

FAITH-LANGUAGE, JESUS'S DISCIPLES, AND NARRATIVE FULFILLMENT IN LUKE-ACTS

WILLIAM B. BOWES*

Abstract: *There has been a renewed interest in the language of faith (πίστις) in recent years, but few studies have focused exclusively on the way that such language is understood and utilized in Luke-Acts. This article explores the nuance and development of faith-language in appropriated and unique Lukan passages, focusing on the faith of Jesus's disciples. The analysis then turns to how this develops throughout the narrative into Acts, with a focus toward illustrating how Luke uniquely highlights the disciples' πίστις to show that a problem to be remedied in the era of Acts is their lack of faith.*

Key words: *Luke-Acts, Gospels, faith, belief, narrative, disciples, fulfillment*

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to rightly define what πίστις means as “faith,” and the variety of ways in which the terminology is used inside and outside the NT, on the surface it can appear that no further lacunae are left to fill. Teresa Morgan’s masterful *Roman Faith and Christian Faith* remains the standard-bearer for linguistic and historical aspects of the discussion,¹ and there is an ever-burgeoning set of contributions to the use of πίστις in the Pauline corpus.² The present examination, however, seeks to build on the insights of recent interpreters while also contending that faith-language particular to Luke-Acts has been routinely overlooked, and that the narrative aspects of the development of such language through these works has been largely ignored.³ The lack of attention to Lukan faith-

* William B. Bowes is a PhD student in New Testament and Christian Origins at the University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK. He can be contacted at W.Bowes@sms.ed.ac.uk.

¹ Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

² Just a few recent examples include Nijay Gupta, *Paul and the Language of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020); Jeanette Hagen Pifer, *Faith as Participation: An Exegetical Study of Some Key Pauline Texts*, WUNT 2/486 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019); Ryan Schellenberg, “οἱ πιστεύοντες: An Early Christ-Group Self-Designation and Paul’s Rhetoric of Faith,” *NTS* 65.1 (2019): 33–42; Kevin McFadden, “Does Πίστις Mean ‘Faith (fulness)’ in Paul?,” *TynBul* 66.2 (2015): 251–70; Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2015); Peter Oakes, “Pistis as Relational Way of Life in Galatians,” *JSNT* 40.3 (2018): 255–75.

³ Among the few available publications addressing this topic, it appears that only two recent studies directly address this theme in detail: Christfried Böttrich, “Glaube im lukanischen Doppelwerk,” in *Glaube: Das Verständnis des Glaubens im frühen Christentum und in seiner jüdischen und hellenistisch-römischen Umwelt*, ed. Jörg Frey, Benjamin Schliesser, and Nadine Ueberschaer, WUNT 373 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 399–422; and J. David Woodington, *The Dubious Disciples: Doubt and Disbelief in the Post-Resurrection Scenes of the Four Gospels*, BZNW 241 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020): 98–136. Other studies related to Lukan faith-language typically deal with specific passages (often 18:1–8), but rarely the role of faith in the broader Lukan narrative. For one of the few treatments of the topic in a previous generation of

language stems from the assumption that the Evangelist “largely follows the same patterns and themes” as Matthew and Mark, not adding significantly to the material in either of these.⁴ It does appear that Luke understands the semantics of *πίστις* in a way similar to the other Synoptics, but this article argues that Luke frames his material uniquely and develops faith-language in a manner that must be understood in view of the overall narrative of Luke-Acts, which emphasizes progression and fulfillment.⁵

Specifically, I propose that although Mark and Matthew each note the insufficiency or absence of faith (or faithfulness) in Jesus’s disciples throughout their narratives, Luke is more pronounced in his employment of this emphasis and, when viewed in conjunction with the messianic-apostolic age inaugurated in Acts, he is the only Evangelist who provides a solution to the problem of the disciples’ lack of faith. That is, in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus observes, questions, and critiques the lack of *πίστις* in the disciples (even post-resurrection), but as the narrative continues into Acts, there is no longer any significant mention of insufficient or absent faith among Jesus-followers. Rather, the post-Pentecost church is characterized by leaders like Stephen and Barnabas who are not among the “faithless” generation (Luke 9:41) but are “full of faith” (Acts 6:5; 11:24). Part of the narrative artistry of Luke is in his presentation of the unfolding actualization of God’s plan of salvation, which is inaugurated by Jesus in the Gospel and carried out by the power of the Holy Spirit from Pentecost in Acts. As it relates to faith-language, the pre-Pentecost disciples are fumbling and fearful after Jesus’s mighty works, but as the narrative continues and the theme of fulfillment is elaborated, the post-Pentecost disciples appear fearless, and their words and deeds are identified by their *πίστις* and produce *πίστις* in their audience.

Before directly examining the texts associated with faith in Luke-Acts, it will first be necessary to briefly review the ways in which faith and faithlessness are

scholarship, see Terence McCaughey, “Paradigms of Faith in the Gospel of St. Luke,” *ITQ* 45.3 (1978): 177–84.

⁴ Gupta, *Language of Faith*, 71. In his discussion of faith in the Synoptics, Gupta devotes over a dozen pages to the use of *πίστις* in Matthew and Mark, but allots only three paragraphs for Luke’s faith-language. Morgan follows this same basic assumption, arguing that Luke “illustrates an understanding of *πίστις* very like Matthew’s in the material which is unique to him.” Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 374. She similarly writes that Matthew “follows Mark extensively, and all the themes identified in Mark’s treatment of *πίστις* are also present in Matthew” (369). As a result, Luke is presumed to do little different than Mark with *πίστις*. These assumptions were also shared decades prior by Mary Beavis, “Mark’s Teaching on Faith,” *BTB* 16.4 (1986), who writes that “neither Matthew nor Luke adds significantly to the Marcan material” (139).

⁵ Various scholars have noted the idea of fulfillment and the actualization of God’s plan in Lukan narrative. For examples, see Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1961), 151–52; and David Peterson, “The Motif of Fulfillment and the Purpose of Luke-Acts,” in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 1: *Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 83–104. The significance of the idea of narrative fulfillment to my thesis is that Luke-Acts is written to be read together, with Luke employing particular terminology to show how the divine plan is realized, having generated certain expectations in the first volume and presuming to demonstrate the actualization of those in the second volume.

understood in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, since these works come from a similar milieu.

