the Western text. This research poses serious problems for dating Acts any later because the variants were already in circulation. The degree of adoption of the Western text by Irenaeus and Marcion requires future research as this may show the development of the textual families more clearly. J.K. Elliott, ‘The New Testament Text in the Second Century: A Challenge for the Twenty-First Century’, *New Testament Textual Research Update* 8 (2000), p. 12; Roth, *Marcion’s Gospel*, pp. 2 n. 4, 438; and Dieter T. Roth, ‘Marcion and the Early Text of the New Testament’, in Charles E. Hill and Michael J. Krueger (eds.), *The Early Text of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 302-12.

67. Joël Delobel, ‘The Text of Luke–Acts: A Confrontation of Recent Theories’, in J. Verheyden (ed.), *The Unity of Luke–Acts* (BETL, 142; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), pp. 83-107 (106).

68. Christopher Tuckett, ‘How Early is the “Western” Text of Acts?’, in Tobias Nicklas and Michael Tilly (eds.), *The Book of Acts as Church History: Textual Traditions and Ancient Interpretations* (BZNTW, 120; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), pp. 69-86 (85-86) and, more recently, Christopher Tuckett, ‘The Early Text of Acts’, in Charles E. Hill and Michael J. Krueger (eds.), *The Early Text of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 1-20. Cf. also D.C. Parker, ‘Codex

The key observation relates to the variants in light of the established Western tendency for expansion.⁶⁹ Although the end of Acts begs for an answer to what happened to Paul, his appeal to Caesar and upcoming trial (Acts 25.11), the differences among the manuscripts with respect to Acts 28.11-31 are relatively colourless.⁷⁰ Meanwhile the entire manuscript record is devoid of any knowledge that connects the historical context with the catastrophic events that follow the ending of Acts. Furthermore, these Western variants do *not* present any major theological, social, cultural or historical differences as compared with the Alexandrian text. It was argued that the recent literary and narrative solutions do not account for these colourless expansions in light of the momentous events in Roman and Jewish history that follow the end of Acts. The evidence suggests that the variants are comparable in age and decidedly earlier.

Not only is the author of Acts (in 28.11-31) silent regarding the terrible events that affected the Roman Empire, the city of Rome and the church in the mid-60s CE, the Western scribes and editors are also silent (see Table 1). Consequently, the earliest and simplest explanation (that Luke knew no more) should be given greater attention because of the combined silence of *all* the variants.⁷¹ To account for this silence through various

Bezae: The Manuscript as Past, Present and Future', in Scot McKendrick and Orlaith O'Sullivan (eds.), *The Bible as Book: the Transmission of the Greek Text* (London: Oak Knoll Press, 2003), pp. 43-50 (48-49) and Eldon J. Epp, 'Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism: Moving from the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty-First Century', in David Alan Black (ed.), *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), pp. 17-76 (38, 41).

69. See Head's observation on the Western *Tendenz* in Peter Head, 'Acts and the Problem of Its Texts', in Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (eds.), *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting. I. The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1993), pp. 415-44 (415); and also Hemer, *Acts*, p. 55; W.A. Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts* (SNTSMS, 71; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 4, 38-56. This tendency has been noted for some time: B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, II (New York: Harper, 2nd edn, 1896), pp. 122-26, 174; W.M. Ramsay, *St Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1905), pp. 24-27.

70. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 52.

71. Cf. Rackham, *Acts*, p. li and 'Plea', pp. 76-87. The earliest and simplest explanation goes back as early as the late second century CE: Muratorian Fragment (lines 35-39); *1 Clem.* 5.2-7; John Chrysostom, *Hom. Act.* 55; and Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*

‘higher’ literary and narrative theories without clearly addressing the issues of ‘lower’ criticism in relation to the historical context, suggests a failure in method. If a scribe would take the time to provide additional details about Paul’s imprisonment and the captain of the guard (τῷ στρατοπεδάρχῳ) in Acts 28.16, how could the same scribe fail to narrate Paul’s martyrdom, the dying multitudes of Christians and victims of the great fire of Rome, the Jewish war with Rome or the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple?⁷² There is not so much as a marginal notation anywhere in any textual stratum of Acts.

Table 1. Key Dates Relating to Acts in the Early Roman Imperial Period (c. 60–150 CE)

41–54 CE	Reign of Claudius
50–60s	Circulation of Paul’s letters
54–68	Reign of Nero
60–61	Paul (as a prisoner) goes to Rome ⁷³
62	End of Paul’s imprisonment and death of James (the brother of Jesus)
62–63	Acts is written
63–64	Death of Paul (terminus for the circulation of his letters)
July 19, 64	Great fire of Rome ⁷⁴

2.22.1, 6-8; 3.1.3. Troy M. Troftgruben, *A Conclusion Unhindered: A Study of the Ending of Acts within Its Literary Environment* (WUNT, 2.280; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), pp. 8-11.

