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The Apostles in the Bezan Text of Acts

1. Introduction

The portrait of the apostles in the Bezan text of Acts is a surprising one, disturbing and reassuring at the same time. It is like looking at a colour photograph of a group of people that one has been used to seeing only in black or white. The surprise comes from seeing these men as people like us instead of the infallible heroes one has become accustomed to – as disciples who had not fully understood the full scope of Jesus' message by the time he left them and who therefore continue to follow in some respects their traditional Jewish teaching even though it conflicts with what he taught; who make mistakes and are sometimes disobedient; who change as they discover for themselves the truth of Jesus' teaching. Because of this, the Bezan portrait disturbs, demanding a new way of hearing the story of Acts, of looking at the apostles and evaluating their actions with the same critical judgement as the narrator; nothing can be taken for granted. But it is also wonderfully reassuring because these apostles are real human beings, who share the struggles, tensions, longings and discoveries of ordinary people. They are seen through the eyes of a narrator who knows them for who they are and who understands something of what they go through.

This last point is important: the account of the apostles in the Bezan text is critical, sometimes scathingly so, but it is not hostile. It demolishes some of the beliefs and aspirations most sacred and dear to its characters but it does so from an intimate, first-hand knowledge of the religious, cultural context to which they belong. The narrator of this text writes from a Jewish perspective and addresses questions that are primarily of importance, fundamental importance, to a Jew who wanted to know the truth about Jesus as Messiah and also about the leaders of his disciples; for the latter, far from acting in unison, presenting a united front and a consistent system of doctrines and dogmas, had given differing interpretations of the Scriptures, had remained more, or less, attached to the Temple and, to cap it all, had apparently changed their ideas as time went by. How did all of this relate to the Jewish faith, to its

Scriptures, teachings or expectations? The response to such questions is so much in focus in the Bezan account of Acts that it is difficult to see what sense it would have made to a Roman officer, such as the ‘most excellent Theophilus’ (Lk 1,3; cf. Acts 1,1) is often assumed to be. If, on the other hand, Luke’s Theophilus were the only Jew known to have had this name, none other than the former High Priest who had served in office from 37–41 CE,¹ then he could well have found that the Bezan Acts was intelligible to him since it addressed him in terms that were familiar to him.

The Jewishness of Codex Bezae is one indication among others that the text of this manuscript transmits a version of the story of the early Church that predates the more familiar account transmitted by the Alexandrian text. Another indication is the coherence of its language which, from a linguistic point of view, does not look as if it is an accumulation of alterations and modifications but rather looks like the work of one hand, one mind.² Yet another pointer to the earlier date of the Bezan text is the coherence of its message, which is above all a theological message expressed by means of a sophisticated and complex interweaving of symbolic and literal representations – of people, places, events – to convey the interplay of spiritual and historical realities.³ All these factors taken together suggest that the Bezan readings are not some marginal afterthoughts, much less the embroidery of a whimsical scribe, but rather they are fragments of a whole that has to be read as a whole and not as a string of detached curiosities. If Luke was the author of Acts – and the relationship between Acts and Luke’s Gospel which is especially close in the text of Codex Bezae supports this supposition – there is no less reason to assume he wrote the Bezan form of the text than the Alexandrian form. On this basis, Luke will be referred to in this study as the narrator of Acts even, or especially, when it is a matter of the Bezan text.

The portrait of the apostles in Codex Bezae is arguably one more feature that reflects an early date, before they had become venerated as the founders of the Church. The present consideration of the Bezan portrait will seek to consider one of its more striking aspects, namely the evolution in their understanding of the restoration of Israel – inevitably, given the limitations of length, it will be a partial study and to that extent it will be unsatisfactory. There is also the difficulty of re-creating, re-entering, the world in which the

1 R. ANDERSON, A la recherche de Théophile, in: *Saint Luc. Evangéliste et historien*, *Dossiers d’Archéologie* 279 (2002–3), 64–71.

2 I have devoted a monograph to a linguistic analysis of the Bezan text of Acts, see J. READ-HEIMERDINGER, *The Bezan Text of Acts* (JSNT.S 236), Sheffield 2002.

3 For a detailed study of the theological message of Bezan Acts see J. RIUS-CAMPS, *El camino de Pablo a la misión de los paganos*, Madrid 1984; ID., *De Jerusalén a Antioquía: Génesis de la iglesia cristiana*, Córdoba 1989; and the forthcoming 4-volume commentary in English, *The Message of the Bezan Text of Acts: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition*, Sheffield.

apostles lived. So little is known of the first century, of both Judaism and Christianity of that time, and there is the constant temptation to impose on the first century what is known about the second century. Many questions will therefore be raised by seeking to comprehend what Luke intended Theophilus to see in his depiction of the apostles. And some questions will remain, which is bound to happen and is as it should be for hasty solutions, imposed because of an urgent demand for answers, would only skew the picture.

We shall proceed by focusing attention on a series of key passages, beginning in the closing chapter of the Gospel since it is in the first volume of Luke's work that the apostles are, as it were, born – certainly, that is where they start their lives of disciples of Jesus. References to Codex Bezae will be indicated by its siglum, D05, and to the principal Alexandrian manuscripts, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, by the abbreviation Alex. except where they differ, in which case by their respective sigla.

2. *Lk 24*

The final chapter of the Gospel covers the same period of time as the opening verses of Acts (1,1-14), the time between Jesus' resurrection and final departure from his disciples, in such a way that the first passage informs and prepares for the second. Both describe meetings between Jesus and the apostles during which he continued teaching them. The difficulties they experienced in understanding him are particularly highlighted in the Bezan account of the encounter of two of them with the risen Jesus on a road leading out of Jerusalem (Lk 24,13-35).⁴ The key to the interpretation of the incident is left by Luke (for all to see, scarcely concealed) in the name of their destination, Οὐλαμμαοῦς, Oulammaous (Lk 24,13 D05). The name evokes the meeting with Yahweh experienced by Jacob in a dream (Gen 28,10-22), at Bethel, a place that was 'formerly (known as) Luz' (וְלֵזָא לְיָזָא, Gen 28,19). The LXX text records the phrase as if all of it were the name, Οὐλαμλοῦς or, according to some manuscripts by phonetic transformation, Οὐλαμμαοῦς.