I. ΠΙΣΤΙΣ AND FAITH-LANGUAGE IN MARK AND MATTHEW

In their use of *πίστις*, the Gospels belong to their first-century context.⁶ That is, a reader of the Gospels would have read “faith” as “a relationship term; it is a person’s response to God’s love, care, forgiveness and saving power.”⁷ As many scholars have noted, it is not first related to one’s cognitive assent to propositions but primarily involves trust and commitment to another. For the Gospel writers, it certainly does involve intellectual acceptance, but this is often not primary.⁸ Rather, *πίστις* faith is “a certain sort of personal relationship” that produces and binds social relations and secondarily involves propositional belief.⁹

This relational mode, “often visible in actions,”¹⁰ and affecting perception and intellectual understanding, is frequently and consistently addressed by Jesus in the Synoptics.¹¹ While Jesus often commends the faith of certain individuals, what is most striking is the way that he refers to the faith of his disciples. In almost every instance in the Synoptics, when Jesus addresses an insufficiency or absence of faith, it is in his own disciples.¹² For example, Matthew 16:5–12 associates the “little faith” of the disciples with a failure of perception or understanding, and thus is an issue of “believing faith,” or as related to “the proper operation of the mind and heart with respect to revelation and truth.... When *πίστις* is used this way, the emphasis falls on the proper method of perception, which is at odds with worldly knowledge and mere human ways of seeing reality.”¹³ The lack of faith of the disciples in Mark 4:35–41 seems to be related to an absence of “trusting faith,” as they

⁶ This is one of Morgan’s best-supported findings in *Roman Faith*. The Gospel writers in particular were straddling two worlds in their writings, namely their Greco-Roman context and their Jewish context.

⁷ Daniel Arichea, “Translating ‘Faith’ in the New Testament Letters,” *TBT* 30.4 (1979): 420.

⁸ The interpersonal relationship or fidelity that faith-language implies is not without attendant propositional adherence. Morgan rightly notes that “to characterize *πίστις* solely as a relational way of life in the New Testament is also problematic,” as internal aspects should not be overlooked. Teresa Morgan, “Faith in Dialogue,” *JNT* 40.3 (2018): 305.

⁹ Daniel Howard-Snyder, “*Pistis*, *Fides*, and Propositional Belief,” *RS* 54.4 (2018): 585.

¹⁰ Morgan, “Faith in Dialogue,” 304.

¹¹ Jesus speaks of faith in some capacity at least a dozen times in each Gospel, with the most occurrences (whether of Jesus commending faith or noting its absence) in Luke. That Jesus noted the lack or absence of faith in those around him is attested even in early noncanonical texts, such as the Egerton Papyrus 1.1.19–20 (of the religious leaders) and *Pistis Sophia* 3.111 (of his disciples).

¹² The only two times where the faith of nondisciples is referred to with any negative implications are Jesus’s comment to the chief priests and scribes in Luke 22:67 and his comment to the seizing boy’s father in Mark 9:24. In the latter case, there is the presence of some belief in the father, while in the same pericope the disciples are called “faithless.” In the former case, Jesus is not observing a total absence of *πίστις* but presuming that his addressees will not exercise it with respect to his messianic identity.

¹³ Gupta, *Language of Faith*, 10.

do not presume to rely upon the identity and ability of Jesus in their panic.¹⁴ Peter's fragile faith in Luke 22:32 appears to be related to "obeying faith," or "faithfulness," since Peter's response in the verse that follows involves not his assent to ideas about Jesus or God but rather to his faithfulness and loyalty to Jesus regardless of the circumstances.¹⁵

In Mark's Gospel, πίστις is widely distributed, whether as related to healing miracles, exorcisms, teaching, conflict, or the passion. While the πίστις of Jesus toward God or toward other human beings is never in view, the πίστις of disciples or others around Jesus to either God or Jesus is the typical focus. As Morgan puts it, the Synoptics use πίστις "to express the complexity of Jesus' identity and status, and the complexity of the divine-human relationship when Jesus is involved."¹⁶ In nearly every case where faith-language appears, Jesus is presented as either calling people to πίστις or addressing an absence or lack of πίστις.¹⁷ A recurring tendency in Mark that is repeated in Matthew and Luke is for the disciples to be those who lack πίστις or possess ἀπιστία, while nondisciples are often commended for their πίστις.¹⁸ In certain situations (as in 4:40), there is a relationship between fear and an absence of faith.¹⁹ As Morgan puts it, "the ἀπιστία of the disciples, it seems, is symptomatic of an ongoing struggle between πίστις, fear, doubt, and skepticism."²⁰ This struggle continues without resolution even as the narrative reaches its completion in the final chapter, as the experience of fear is how the Gospel ends (16:8b).²¹

In Matthew's Gospel, readers immediately notice that the Evangelist has reshaped faith-language in his own parlance, frequently referring to the disciples as those with "little faith" in a manner different from Mark or Luke. Andries van Aarde points out that Matthew's references to the disciples as ὀλιγόπιστοι ("you of little faith") often follow Mark in the involvement of fear, implying that in order for the disciples to engage in the commission that Jesus gives them, they must

¹⁴ On the Synoptic tendency to conceive of faith as trusting in Jesus's identity, see Edward O'Connor, *Faith in the Synoptic Gospels: A Problem in the Correlation of Scripture and Theology* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), 83–93.

¹⁵ I am here following the threefold terminological categorization for understanding πίστις proposed by Gupta. Gupta, *Language of Faith*, 10–13.

¹⁶ Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 349.

¹⁷ This can be distinguished from John the Baptist, who (in the Gospels) called people to repentance but is not explicitly described as calling people to faith. Later, Acts 19:4 suggests that John did actually call people to πίστις.

¹⁸ A point made by Beavis, "Mark's Teaching on Faith," 140. See Mark 5:34; 10:52.

¹⁹ There are two further examples of this in 5:33–36. This connection between fear and faith is adapted by Luke in his appropriation of Mark (cf. 8:50) and in his own material in Acts (cf. 9:26).

²⁰ Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 356.

²¹ For more on Mark's faith-language, see Peter-Ben Smit, "Subversive Faith and Competition in Patronage: A Note on ΠΙΣΤΙΣ in Mark," *JTS* 71.2 (2020): 1–29; Christopher Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*, SNTSMS 64 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Thomas Söding, *Glaube bei Markus: Glaube an das Evangelium, Gebetsglaube und Wunderglaube im Kontext der markinischen Basileiatheologie und Christologie*, 2nd ed., SBB 12 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1987). For more on the post-resurrection accounts, see Woodington, *Dubious Disciples*, 22–59.

overcome this fear.²² Matthew builds on this in the development of his narrative, however, for while “disbelief equals fear in Mark,” in Matthew “disbelief is reinterpreted to imply little faith.”²³ That is, while in several occurrences Mark presents the disciples as faithless (as in 4:40 and 9:19), Matthew presents them as having an inadequate or insufficient faith, not exonerating them but perhaps lightening the language in view of his own narrative concerns.²⁴ As in Mark’s narrative, Matthew’s Gospel ends without a clear resolution of the problem of the disciples’ lack of faith, as even in the glorious, post-resurrection commission scene some disciples are doubting (28:17). Thus, we can conclude that both Mark and Matthew focus on a lack or insufficiency in the faith of the disciples (while nondisciples often have faith), with Matthew developing, describing, and expanding this in a slightly different way, fitting with his use of certain themes such as the nature of discipleship.²⁵

Even with the thorough and useful work done on faith-language in Matthew and Mark, there has yet to be much substantial work on how Luke uses it, and still less on how faith-language should be understood from a narrative-critical standpoint. That is, many interpreters have shown how to interpret the meaning of the words themselves, but fewer have focused on what is being said about faith in view of these meanings, and how this develops over the narrative. This lack of focus on narrative development, in my view, is the primary reason why Luke is so often subordinated to Mark and Matthew. As I will show, Luke does have something unique to say in his faith-language (both that which originates with L and that which is appropriated from Mark and Q).²⁶ While Luke does incorporate ideas of a lack of faith in the disciples from his sources, he expands and shapes it throughout his narrative. As the narrative progresses into Acts, Luke alone presents a solution to the disciples’ insufficient or absent faith. In what follows, I examine what Luke highlights in his use of πίστις, how such language changes in Acts, and reasons for the changes.