72. It has long been observed how Western readings regularly ‘impinge on historical questions’ (Head, ‘Acts’, p. 419). And yet, despite the propensity to fill in the ‘historical’ blanks elsewhere, the scribes (or redactors) of these variants remain silent regarding major events that tragically affected both the church and the city of Rome.

73. Since Paul’s two-year imprisonment (c. 60–61 CE) is the last event described in Acts 28.30-31 it seems reasonable to suggest the author probably finished writing within a year or two of this *terminus a quo*. Bruce, *Acts*, p. 9.

74. Since the fire of Rome (July 19, 64 CE)—and the persecution that followed—is ‘one of the best known of all historical events’, a date beyond this seems unlikely due to the silence in Acts. See Stephen Dando-Collins, *The Great Fire of Rome: The Fall of the Emperor Nero and His City* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2010), p. 1 and Peter

64	Post-fire persecution of Christians in Rome under Nero
64–67	Death of Peter
66	Outbreak of the Jewish War (66–74 CE) and the destruction of Gaza
68	Death of Nero (r. 54–68)
68–69	Year of the four Emperors (Galba, Otho, Vitellius, ending with Vespasian)
69–79	Reign of Vespasian
Pre-70 CE	Early Dating Advocates
70	Destruction of the Jewish temple
71	Roman triumph
73–74	Fall of Masada
75–79	Josephus writes <i>Jewish War</i>
79	Eruption of Mount Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum
79–81	Reign of Titus
Post-70 CE to ~80	Middle Dating Advocates
81–96	Reign of Domitian
85–95	Persecution of Christians under Domitian
93–94	Josephus writes <i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>
94–95	Apostle John dies on the Isle of Patmos
95–100	Clement of Rome writes <i>I Clement</i>
96–98	Reign of Nerva
98–117	Reign of Trajan
90–130 CE	Late Dating Advocates
100	Josephus's <i>Life</i> and <i>Against Apion</i> circulated shortly before his death
117–38	Reign of Hadrian
132–35	Bar Kokhba rebellion and the Second Jewish War
138–161	Reign of Antoninus Pius
144	Marcion founds his church and writes his gospel sometime before 150 CE.

Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (ed. Marshall D. Johnson; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), p. 82.

The Early Dating Advocates (pre-70 CE)

The following three sections will examine the major views of individual scholars in ascending chronological sequence. The ‘early’ group builds on Harnack and especially Rackham’s previous deductions.⁷⁵ Starting with Blass (57–59 CE) we have a wide range of dates to choose from: Mattill, Finegan and Wikenhauser (near the end of Paul’s imprisonment, c. 61 CE), Filson (early, before Peter arrives in Rome, c. 62 CE), Blaiklock, Mittelstaedt, Edmundson, Reicke, Harrison and Robinson (62),⁷⁶ Bihel (immediately after 62), Robertson and Porter (63),⁷⁷ Armstrong and Parker (62–63),⁷⁸ Vine, Carson, Moo, Morris and Peterson (62–64), R.R. Williams and Guthrie (before 64), Rackham and Harnack (by 64),⁷⁹

75. Rackham, *Acts*, pp. 50-55 and Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 52.

76. Blaiklock says that a ‘date in the neighbourhood of AD 62 seems reasonable’. Edward Musgrave Blaiklock, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Historical Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1959), p. 17. J.A.T. Robinson settles on 62 CE (*Redating the New Testament* [London: SCM Press, 1976], pp. 19, 72, 112) but implies a range of 57–62 CE (p. 352). Mittelstaedt concludes that Luke was written in late Autumn of 59 in Caesarea, while Acts was written in 62 CE in Caesarea or Philippi. See Alexander Mittelstaedt, *Lukas als Historiker: Zur Datierung des lukanischen Doppelwerkes* (TANZ, 43; Tübingen: Francke, 2006), pp. 251–55. My sincere thanks to Dr. Mittelstaedt for his generosity in sending me a copy of his valuable book.

77. ‘A date of around A.D. 63 has, in my opinion, the most to commend it, even though it is not as widely held as the intermediate view.’ Porter, *When Paul Met Jesus*, p. 78.