Luke uses Jacob's encounter with God as a paradigmatic model for the meeting between Jesus and the disciples, thereby establishing that the motive for the disciples' journey was one of flight: they were running away, fleeing from the danger they thought they were in. The reason for their flight is that

4 J. READ-HEIMERDINGER/J. RIUS-CAMPS, Emmaous or Oulammaous? Luke's Use of the Jewish Scriptures in the Text of Luke 24 in Codex Bezae', in: *Revista Catalana de Teologia* 27 (2002), 23-42. The text of Luke 24 D05 goes from v. 11 where the last named subject is the apostles, to v. 13 where it is said that those who set off on the journey were δύο ἕξ αὐτῶν, implying that the two belong to the Eleven.

there had been a betrayal among them which the Bezan text assimilates with the motive for Jacob's flight, namely his deception of his father when he stole the birthright from his brother and sought to succeed his father as the first-born son (Gen 27,1-45). The betrayal was that of Jesus by Judas who, as he led the Jewish authorities to his master, had greeted him with a kiss (Lk 22,47): in the Bezan text, the kiss is related in terms identical to the LXX account of Jacob's kiss of his father:

Lk 22,47	Alex.	καὶ ἤγγισεν τῷ Ἰησοῦ φιλεῖν αὐτόν
	D05	καὶ ἐγγίσας ἐφίλησεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν
Gen 27,27	LXX	καὶ ἐγγίσας ἐφίλησεν αὐτόν

Judas' kiss, by being assimilated with Jacob's, is rich in resonances which will need a separate study in order to tease out their implications. Suffice it to say here that for the group of the apostles – the Twelve, among whom Judas is carefully named as he approaches Jesus to kiss him – his betrayal has profound consequences. Judas was one of them, and if one had betrayed their master, all had betrayed. And not just their master, but the Messiah of Israel. Little wonder that two of the group were running away.

As he walked with the pair, Jesus talked with them about their profound disappointment that their master had not been the redeemer of Israel they had hoped he was (Lk 24,21) and responded by interpreting the Scriptures. This was no easy task, given their stupidity and slowness concerning the writings of the prophets about the Messiah's suffering —not just to believe them, as in the Alex., but in general (ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν οἷς ἐλάλησαν οἱ προφῆται, Lk 24,25 D05). Significantly, in the Bezan account Jesus did not make a complete explanation of the Scriptures during the journey, he only managed to make a start: three times in place of the Alex. reading of a compound verb that expresses completeness, D05 has the simple form (ἐρμηνεύειν, Lk 24,27; ἠνοίγησαν, 24,31; ἤνοιγεν, 24,32); moreover he merely *began* with Moses and all the prophets (ἦν ἀρχάμενος ἀπὸ Μωσέως [sic.] καὶ πάντων τῶν προφητῶν, Lk 24,27 D05), and did not explain 'all' the Scriptures, contrary to B03 (πάσαις, Lk 24,27, *omit* **¶**01 D05). Indeed, their hearts were veiled as he spoke with them (κεκαλυμμένη, Lk 24,32 D05) and they returned to Jerusalem grieving deeply (λυπούμενοι, Lk 24,33). For just as they had realized who he was, he disappeared again! If his departure caused such an intense feeling of bereavement as the verb λυπέω expresses, they cannot have understood about the resurrection. They are 'stupid and slow', and no miraculous transformations have occurred to change that.

In the end, at his final appearance and just before he leaves them definitively, Jesus does 'fully open their minds for the understanding of the Scriptures' (διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς γραφάς, Lk 24,45). The

present tense of the infinitive *συνιέναι* expresses their understanding as a progressive action which starts now and continues, rather than as a comprehension acquired at once and for all time. It anticipates the fact that the apostles, although they have been made fully aware by Jesus of the meaning of the Scriptures, will not manage to accept and put into action all of his teaching at once.

What were the difficulties they faced? The Scriptures Jesus explained specifically related to his suffering and resurrection, and ‘the preaching of repentance and forgiveness in his name that is intended for the nations but has to start in Jerusalem’ (Lk 24,47-48 D05).⁵ Jesus’ focus on the nations at this point contrasts with the presentation of the Messiah in the first two chapters of Luke’s Gospel where, in the Bezan text, there was no mention of the Gentiles: Simeon in the Temple, holding the young Jesus and inspired by the Holy Spirit (Lk 2,25-28), limited his recollection of Isaiah’s prophecies to ‘your people Israel’ (φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν καὶ δόξαν λαοῦ σου Ἰσραήλ, Lk 2,32 D05; cf. Isa 42,6; 49,6).⁶ In the Bezan text of his Gospel, Luke seems deliberately to choose to depict the Messianic expectations of the Jews as excluding the Gentiles, a position for which there is certainly evidence in some writings even though elsewhere Jewish hopes are given a more universalistic expression.⁷ The Messiah, according to this exclusivist view, is for Israel alone; when he comes, the Gentiles will be punished by God and, if not destroyed, brought under Messianic rule in total subjection. Luke does not criticise this view but rather presents it as the plan of God for Israel revealed through the Scriptures. The idea that the Gentiles were to benefit from the Messiah is introduced progressively into Luke’s Gospel by Jesus, as a result of his rejection by the Jewish leaders (see, for example, Lk 7,1-10, cf. 7,29-30; 10,10-16; 11,29-32; 13,24-30; 14,15-24).