²² Andries van Aarde, “Little Faith: A Pragmatic-Linguistic Perspective on Matthew’s Portrayal of Jesus’ Disciples,” *IDS* 49.1 (2015): 1. For more on Matthew’s faith-language, see Matthias Konradt, “Die Rede vom Glauben in Heilungsgeschichten und die Messianität Jesu im Matthäusevangelium,” in Frey, Schliesser, and Ueberschaer, *Glaube*, 423–50.

²³ Van Aarde, “Little Faith,” 2.

²⁴ Matthew uses his “little faith” terminology for the disciples five times (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20). For more on Matthew doubt-language, see Woodington, *Dubious Disciples*, 60–97.

²⁵ Gupta, *Language of Faith*, 61. Gupta writes that for Matthew, “faith in Jesus ... was evident in wholehearted discipleship.”

²⁶ I reject the Farrer Hypothesis and assume that Luke used Mark and Q. Recently, there have been a few attempts to revive the view that Luke knew Matthew, including Thomas Mosbo, *Luke the Composer: Exploring the Evangelist’s Use of Matthew* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017); J. T. Nielsen and M. Müller, eds., *Luke’s Literary Creativity*, LNTS 550 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016); J. C. Poirier and J. Peterson, eds., *Marcan Priority without Q: Explorations in the Farrer Hypothesis*, LNTS 455 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015). However, the Two-Source Hypothesis has generally garnered greater support; cf. Craig Evans, “Two Source Hypothesis,” in *The Synoptic Problem: Four Views*, ed. S. Porter and B. Dyer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 27–45; John Kloppenborg, *Synoptic Problems: Collected Essays*, WUNT 329 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); Christopher Tuckett, *From the Sayings to the Gospels*, WUNT 328 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). If I am incorrect on this point and Luke did use Matthew, my argument is not significantly affected.

II. ΠΙΣΤΙΣ AND FAITH-LANGUAGE IN LUKE

In Luke's Gospel, displays of faith are commended seven times (1:45; 5:20; 7:9; 7:50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42), and none of the individuals commended is a disciple.²⁷ This can be compared to Mark's three times (2:5; 5:34; 10:52) and Matthew's four times (8:10; 9:22; 9:29; 15:28).²⁸ The Evangelist Luke (either by Jesus or through the narratorial voice) also critiques or notes a lack or absence of faith fourteen times (1:20; 8:12–13; 8:25; 9:41; 12:28; 12:46; 16:11–12; 17:5; 18:8; 22:32; 22:67; 24:11; 24:25; 24:36–49), and in every instance this refers to a fault that has been displayed or will be displayed in the future (if the saying is parabolic or eschatological, as in Luke 18:8b). This can be compared with Mark's two times (4:40; 9:19) and Matthew's seven times (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:17–20; 21:32; 23:23). Only two of the Lukan passages about a lack of faith do not refer to the faith of the disciples in some way, whether regarding a direct observation or a teaching directed toward them (1:20 of Zechariah, and 22:67 of the chief priests and scribes).²⁹

The fact that Luke notes both commendations of faith and critiques of its absence or insufficiency more than the other Evangelists serves to illustrate the importance of this theme to him.³⁰ It is not only that Luke uses the *πίστις* terminology more than the other Evangelists that matters to my point, but more his methodology and purpose in such use with respect to the disciples. This is especially important relative to the various responses to Jesus's words and actions, and what qualities characterize Jesus's disciples in a pre- and post-Pentecost narrative timeframe. I am not as concerned with the passages that speak of the faith of non-disciples (whose faith he generally presents positively) but rather how faith-language regarding Jesus's followers changes throughout the narrative unfolding of Luke-Acts, as well as how commendations of the faith of nondisciples serve to

²⁷ In 1:45, Luke notes Mary's faith, but since Mary is not included among the disciples, this is irrelevant. The others whose faith Jesus commends are the lowered paralytic and his friends, the centurion who approaches him, the "sinful" woman, the hemorrhaging woman, the Samaritan leper, and the blind beggar. Uniquely Lukan faith sayings are found in 1:45, 7:9, and 17:19, further suggesting that Luke is not simply following Mark and Q in his usage.

²⁸ It should be noted that Matthew's Jesus commends the "servant" for being "faithful" in 24:45 and 25:21–23, but this is in the context of a parable and refers to a nonactual display of faith that he is illustrating as an example. Although the "faithful" quality of those who do rightly is noted, those who do the opposite are not called faithless or unbelieving (as in Luke 12:46). Thus, the intentional Matthean use of *πίστις* is not as clear.

²⁹ Every Markan passage about a lack or absence of faith refers to the disciples, as does every Matthean passage save two (21:32 of chief priests and elders, and 23:23 of scribes and Pharisees). In the Matthean exceptions, the unbelief is related to John in 21:32 and to God in 23:23, while in Luke 22:67 the unbelief is related to Jesus's identity. Luke's mention of the authorities' disbelief in the message of John the Baptist does not have Jesus explicitly using *πίστις*, but it is only part of the hypothetical portion of their dialogue (Luke 20:5). Uniquely Lukan passages related to the lack or absence of faith are found at 1:20, 16:11–12, 17:5, 18:8, 22:32, 24:25, and 24:36–49, with the others either directly paralleled in Mark or Q, or else indirectly paralleled with Lukan emendations.

³⁰ Böttrich helpfully distinguishes Lukan faith-language from that of Mark and Matthew by highlighting five nuances that develop through the narrative: "1. Glaube wird herausgefordert, 2. Glaube setzt in Beziehung, 3. Glaube bewirkt Rettung, 4. Glaube ist gefährdet, 5. Glaube motiviert zum Handeln." Böttrich, "Glaube im lukanischen Doppelwerk," 402–3.

contrast with the disciples' lack or absence of faith. As we proceed, we will examine three subcategories of Lukan faith-language relative to the disciples, beginning with language appropriated from Mark, followed by material Luke takes from Q, and lastly, the L material (material unique to Luke's Gospel).

