

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Methodology

If one chooses to teach and preach Luke's stories uncritically, they continue to reinforce patriarchal role divisions. On the other hand, if one engages in the difficult task of reinterpreting the text from a feminist perspective, reading against Luke's intent, then the stories can be recontextualized to proclaim a message of good news for women and men called equally to share in the same discipleship and mission of Jesus.

—BARBARA E. REID. *CHOOSING THE BETTER PART? WOMEN IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE*, 205.

THE AUTHOR OF THE quote above is not alone in her negative evaluation and consequent rejection of the Lukan narrative and Luke's views of women. She is representative of several, mainly feminist, interpreters who consider that Luke's objective was to suppress the roles of women in the early church. Consequently, he portrays them as passive and silent disciples who do not enjoy equal participation with men in the mission of Jesus.

This book proposes a counter-case. It is our contention that Luke has a remarkably positive and rich view of women who are believers in the God of Israel and Jesus as Lord. We arrive at this contention by utilizing a narrative, and narrative-theological approach, the justification for which will

be further explained after the literature review. This review clearly demonstrates the polarized nature of scholarship on Luke's theology of women. Our work provides a narrative-sensitive way through the impasse.

Literature Review

Works on literature, narrative, characterization, and narrational theology abound. General material in these areas include those by Robert Alter,¹ Mark Allan Powell,² Shimon Bar-Efrat,³ and more specialized pieces on OT⁴ and NT books⁵ (particularly Mark's Gospel).⁶ Specialized contributions on Luke and Luke-Acts include those by Sánchez Navarro,⁷ Manuel Benítez,⁸ Étienne Mbilizi,⁹ Daniel Gerber,¹⁰ Jens Börstinghaus,¹¹ Willard Swartley,¹²

1. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*; Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature*.
2. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*
3. Bar-Efrat, *Das Zweite Buch Samuel*; Bar-Efrat and Klein, *Das erste Buch Samuel*; Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*.
4. Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*.
5. Poplutz, *Erzählte Welt: narratologische Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*; Frey and Poplutz, *Narrativität und Theologie im Johannesevangelium*; Dettwiler, "Studien Zu Matthäus Und Johannes"; Eisen, *Die Poetik der Apostelgeschichte: Eine narratologische Studie*; Sánchez Navarro, *Testimonios del Reino: Evangelios sinópticos y Hechos de los apóstoles*; Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*; Culpepper and Segovia, *The Fourth Gospel from a Literary Perspective*.
6. This is a very fruitful field of study, but only a representative sample may be provided at this juncture. In New Testament circles, Mark's Gospel has received significant sustained attention over the past twenty years. A landmark work in this field was Rhoads and Michie, *Mark as Story*. This work (now in its third edition) and its enduring influence has now been the source of considered reflection in Iverson and Skinner, *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*. Another thorough work on narrative methodology is France, *Gospel of Mark*.
7. Sánchez Navarro, *Testimonios del Reino: Evangelios sinópticos y Hechos de los apóstoles*.
8. Benítez, "Esta salvación de Dios" (Hech 28,28): *Análisis narrativo estructuralista de "Hechos"*.
9. Mbilizi, *D'Israël aux nations: L'horizon de la rencontre avec le Sauveur dans l'œuvre de Luc*.
10. Gerber, "Il vous est né un sauveur," *La construction du sens sotériologique de la venue de Jésus en Luc-Actes*.
11. Börstinghaus, *Sturm fährt und Schiffbruch: Zur lukanischen Verwendung eines literarischen Topos in Apostelgeschichte 27,1—28,6*.
12. Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions*.

James Dawsey,¹³ Robert L. Brawley,¹⁴ C. Kavin Rowe,¹⁵ Charles Talbert,¹⁶ Joel Green,¹⁷ Karl Allen Kuhn,¹⁸ Mikeal C. Parsons,¹⁹ John A. Darr,²⁰ Robert C. Tannehill,²¹ and multi authored works such as that edited by J. Frey, C. K. Rothschild, and J. Schröter.²² Clearly there is a sustained interest in Luke's narrative, theology, and characterization. However, there has been relatively little narratological work on female characters in Luke and/or Acts.

In terms of what has been done with respect to the Lukan narrative and its theological portrayal of women believers there are three broad approaches. We have labeled these approaches the 'feminist—liberationist' perspective, the 'selective reader' approach and the 'broad positive—descriptive' stance. We will summarize each of these in turn.

First, the 'feminist-liberationist' perspective. Some of the specific work on female characters in Luke has been carried out from this perspective with the intent to provide a counter reading against the grain of Luke's Gospel. This is represented by Barbara Reid's 1997 volume *Choosing the Better Part? Women in the Gospel of Luke*.²³ In her study Reid employs a femi-

13. Dawsey, *The Lukan Voice*.

14. Brawley, *Centering on God*.

15. Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*; Rowe, "History, Hermeneutics and the Unity of Luke-Acts"; Rowe, "Luke and the Trinity"; Rowe, "Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics."

16. Talbert's contribution to the study of Luke's narrative and its theology revolves around the idea that Luke has a distinctive view of Jesus, and this view of Jesus has many facets. This must be borne in mind when pericopes are interpreted. Talbert notes that the Lukan use (or omission) of available materials is one of the keys to understanding the "distinctively Lukan picture of Jesus." Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 111–12.