78. Parker, ‘Former Treatise’, pp. 52-58.

79. Adolf Harnack is usually attributed a 64 CE view: Adolf Harnack, *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Neue Testament. IV. Zur Apostelgeschichte und zur Abfassungszeit der synoptischen Evangelien* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911), pp. 86, 113. However, Rackham’s article published in the first issue of *JTS* (1899) presents the first ‘classic’ defence for an early date of Acts. For Rackham, Acts ends the way it does because the author is unaware of the fates of Peter, Paul and James, the persecution of the Christians in Rome under Nero and the destruction of Jerusalem (and the temple); all the while peaceful relations still existed between the church and Rome. He points to many prior Old Testament parallel passages regarding Jerusalem (and the temple’s) destruction (cf. Jer. 20.4; Deut. 28.64; 1 Kgs. 8.46; Isa. 5.5; 29.3; 37.33; 58.18; Dan. 8.13; Zech. 12.3; 1 Macc. 4.60; Jer. 6.6; 52.4-5; Ezek. 4.1-3; Ps. 137.9; Hos. 13.16). Luke’s language is not surprising because Jerusalem had already been twice ‘surrounded by armies’ in the preceding century and a half. See Rackham, ‘Plea’, pp.

Torrey and Longenecker (64), Goodenough and Munck (early 60s),⁸⁰ Manson (64–70 or the years immediately following), Wikenhauser (later 1958) and Dupont (after Paul’s death), C.S.C. Williams and Schneckenburger (66–70),⁸¹ Russell (pre-70), Bock (just before 70 CE),⁸² Marshall (perhaps towards 70) and Ellis (early, perhaps around 70).

Table 2. The Early Dating Advocates (pre-70 CE)

57–59 CE	Blass
Near the end of Paul’s imprisonment (c. 61)	Mattill, Finegan and Wikenhauser (1921)
Before Peter arrives in Rome (c. 62)	Filson
62	Blaiklock, Mittelstaedt, Edmundson, Reicke, Harrison and Robinson
Immediately after 62	Bihel
63	Robertson and Porter
62–63	Armstrong and Parker
62–64	Vine, Carson, Moo, Morris and Peterson
Before 64	R.R. Williams and Guthrie
By 64	Rackham and Harnack
64	Torrey and Longenecker
Early 60s	Goodenough and Munck
64–70 (or immediately	Manson

76-87; Gasque, *History*, pp. 131-33 and Dodd, ‘Jerusalem’, pp. 47-54. Hemer (*Acts*, p. 367) relays how Harnack progressed to a later date of 78–93 CE.

80. D.A. Carson, D.J. Moo and L. Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), pp. 190-94. While Peterson thinks a ‘date in the 70’s seems entirely reasonable’ he suggests that ‘a good case can be made for a date as early as 62-64’. Peterson, *Acts*, p. 5. These scholars note: (1) the ignorance of Paul’s letters; (2) Judaism as a ‘legal religion’; (3) the lack of any reference to Nero’s persecution; or (4) the outcome of Paul’s Roman incarceration.

81. For Schneckenburger, the silence of Jerusalem and its temple’s destruction is key, and thus he argues for a date ‘subsequent to the death of Paul, but prior to the destruction of Jerusalem’ (see Gasque, *History*, p. 39 and his synthesis of Matthias Schneckenburger, *Über den zweck der Apostelgeschichte: Zugleich eine Ergänzung der neueren Commentare* [Bern: Fischer, 1841], pp. 231-35).

82. Marshall, *Acts*, pp. 46-48 and Bock, *Acts*, p. 27.

after)	
After Paul's death (c. 64–68)	Wikenhauser (1958) and Dupont
66–70	C.S.C. Williams and Schneckenburger
Pre-70	Russell
Just before 70	Bock
Towards 70	Marshall
Around 70	Ellis

Many scholars in the group give Acts an early date for the following reasons:⁸³ (1) Luke fails to mention Paul's death or his pending trial before Caesar; (2) Luke fails to mention the great fire of Rome in 64 CE;⁸⁴ (3) Luke fails to mention the persecution of Christians under Nero;⁸⁵ (4) Luke's apologetic purpose of showing Christianity as a *religio licita* under Nero is problematic; (5) similarly, the peaceful tone of Acts is inconsistent with an awareness of Paul's tragic martyrdom and the subsequent persecution of the church; (6) the description of the early Jerusalem church that was still in contact with the temple, Synagogues, Pharisees and Sadducees is far too idyllic for being written after the Jewish Rebellion and Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE;⁸⁶ (7) the author seems unaware of Paul's letters; (8) the 'obvious parallel' between the death of Jesus and the death

83. Cf. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 52.

84. Nearly 70 per cent of the city was destroyed in the summer of 64 CE. Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, p. 47 and Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.38-43. For details on the radical urban impact on the city, see R. Laurence, S.E. Cleary and Gareth Sears, *The City in the Roman West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 117-18.

85. Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, p. 401 and Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44.2, 4. An omission of this persecution in c. 64 CE seems incredible, especially given the stated friendliness to Rome. Parker observes that any gloss over such cruelties would be 'egregious' after 64 CE. Nero's 'hateful reputation among Christians ... never died', and for 'any Christian to write, thereafter, with the easy optimism of Acts 28 would require an almost subhuman obtuseness' (Parker, 'Former Treatise', p. 53). Additionally, the 'expectation of Roman justice would be unlikely' after Nero's persecution (Keener, *Acts*, I, p. 387).