1. *Faith-language in material appropriated from Mark* (8:12–13, 25; 9:41). That Luke used Mark as a source is not frequently disputed. Generally, the Evangelist tends to formalize Mark's Greek and shorten pericopes where he can, seen most clearly from his shorter versions of the episode with the seizing boy (9:37–43; cf. Mark 9:14–29) and his shorter version of the miraculous feeding (9:10–17; cf. Mark 6:30–44). As it relates to our topic, in Luke's version of the parable of the sower (8:1–15; cf. Mark 4:1–20), the Evangelist adopts the same framework as Mark in Jesus's delivery of the parable, his call for understanding and Isaianic citation, and the explanation to the disciples. However, Luke alone departs from Mark by adding the details about believing in his explanation of the seed on the path (8:12) and on the rocky ground (8:13).³¹ Luke specifically qualifies the statement about the devil's theft of the word by stating that its result is *ἵνα μὴ πιστεύσαντες σωθῶσιν*. I would suggest that this addition was intentional, in line with Luke's emphasis both on the significance of Satan's role to affect human beings and on the problem of the lack or absence of faith in those who hear the words of Jesus.³² This is the only instance in Luke's adaptations where he appears to increase the emphasis on faith in a way unoriginal to the source. While Jesus spoke this parable to the crowds and not only the disciples, his use of faith-language in 8:12–13 is relevant for our purposes, since Luke specifies that the explanation was only for the inner circle (8:9).

In Luke's version of the stilling of the storm (8:22–25; cf. Mark 4:36–41), the Evangelist shapes the material to focus more on the absence of faith than on the presence of fear, which is a more Markan element. Since Matthew also includes the Markan question about fear (cf. Matt 8:26), while Luke removes this from the lips of Jesus and simply narrates it himself, Luke uniquely amends Jesus's specific words to focus only on the absence of faith (8:25). Interestingly, in Luke's relocation of the disciples' fear to the narratorial voice, he further highlights the aspect of faith, since in Mark and Matthew the question of the disciples' fear precedes the problem of their absent faith and is more directly related to it (as if to say that no faith can be present if such fear is present). Luke, however, subordinates the disciples' fear to the issue of their lack of faith, making their fear sequentially (and chronologically) secondary to their lack of faith.

Luke likewise retains the element of harshness in Jesus's language to the disciples with the implication that their faith is entirely absent, whereas the characteristically Matthean comment focuses not on absence but minuteness or insufficiency.³³ This aligns with his narrative intent, namely, to highlight the disciples' absence

³¹ Matthew follows Mark closely, not specifically mentioning *πίστις* (cf. Matt 13:19–21).

³² Many commentators suggest that Luke's alterations are due to underlying theological and narrative interests. See, e.g., Darrell Bock, *Luke*, 2 vols., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 1:718–20.

³³ Some suggest that the formulation of Jesus's statement in Luke 8:25 is not indicative of an absence of faith (as in Mark) but that the disciples have an insufficient amount of faith, or faith that is

of faith as a recurring problem to be solved. While Luke clearly abbreviates Markan episodes, it is incorrect to suggest, as some interpreters do, that in his appropriation Luke lessens the criticism of the disciples, painting them in a more positive light.³⁴ Quantitatively speaking, Luke records more failure from the disciples than is recorded by Mark or Matthew.

The idea in 8:22–25 is that the disciples should have been able to trust God’s care and Jesus’s ability, as the implication appears to be that πίστις is required to overcome trials. As Bock notes, “the faith in view here is not initial faith, but an applied faith that functions amid pressure. It is a faith that has depth of understanding and can be drawn upon in tough times.”³⁵ The disciples’ inadequate response in this case serves as a point of comparison between the disciples and other characters in Luke’s narrative, since while the behaviors of such characters as the Capernaum centurion and the “sinner” woman of Nain dramatize what Jesus identifies as πίστις, the disciples’ behaviors consistently do not.³⁶ In this case, as Nolland puts it, “It is faith in God which they had failed to exercise.... It is the concrete form of Jesus’ act that should give them confidence for the future.”³⁷

In Luke’s version of the exorcism of the seizing boy (9:41; cf. Mark 9:19), much like Matthew, Luke retains the strong language against the disciples for being “faithless” in their failure to expel the spirit. At this point in both Mark and Luke, the disciples had been given authority to heal infirmities and expel spirits (Luke 9:1), and so their failure here is exceptional. While Luke has the most abbreviated version of this episode, Jesus’s exasperated response in 9:41 implies that the faith of the disciples was the issue here, and so in his redaction Luke may have seen no need to further explain the cause of the failure (as Matt 17:20 does). While Jesus calls the “generation” faithless, the issue is with the disciples’ failure; it would be incorrect to associate this description with the crowd or all of Jesus’s contemporaries (as some interpreters have).³⁸ It is clear that what precedes Jesus’s exasperation

present but simply not showing itself in this circumstance. For examples of this view, see John Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 191; Joel Green, *Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 333; David Garland, *Luke*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 356. Although Matthew does appear to do this, I am not convinced that Luke is doing this here, but rather that he is following Mark in implying that the disciples are faithless. For a similar position, see John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, WBC 35A (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 400.

³⁴ For examples of this argument, see Garland, who argues that Luke has a “tendency toward a more positive portrayal of the disciples.” Garland, *Luke*, 68; similarly, Bock, *Luke*, 1:763; Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 400. For more on the various portrayals of the disciples by Mark and Matthew, see Sug-Ho Lee and Jan G. van der Watt, “The Portrayal of the Hardening of the Disciples’ Hearts in Mark 8.14–21,” *HTS Theological Studies* 65.1 (2009): 145–49; Robert Tannehill, “The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role,” *JR* 57.4 (1977): 386–405; Jeannine Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples*, AcBib 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

³⁵ Bock, *Luke*, 1:763.

³⁶ This point is made by Robert Brawley, *Luke: A Social Identity Commentary*, T&T Clark Social Identity Commentaries on the NT (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2020), 100.

³⁷ Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 400.

³⁸ Among those who make this characterization broad are I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 1978), 391; Frederick Danker, *Jesus and the New Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 203; and more recently, Bock, *Luke*, 1:883.

was the disciples' failure to trust in and depend upon God in dealing with this case (even though they had been granted the ability and authority by Jesus), hence the ἄπιστος designation.

2. *Faith-language in material appropriated from Q (12:28, 46)*. In Luke's version of Jesus's teaching about anxiety, his "little faith" passage (12:28) corresponds almost exactly to Matthew's version. What is interesting about this passage is that it is the only time Luke employs the word ὀλιγόπιστοι, and one of the few times that he has a passage suggesting a quantitatively minimal faith, rather than simply an absent faith. In a teaching that Luke specifies was only "to the disciples" (12:22), the idea is that Jesus is "combating a lack of faith that manifests itself in anxiety."³⁹ For the disciples not to worry is to display the truest form of πίστις, in that Jesus advocates complete trust and dependence upon God as provider, knowing that God is aware of their needs. This teaching and the "little faith" appellation would not have been necessary if the disciples had not been displaying such lack of trust (as do πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τοῦ κόσμου, 12:30), necessitating its highlighting here.