17. According to Green, in order to draw theology from the Gospel of Luke, the exegete needs to bear in mind two key points. First, how conclusions were drawn from narratives by readers in a Greco-Roman/Hellenistic Jewish context. Second, being attuned to the particular shape the author gives his narrative in order to achieve his larger aims. Green, *Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 21; Green, "Learning Theological Interpretation from Luke."

18. Kuhn's particular contribution is to focus on the relationship between the narrative and the emotional elements of stories. His focus is especially on the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel. His point is that there is a "cardiography" within biblical narratives that are intended to move the reader. Kuhn, *The Heart of Biblical Narrative*.

19. Parsons locates Luke within his Greco-Roman rhetorical milieu, and explores the author's work from this standpoint. Parsons, *Luke*.

20. Darr, *Herod the Fox*. See also the more general work on characterization in Luke-Acts: Darr, *On Character Building*.

21. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*. Tannehill, *Luke*. Tannehill, *The Shape of Luke's Story*.

22. Frey, Rothschild, and Schröter, *Die Apostelgeschichte im Kontext antiker und frühchristlicher Historiographie*.

23. Reid, *Better Part*. Examples of similar approaches were included in the 1997

nist-liberationist hermeneutic to the end that she explicitly writes *against* what she perceives to be Luke's view on women. Reid is unambiguous in clarifying her intention. She explains: "As we proceed with these stories, we will approach Luke's restrictive portrayal of women with a hermeneutic of suspicion. We will be 'choosing the better part' by looking for ways to read against Luke's intent so as to release their liberating potential."²⁴ Reid has also written polemically against what she believes to be Luke's portrayal of women as silent and passive contrasts to male disciples.²⁵ Given that Reid writes against the grain of the text, the natural result is that these leanings dampen the theological depth and integrity of her conclusions from the narrative. Reid's work was shortly followed by Jane Schaberg's provocative essay in the *Women's Bible Commentary*.²⁶ Schaberg writes, "The Gospel of Luke is an extremely dangerous text, perhaps the most dangerous in the Bible."²⁷

The second approach to the characterization of women within Luke's narrative is the 'selective-reader' method. Loretta Dornisch may be taken as representative of this approach. Like Reid's work, Dornisch's *A Woman Reads the Gospel of Luke* was published by the Liturgical Press in the mid-1990s, and operates with a feminist reading of the text. We have categorized this approach as the 'selective reader' approach to the text because it is a fusion of historical-critical methods, a study of selected perspectives offered within the text, and the individual perspective (often based on particular experiences) of the reader. This view could also be described as a selective and biblically informed version of the reader response approach. Dornisch's description of the methodology she uses to interpret the Gospel of Luke includes comments on 'latitude' in her reading. For Dornisch this latitude allows one to move away from the majority "male or even patriarchal" reading of the text.²⁸ This latitude is enhanced when Dornisch brings significant personal reflection to bear upon the text. She writes:

Semeia volume which was wholly devoted to women's perspectives on the Bible. The volume was entitled "Reading the Bible as Women: Perspectives from Africa, Asia and Latin America." Essays included Rebera Ranjini, "Polarity or Partnership? Retelling the Story of Martha and Mary from Asian Women's Perspective (Luke 10:38-42); Musa W. Dube, "Toward a Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible." Reid's more recent work includes *Taking Up the Cross: New Testament Interpretations through Latina and Feminist Eyes*.

24. Reid, *Better Part*, 95.

25. Reid, "Choosing the Better Part."

26. Schaberg, "Luke," 363-80.

27. *Ibid.*, 363.

28. Dornisch, "A Woman Reads the Gospel of Luke," 8.

We have, then, for our reflections a first perspective of the writer or writers of Luke, a second perspective of the implied narrator or narrators of the individual story or groups of stories, and a third perspective of “certain women” who seem important in the unfolding of the text. A fourth perspective is that of women today who bring their own experience to the reading of the good news.²⁹

Dornisch's work has a more positive view of the authorship of Luke's Gospel than that of Reid. Dornisch even hypothesizes that the composition of the Gospel may have included female contributors. She is thus focused on stories about, and from, women.³⁰ For her, such a reading provides a sound counter to pervasive views of women in the Greco-Roman world.³¹ However, what her Ricoeurian approach ultimately accents is the *possibility* of a *positive reading* of women in Luke's Gospel. There is, therefore, a significant implied assumption which informs her approach to the narrative and underlies her aims. Dornisch assumes that a positive view of women in Luke is not accomplished by listening to the narrative and the theology which is native to the text itself. To her mind, such a positive view must be achieved by adding to the text. Dornisch's positive view of women, therefore, is established by means of reading the text via the external lens of one's own aims, history and experience.

The third direction in studies of women in Luke may be termed the 'broad positive-descriptive' approach. These are studies which are broad in that they either include material from beyond Luke's Gospel or their survey of the material in Luke (or Luke-Acts) is from a wide-ranging perspective. These studies are positive in that they consider (1) Luke's perspective towards women to be in some sense counter-cultural and (2) Jesus' ministry meant some form of social and spiritual liberation for women.