86. Given the narrated rejection of Jesus, and the persecution of the apostles by the Jewish leadership, it seems reasonable to expect the author to capitalize on the temple's destruction (e.g. Ezra 5.12).

of Paul is missing;⁸⁷ and (9) the Jewish–Christian prayers in Acts presume the temple still stands.⁸⁸ In summary, Hemer states that Acts ‘reflects the situation and concerns of the church in the pre-70 CE period and betrays no clear indication of a later period’.⁸⁹

The Middle Dating Advocates (post-70 CE to ~80)

The middle-dating contingent (with some overlap) seems to represent the current majority opinion.⁹⁰ For this group, before 70 CE is too early, and after 90 is too late. Starting with Lightfoot, a significant number of scholars argue that Acts was probably written in the 70s, after the fall of Jerusalem.⁹¹ From Lightfoot we find a range of dates that fall somewhere within 70–80 CE: Headlam (shortly after 70), Page and Hanson (after 70), Bartlett (72–74), Knowling (based on the date of Luke), Zahn (75), D.J. Williams (about 75), Keener (70–80),⁹² Neil (doubts an early date), Clarke

87. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 52. Considering the detailed treatment of Jesus’ death in Luke, and Stephen in Acts 7, there is every reason to expect a note on the outcome of Paul’s trial. Rackham (‘Plea’, p. 78), while commenting on the missing, ‘obvious parallel to the Passion of the Gospel’, explains how we should otherwise be at a loss to understand ch. 20 to the end. The plan of Acts disappears and the end becomes ‘unintelligible’ afterwards.

88. Since the prayer forms in Acts reflect the temple and not the synagogue, there is ‘little evidence to suggest that Luke’s picture contains elements from post-70 developments in Jewish and Christian worship’ (Daniel K. Falk, ‘Jewish Prayer Literature and the Jerusalem Church’, in Richard Bauckham [ed.], *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*. IV. *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], pp. 267-301 [267]).

89. Hemer, *Acts*, p. 382.

90. Spencer agrees with ‘most scholars’ who date Acts after 70 CE but ‘before the letters of Paul, which Acts does not allude to’, and which were ‘collected and circulated close to the end of the century’. F. Scott Spencer, *Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), p. 16. Keener (*Acts*, I, p. 384) also ‘holds’ to this ‘centrist’ position that apparently carries four times as many scholars than the second-century group.

91. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple is the hinge between the early and middle groups. Troftgruben, *Conclusion Unhindered*, p. 10.

92. Keener (*Acts*, I, p. 384) seems to lean very close to 70 CE because ‘charges against Paul and his death in Roman custody remain a live apologetic issue’ (and on p.

(80 is more satisfactory, but an earlier date is possible), Plummer (no later than 80), Meyer and Johnson (80)⁹³ and Witherington (late 70s or early 80s).⁹⁴ Meanwhile, there are the ‘late-middle’ advocates: Marguerat and Dunn (80s),⁹⁵ Kümmel (70–90), Ramsay (immediately after 81), Ehrhardt (75–90), Boismard (not before 80), Macgregor, Fitzmyer and Bruce (c. 85),⁹⁶ Schneider, Weiser, Juel, Jervell and Hengel (80–90),⁹⁷ Maddox (80s or early 90s), Goguel (85–90), Barrett (late 80s or early 90s),⁹⁸ Jackson (before c. 90) and Trocmé (last quarter of the first century). Fitzmyer adds to this list: Marxsen, Michaelis, Perrot, Pesch and Vielhauer.⁹⁹

Table 3. The Middle Dating Advocates (post-70 CE to ~80)

70s	Lightfoot
Shortly after 70	Headlam
After 70	Page and Hanson
72–74	Bartlett
75	Zahn
About 75	D.J. Williams
70–80	Keener
Based on Luke	Knowling
Doubts an early date	Neil

400 he ponders the possibility of a date in the ‘early 70s, with dates in the 80s and 60s still plausible’).

93. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SP, 3; Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 1991), p. 2.

94. Witherington, *Acts*, p. 62.

95. Marguerat (*Historian*, 229) suggests a date of ‘around the 80s’ but apparently without reason. Similarly, Dunn’s single paragraph on the date of Acts is disappointing (James D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Narrative Commentaries; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996], p. xi).

96. Bruce progressively changed his opinion from as early as c. 62, and then later ‘towards 70’ and eventually 85 CE. See, Bruce *Acts*, pp. 9-18 and Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 54.

97. Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK, 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 17th edn, 1998), p. 86.

98. Barrett (*Acts*, II, p. xlii), thinks this is probable—‘though anything but certain’—while admitting his dating is ‘complicated by several factors’.