In Luke 12:46, Morgan is right to observe common eschatological elements, noting that "Luke shares Q's and Matthew's interest in the ongoing faithfulness which community members must practice till the coming of the Son of Man."⁴⁰ This certainly comes to the fore regarding the eschatological readiness of the "managers," with most of the text finding its parallel in Matthew 24. For our purposes, the difference of a single word in Luke's version is relevant, as Luke 12:46 has the Son of Man casting the disobedient manager with τῶν ἀπίστων, whereas Matthew 24:51 has the more Matthean designation τῶν ὑποκριτῶν instead. It seems most likely that the "unfaithful" or "unbelieving" here was original, and that Matthew altered the wording.⁴¹ This is relevant to the way that faith is spoken of in Luke, in that the group that is judged are those who are without πίστις. This corresponds with an overarching idea in Luke about the importance of πίστις and the problem of its absence, and here we have an example of one called "faithful" (12:42) as commended by Jesus, this one being a person who behaves in a manner that suggests readiness for the parousia. The fact that Matthew 24:45 retains the introductory remark about the one who is πίστις, but omits the association of an absence of πίστις with the one who is judged, reflects a tendency in Luke to emphasize a lack or absence of faith(fulness).⁴²

Luke's focus on πίστις here in 12:46 and in 18:8 highlights more eschatological and spiritual nuances of the term. That is, πίστις is associated not with worldly things but with the human relation to God and with admission to God's kingdom. Luke 12:46 represents an especially severe condemnation of the ἄπιστοι, with the

³⁹ Amy-Jill Levine and Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 349.

⁴⁰ Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 375.

⁴¹ A view held by Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 704. Matthew has Jesus refer to others as "hypocrites" fourteen times in comparison with one use in Mark and three in Luke.

⁴² Morgan notes that while both Luke and Matthew "clearly indicate that the unfaithful servant will be excluded from the Kingdom.... Luke's phrasing links entry to the Kingdom explicitly to πίστις." Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 375.

judgment/curse epithet “cut in two.”⁴³ This picture of rejection points to the servant/manager’s ultimate flaw (in Jesus’s sight) as his absence or lack of πίστις, whereas the one commended possesses it. This portrayal follows the rest of Luke’s Gospel in its references and critiques of those who do not possess πίστις. In the eschatological context of the parable, the commended one is a good steward and responds with faithfulness in his pre-parousia actions, while “the wicked one despises God’s kindness and grace.”⁴⁴ Thus Wolter refers to πίστις here as “the central Christian identity marker.”⁴⁵ Green notes that the underlying idea of this parable is discernible later in the narrative of Acts, as in the issue of the ἄπιστοι in Acts “who reject God’s salvation and turn aside from their heritage and divine charge as God’s people.”⁴⁶

3. *Faith-language in L material (16:10–12; 17:5–6; 18:8; 22:32; 24:11, 25, 36–49).* In Luke 16:1–13, the disciples are presented with the parable of the dishonest manager, a rather perplexing teaching somewhat similar to the aforementioned parable. For our purposes, what is important is Jesus’s explanation of the parable in 16:10–13, where the disciples are exhorted to faithfulness in their service to God and stewardship of possessions. The fact that faithfulness “in very little” is mentioned is in order to draw attention to Jesus’s call to be πιστός in every area of life, since the idea is that one’s true nature is revealed in one’s stewardship. I suggest that the presence of two negative questions related to a lack of πίστις (16:11–12) corresponds to a characteristically Lukan concern with this problem, particularly in a future-oriented, eschatological sense (as can be discerned from 18:8, discussed below).

In Luke 17:5,⁴⁷ the apostles approach Jesus after his teaching on forgiveness to implore him: “Increase our faith!” It is important to note that the request is for an addition of πίστις, not necessarily to simply give πίστις, as though the disciples feel that they have none. I agree with Darrell Bock who suggests that, based on Jesus’s response, the issue here is more about presence than quality of faith.⁴⁸ That is, since genuine faith as a mustard seed is all that is necessary, Jesus’s answer would suggest that the disciples lack even that.⁴⁹ This absence can be seen in the fact that

⁴³ For more on the language of judgment and cursing, see Bock, *Luke*, 2:1182.

⁴⁴ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Nottingham: Apollos, 2020), 382.

⁴⁵ Michael Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke, Volume 2 (Luke 9:21–24)*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig, Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity 5 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 165.

⁴⁶ Green, *Luke*, 505–6.

⁴⁷ The distinctively Lukan vocabulary (ἀπόστολοι for the disciples, κύριος for Jesus) indicates that this is more probably from L than a Lukan adaptation of a Q text.

⁴⁸ Bock, *Luke*, 2:1390. Cf. Brawley, *Luke*, 158; Green, *Luke*, 613; Michael Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke, Volume 1 (Luke 1–9:50)*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig, Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity 4 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 291; Mikeal Parsons, *Luke*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 253.

⁴⁹ Among those who take a contrary perspective is Edwards, who argues that Jesus is saying that the apostles have faith but do not act on it appropriately and need Jesus to be present in the smallness of the faith that they possess. Edwards, *Luke*, 479. F. Scott Spencer agrees, arguing that this is not a contrary-

Jesus's response says nothing about the little faith that they presume to have, but rather reflects on the nature of true faith itself. This answer, therefore, is a conditional phrase that effectively argues, "If you had x, you would do y." What Jesus is saying is that the apostles' assumption that they have a little faith is indeed an illusion and that they do not even have as much as a mustard seed of what they will need to have. As Brawley puts it, the Lukan Jesus is here "reducing the faith that they presume to have to less than a mustard seed entity.... The absurd hyperbole (of the uprooting of the tree) implies the deficiency of the apostles' faith."⁵⁰ I contend that this request and the implications of Jesus's response fit with the characteristically Lukan tendency to emphasize a lack of faith in the disciples, a tendency that flows throughout the Gospel, only finding its solution in Acts.

The implication in Jesus's response in 17:6 is that πίστις is what allows impossible realities to be made manifest or works of power to happen that evidence God's presence.⁵¹ The obvious exaggeration in the idea of supplanting the mulberry tree (with its deep roots) emphasizes the extraordinary nature of what the person with faith can accomplish. It may also have import for the community reading Luke's Gospel, in that Luke may be portraying faith as a "resource for guarding against scandalizing another, for repenting, and for forgiving."⁵² It is also necessary to note the relative infrequency of the noun form of πίστις, which appears here. Green argues that πίστις here should be understood as a "disposition" more than a "possession," in that faith leads to faithful behavior, whereas lack of faith leads to anxiety and fear.⁵³ Thus, he argues that the Lukan idea of faith manifests itself in faithfulness, so much so that the passage can be rendered as equivalent to "make us faithful," with Jesus casting doubt on whether his apostles yet even have sufficient πίστις to be faithful in the way his prior parables have commended.⁵⁴ This is a problem that, in the era of Acts, the disciples will need the Holy Spirit in order to remedy.⁵⁵

In Luke 18:1–8, the final verse brings Jesus's parable on prayer and persistence in line with Luke's broader eschatological focus and with his emphasis on the

to-fact clause but an example of Jesus redefining how faith is used, not whether it is present. F. Scott Spencer, *Luke*, THNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 419. My perspective is cogently supposed by Wolter, who suggests that "the πίστις is not an accompanying circumstance but the presupposition of the λέγειν. In this way Luke establishes an antithetical opposition between the two imperatives in v. 5b and 6d.... If the apostles had faith at all, then they would not petition Jesus for its increase." Wolter, *Luke*, 1:291.