One of the 'broad positive' approaches is represented in the seminal study by Ben Witherington III. Witherington's *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* is a survey of Jesus' view of women during his earthly ministry.

29. Ibid., 11.

30. Dornisch, *A Woman Reads the Gospel of Luke*.

31. Dornisch's position may be described as a post-modern, moderate womanist and comparative-religions position. This approach differs from Reid's. A representative passage reads as follows: "Many feminist writers see the highlighting of the role of a virgin as anti-woman, lacking appreciation of the goodness of sexuality. In the context of the culture of the time, however, the concept may have very different connotations. . . . In this story, then, Mary is a virgin, radically replacing the accepted virgin Athena. She appears in the simplicity and strength of an autonomous woman from whom the Lord requests a role radically different from the dominant roles in her society. A new concept of virgin as free person has emerged." Ibid., 16.

Witherington explores these relationships, actions, and attitudes between the birth and resurrection narratives (which he does not treat).³² A recent work by Darrell Bock has contributed to this strand of scholarship. Bock's *A Theology of Luke and Acts* includes a section on women in Luke and Acts which concludes that women are depicted as those who model belief and testify to the grace they have received from God through Jesus.³³ These examples affirm Jesus' and Luke's positive stance towards women and their involvement in his mission. However, the theological claims about women arising from the narrative are not stated strongly. For example, although Witherington notes that the relationship that Jesus has with women is marked by positive regard, the narrational and theological claims are quite restrained given the direction and cumulative focus of the narrative. Notwithstanding this restraint, the positive regard for the narrational presentation of Jesus and his interactions with women is what sets works like these apart from the 'feminist-liberationist' and the 'selective-reader' proposals.

Richard Bauckham's *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* seeks to provide fresh insight into particular women characters in the Gospels. Not all named women are covered (e.g., Mary and Martha), but those that do appear are treated with Bauckham's characteristic historical and exegetical rigor. While drawing on the insights of feminist biblical criticism, Bauckham is sharply critical of the feminist tendency to employ a hermeneutic of suspicion as their methodological foundation. On this approach texts are "not assumed innocent until proved guilty, but assumed guilty without a chance of a fair hearing."³⁴ Bauckham likens his work to a "series of deep probes,"³⁵ a collection of essays designed to conduct a thorough investigation into "whatever questions seemed capable of interesting answers."³⁶ In the main, Bauckham focuses on "the world of the text and the world to which the text makes historical reference."³⁷

As expected, much of Bauckham's work is focused on the Gospel of Luke, for it is here that many of the named women in the Gospels appear. Overall, not only is his study of women 'broadly positive,' he also suggests that at times the narrative presents a gynocentric perspective in which recipients are invited to read the text from the perspective of the female

32. Witherington, *Women*.

33. Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 344–52. Another example of a positive view of Jesus' and Luke's perspectives on women is a very short, devotional piece by Osiek, "Accusers, Mourners, Disciples."

34. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, xv.

35. *Ibid.*, xvii.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, xviii.

character(s). He brings this to bear specifically in his study on Joanna (Luke 8:1–3) where he proposes that from this point in the narrative the text invites the reader to adopt the perspective of the women who journey with Jesus. Consequently,

if we read on from 8:1–3 in the company of Joanna and the other women, it will not be possible to read 10:1–20, where Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples to participate actively in his own mission of preaching and healing, without assuming that the women are included among these disciples.³⁸

Bauckham's text and historical-centered approach forms a contrast to that of F. Scott Spencer. Spencer's recent work is restricted to Luke's Gospel and is 'broadly positive' towards Luke's presentation of women and their relationship to Jesus.³⁹ The breadth that characterizes Spencer's work stems from his decades-long interaction with feminist scholarship. This means that his treatment of Luke's Gospel with respect to women is focused upon significant themes within feminist thinking. The breadth of his work is also evidenced in the scope of characters which he studies. Beyond those with whom Jesus interacts directly, he also pays significant attention to female characters including the persistent widow from one of Jesus' parables, as well as foreign women mentioned by Luke such as the widow of Zarephath, the queen of Sheba, and Lot's wife. Spencer's work is generally positive towards Luke's depiction of women, however, he argues that it is a complex and at times ambiguous depiction.⁴⁰ He states:

I endeavor in this project to pull the pendulum back a tad from the feminist-critical pole toward the center . . . still applying sharp feminist-critical analyses, but pressing through to more salutary results, to a somewhat sweeter concentration in Luke's bittersweet, 'mixed message' regarding women's agency and action.⁴¹

38. Ibid., 200.

39. Spencer, *Salty Wives*.

40. Spencer has marked similarities with an earlier work by Turid Karlsen Seim. In a statement with strong affinities to Spencer's findings Seim writes: "It is a preposterous simplification to ask whether Luke's writings are friendly or hostile to women. Luke's version of the life of Jesus and of his believers cannot be reduced either to a feminist treasure chamber or to a chamber of horrors for women's theology. It contains elements that bring joy to 'dignity studies' and other elements that give support to 'misery studies.'" Seim, *Double Message*, 249.