In consequence, the idea that the Messiah was a leader and a saviour for anyone outside Israel is one the apostles have to learn to get used to. They have not travelled with Jesus to regions beyond the frontiers of Israel, as they

5 Lk 24,47-48 D05: κηρυχθῆναι ... μετάνοιαν καὶ ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτίων ὡς ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἀρξαμένων ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ. With its force of expressing an intended purpose, ὡς ἐπὶ focuses on the nations as the goal of the mission which, nonetheless, has to start in Jerusalem.

6 The idea that God’s gifts are for anyone other than the Jews is also excluded from the Bezan account of the parable of the man who asks his friend for bread at midnight (Lk 11,5-13 D05). In applying the parable to ‘everyone’ (Lk 11,10), Jesus simply says that God will give ‘a good gift’ to those who ask; he does not say, as the Alex. does, that God will give the Holy Spirit to anyone asking, thus precluding the interpretation that the Gentiles, too, could expect such a request to be granted.

7 E.g. Isaiah; the targum to Isaiah (see B. CHILTON [ed.], *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus, Notes*, Edinburgh 1987, 59); Micah; Testament of Moses; Joseph and Aseneth.

do in Mark's presentation.⁸ Later, in their speeches in Jerusalem, once they observe how God is acting through the Holy Spirit and the name of Jesus, they seem to accept the idea of an eventual inclusion of the Gentiles within Israel, but they do not change their ideas overnight.

Besides, there is another problem that must have made Jesus' teaching about the kingdom very difficult to get their minds around. That is the fact that his vision of the kingdom of God involved something even more radical than bringing the Gentiles into Israel: it involved the acceptance of the Gentiles in the kingdom of God *on a par with* Israel since, as becomes apparent in the parallel scene of Acts 1, Israel had lost its privileged position as God's chosen people.

This will be the message that is repeated over and over again in Bezan text as the apostles, and Luke's audience at the same time, are shown by one divine intervention after another that a profound change has taken place and that the plan hitherto interpreted from the Scriptures has been destroyed. The following stages may be noted, which we will move on to consider: Jesus taking the apostles out of the Jewish religious institution represented by Jerusalem; his final departure without choosing a replacement for Judas to represent the 12th tribe of Israel; the increasing hostility of the Temple authorities towards the power of Jesus to the point that they become likened to Pharaoh in their oppression of God's people; the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans, and then the Gentiles; finally, the intervention of the angel of the Lord for a second time to deliver Peter from the Jewish hopes and aspirations.

Meanwhile, the apostles' difficulty is seen in the fact that despite the explanations of the Scriptures by Jesus during his final meeting with them, it is to a nationalistic view of the Messiah and his message that they return. How does Luke show this? Not in any overt comment, but by a series of devices that he employs to communicate his evaluation of his characters. One of these is the symbolic representation of place names, a device already at work in the choice of Οὐλαμμοῦς for the place of encounter with the divine in Lk 24,13 D05. It is in the Bezan text generally that Luke's recourse to implicit narrative techniques is the most apparent and the most consistent. For the current issue, the attitude of the apostles to Israel, it is the name given to Jerusalem that is relevant. Throughout his two volumes according to Codex Bezae, Luke operates a dual system in the spelling of the name, using the Hebrew-derived spelling, Ἱερουσαλήμ, to mean Jerusalem as the holy city, the seat of religious authority and the place of the Temple; in contrast, the Hellenistic

8 It can hardly have been by accident that Luke omitted from his Gospel Mark's material concerning Jesus' ministry among the Gentiles in which he goes beyond the frontiers of Israel (Mk 6,45-8,26). This is a task he leaves to the apostles.

spelling, Ἱεροσόλυμα, denotes the city as a geographical location, devoid of religious significance.⁹

Throughout Luke 24 (vv. 13.18.33) the action of the narrative has been centred in the former, Ἱερουσαλήμ, which has been used to represent the apostles' attachment to its authority. However, Luke records that as Jesus was about to leave them, he 'led them outside (ἐξήγαγεν αὐτοὺς ἔξω, Lk 24,50 D05; Alex.: ἔως) near Bethany', using the verb that characterised the Exodus (LXX ἐξάγω, e.g. Ex 12,17.42.51; cf. Stephen speaking of the Exodus, Acts 7,36.40). At the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah spoke of the 'exodus' that Jesus himself had to make when he got to Jerusalem in anticipation of his death there (ἔλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ ἣν ἤμελλεν πληροῦν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ, Lk 9,31, cf. 9,51). This was the first sign Luke gave that the Exodus would be re-enacted but in a new way, by the Messiah leaving Jerusalem, the centre of Jewish existence and the place of his expected arrival; it will be repeated when the apostles are led out by the angel of the Lord of the prison in which the High Priest and Sadducees had shut them up (Acts 5,19), and again when Peter is led out of the prison in which Herod had shut him (Acts 12,17). The series of occurrences of the verb ἐξάγω, in conjunction with the later development of the theme of the exodus and of the oppression of the apostles by the Jewish authorities, causes Jesus' action of 'leading out' his disciples to be seen as a deliberate attempt to free them from Jerusalem as a place of spiritual significance.