⁵⁰ Brawley, *Luke*, 158.

⁵¹ Bock, *Luke*, 2:1390.

⁵² Brawley, *Luke*, 158.

⁵³ Green, *Luke*, 613.

⁵⁴ Green, *Luke*, 613.

⁵⁵ One might argue that texts like 17:11–19 show that it is not only his disciples who lack faith but other Jewish characters as well. For example, in the account of the ten lepers, although a lack of πίστις is not mentioned, the one Samaritan leper is commended for his πίστις for returning to give thanks, while the rest of the lepers do not return and are thus not commended. This fits with the overall Lukan tendency to emphasize the absence of πίστις.

need to remedy a lack or absence of faith.⁵⁶ That the answer falls in line with this idea is not in doubt, since the particle ἄρα in v. 8 (rare in the Gospels) is “used to introduce a question to which a doubtful or negative answer is expected.”⁵⁷ Luke portrays Jesus, then, as doubtful anyone will possess πίστις at the parousia, given their present behavior, informing the need for the parable about persistent, persevering faith(fulness), the sort that characterizes those whom Jesus elsewhere commends.

While we have established that Luke follows Mark and Q in associating faith with miraculous events, Luke in both 18:8 and 22:32 associates πίστις with prayer, namely the sort of prayer that trusts God with unfailing allegiance in the face of overwhelming circumstances.⁵⁸ Freed argues that when the Gospel was written, this sort of faith was in question in the Evangelist’s community awaiting the parousia, and this question would be answered “not in the Gospel, but in Acts, where the apostles are presented as men constant in prayer and strong in faith.”⁵⁹ Indeed, to persevere in faith would have been a real concern to the community of Jesus-followers in the era prior to a return that they expected imminently. In Luke, Jesus calls his followers to a faith that trusts in the future vindication, even when hopes are delayed and suffering seems unrelenting.

Luke 22:32 follows similarly to 18:8, with Jesus praying for Peter’s failing faith to endure the attacks of Satan. The language in this passage suggests that Peter’s lapse was not one of failing to believe but of betrayal of loyalty to Jesus that is suggested by a rendering of “faithfulness” for πίστις.⁶⁰ The address to Peter with a plural pronoun indicates that Jesus sees Peter as representative of all the disciples, and thus this Satanic “sifting” is motivated from a desire to “destroy the faith of the apostles.”⁶¹ The language implies that Satan indeed does cause the faith of the disciples to fail, and that their faith will need restoration, in line with the emphasis to which I have pointed.⁶² That Luke sees Satan as having power to topple one’s faith is clear from the way that Judas’s betrayal is portrayed, with Satan “entering” into him (22:3). This aligns with Luke’s tendency to highlight Satan’s authority,

⁵⁶ This parable has been the subject of much scholarly discussion. For a good overview of the issues inherent in the text and various critical views, see Stephen Curkpatrick, “Dissonance in Luke 18:1–8,” *JBL* 121.1 (2002): 107–21.

⁵⁷ Edwin Freed, “The Parable of the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1–8),” *NTS* 33.1 (1987): 55.

⁵⁸ For more on precisely what πίστις means here compared with other occurrences, see David Catchpole, “The Son of Man’s Search for Faith (Luke 18:8b),” *NovT* 19.2 (1977): 81–104. Catchpole sees a broad spectrum of possible renderings, such as “the maintenance of a faithful confession of the Son of Man in a setting of persecution,” or the belief that “God will ultimately be true to his word and will intervene eschatologically” (86).

⁵⁹ Freed, “Parable,” 56. Carroll also points out that this idea of faith would have been understood by Luke’s community in light of awaiting a return of Jesus that seemed delayed. Carroll, *Luke*, 354.

⁶⁰ Gupta, *Language of Faith*, 73.

⁶¹ Edwards, *Luke*, 637.

⁶² Carroll, *Luke*, 441. See also Böttrich, “Glaube im lukanischen Doppelwerk,” 415–18.

ability, and power to attack and influence people.⁶³ If even Peter was imperiled in this way, Luke's readers would have understood the risks to their own faith.

The final passages in Luke 24 that relate to faith-language all follow a similar pattern of the disciples collectively failing to exercise *πίστις*, either in sufficient manner or entirely. In Luke 24:11, the Evangelist has a group of women inform the apostles of the resurrection, and despite the many statements Jesus makes about this event, the apostles do not simply fail to understand but disbelieve and dismiss the women's testimony. Peter tries later to investigate, but little comes of this until Jesus's subsequent physical appearances. The first appearance has Jesus speaking with and then confronting the two disciples on the Emmaus road, criticizing them for being "slow of heart to believe," since their response showed a lack of understanding of "the Scriptures" (24:25). What is especially interesting is that they "are not criticized for failing to recognize Jesus, but for not trusting or believing in the prophets."⁶⁴

The obtuseness displayed here is a failure of the disciples to orient themselves around Jesus's teaching and person, and this lack of insight is really a lack of *πίστις*. This failure follows a Lukan pattern throughout this chapter, where *πίστις* is associated more with the word that one hears and trusts than with the way things appear to be by sight. This pattern is demonstrated in that even when Jesus appears physically a second time, now in the midst of the disciples (24:36–49), doubts arise in them (24:38) and some disbelieve (24:41), despite seeing him. Repeating a message similar to the one he gave to the two on the road, Jesus directs their attention to the need to trust in the words that he had spoken to them before (24:44). This doubt and disbelief, as Brawley puts it, "arise from deficiencies in their construal of reality," which is one that has failed to understand Jesus's words about how his life, suffering, death, and resurrection are the end to which the Scriptures point.⁶⁵ To Luke, the disciples' perceptions must be reshaped first in light of Jesus's resurrection, and in order to understand the place of this event relative to the Scriptures, Jesus must supernaturally open their minds (24:45). Without this secondary illumination, even incontrovertible physical evidence is not enough to produce *πίστις*.⁶⁶ Second, the disciples' perceptions must be reshaped by the power of Spirit, which will not come upon them at this point in the narrative, but only in Acts.