41. Spencer, *Salty Wives*, 4

Spencer continues with the claim that his mixed message seeks to avoid both selectivity and anachronism whilst engaging in sensitive literary and historical work:

Short of remixing Luke's soundtrack, I see . . . no way to amplify women's virtual silence (after the birth narratives) in this Gospel. And short of anachronistic revisionism, I see no rhyme or reason to profiling Jesus or Luke as first century feminists. . . . But I do see room to expand our positive engagement with 'capable women of purpose and persistence' within their Lukan literary and social worlds.⁴²

Spencer describes his methodology as one which "generally reflects an eclectic use of grammatical, historical, sociological, literary, canonical, theological, postmodern, and feminist tools."⁴³ However, such eclectic method arguably comes at a price. The cost is less attention on the text and its narrativ and theological claims. It can also lead to quite disparate results. This problem is exacerbated by his rather wide-ranging interests (e.g., he reads Luke 1:57–58 and 15:8–9 with reference to the *gecekondu* women in Istanbul⁴⁴).

The Aim of this Book

If these three approaches are indicative of the state of affairs, they point to a lacuna in Lukan scholarship. That is, there is a paucity of recent work which privileges the narrative and its theology of women who believe in the God of Israel and Jesus as Lord. This state of affairs is surprising given the frequent inclusion of women and the relatively prominent role (in comparison to the other Gospels) that they play throughout Luke's Gospel and Acts. In his study we intend to redress this lacuna.

So the aim of this work is to study the narrative of Luke-Acts and to clearly articulate the theology which resides within the author's characterization of women. To this end we will explore three literary and theological elements which relate to women as players in the divine drama that Luke describes. These elements are (i) the characterization of women in the narrative, (ii) narrativ claims made concerning such women, and (iii) theological claims concerning women that arise directly or indirectly from the narrative. A more detailed explanation of our methodology follows.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., 20.

44. Ibid., 337–38.

A Methodology for Exploring a Narrative's Theological Claims about Its Characters

In the preface to Luke's Gospel (Luke 1:1–4), the author introduces his work as a narrative (διήγησις), with key concerns for order (καθεξής), accuracy (ἀκριβώς) and reliability (ἀσφάλεια).⁴⁵ In so doing, Luke has carefully constructed a two-part work in which there are a number of narrative parallels both within each of the two parts and between the two parts. In terms of its balance, symmetry, and pattern, it resembles classical works such as Virgil's *Aeneid* and Near Eastern literature such as the books of Jonah and Ruth.⁴⁶ Luke informs us that his gospel is written for the purpose of strengthening the recipient's confidence in the reliability of what he has been informed or taught. In other words, Theophilus can be sure that the narrative of events surrounding the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus is indeed trustworthy. The book of Acts will go on to provide a narrative account of those who are understood to be the legitimate followers of Jesus.⁴⁷

It is now generally accepted that the four canonical Gospels fall within the broad genre of Greco-Roman *bioi*.⁴⁸ Luke's 'cultic biography' then follows the tradition which includes works such as Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. These biographies "usually treat the career of the community's founder as the value norm for devotees and the object of their reverence and worship."⁴⁹ Talbert also notes that within this genre tradition there was a type of biography in which "(a) the life of the divine hero was followed by (b) a narrative of successors and selected other disciples. These components (a + b) were parts of a single work."⁵⁰ Such biographies with the a + b pattern were employed to legitimate particular philosophical schools of thought. This endorsement occurs via legitimating the initial witness to the founder's words and actions and also by legitimating the continuity

45 "[I]n describing his work as a narrative . . . , Luke identified his project as an account of many events, for which the chief prototypes are the early Greek histories of Herodotus and Thucydides." Green, *Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 18. For the style of amateur history or biography including Callimorphus, Josephus (*Antiquities*, *Against Apion*) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Roman Antiquities*), see Downing, "'Theophilus' First Reading of Luke-Acts," 97–100. For narrative parallels in Old Testament, Rabbinic and Hellenistic stories, see Martin, ed. *Narrative Parallels to the New Testament*.

46. On Luke's genre see Talbert, "Once Again: Gospel Genre."

47. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 2–3.

48. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*; Pearson and Porter, "Genres of the New Testament," 137–42; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 71–125.

49. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 2–3.

50. *Ibid.*, 3.

between the followers and the life and teachings of the hero.⁵¹ Luke-Acts has obvious parallels with this literary form.

For the author of Luke-Acts, “narration is proclamation.”⁵² As highly purposeful literature, the narrator deliberately employs “history to preach, to set forth a persuasive, narrative interpretation of God’s work in Jesus.”⁵³ Therefore, not only the narrative itself and its structure, but the interpretation of the narrative is a key concern for Luke.⁵⁴ As a compiler and redactor, he has selected his material so that the narration occurs as a select sequence of events. This selection has been deliberately made so that the narrative achieves a particular theological, and thus proclamatory aim.⁵⁵ Storytelling techniques such as dialogue,⁵⁶ mode of narration,⁵⁷ repeated actions⁵⁸ including type scenes,⁵⁹ narrative specification,⁶⁰ word and phrase choice, and word or phrase repetition, alert the reader to the significant themes in the narrative.

51. Ibid., 2–3.

52. Green, *Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 19.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Dialogue is stylized in different ways to achieve various ends. It may be long or short and include varied tones and images within. All these features contribute to dialogue being an “effective vehicle of meaning.” Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 182–83.