In keeping with this interpretation is his instruction to them that after his departure they were to return and wait for the Holy Spirit 'in the city' (ἐν τῇ πόλει), an order that is repeated in exactly equivalent terms in Acts 1,4: 'do not depart from Hierosolyma' (ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων μὴ χωρίζεσθαι). This clear order notwithstanding, the apostles are described on both occasions as returning to the Jewish religious centre: 'they returned to Jerusalem' (καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπέστρεψεν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ, Lk 24,52; τότε ὑπέστρεψεν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ, Acts 1,12). Clearly, they had understood something more of Jesus message than when he left the two of them in such a state of grief at Oulammaous (Lk 24,33 D05), for they returned to Jerusalem after his ascension 'with great joy' (μετὰ χαρᾶς μεγάλης, Lk 24,52, *omit* μεγάλης B03); and Peter's first speech to the rest of the disciples (Acts 1,16-22) will certainly demonstrate a full belief in his resurrection such as will be manifest in all of the early apostolic speeches. But that the status of Israel had changed and that Jerusalem was no longer the spiritual centre is an awareness that is yet to develop. Accordingly, they returned to the Temple (Lk 24,52) and continued to participate in Temple activities for some considerable time (Acts 1,14, cf. 2,46; 3,1-8). The form Ἱερουσαλήμ will continue to be used with reference to the apostles as a whole until after the decision of the Jerusalem council (16,4; cf. 15,2a D05,

9 READ-HEIMERDINGER, Bezan Text, 311-333.

2b, 4), although in the case of Peter and John, a change is signalled once they have taken the message of Jesus to the Samaritans (8,25; cf. 8,1 D05, 14 D05 and 11,2 D05).

3. Acts 1,6

There is more evidence of the apostles' partial comprehension of Jesus' vision of the kingdom in the Acts account of their final meal together (cf. Lk 24,41-43), during which the apostles brought up the topic of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. That their thoughts should turn to the question is natural. Jesus had been talking about so many things that were, precisely, part of the Jewish expectation of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel – the resurrection of the Messiah, the accomplishment of the promise of the Father, through the coming of the Holy Spirit, which was to take place in Jerusalem. All these factors taken together could cause the apostles to understand that the restoration of Israel was about to happen, and happen according to the plan they had always understood was laid out in the Scriptures.

The moment has arrived when they realize their master is about to be taken from them,¹⁰ and it is urgent that before he goes they settle a crucial question about the restoration. All manuscripts except Codex Bezae say that they started to ask him (ἠρώτων αὐτόν), 'Is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' (εἰ ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ ἀποκαθιστάνεις τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ Ἰσραήλ;). In other words, since Jesus is the Messiah, and since he has demonstrated the truth of the resurrection and is now about to return to the Father, and since the Holy Spirit is about to be given, are they about to witness the fulfilment of the other prophecies concerning the return of Israel's sovereignty over all the other nations? And within that kingdom, their own rule over the twelve tribes of Israel, promised by Jesus at his other last meal with them shortly before he was crucified (Lk 22,30)? For the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel was a key aspect of the renewal of Israel when the

10 The parallels between the account of Jesus' ascension and that of Elijah are marked. Since in the Gospel, however, Jesus is at pains to stress to his disciples that he is not Elijah, it would seem that Luke's intention in drawing attention to the parallels wishes to show how the apostles mistakenly continued in some ways to identify Jesus as Elijah. The intuitive knowledge of Elijah's disciple, Elisha, that his master was to be taken away before anyone had told him so, is a central element of the story in 2 Kings (2 Kgs 2,3.5). From this it can be deduced that the apostles also realized when the last day of Jesus' life on earth had arrived and that it was this realization that prompted their questioning in Acts 1,6

time came for Israel to rule again as a united kingdom under the Davidic Messiah-king.¹¹

In the text of Codex Bezae, the apostles' question is rather different and focuses on just one aspect of the restoration of Israel. The Greek has an unfinished question, which the apostles put to Jesus insistently (ἐπηρώτων αὐτόν): 'Is this the time when you will restore to Israel...?' (εἰ ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ ἀποκαταστάνεις εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Ἰσραήλ ...;). What is missing from the kingdom of Israel that needs to be restored before Jesus leaves them? In the Bezan text of Lk 22,30, Jesus had specified that there would be twelve thrones,¹² thus making explicit the assimilation of the Twelve apostles with the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Lk 6,13-14; 9,1-2). The apostles are faced, however, with a dilemma seeing as Jesus is about to leave them. They have lost one of their members, Judas, 'one of the Twelve' (Lk 22,47) or, more emphatically, 'one of the number of the Twelve' (Lk 22,3); since his betrayal of Jesus, they have been reduced to a group of 'Eleven' (Lk 24,9.33; Acts 1,13.26 Alex.), which was as incomplete as the number of the sons of Jacob in the absence of Joseph (cf. Gen 37,9; 42,32). What could be more natural than that the apostles should look to Jesus for the replacement of Judas?

But he does nothing. He does not even answer their question. In the Bezan text of 1,7, he interrupts them (indicated by καί)¹³ and cuts across their question without letting them finish it (the aorist εἶπεν interrupts the imperfect ἐπηρώτων); that he does not answer their question is indicated by the equally unexpected absence of conjunction in B03 (other manuscripts, including **801**, read δέ). Instead of doing anything about replacing Judas, he responds with a general remark about the inappropriateness of asking the question at all: only the Father knows about every moment in time and the timing of his intervention in the world. His rebuke does not allow any certain inference to be drawn at this stage about whether restoration will ever take place at all. What is about to become clear is that the Twelve have lost their status as representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel and that Jesus does not intend the number of the apostles to be brought back to its full complement.

11 On the importance of the apostles as representatives of the twelve tribes for the restoration of Israel, see R. BAUCKHAM, *The Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts*, in: J.M. SCOTT (ed.), *Restoration. Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Perspectives*, Leiden 2001, 435-487.

12 Cf. the parallel in Mt 19,28. Although the D05 text of Lk 22,30 could be seen as a harmonisation of the Matthew passage, it is equally possible that 'twelve' was felt to be a problem by other MSS of Luke because of the loss of Judas who was part of the group addressed by Jesus (in Matthew's account the group is wider).

13 See S.H. LEVINSOHN, *Textual Connections in Acts*, Atlanta 1987, 83-120; READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text*, 247. The use of καί to introduce a speaker response is unusual in a dialogue in Acts and can be understood as an indication that there is a lack of true exchange and that there are two lines of thought (the apostles' and Jesus') running in parallel.