99. Contrary to Fitzmyer’s list, Dupont and C.S.C Williams should be on the ‘early’ list, as that seems to be a better fit based on their views.

80 (earlier is possible)	Clarke
No later than 80	Plummer
80	Meyer and Johnson
Late 70s or early 80s	Witherington
80s	Marguerat and Dunn
70–90	Kümmel
After 70, but before the circulation of Paul's letters	Spencer
Immediately after 81	Ramsay
75–90	Ehrhardt
Not before 80	Boismard
c. 85	Macgregor, Fitzmyer and Bruce
80–90	Schneider, Weiser, Juel, Jervell and Hengel
80s or early 90s	Maddox
85–90	Goguel
Late 80s or early 90s	Barrett
Before c. 90	Jackson
Last quarter of the first century	Trocme

Troftgruben suggests further reasons for a post-70 CE date that are summarized here:¹⁰⁰ (1) the idea of the ‘many’ in the early sixties CE who would ‘have undertaken to compile a narrative’ before Luke is difficult;¹⁰¹ (2) only after the destruction of Jerusalem (70 CE) does the phrase Lk. 13.35 ‘your house is abandoned’ make sense;¹⁰² and (3) in Mk 13.2, Jesus pronounces judgement upon the temple and in Mk 13.14 the ‘abomination of desolation’ is replaced by ‘Jerusalem surrounded by camps’ in Lk. 21.20.¹⁰³ Where Mark alludes to Dan. 9.27 or 12.11, Luke instead

100. Troftgruben, *Conclusion Unhindered*, p. 10.

101. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 54.

102. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 54. Previously Jeremiah used even stronger language in Lam. 2.7 or Jer. 22.5, e.g. ‘this house is for desolation’.

103. This is a dubious reason to insist on post-70 CE. For example, in the LXX the word *κυκλώω* ‘surround/encircle’ in general or ‘to move around an object’ is found 95 times (BDAG; cf. Louw and Nida 15.146). Meanwhile it is found only 4 times in the whole New Testament and with only one other military use (Heb. 11.30) regarding the

describes the actual siege of Jerusalem;¹⁰⁴ (4) the fact that Lk. 19.43-44 ‘alludes to Roman earthworks of the sort described by Josephus’ indicates a post-70 dating (cf. *War* 6.2.7-150, 156).¹⁰⁵ Hence, many in this middle group prefer a date after 70 CE but before 81–96 because of a lack of reference to the Domitian persecution during this time.¹⁰⁶

The Late Dating Advocates (90–130 CE)

Promoters of a late date for Acts include: Windisch (80s or 90s, possibly 100–110), McNeile, Dibelius, Goodspeed and Roloff (c. 90), Streeter (90–95), Conzelmann (80–100),¹⁰⁷ Bornkamm (towards the end of the first century, at the earliest), Moffatt and Talbert (c. 100),¹⁰⁸ Schmithalls, (90–110), Jülicher (100–105), Koester (100–110),¹⁰⁹ Schmiedel (105–130), Parsons (110),¹¹⁰ Pervo (110–120),¹¹¹ Tyson (120–125),¹¹² Knox (125),

walls of Jericho: Πίστει τὰ τεῖχη Ἱερικῶ ἔπεσαν κυκλωθέντα ἐπὶ ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας. Similarly, περικυκλώω (κυκλεύω) also means ‘to surround’ and ‘to move in such a way as to encircle an object’, and is found only once in Lk. 19.43 compared with 16 times in the LXX (Louw and Nida 15.147).

104. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 54. Dodd argues persuasively against Luke’s supposed ‘editing’ of Mark by saying, ‘It will hardly be argued that the mere expression κυκλομένην ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων, describes Titus’s siege so precisely that it must necessarily be a *vaticinium ex eventu*. If you want to say in Greek “Jerusalem will be besieged”, the choice of available expressions is strictly limited, and κυκλοῦσθαι ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων, is about as colourless as any.’ See Dodd, ‘Jerusalem’, p. 48.

105. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 54. Again, this argument is weak in light of Dodd’s claims, and the general manner of Roman siege tactics against a walled city.

106. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 54.

107. Conzelmann suggests that ‘somewhere between 80 and 100 best fits all the evidence’. Conzelmann, *Acts*, p. xxxiii.

108. C.H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Reading the New Testament Series; New York: Crossroad, 1997), p. 237.

109. More recently, Koester scaled back his date from 135 (as noted by Hemer, *Acts*, 370) to 100–110 CE. Cf. Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament: History and Literature of Early Christianity* (2 vols.; New York: de Gruyter, 2nd edn, 1995–2000), II, p. 314.

110. Parsons settles for about 110 CE ‘though a release anytime within the first two decades of the second century (ca. AD 100–120) would have provided sufficient time

Overbeck (second or third decade of the second century), Baur (deep into the second century)¹¹³ and Townsend (middle of the second century).¹¹⁴

for Polycarp's knowledge of the book'. Cf. Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), p. 17.