57. Alter (ibid., 183) states, “Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the role played by the narrator in the biblical text is the way in which omniscience and inobtrusiveness [*sic.*] are combined.” The attentive reader of narrative should also pay attention to changes in narrational patterns, as this is highly significant and a means by which the narrator emphasizes a point. Alter writes: “The Bible’s highly laconic mode of narration may often give the impression of presenting the events virtually without mediation: so much, after all, is conveyed through dialogue with only the minimal ‘he said’ to remind us of a narrator’s presence; and even outside of dialogue, what is often reported is absolutely essential action, without obtrusive elaboration or any obvious intervention by the narrator. Against this norm, we should direct special attention to the moments when the illusion of unmediated action is manifestly shattered. Ibid., 184.

58. Repeated action “occurs when we are given two versions of the same event and when the same event, with minor variations, occurs at different junctures of the narrative, usually involving a different character or sets of characters. . . . The question we might ask is why he [the author] should have done this, in what ways do the two narrative perspectives complement or complicate each other.” Ibid., 181.

59. “The recurrence of the same event—the sameness being defined as a fixed sequence of narrative motifs which, however, may be presented in a variety of ways and sometimes with ingenious variations—is what I have called ‘type scene,’ and it constitutes a central organizing convention of biblical narrative.” Ibid.

60. The general lack of narrative specification in the Bible means that “when a particular descriptive detail is mentioned—Esau’s ruddiness and hairiness, Rachel’s beauty, King’s Eglon’s obesity—we should be alert for consequences, immediate or eventual, either in plot or theme.” Ibid., 180.

The key concern in our study is to examine what the narrative communicates and its consequent theological message regarding women who are followers of Jesus.⁶¹ Therefore, we hope to draw both narratival and theological proposals (see further, below) from a close following of the text itself. In this way we hope to subordinate our Australian male biases to the text. This awareness of our own situatedness means that a careful and attentive methodology is crucial to the success of our endeavor. This methodology is outlined below.

Our method will particularly draw upon the contributions of scholars who have specialized in narrative and literary critical issues. These include R. Alan Culpepper, Robert Alter, David Rhoads and Donald Michie, R. T. France, Willard Swartley, James Dawsey, Robert F. Brawley, C. Kevin Rowe, James L. Resseguie, Charles Talbert, Joel Green, John A. Darr, and Robert C. Tannehill.⁶²

First, the structure of the narrative will be ascertained from the plot.⁶³ For example, based on the turning points in the narratival flow, we may break up the narrative of Luke-Acts into the following sections: Infancy Narratives (Luke 1:5—2:52), Galilean Ministry (3:1—9:50), Travel Narrative (9:51—19:28), Jerusalem Narrative (19:29—24:53), The Birth of the Church (Acts 1–2), The Church in Jerusalem (Acts 3–12), and The Church in the Greco-Roman World (Acts 13–28). The narrative can then be broken down into macro-sections of grouped pericopes. This macro-breakdown and pericope grouping is based upon the “prima facie coherence of subject matter and/or function in the development of the narrative.”⁶⁴ That is to say, the major sections of the narrative provide their own compass for the interpretation of the passages within them.

Awareness of the larger structure of Luke-Acts and how this affects the interpretation of pericopes will aid the identification of the narratival threads (see below) which run through each section of the narratival structure. Examples of such key threads of the narrative include Christology, promise-fulfilment, and mission. Based upon these broader structures of

61. The exception here is, of course, the women in the Infancy Narratives who are not followers of Jesus but believers in the God of Israel.

62. Steps three through five of our methodology are a significant adaptation, drawing on the works of others cited in this paragraph, of a methodology developed by Douglas S. McComiskey in a class that he teaches for deriving theology from Luke's narrative. His methodology involves the formation of summary thematic propositions on a pericope-by-pericope basis, the translation of those narrative propositions into theological propositions, and the consideration of the cumulative body of propositions in the development of a Lukan theology.

63. This is done bearing in mind the macro-genre of the Gospels and the genre of individual pericopes.

64. France, *Gospel of Mark*, 14.

the narrative, the reader is to follow each thread (i.e., Christology, fulfilment or mission) through the narrative to see how the narrative makes certain theological propositions about these concerns.

Second, we shall note how characters are introduced into and developed within the narrative. This will take place within individual or grouped pericopes and may include several different techniques. Characterization may be developed through “indirect presentation,”⁶⁵ whereby characters are left to reveal themselves to the reader. In this case there is no comment by the narrator which may influence the reader’s perception of the character. For example, Luke 7:39 records the self-talk of the Pharisee: “when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, ‘If this man were a prophet he would know who and what sort of a person this woman is who is touching him, and that she is a sinner.’” On the other hand, characters may be presented directly to the audience. This means that the omniscient narrator will comment on the traits of the characters or reveal their inner thoughts. For example, Cornelius is depicted as a generous and kind man: “a devout man . . . gave many alms to the people . . .” (Acts 10:2). Other narrative techniques which will be highlighted include ‘explanatory discourses,’⁶⁶ scenes where the narrator uses ‘sandwiching’ technique and/or a ‘parallel spotlight’ technique,⁶⁷ and narrative ‘knots.’⁶⁸

Third, based on characterization and the broader story of Luke, we shall identify the *narrative propositions* which emerge from the text. A narrative proposition is a succinct proposal or statement that arises from the narrative, and may be either implicit or stated directly. It summarizes the main point the narrative makes about a given character or characters. The focus of the narrative proposition will vary according to the type of character presented in the story. In this way, the same story can yield different propositions with respect to different characters. For example, a narrative proposition arising from the story of Jesus calming the storm (Luke 8:22–25) is that *Jesus has power over the fierce wind and the waves of the sea*. With

65. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 126–28.