4. *Acts 1,15-26*

For the time being, the apostles themselves have not yet understood that the divine plan has been modified and that Judas is not to be replaced. Once Jesus has been taken away from them, therefore, it is understandable that they cannot allow their incomplete number to continue. True, the instructions of Jesus had been clear enough: they were to ‘sit in the city’ (καθίσαιτε ἐν τῇ πόλει) until they received power from on high (Lk 24,49); they were to ‘wait for the promise’ (περιμένειν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν) of the Holy Spirit, in Ἱεροσόλυμα (Acts 1,4-5). But they, for their part, are so concerned by the urgent need to have Judas replaced that they set about organizing it themselves. The reason for the urgency becomes apparent when Luke provides the list of the people who gathered in the upper room to wait for the Spirit —apart from the Eleven, there is the family of Jesus, including his brothers. Now, these had been conspicuous by their absence during his lifetime (Lk 4,22-24 [cf. Mk 6.1-4]; Lk 8,19-21), and their sudden appearance at this stage has all the marks of an interest in the succession of Jesus. To avoid a claim being made by his blood family, it is imperative to make the group of Twelve intact again.

If Jesus did not intend their number to be made up to Twelve after Judas’ death, does this not contradict his promise about the twelve thrones? What has happened to alter the plan? Certainly, Judas has betrayed him since the time the promise was made but Jesus already knew that was about to happen (Lk 22,21). Furthermore, the assimilation made by the Bezan text of the act of Judas with the deception of Jacob who, despite his cruel trickery, nevertheless went on to become the one called Israel, signifies that it was not the betrayal in itself that deprived Judas of his place as one of the apostles, or caused a permanent change in the number of the apostles in the divine plan.

The event that received no mention in the Gospel is the death of Judas. This will only be brought up in the course of the speech Peter makes to the assembly of 120 disciples in preparation for the replacement for Judas (Acts 1,16-22). It will be mentioned, in an aside by the narrator according to Codex Bezae, to explain why Peter believes Judas must be replaced (1,18-19). Now, the accounts of the events in Judas’ life after he had handed Jesus over to the Jewish authorities notoriously vary from one to another (evidence perhaps that symbols have been misconstrued),¹⁴ but according to Luke he died the death of an ungodly blasphemer, his entrails bursting out as he fell headlong (πρηνής) on the ground of the field (χωρίον) he had purchased with his payment for betraying Jesus. He presents his death as a punishment, taking up the term πρηνής from the LXX book of Wisdom (Wisd 4,19) where the gruesome fate of the godless is described: ‘They will become a dishonoured

14 See W. KLASSEN, *Judas. Betrayer or Friend of Jesus*, London 1996, esp. Chapter 9.

corpse ..., he will throw them ... headlong (πρηνής) ..., they will remain a desert to the end'.¹⁵ Thus his field had become known as the field of blood. In a powerful play on words in Aramaic, Luke shows how Judas' role as one of the Twelve has become a curse. He takes up a word from the expression used by Peter to describe Judas, a phrase that traditionally referred to one of the twelve patriarchs: 'he was numbered with us and will receive a portion (κλήρος) and share with us in the division of the land'.¹⁶ The Aramaic word for 'portion', קלל, can be re-ordered to produce the word for 'field' קלל.¹⁷ Judas has exchanged his portion in Israel for a field of blood. The unthinkable has happened.

Betrayal, denial, Jesus' death, all these were already envisaged by Jesus when he confirmed to the Twelve apostles the importance of their role with respect to Israel. The rupture of the group, the loss of one of the Twelve, this was never envisaged. Jesus does not talk about it with the Eleven, much less does he choose a replacement. The apostolic group has become incomplete and he leaves it so. And without the Twelve representing Israel, Israel ceases to hold a privileged position among the nations. No minor adjustment to the divine plan, but a massive upheaval. According to Acts in Codex Bezae, this will be the lesson the apostles eventually learn; Paul, too, though not without much resistance. Questions here abound, not least because we are not used to considering the loss of Judas as causing the permanent removal of Israel's privilege. Who or what did Judas represent exactly in Luke's account of events? Why could Jesus not simply replace him? Why did Jesus not explain clearly to the Eleven what had happened? Exploration of these questions, with specific reference to the Bezan text of Luke-Acts, would be well worthwhile but has to be left for another time.

Who knows what explanation the apostles gave themselves for why the Messiah did not take it upon himself to appoint a replacement for Judas on the day he was ascending to heaven? Whatever it may have been, they did not understand that the rupture provoked by the death of Judas was so profound that it had broken up the whole structure and importance of the Twelve for good.

So Peter pushes through his proposal to replace Judas with another of Jesus' disciples. The procedure adopted to select the replacement is commonly as-

15 This parallel is pointed out by KLASSEN, Judas, 168-169.

16 *Targ. Gen.* 44,18. This use of targumic material was pointed out by M. WILCOX, The Judas-Tradition in Acts 1.15-26, in: NTS 19 (1973), 438-452. The few commentators who note Wilcox's article tend to be dismissive but in fact, the use of targumic material here is typical of the use made of Jewish traditional material by Luke generally and by the representatives of the early Church in Acts, especially according to Codex Bezae.

17 The play on words in Aramaic is presented by WILCOX, The Judas-Tradition, pp. 448-449. The significance of the name was presumably lost on anyone not familiar with Aramaic, which could account for the variant spelling in Ⲛ 01, for example.

sumed to be a draw by lots, following a precautionary prayer to ensure divine ratification of the result. This interpretation assumes that the disciples were in line with the plan of God in replacing Judas. It also depends on taking the expression used to describe the procedure (ἔδοκαν κλήρους αὐτοῖς, 1,26 Alex.) as meaning that ‘lots were thrown for them’, imitating a procedure found frequently in the Jewish Scriptures, which would involve a random throwing of pebbles, for example, to make a selection by chance; the people concerned have no part in the decision and the choice is seen as God’s. The way this operation is described in the Scriptures, however, is always ‘to throw lots’, βάλλειν κλήρους.¹⁸ The expression of Acts is only found in the singular, διδόναι κλήρον; the references are countless and chiefly refer to the distribution of land to the twelve tribes. Elsewhere there is evidence that it refers to a vote and not to a casting of lots at all.¹⁹ While a vote is by no means excluded by the Alex.,²⁰ in Codex Bezae it is made more likely by the presence of the possessive adjective: ἔδοκαν κλήρους αὐτῶν, ‘they gave *their* votes’, 1,26 D05. That is, the election of Judas’ replacement is carried out by the disciples themselves.