111. See Pervo's 2006 work *Dating Acts* and his 2009 commentary *Acts*, p. xv and 5.

112. Tyson, *Marcion*, pp. 1-23. Tyson dismisses the position of the early group as 'flawed' while the middle group is 'built on an inadequate foundation' (p. 22). This is precisely the kind of partisan 'camp' mentality that Keener refers to where scholars 'dismiss [a] position rather than considering [its] arguments seriously'. Keener, *Acts*, I, p. 383. Tyson's dismissal appears to be based on presuppositions shared by the Westar Institute's 'Acts Seminar' (Tyson, *Marcion*, p. xii). He argues for a range between 100–150 CE because of the church's struggle 'with Marcion and Marcionite Christianity' (p. 23). He narrows this to 120–125 CE when Marcion was gathering followers (p. 78)—hence, Luke–Acts is a reaction to Marcion (p. 127). This dating is problematic because it was not until July 144 CE that Marcion founded his own church (Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, p. 250). Second, Barton argues that Marcion 'was not a major influence on the formation of the New Testament'. Cf. John Barton, 'Marcion Revisited', in Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (eds.), *The Canon Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), pp. 341-54 (354). In a later essay, Tyson claims that the author of Acts 'stresses the community's fidelity to Jewish traditions and practices' and how the 'missionary method used by the Paul of Acts and his message to Jews stands in stark contrast to Marcionite theology' (cf. Joseph B. Tyson, 'Marcion and the Date of Acts', in Dennis Edwin Smith and Joseph B. Tyson [eds.], *Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report* [Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2013], pp. 6-9 [8-9]). Few, if any, would disagree with Tyson's observations here, but he lacks evidence that the author of Acts is intentionally 'reacting against certain fundamental features of Marcionite theology' (p. 9). The simplest explanation is that the Jewishness of Acts reflects a time in history when the temple, its institutions, practices, people and prayers (so Falk, 'Jewish Prayer', p. 267) were central to the early Church (this was not the case in Marcion's day). Furthermore, while there are plenty of Acts manuscripts to choose from, the only references to Marcion's version of Luke are by *later* Christian writers. For an updated comprehensive list of the extant sources for Marcion see Roth, *Marcion's Gospel*, pp. 46-82 (for a reconstruction of Marcion's gospel as it follows canonical Luke, see pp. 412-36).

113. Baur considered the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the epistles as 'irreconcilable'. Hence, he gave a date for Acts as 'tief in das zweite Jahrhundert'. See Gasque, *History*, p. 40.

114. Townsend argues for a much later date 'that approaches the middle of the second century'. See John T. Townsend, 'The Date of Luke–Acts', in Charles H.

To this list can also be added Burkitt, Klein and O'Neill.¹¹⁵ Pervo adds several in the post-90 category: Kee, von Soden, Davies, Drury, Mount, Barnikol, Couchoud, Enslin, Lake, Lohse, Bonz and Shellard.¹¹⁶

Table 4. The Late Dating Advocates (90–130 CE)

80s or 90s CE, possibly 100–110	Windisch
c. 90	McNeile, Dibelius, Goodspeed and Roloff
90–95	Streeter
80–100	Conzelmann
Towards the end of the first century (at the earliest)	Bornkamm
c. 100	Moffatt and Talbert
90–110	Schmithals
100–105	Jülicher
100–110	Koester
105–130	Schmiedel
110	Parsons
110–120	Pervo
120–125	Tyson
125	Knox
Second or third decade of the second century	Overbeck
Deep into the second century	Baur
Middle of the second century	Townsend

Scholars in this group generally emphasize the connections between Acts and late first- and second-century writings (i.e. Josephus, Marcion, Justin Martyr, Polycarp and Clement), although these connections are

Talbert (ed.), *Luke Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), pp. 47-62. Townsend relies heavily upon comparing Acts with second-century Pseudo-Clementine literature.

115. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 53.

116. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, pp. 362-63.

disputed.¹¹⁷ Overbeck, an early but highly influential Acts scholar, argued that Acts could ‘not have been written during the apostolic age, or even as early as the last two decades of the first century’.¹¹⁸ This leads him to a date of the second or third decade of the second century. Basically, Overbeck considers that Acts ‘either must be an example of a completely meaningless fabrication, or presuppose a length of time between its date and the events it narrates sufficient to allow for the development’.¹¹⁹ For him, Acts is ‘strongly affected by the influences of legend’ and the image of Paul is ‘strongly distorted’ leading to a date beyond the apostolic age.¹²⁰ Overbeck finds 5 items in church history that are comparable to Acts: (1) the state of church affairs is advanced; (2) Acts has an apologetic nature; (3) the *parousia* is a part of the ‘indefinite’ future; (4) there are traces of the ‘beginning of the hierarchical constitution of the Church’; and (5) Acts 20.29 suggests a polemic against Gnosticism.¹²¹