In short, Luke uses faith-language in both his appropriated and his unique materials in such a way as to emphasize a lack or absence of faith in the disciples throughout the narrative, even after the resurrection.⁶⁷ This emphasis is not only

⁶³ Matthew largely follows Mark in his references to Satan. Luke has several L texts referencing Satan (10:18; 13:16; 22:31) and adds details about Satan to his appropriated material (as when Satan enters Judas in 22:3 and when Luke attributes authority over all kingdoms to Satan in 4:6).

⁶⁴ Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 381. See also Edwards, *Luke*, 721.

⁶⁵ Brawley, *Luke*, 207.

⁶⁶ A point made by Green, *Luke*, 855.

⁶⁷ For more detail on the Lukan tendency to focus on the disciples' lack of faith in the post-resurrection appearances, see Woodington, *Dubious Disciples*, 98–136; and J. D. Atkins, *The Doubt of the Apostles and the Resurrection Faith of the Early Church: The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospels in Ancient Reception and Modern Debate*, WUNT 2/495 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019): 409–23.

inherited from Mark and Q, but is heightened by the Evangelist to illustrate that it is only in the post-Pentecost era that this issue will be remedied. Just as Luke's employment of faith-language is distinct in his Gospel, in what follows, relevant texts in Acts further show that Lukan faith-language must be viewed from the perspective of the broader narrative of both books in order to be rightly interpreted.

III. ΠΙΣΤΙΣ AND FAITH-LANGUAGE IN ACTS

While scholars debate the identity of the author, most do not dispute that the same author wrote both the Gospel and Acts and intended for both to be read together.⁶⁸ Given the shared authorship and literary continuity, we may assume that there is indeed a "fundamental narrative unity" to these books.⁶⁹ In assuming as much, we can also assume that the language and theology of both documents are intentionally interrelated and should therefore be analyzed together, with Acts as a literary continuation of Luke's Gospel, and the faith-language of Acts as integrally connected to the faith-language of its precursor. The decisive narrative event in Acts is Pentecost, in that it serves to inaugurate a new era of history and of the unfolding fulfillment of earlier hopes and promises regarding the expansion of God's kingdom and the gospel message throughout the world.⁷⁰ Just as Jesus's baptism is the key event inaugurating his ministry in the Synoptics, Pentecost is the key event in Acts, informing the fearlessness and faithfulness of the apostles in the earliest epoch of the nascent church.⁷¹

In Acts, *πίστις* and its derivatives occur more than fifty times. Among all of these uses, only once (9:26) are the disciples said not to believe, and this is not with respect to God but with respect to Saul and the fear and questioning of the disciples about his legitimacy. The vast majority of faith-language is used positively, and when speaking either of the disciples or those who believe through their word, Acts often refers to faith as something a person possesses, as something one is "full" of, as the response to the message of Jesus, or as the primary identifying characteristic

⁶⁸ For a further discussion of this point and a review of the arguments pertaining to this conclusion, see John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, SNTSMS 76 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Darrell Bock, "Scripture and the Realization of God's Promises," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. H. Marshall and D. Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 41–62. For an example of those who dispute this view, see Mikeal Parsons and Richard Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

⁶⁹ For more on this fundamental unity, see Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 2 vols., Foundations and Facets (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Paul Borgman, *The Way according to Luke: Hearing the Whole Story of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); and Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 1: *Introduction and 1:1–2:47* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 550–73.

⁷⁰ As Bock puts it, "the Spirit's presence at Pentecost was a visible indication that the new era of the Messiah had arrived." Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 36; cf. Carl R. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016), 89.

⁷¹ Morgan notes that for the church in Acts, faith is understood in light of "God's kingdom as having already, in some sense, broken into the world and as marking it ahead of the eschaton." Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 390.

of the one being referenced.⁷² This shift in the tone and usage of faith-language reflects my primary contention, namely that the language of Luke's Gospel emphasizes an absence or insufficiency in the faith of Jesus's disciples, while the language of Acts presents the disciples as full of faith, exhibiting faithfulness, and proclaiming the message of Jesus in a way that results in faith among their hearers. Thus, in the analysis that follows, I contend that the Pentecost experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit has provided for Jesus's followers the solution to the problem of the lack or absence of faith exhibited earlier in the Gospel narrative.

1. *Jesus's followers identified as "believers" or "those who believe(d)"* (Acts 4:32; 5:14; 10:45; 15:5; 16:1; 18:27; 19:18; 21:20, 25; 22:19). In Acts, we find that the disciples are most commonly identified by their faith, not their lack of it. The designation "those who believe(d)" for disciples is essentially absent from the Synoptics and similar distinctions are limited outside of some early Pauline letters.⁷³ In Acts, however, it is a common way of referring to those who join the community of Jesus-followers and appears equivalent to "disciple" or "brother."⁷⁴ As Bock points out, this designation is descriptive of being part of a "new messianic community," called thus "because of their response of faith."⁷⁵ The post-Pentecost disciples are those who are defined by their right response of πίστις, rather than their doubt, incomprehension, and inability. Keener likewise notes the intentional parallel to the Gospel on the part of the narrator, noting that "the convert's repentance reflects the same character demanded of the repentant in the Gospel; they are truly *those who believed*."⁷⁶ This character, which in the first part of the narrative had been demanded of the original insiders but clearest only in outsiders, is in this second part of the narrative the primary characteristic of the insiders. This, in the broader narrative scheme of Acts, is possible by the Spirit.

In designating the Jesus-community as "believers," Luke was not without precedent in LXX or apocryphal texts.⁷⁷ However, I suggest that this designation intentionally creates a contrast that draws attention to development of Luke's characterization of the disciples. Additionally, as Paul Trebilco suggests, one facet of Luke's believer designations is their use "when emphasizing that Christians are united, or to underline the universality of Christian faith, using πᾶς in each case."⁷⁸ This new designation is possible because of Pentecost, where the Spirit is "the definitive identity marker" for "a new social group composed of Spirit-filled mem-

⁷² For the various ways in which πίστις is understood and employed in Acts from a linguistic-semantic perspective, see Shuji Ota, "Pistis in Acts as Background of Paul's Faith Terminology," *Hitoisubashi Journal of Arts and Sciences* 56.1 (2015): 1–12.

⁷³ In the Synoptics, one possible occurrence is Mark 9:42/Matthew 18:6. While this is not entirely the same distinction, otherwise it is found only in John 7:39 and 20:39, as well as Titus 3:8. The designation "believers" does not occur in the Gospels, appearing first in Acts. For Pauline believer designations, see 1 Corinthians 14:22 and 1 Thessalonians 1:7.

⁷⁴ An example of demonstrated equivalency in terms is found in Acts 18:27.

⁷⁵ Bock, *Acts*, 152.

⁷⁶ Craig Keener, *Acts*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 174, italics original.

⁷⁷ For example, see LXX Isa 28:16 and 1 En 108:18.

⁷⁸ Paul Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 104.

bers.”⁷⁹ The faith that now defines the community is that which they must “remain” (11:23) in and “continue” (14:22) in, as they were called to do in the Gospel, but the outpouring of the Spirit now empowers them to persevere.