The result? The vote falls in favour of Matthias and he was ‘enrolled (συγκαταψηφίσθη) with the Eleven apostles’, according to the Alex.. Codex Bezae views it differently: he was ‘reckoned (συνεψηφίσθη) with the Twelve apostles’.²¹ This could be thought to be saying exactly the same thing as the other manuscripts, taking the counting to be inclusive rather than exclusive. However, when the narrator next mentions the apostles, at Pentecost as Peter prepares to speak on their behalf to the crowd (2,14), in place of the Alex. reading ‘Peter with the Eleven’ (ὁ Πέτρος σὺν τοῖς ἑνδεκά), D05 reads ‘Peter with the ten apostles’ (ὁ Πέτρος σὺν τοῖς δέκα ἀποστόλοις). It then becomes evident that Matthias had not been integrated into the apostolic circle at all. He was to be viewed as standing alongside the original group of Twelve; no-

18 See 1 Chron 25,8; 26,13.14; Neh 10,34 [35]; 11,1 *vl.*; Est 3,7; Joel 3 [4].3; Hab 1,11; Jon 1,7; Nah 3,10; Isa 34,17.

19 For the meaning of διδόναι κλήρον as a ballot, see Est. 9,24 and DSM (=IQS) 6,16.18.22.

20 A. JAUBERT, ‘L’élection de Matthias et le tirage au sort, in: SE 6 (1973), 274-280, admits of a preliminary deliberation of the kind indicated at Qumran followed by an election by means of lots. Likewise, W.A. BEARDSLEE, *The Casting of Lots at Qumran*, in: NT 4 (1960), 245-252, though the parallel he draws with Qumran is debatable. R. ECKART, *Pseudo-Philo und Lukas*, Tübingen 1994, discusses interesting similarities between the account of Acts and the book of Judges in Pseudo-Philo.

21 The basic meaning of the verb ψηφίζω, ‘to count with pebbles or fingers’, comes to mean ‘to count, calculate’. In the Alex. verb συγκαταψηφίζω (found elsewhere only in Plutarch, *Themistocles* 21, with a different sense), the preposition συγ- underlines the idea of a common decision and the preposition -κατα confers on the verb a perfective nuance, ‘completely, totally’. In contrast, the simpler verb συμψηφίζω of the Bezan text contains only the first nuance, a joint decision.

one could fully replace any of those original members chosen by Jesus. In actual fact, he will never be mentioned again. The one Christian leader who is frequently mentioned, and always in strongly positive terms, is Barnabas, the first candidate proposed by Peter according to 1,23 D05 and rejected by the vote of the assembly.

It seems that in some measure Peter understood this, for he had carefully explained in his preparatory speech that the elected candidate should take on Judas' 'office' but that his 'estate' was to remain deserted (1,20). So the new apostle was not intended to be enlisted as a full member of the original apostolic group but only as a replacement to fill the 'office', leaving the patriarchal seat vacant. Even so, in the thinking of the apostles, Judas had in some respect been replaced and the established pattern of the leadership of Israel has been maintained. Furthermore, with the vacant place filled, the family of Jesus has been prevented for the time being from laying claim to their family ties to succeed as the Messiah's heir. In time, however, James, the brother of Jesus, will become head of the church in Jerusalem (Ἱεροσολήμ, 15,4, not B03), closely attached to the Temple and Jewish opinion long after the apostles had broken free (cf. 21,18-25).

The main consequence that follows from this election is that with the restoration of the Twelve, the apostles have restricted the universal scope of the witness that Jesus had entrusted them with (1,8). Their understanding that the apostolic group was to mirror the patriarchal pattern of the leadership of Israel will conflict with the breadth of vision that was a distinguishing feature of Jesus' commission and they will find that they have erected a barrier to their witness with their failure to realize that the Gentiles are accepted by God on the same basis as the Jews. The apostles' discovery of the opposition of the Jewish leaders to the one they are now so confident is the Messiah, will be the main impetus for them to broaden their vision and in the end abandon the ancient Jewish hopes and expectations.

5. Acts 5,12-42

Following the arrival of the Holy Spirit (2,1-4), the apostles' mission will slowly be carried out according to Jesus' instructions, often with much success, though not without some stumblings. For receiving the Holy Spirit did not produce, any more than it does now, instant perfection. Even with some of their great speeches Luke disagrees. This is important: he uses the speeches to show what his characters were thinking at a given time, as a reflection of their ideas. Is this not what speech is about? As for Luke, his voice is heard as the narrator's, whose silences are often as telling as the overt comments.

Progressively, the apostles come to a realization of the responsibility of the Jewish leaders for the death of the Messiah, expressed in a radical re-working of Ps 2,1-2 in which the nations who oppose the 'Lord and his anointed' are recognized as including their own 'peoples of Israel' (4,27). This will cause the believers in Jesus to organize themselves as a separate community under the supervision of the apostles. The extent to which they replace the Temple authorities is seen in the fact that it is they who administer the funds for the poor, a task otherwise entrusted to the priests (4,34-35).