66. These are crucial for drawing out theology from the narrative. They provide “a theological framework for understanding the new thing that is happening with the coming of Jesus of Nazareth.” France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 15.

67. “Not only does he enclose one story within another, but he likes to set up parallel scenes and move the spot light between them . . . so that they become mutually illuminating.” Ibid., 19.

68. These are points at which multiple paradoxes come together with “special force.” This allows for comparison between the beginning of the particular paradox and the unexpected final status of the elements within the paradoxes. The solution of the narrative knots is sometimes left to the reader, because the paradox may not be explicitly resolved. Ibid., 20.

reference to the disciples, the same story would lead to the proposition that *the disciples' faith in Jesus is challenged by the storm and found to be wanting.*

The examples that have been given above are narrational propositions whose contours are determined by the specific details of the text. One might say they are 'first order' narrational propositions. In addition the narrative may also yield more generalized 'second order' narrational propositions. This is so because the narrative may have inherent generalizing tendencies which cannot be ignored. These second order propositions extend beyond the particular details of the story and generalize according to major influences within the narrative. These influences may be summarized as four narratively attuned criteria:

1. Key concerns of the narrative, for example the kingdom of God, the poor and the marginalized of society.
2. The generalization will be entirely consistent with the broader ministry of Jesus in Luke-Acts.
3. The generalization will not be inconsistent with any other features of the narrative.
4. The presence of words or signs within the story which drive the proposition beyond its immediate horizons.

For example, in the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38–42) Jesus explicitly rejects a socially regulated role for Mary (preparing a meal) in favor of her accepting the disposition of a rabbinic pupil. A first order narrational proposition emerging from the episode would be: *Jesus rejects socially regulated roles by allowing Mary to listen to his teachings as her first priority.* However, according to the four criteria listed above, there is evidence from the narrative that Jesus' response would not be limited purely to Mary but would be applicable to all women believers. It is clear that:

1. The kingdom of God, and the poor and the marginalized (including women) are major narrational and theological concerns in Luke-Acts.
2. Jesus consistently shows concern for the marginalized of society, and repeatedly draws attention to the necessity of listening to his words.
3. There is no evidence that Jesus either allowed a socio-religious norm to contravene, or to take precedence over, his teaching, or that he discouraged women in any way from being disciples and listening to his words.

4. The statement by Jesus that “Mary has chosen the better part,” naturally points beyond the story itself to all disciples choosing the better part no matter what the circumstances.

Consequently a second order narratival proposition that emerges from this episode would be the more global: *Jesus’ first priority for female disciples is that they listen to his words, even if this overturns socially regulated roles.*

At times, first order narratival propositions cannot be generalized. For example, the proposition *Elizabeth was a woman of pedigree* is specific to her character and therefore resists generalization. Due to the particular characters and events in the infancy narratives, we find numerous examples that fit this category. At other times, recognizing that the narrative has interests and goals beyond first order narratival propositions, we will endline a second order proposition after discussing the first order proposition that forms its basis.

The narratival propositions are the basis for broader *narratival threads*. A narratival thread conveys a larger picture with respect to a person or topic based upon the logic of the narratival sequence. A coherent narratival thread with reference to the proposition arising from Luke 8:22–25 would take into account previous propositions that *Jesus cured a centurion’s servant* from Luke 7:1–10, and *Jesus raised a man from the dead* from Luke 7:11–17. The narratival thread from Luke 7 and 8 would be that would be that *there is no power which Jesus cannot resist and overcome: neither illness, nor death, nor creation, nor demons.*

Fourth, narratival propositions, or several narratival propositions forming a narratival thread, may lead to *theological propositions*. For example, whereas a key narratival proposition from the story of Jesus calming the storm may be that *Jesus has power over the wind and the waves of the sea*, the theological proposition may be that *Jesus is Lord over creation*. In the case of a narratival proposition not having a theological proposition emerging directly from it, it may contribute to a theological proposition in a cumulative manner in tandem with other narratival propositions, e.g., from a narratival thread. For example, the theological proposition that *Jesus is fully human* receives a strong contribution from the narratival claim “the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom . . .” (Luke 2:40a), and a modest and indirect contribution from the passage where Jesus weeps over Jerusalem (19:41–44). In the first instance, the narrative makes a direct claim that Jesus developed as a normal yet godly person. In the second instance, we read a description of an appropriate human emotion “as he came near and saw the city, he wept over it” (19:41). The fact of Jesus crying is consistent with the first claim; however the narrative is not primarily interested in the doctrine of Jesus’ humanity *per se*. The difference lies in the fact

that Jesus' common humanity is a direct implication of the passage about his growth and development (2:40a), whereas the second passage (19:41) only leads to such a conclusion in tandem with other like passages. Thus, strong theological propositions emerge directly from a particular pericope and may also take into account the cumulative effect of other previous narrational propositions.