2. *Belief as the common and immediate response to the apostles’ word* (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 8:12–13; 9:42; 11:21; 13:12, 48; 14:1; 16:34; 17:12, 34; 18:8). In Acts, πίστις is now the most common response to the message, which it generally was not in the Gospel. In this second work, Luke focuses on those who are believing the apostles’ word, whereas in the first work, there is an apparent, stubborn refrain of the apostles failing to exercise πίστις in response to Jesus’s word. Trebilco observes that the significance that Luke’s Gospel places on faith (and its absence) in the sayings of Jesus “anticipates its significance for salvation in Acts,” where readers see possession of πίστις as characteristic of those added to the number of the community of the saved.⁸⁰ Not only does the response to the apostles’ word show the difference in the portrayals across the narrative, but in Acts the apostles are also able to heal others as Jesus was, and this by faith in Jesus’s name (cf. 3:16; 14:9). And while in the Gospel there is often Satanic resistance to the message of Jesus and the disciples which proves significant, in Acts such resistance is consistently overcome, and this overcoming can result in πίστις. For example, Acts 13:7–12 describes Elymas (associated with Satan in 13:10) opposing Barnabas and Paul in order to turn the proconsul “away from the faith,” but Paul spiritually incapacitates him, resulting in the proconsul coming to faith.

Faith continues to have a participatory aspect in these instances, in that those who respond with πίστις are identified and associated with trust in God and Christ and identified with the community. This response is specifically and consistently associated with a response to the proclaimed word.⁸¹ The language of Acts shows not only a consistent response of faith but an immediate one (as in 2:41) with daily increase (as in 16:5). This response stands in contrast to the dullness of the disciples in the Gospel, who are “slow of heart to believe” (24:25). The power of the apostles’ word in Acts is related to their enablement by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, much as the Synoptics related the power of Jesus’s word to his baptism and filling with the Holy Spirit. It is the presence of the Spirit that legitimates the word, making such a response of πίστις possible.

3. *The apostles as “full” of faith* (6:5; 11:24). Although the explicit language of the apostles as “full” of faith occurs only twice (of Stephen and of Barnabas), each instance is telling, and especially significant for understanding the relationship of the narrative of Acts with that of the Gospel. While in the Gospel the disciples are frequently described as possessing insufficient faith or as without faith (or “empty”

⁷⁹ Aaron Kuecker, *The Spirit and the ‘Other’: Social Identity, Ethnicity, and Intergroup Reconciliation in Luke-Acts*, LNTS 444 (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 125.

⁸⁰ Trebilco, *Self-Designations*, 107–8. Trebilco argues that Luke’s addition of a statement about belief in his adaptation of the Parable of the Sower is an example of such anticipation, in that Jesus there describes those who do not respond in faith to the word, while in Acts, such responses of faith to the word are frequent.

⁸¹ As Böttrich puts it, this means for Luke that “Glaube ist Teil einer Beziehung, die von Gottes Wort her begründet wird.” Böttrich, “Glaube im lukanischen Doppelwerk,” 406.

of faith), here in Acts early leaders are filled. Just as they are “filled,” the Holy Spirit “fills” from the time of Pentecost in accordance with Joel’s prophecy, the proclamation of John the Baptist early in Luke’s Gospel, and the promise of Jesus to the pre-Pentecost disciples.

I suggest that this language of being “full” of faith is intentionally in contrast with the description of the disciples in the Gospel, showing that in the era of the Spirit, the insufficiency of πίστις exhibited earlier is no longer the typical response.⁸² This points to the important role of the Spirit in determining how πίστις is used and understood differently at this point in the narrative, particularly inasmuch as the Spirit serves as enablement to exercise πίστις and to testify to Jesus. So suggests Bock, who affirms that this language shows “that the Spirit is the driving power behind the early church’s effectiveness. Jesus gives the Spirit not only to show that the promise is being fulfilled, but also to equip the church to perform its mission.”⁸³ The fact that each instance has a mention of the Holy Spirit as well as faith that fills them is a further indication by Luke that it is only in the post-Pentecost era, where the Holy Spirit was available in a way not possible for the pre-Pentecost disciples, that this fullness of faith is possible.⁸⁴ Earlier in the narrative of Luke’s Gospel, it is Jesus who is filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1) and demonstrates unflinching faith (fulness), and the disciples partake in the related abilities and benefits only secondarily and by Jesus’s delegation. However, in Acts, the Spirit is poured out according to Jesus’s promise and this enables leaders like Stephen and Barnabas to be “full” of faith in a way that they were not before. Therefore, as Sean Adams suggests, Luke “creates a model in his first work and then has his disciples follow it in the second.... He shapes his depictions of the disciples to conform to his model of Jesus as established in the Gospel.”⁸⁵

IV. CONCLUSION: FROM IN ABSENTIA TO IN PROPRIA PERSONA?

If πίστις is “a divine initiative to which human beings are invited to respond and which enables the power of God to work through them in the world,”⁸⁶ then Luke’s Gospel has the disciples failing to respond rightly or adequately.⁸⁷ As I have

⁸² Tannehill notes that the problem of the disciples’ insufficient or absent πίστις “will be overcome ... through the risen Messiah’s revelation and gift of the Spirit.” Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 1:254. Böttrich also briefly hints at this narrative development, affirming that this fullness of faith is possible only through the Spirit and thus only in view of Pentecost. Böttrich, “Glaube im lukanischen Doppelwerk,” 419.

⁸³ Darrell Bock, *A Theology of Luke-Acts: God’s Promised Program, Realized for All Nations*, Biblical Theology of the NT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 145.

⁸⁴ Luke 6:5 has Stephen as πλήρη πίστεως καὶ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, and 11:24 has Barnabas as πλήρης Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ πίστεως.

⁸⁵ Sean Adams, “The Characterization of Disciples in Acts: Genre, Method, and Quality,” in *Characters and Characterization in Luke-Acts*, ed. Frank Dicken and Julia Snyder, LNTS 548 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 167.

⁸⁶ Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 363.

⁸⁷ For more on the role of the Holy Spirit in the unfolding fulfillment of God’s plan throughout the narrative, see Bock, *A Theology of Luke-Acts*, 143–54, and John Squires, “The Plan of God,” in Marshall and Peterson, *Witness to the Gospel*, 17–40.

argued here, Luke intentionally develops this idea of fulfillment throughout the narrative of Luke-Acts as a way of providing a solution to the disciples' failure of faith. In the Gospel, we see the disciples consistently confronted by Jesus for their demonstration of a lack of *πίστις*, while in Acts the post-Pentecost followers of Jesus are fundamentally identified by *πίστις*, full of *πίστις*, and preach and teach with power that results in a response of *πίστις* from their hearers. Far from simply following after the faith-language of Mark and Q, I conclude that Luke adopts, adapts, and transforms it, and adds his own material in order to uniquely emphasize the idea of fulfillment in the Luke-Acts narrative, illustrating a continuum of absence to presence relative to the disciples' faith.