The community continue, nevertheless, to meet in the Temple (ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, 5,12 D05; cf. Lk 24,52; Acts 2,46; 3,1). For all that there have been significant steps made by the apostles in moving away from their traditional religious system, it is within it that they remain. Another step is imminent, however, as the High Priest and the Sadducees, jealous of the apostles' success in performing healings of all kinds (5,17), imprison them for a second time (cf. 4,2). An angel of the Lord frees them and instructs them to return to the Temple, this time to 'speak to the people all the words of this life' (5,20). The Sanhedrin are furious and apparently intend to do away with them but, thanks to the intervention of Gamaliel, they finally accept to let them go. At the end of the episode, the apostles are seen back in the Temple, now engaged in teaching and announcing Jesus as the Christ (5,42).

All of this would read as a straightforward, factual report if it were not for a trail of clues leading to a deeper purpose that identifies the release of the apostles from the Temple prison with the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt:²² the angel of the Lord (ἄγγελος κυρίου, 5,19; cf. Num 20,16, Ex 14,19); who leads the prisoners out (ἐξαγαγών τε αὐτούς, 5,20; cf., e.g., Ex 12,17.42.51 LXX); at night, highlighted in D05 (τότε διὰ νυκτὸς ἄγγελος κυρίου, 5,19 D05, cf. Ex 12,12.29.31.42). Further verbal clues in the scene preceding the imprisonment draw on Jewish traditions surrounding the Exodus story as much as the biblical narrative:

–the apostles' signs and wonders (σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα πολλά ἐν τῷ λαῷ, 5,12a) recall the wonders performed by Moses (τέρατα, Ex 7,3), as well as the large number of miracles at the Red Sea attributed to him by tradition: Wisd 19,8b; cf. Acts 7,36.²³

–the unity of the apostolic community (ὁμοθυμαδόν, 5,12) is comparable to that of the Israelites as they left Egypt, as later tradition records it following Ex 12,31-32 (cf. Wisd 10,20 ὁμοθυμαδόν; 18,9; 19,8)

22 For a more detailed examination of the theme, see J. READ-HEIMERDINGER, 'The Re-Enactment of the History of Israel. Exodus Traditions in the Bezan Text of Acts', in: Festschrift GARETH LLOYD-JONES, 2003, forthcoming.

23 *Targ. Ps.-J. Ex.* 15,11 amplifies the Hebrew text when it speaks of the Lord 'performing signs and wonders for your people, the house of Israel' at the Red Sea.

– the divine power experienced through Peter’s shadow (σκιά) as it overshadowed (lit.) the sick (ἐπισκιάση, 5,15), is comparable to the divine presence contained in the cloud that preceded the Israelites and ‘overshadowed’ the tent of meeting in the wilderness: e.g. Ex 40,35, ἐπεσκίαζεν LXX; cf. Isa. 4,6.

– the healing of the sick in Jerusalem (ἔθεραπεύοντο, 5,16 Alex.; ἰώντο D05) recalls the healing of the Israelites by the Lord ‘your healer’ in the wilderness: Ex 15,27, ἰώμενος LXX.

By activating the Exodus account as a paradigm, comparison is made between the miraculous deliverance of the apostles and the release of Israel from the Egyptians. Other similarities with accounts of Jesus’ activity in the Gospel combine with this positive assessment of the apostles to endorse the apostles’ ministry and demonstrate that God is on their side.

At the same time, there is a more sinister aspect of the use of the Exodus paradigm, for it implies that the authorities of the High Priestly circle are assimilated with Pharaoh. The parallels between the two are apparent in additional elements, more numerous in the Bezan text, that relate specifically to the authorities: their jealousy (5,17), in accordance with a tradition that Pharaoh sought to get rid of Moses because he was jealous of his success;²⁴ the comments in Codex Bezae that after putting the apostles in custody, ‘each one went to his own house’ (5,18 D05), where they remained until they were ‘roused early in the morning’ (τὸ πρωῖ, 5,21 D05), apparently enacting Moses’ command to the people of Israel on the night of the Passover: ‘none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning’ (Ex 12,22, ἕως πρωῖ LXX); finally, ‘they called together the Sanhedrin, that is all the senate of the sons of Israel’ (πᾶσαν τὴν γερουσίαν τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ, 5,21), echoing the action Moses took when he transmitted the instructions concerning the passover to the people of Israel: ‘Moses called all the senate of the sons of Israel’ (Ex 12,21, πᾶσαν γερουσίαν υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ LXX).

In other words, the High Priest and the Sadducees behave as if *they* are the favoured ones, the privileged people of God. Their confidence, however, turns to parody for while they think that they are safe behind the closed doors of their houses (cf. Ex 12,22, τὴν θύραν LXX), protected by their obedience to God just like the Israelites of old, the angel of the Lord comes and opens the doors (τὰς θύρας, Acts 5,19) to deliver not them but the apostles! The reversal of fortune is full of dramatic irony for the narrator has already established (5,12-17) that it is the apostles, those who believe in and follow Jesus as Messiah, who have been given the divine power to teach, heal and lead the people of God.

24 The evidence for this tradition is found in the work of Artapanus, a Hellenistic Jew from 3rd/2nd century BCE, cited by Eusebius *praep.* 9,27,7.17; and Josephus, *Ant.*, 2,254-5.

There is, in other words, an implied conflict over who exactly is leading Israel. The apostles, for their part, have understood that they have superseded the Temple leaders; they return to the Temple but this time to teach and announce Jesus as the Christ (5,42). No mention will be made again in Acts of the apostles' participation in Temple worship or practices.

6. Acts 12

When the apostles' attention is forced away from Jerusalem by the ministry of the Hellenistic disciples from Acts 6 onwards, significant steps, constantly underlined in the text of Codex Bezae, continue to be made in their detachment from their traditional beliefs and expectations. As we leap-frog over them to reach the climactic break recorded in Acts 12 D05, we may note in passing how Peter and John's break with religious centre of Ἱερουσαλήμ first occurs when they witness the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans (Ἱεροσόλυμα 8,25; cf. 8,14 D05); and how Peter first refuses the symbol of the purity of all flesh (10,14-16; 11,8-10) but is forced to accept its truth when he witnesses the outpouring of the same Spirit on the Gentiles (10,34-36, 45; 11,15-17 D05; 15,8-11).