Thirty years ago R. Alan Culpepper, in his groundbreaking work on the Fourth Gospel, noted how the author can convey ideas to the reader without direct narration. This is achieved by utilizing any number of indirect signals such as misunderstanding, irony, and symbolism. In other words there is often silent communication, when the narrative generates a "surplus of meaning."⁶⁹ So, in addition to forming the basis for a narrational argument, many narrational propositions generate a corresponding theological proposition which emerges 'silently'.

It is important at this point to emphasize how narrational propositions differ from theological propositions. The crucial difference between the narrational proposition *Jesus has power over the wind and the waves of the sea*, and the theological proposition *Jesus is Lord over creation* is that the theological proposition is more broadly theological and, as it stands, is not limited to the passage at hand. Moreover, a theological proposition is stated atemporally, whilst many narrational propositions have temporal referents. To cite the next story in Luke as an example, the story about Jesus and the Gerasene demoniac (Luke 8:26–39) gives rise to the first order narrational proposition that *Jesus has power over the Legion*. A second order proposition flows naturally from it: *Jesus has authority over the demonic realm*. A theological proposal from the story would have no temporal or story reference point. It may be *Jesus is Lord over the demonic realm*. Consequently, a theology of female disciples in Luke-Acts will necessarily be derived from both narrational and theological propositions.

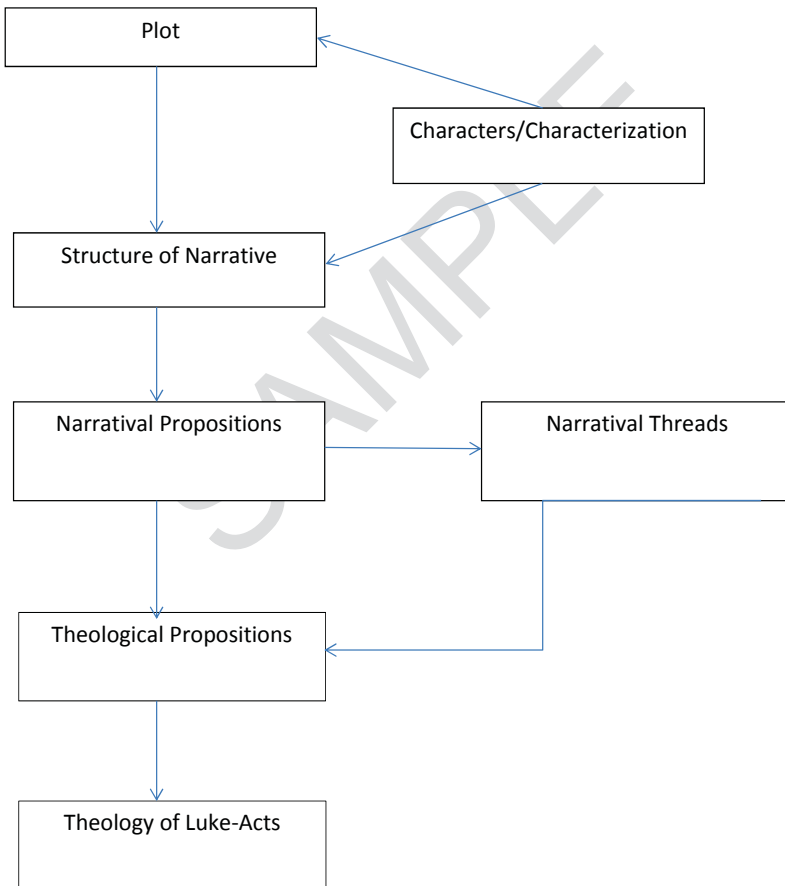
On occasions our work will endline second order narrational propositions which closely approximate theological propositions. One such example is *God reverses the fortunes of the lowly who are open to him, including women*. This close approximation between narrational and theological propositions exist because what sometimes distinguishes a second order narrational proposition from a first order narrational proposition is that its generalizing force is grounded in a theological theme (e.g., the kingdom of God). Such second order narrational propositions are often inherently theological and thus require no deeper theological interpretation (although it may require rewording), in order to produce an a-temporal theological

69. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 199.

proposition. Consequently, when such narrativ propositions are endlined it is not the case that the theological interpretation of Scripture has been privileged over and above the narrative. Rather, we are recognizing the fact that second order narrativ propositions are often inherently theological.

Fifth, in addition to theological propositions, theological progression can be determined as theology emerges from the narrativ argument and the accumulation of theological propositions. That is, our theology of female disciples in Luke-Acts will be an evolutionary one that will build on what has previously been stated. This will include elements of continuity and discontinuity, thus giving rise to a rich and multi-layered theology.

In sum, our methodology can be diagrammed as follows:



A consistency criterion

In this connection, our methodology works with a strong consistency criterion. This criterion rests on the assumption that Luke has an overall narrativ and theological framework that governs Luke-Acts. This assumption is formed on the basis of Luke's stated concern for accuracy, order, and reliability in the opening preface (see above). Theophilus can hardly have assurance of the reliability of what he has been informed⁷⁰ if the narrative and its characterization lacks coherence.