Over a century later, Pervo, in his monograph *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists*, argues that the author of Acts is familiar

117. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, p. 53. Although a ‘faithful late-date remnant’ remains, most do not subscribe ‘for good and persuasive reasons’. Porter, *When Paul Met Jesus*, p. 77. Pervo dates *1 Clement* to 100 CE and claims it shares a ‘good deal’ with Acts. Pervo, ‘Suburbs’, p. 36 and *Dating Acts*, pp. 301-305. He says that Acts ‘may be attested by Polycarp, ca. 130 CE.’ Pervo, ‘Suburbs’, p. 35, and *Dating Acts*, pp. 17-20.

118. Cf. Gasque, *History*, p. 85 and W.M.L. De Wette, *Kurze Erklärung der Apostelgeschichte* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1870)—this 4th edition of De Wette’s commentary is ‘edited and greatly expanded’ by Overbeck.

119. Gasque, *History*, p. 332 (trans. from p. 85); De Wette, *Apostelgeschichte*, p. lxiv. Similarly, Rackham reasoned that ‘St. Luke then, if writing after St. Paul’s death, has undoubtedly been guilty of making a false climax.’ Rackham, ‘Plea’, p. 78. This is unlikely according to Rackham for at least two reasons: (1) Luke exercised considerable literary power in Acts, and (2) a false climax distorts the entire narrative. By literary power, he means that Luke had the ‘painter’s power in sketching a vivid scene by a few dramatic touches’ (p. 79). Given the range of the miraculous, and at times terrifying scenes (e.g. Ananias and Saphira’s deaths) that Acts narrates, it is hard to conceive of any plausible reasons why the author might have avoided recording Paul’s death. Since Paul (i.e. Saul) was present at Stephen’s martyrdom, the ‘shedding of St. Paul’s own blood’ would indeed be a ‘complete fulfillment of the doctrine’ (p. 79).

120. Gasque, *History*, pp. 85, 332; De Wette, *Apostelgeschichte*, p. lxiv.

121. Gasque, *History*, pp. 85-86; De Wette, *Apostelgeschichte*, pp. lxiv-lxv.

with Paul's ten letters, the later writings of Josephus (c. 100 CE) and the Pastoral Epistles and Polycarp (c. 125–130).¹²² Like Overbeck, he argues that Acts should carry a date of c. 115 (c. 110–120 CE) from Ephesus 'or its general environs' based on this earlier monograph.¹²³ Spencer remains unconvinced in his dual review of *Dating Acts* and *Marcion and Luke–Acts*:

As stimulating as these studies are, however, they do not quite hit their desired chronological and historical targets. Arguing for direct dependence on particular sources (other than the repeatedly flagged Greek Old Testament [LXX]) or a specific polemical context (Marcionite or otherwise) is a difficult case to make with an anonymous theological narrative like Acts.¹²⁴

Likewise, Tannehill, while appreciating Pervo's efforts, also remains cautious, stating, 'P[ervo]'s alternative date of 110–120 should not be taken as the final word'.¹²⁵

Later, in a short article in *Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report*, Pervo pegs Acts to the time of the Apostolic Fathers (100–150 CE) suggesting that Acts is familiar with post-100 CE 'institutions' and 'terminology and concepts'.¹²⁶ Conversely, is this not a chicken and egg anachronistic fallacy? Is it not simpler to argue that the second-century writers are engaging with already-established issues and

122. Porter (*Paul in Acts*, pp. 14–19), in his critique of Pervo's *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), relays how his penchant for anachronistic literary comparisons 'verges on parallelomania' (p. 18).

123. Pervo (*Acts*, pp. xv, 5). He maintains a date of 115 CE in 'Suburbs', p. 36 and his later *Dating Acts*, p. 6.

124. F. Scott Spencer, review of *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge, 2006), by R.I. Pervo; and *Marcion and Luke–Acts: Defining Struggle* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), by Joseph B. Tyson, in *Int* 62 (2008), pp. 190–193 (192).

125. Tannehill, review of *Dating Acts*, p. 828.

126. Cf. Pervo, 'The Date of Acts', p. 6; cf. Pervo, 'Suburbs'. It is very doubtful that the kind of Jewish political power narrated in Acts would be present post-70 CE. See Longenecker, *Acts*, pp. 31–34. Likewise, Keener (*Acts*, I, p. 400) observes Pervo's anachronisms.

concepts in Acts?¹²⁷ It is ironic that one scholar could argue that the early second century is a better theological fit for Acts, where another uses the exact same argument to argue the exact opposite!¹²⁸ The evidence clearly points to Acts as the progenitor of the later second-century writings.¹²⁹

Concluding Observations: Early, Middle or Late?