It is Peter, (whose heightened role in the Bezan text has everything to do with Luke's interest in him, already evident in the Gospel, and nothing to do with the importance accorded to him by a later church)²⁵ who leads the apostles in a final deliverance from the Jewish religious institution. This is realized with the impact of his Spirit-inspired speech at the apostolic council (15,7-11 D05), but his own personal deliverance is achieved as early as Acts 12. The incident reported here is ostensibly an attack on the apostles by the Jews who are represented by Herod Agrippa I, of Jewish stock and anxious to please the people he ruled (12,1.3), which is countered by divine intervention. However, as in the similar incident of Acts 5, Peter's imprisonment and his miraculous escape with the help of an angel of the Lord is modelled on the Exodus paradigm. It is telling that the lesson has, as it were, to be repeated in order for its implications to be properly learnt. This time it has profound consequences for Peter's relationship with the Jewish religious institution.²⁶

Exodus parallels abound —among them: the last night of Passover (12,4.6; cf. Ex 12,12.29-31.42); while the church was watching (12,5.12; cf. Ex

25 *Pace* B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Stuttgart 1994, who expresses the popular belief that Peter's enhanced role in D05 reflects his 'monarchical episcopate' (249).

26 The text of Acts 12 in Codex Bezae is examined in detail in READ-HEIMERDINGER, *The Re-Enactment of the History of Israel*.

12,42); the angel of the Lord (12,7; cf. Num 20-16); in haste (12,7; cf. Ex 12,11.33); the belt and the sandals (12,8; cf. Ex 12,11); the cloak (12,8; cf. Ex 12,34); he was 'led out (ἐξήγαγεν) of the prison' (12,17; cf. Ex 12,17.42.51). Once again, the oppressors are the Jews who turn upon their own 'faithful' people (12,3 D05), the Jesus-believers in Judaea (12,1 D05), but this time it is not just the religious authorities who act out Pharaoh's role but the people as a whole (12,3) under their secular ruler. And in Codex Bezae the paradigm is applied at a deeper level: in Acts 5, the apostles were released from obedience to the Temple rulers; now, Peter is released from the whole religious system.

The provocation for the attack at this particular time was the famine relief that the Jewish brethren in Judaea (11,29) received from the Jesus-believing community in Antioch which included many Greeks according to Codex Bezae ('Ελληνάς, 11,20 D05; cf. Ἑλληνιστάς, B03; εὐαγγέλιστας, N01). The repetition of the phrase ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ to describe the church in 12,1 D05 makes the connection clear. Such gifts would be impure and it is Herod who takes the lead in punishing those who received them.

While on a literal level of interpretation the miraculous deliverance of Peter from Herod's prison, despite the highest level of security, is a demonstration of the power of God and his care of the apostles, the exodus paradigm further underlines how the church have become the new People of God, as the Jewish people have become the oppressors. That this involves a complete break with Israel is shown in the Bezan text through the juxtaposition of the declaration Peter makes on becoming aware of his deliverance and another of those clues that has been deposited in the Bezan text as an interpretative key for the episode. Taking the elements in the order they appear, the key is the mention of the 'seven steps' (τοὺς ζ βαθμούς, 12,10 D05) that the angel led Peter down as they went through the iron door and out of the prison. Far from constituting a touch of local colour, as is often supposed, the seven steps recall, as I have argued previously,²⁷ the only other mention of seven steps in the Jewish Scriptures, those that lead out of the new temple in Ezekiel's vision of the restored Israel (Ez 40,22.26). The allusion, in itself a typically Jewish exegetical device, confers on Peter's prison a symbolic force, identifying it as the heart of the restoration ideal. Peter has been freed by the angel of the Lord from the hopes, expressed even in Scripture, for the restoration of Israel.

27 See J. HEIMERDINGER, The Seven Steps of Codex Bezae: A Prophetic Interpretation of Acts 12, in: D.C. PARKER/C.-B. AMPHOUX (eds.), *Codex Bezae: Studies from the Lunel Colloquium June 1994* (NTTS 22), Leiden 1996, 303-310. In suggesting that a complete break with Israel is represented by the symbols and allusions of Acts 12, and not just a separation from the Jews opposed to the Messiah, I go further here than in the previous study.

This interpretation gives a poignant meaning to Peter's declaration at 12,11 (which echoes the words of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, when he learnt how the Israelites had been delivered from Egypt, Ex 18,10-11), when he recognizes not only that God has saved him from the hostility of Herod, the Jewish king who has become aligned with Pharaoh in a tragic reversal of roles, but more profoundly, that he has been freed from 'all the expectations of the Jews'.

At last, Peter's understanding and acceptance of the message of Jesus is complete and, once he has reported his release to the church at Mary's house, he is said to go 'to another place', εἰς ἕτερον τόπον, 12,17. The meaning of this enigmatic phrase is once again derived from the book of Ezekiel for the identical expression is found at Ez 12,3 to describe the destination of the prophet as he left Jerusalem like an exile because of the city's rebellion against God. His judgment is repeated in Peter's gesture, but this time without the promise of a future return: God has taken his people out of Jerusalem and released them from the expectations of a restored Israel.

7. Conclusions

The radical shift in the status of Israel from being the chosen people of God to being one nation among others is a principal component of the message of the Bezan text of Acts. That such a dramatic upheaval was initially beyond the grasp, let alone the acceptance, of the apostles is not surprising. They will see what God has planned, for Israel and the Gentiles, as he acts through their witness to the Messiah. Luke uses their experience, as he will later use that of Paul (who was no less fallible than the apostles according to the Bezan portrayal), to convey to Theophilus the complete change of mentality needed to follow Jesus.