The consistency criterion is a negative criterion in that it does not guarantee that a proposal is true. That is, such a proposal will need to be substantiated by reference to the work as a whole. However, if a proposal is found to be discordant with any narrativ and theological thread, and/or the overall narrativ and theological framework, then it must be regarded as questionable.

Characters are deployed throughout Luke-Acts in order to express the author's theological ideas within his narrativ framework. This does not mean, however, that characters will be presented in a monochrome mode. Characters may be presented in a dynamic manner because they are caught up in the storied interaction between the narrativ-theological threads. A character may be initially portrayed in one instance in a manner which serves one narrativ-theological thread but in another situation a similar character may be employed to communicate a message concerning another thread.

The way that Luke portrays Roman soldiers illustrates this point. Roman soldiers are not 'flat' characters, i.e., they are not monochrome in their characterization and can undergo development. At times soldiers form part of the narrative thread of Gentiles demonstrating faith (to varying degrees) in Jesus (see Luke 7:1–10; 23:47; Acts 10:1–49). Other Roman soldiers beat and mock Jesus (Luke 23:22, 36–37)⁷¹. In the latter situation, the soldiers are serving the narrativ thread of human sinfulness against God. This complex portrayal of the Roman soldiers is not due to inconsistency on the author's behalf. Their characterization varies according to their role in particular narrativ threads within Luke's overall framework. Hence, the Roman soldier characters may be represented in various ways for different purposes without contradiction.

It is important to note that these character descriptions (and accompanying theologies) are always in conversation with the major narrativ

70. Or, *taught*, depending on the force of κατηχήθης. See the discussion in Nolland, *Luke*, 1:10–11.

71. Admittedly, this brutality is downplayed significantly in Luke's account (cf. Mark 15:16–20; Matt 27:28–31; John 19:1–3).

and theological threads which run through the established framework of Luke-Acts. As stated above, this framework is a function of Luke's concern for order and reliability as he reflects on various accounts of events available to him. Given this intent stated in the preface, the reader is encouraged to assume that the author has a consistent theology throughout his work and consistently portrays his characters in the service of his theology. Thus it is reasonable to assume that the narrative and its proposals will not contain internal contradiction. So, the proposition that *Roman soldiers are models of faith* is not contradicted by another narrational proposition that *Roman soldiers brutalized and crucified Jesus*. Both these propositions serve different narrational and theological threads.

If, however, a narrational proposition is being considered which is not consonant with any other narrational proposition or thread, doubts about its viability would naturally arise. For example, the proposition *Roman soldiers are ideal apostles* appears to be in conflict with key aspects of the narrative such as Jesus' selection of the twelve disciples for the sake of mission to the world (and the criteria established for Judas' replacement in Acts 1:12–26), together with the silence with regard to Roman soldiers taking on this role in Acts. So, by adhering to Luke's overall narrational-theological framework and the narrational threads that serve it, we hope to work in a manner which may be resisted and falsified if it falls outside of these bounds. The strength of this point is that this criterion not only functions as a negative criterion, it also avoids monochrome characterization by being attuned to character complexity.

Structure and Content of the Book

As stated above, our aim in this volume is to explore the Lukan narrational and theological characterization of women who are followers of Jesus. Our approach is narrative-critical with theological aims. The book is structured according to the major structural outline of Luke-Acts (as discussed above under our methodological approach). Chapters 3–6 deal with women in Luke's Gospel. Chapter 7 looks at some introductory matters concerning Luke's portrayal of women in Acts, including the purpose of Acts and its narrational and literary progression. Chapters 8–10 study the narrative of Acts as it pertains to women. Chapter 11 draws the study together by way of conclusion, and offers suggestions regarding the potential contribution of our work to both a canonical 'theology of women,' and the discussion of women in Christian ministry today.

Each of the chapters that deal with the Luke-Acts narrative is structured similarly. In general, only pericopes that deal with women are investigated, although there are exceptions. For example, in chapter 4, at the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry, several narrational propositions regarding Jesus and his ministry are examined. This is so because although women as disciples are the focus of our study, women as characters serve Luke's central narrational focus on the identity and work of Jesus and how people respond to him. This christological section provides the broader context with which the narrational material on women interacts.

Within each chapter material is normally treated sequentially following the order of Luke's narrative. Introductory issues that pertain to each pericope are discussed before the narrational propositions are presented. The narrational propositions appear in italics and are followed by a discussion of that proposition. At the end of each chapter there is a summary of the narrational propositions, followed by a list of theological propositions that arise from them. At times, we depart from the above structure in an attempt to be sensitive to the narrative and particular characterization. For example, in the Infancy Narratives each of the female characters is treated separately. The narrational propositions are summarized, and the theological propositions presented for each in turn. In Luke 8:1–3 each of the three women mentioned is discussed in turn by way of introduction, but the narrational propositions are presented with respect to the women as a group.

Before we commence our narrational analysis, we first of all turn to the Jewish and Greco-Roman historical-cultural context of the recipients of Luke's work. Our purpose here is to assess how women were viewed in the ancient world, and the extent of their participation and leadership in religious and community activities. In this way we can better appreciate how the original recipients of Luke's work would have been impacted by his characterization of women.