In light of the existing scholarship and the evidence presented in this essay, it seems reasonable to argue for a date as early as 62–63 CE (but most likely before the summer of 64 CE), and no later than 70 CE (after the fall of Jerusalem).¹³⁰ There are several reasons to cautiously present this early range. First, the end of Acts is famous for leaving the reader in suspense regarding Paul's upcoming trial (acquittal or sentence). This is unusual given the author's propensity to narrate the deaths of Jesus and Stephen, as well as the persecutions of Paul and the other apostles. Accordingly, the idea that Luke's silence on these events is literary in nature (i.e. a narrative device such as foreshadowing) remains possible, but

127. Is it really improbable that in the first century the Church (or any voluntary association) had leadership positions (Acts 6.1-7; 20.17-35), helped their widows (Acts 6.1-7; 9.36-41) and dealt with both the 'misuse of funds' (Acts 5.1-11; 8:14-25) and 'deviant teaching'? Pervo, 'The Date of Acts', p. 6. These social structures are already found in the Gospels and Paul's earlier letters. Should we now date the earliest New Testament letters (e.g. Galatians) into the second century because they address (1) deviant teaching (Gal. 1.6-9 etc.), (2) leadership structures (Gal. 2.2, 8, 9), (3) doing good both to neighbours and to one's church family (Gal. 5.6, 13, 14; 6.2, 10) and (4) compensating their instructors (Gal. 6.6)?

128. E.g. Conzelmann, *Acts*, p. xxxiii as noted by Bock, *Acts*, p. 27.

129. See above, footnotes 124 and, especially, 125 and 126.

130. Tajra claims that Paul was definitely martyred in Rome during Nero's reign (54–68 CE); he narrows the date to 63 or early 64 CE just before the great fire. This limit appears to be an approximate and reasonable *terminus ante quem*. H.W. Tajra, *The Martyrdom of St. Paul* (WUNT, 2.67; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), p. 199 and also Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), p. 97. Keener's date in the very early 70s CE is possible (*Acts*, I, pp. 384, 400), but his arguments also support a pre-70 CE date; ultimately, a date beyond 70–74 CE seems to be increasingly unrealistic. Cf. H.M. Cotton, 'The Date of the Fall of Masada: The Evidence of the Masada Papyri', *ZPE* 78 (1989), pp. 157-62.

inconclusive. Secondly, concerning theories that Acts is dependent upon Josephus, existing scholarship suggests they will remain likewise inconclusive until further definitive evidence is produced. Thirdly, concerning the relationship between Acts and Paul's letters, it is argued above that even if it can be proven that Acts incorporated some elements of Paul's letters (and this is possible), this is no roadblock precluding the possibility that these letters could have been in circulation as early as the 60s CE.

Fourthly, the single greatest argument for an early date of Acts is based on the historical context of Luke–Acts.¹³¹ Where scholars press for suggestive theories of literary dependency or rhetorical devices, they must also show an awareness of the historical context.¹³² For over a century, scholars have noted how the author of Acts was not aware of several momentous historical events.¹³³ This unanswerable silence (along with the fate of Paul) is magnified due to the collective omission of these events across the entire manuscript record of Acts.¹³⁴ Any defensible argument for a date range must engage the *literary* and *historical* issues. Fifthly, the issue of *prophecy ex eventu* appears to have been challenged successfully by Dodd and others who have shown that the language of the prophecy in Luke can be traced to the LXX, including descriptions of the previous destruction of both Jerusalem and its temple. Since the period leading up to the first Jewish revolt is commonly considered to be a time of mounting political tension with Rome, it is no surprise the city was 'surrounded' and destroyed—especially given Rome's military capabilities at that time. Based on the cumulative evidence, and on the opinions and arguments from both sides of this long debate, it seems that Acts was written close to 62–63 CE, with a general range of 62–70 CE.

131. I agree with Tyson's desire to match the date with the historical context, but I disagree with his identification of that context for Acts. Tyson, *Marcion*, p. 2.

132. Especially noteworthy is Pervo's failure to address historical issues—his emphasis rests primarily upon literary parallels.

133. Rackham, *Acts*, pp. l–lv. As noted above: (1) the Jewish War 66–74 CE; (2) the destruction of Jerusalem and (3) the temple in 70 CE; (4) the fire of Rome in 64 CE; and (5) the subsequent Neronian persecution. Parker remarks how 'all these discrepancies would disappear if only we could date Acts earlier'. Parker, 'Former Treatise', p. 54.

134. This cumulative silence is considerable in light of the established 'Western' tendencies for expansion. Recall the section above: 'Acts and the Comparable Age of its Variants' and refer also to Armstrong, 'End of Acts' (forthcoming).