

The Function of LXX Habakkuk 1:5 in the Book of Acts

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This case study of Scripture's intertextuality follows the route of LXX Hab 1:5 through the Acts of the Apostles, from Paul's citation of it in climaxing his inaugural (and programmatic) sermon (Acts 13:41), to its intra-/intertextual echo in Acts 15:3. Its function in Acts 13:41 underscores the redemptive importance of Paul's "report" of God's "work" among the Gentiles: to dispute the prophet's "report" (ἐκδιηγέομαι) is to reject God's bid to save God's people. When Paul's travel "report" (ἐκδιηγέομαι, 15:3) of his Gentile mission is again disputed by Jewish believers in Antioch (15:1) and Jerusalem (15:5), their eternal life is threatened according to biblical prophecy.

Key words: intertextuality, intertextual echo, proof-from-prophecy, Jerusalem Council, Gentile mission

1. DEFINITION OF INTERTEXTUALITY

A technical definition of intertextuality is difficult to state with precision. In part this is because the term was only recently coined by poststructuralist literary critics (J. Kristeva, R. Barthes) as a catchword for a textual phenomenon recognized and practiced from antiquity: that the very existence and full meaning of every literary text are predicated by its relationship to other texts, whether spoken or written, earlier or later. At its essence, then, intertextuality refers to literature's constant recourse to other literature, which merely confirms that "no text is an island," composed in isolation from a body of other texts. This repetition of antecedent and subsequent texts, whether by citation or echo diction, not only marks out the intertext but amplifies and even revises an "original" meaning in order to reconstitute different texts as parts of one continuous written Text of shared images, stories, and meanings.

Even a cursory reading of Scripture reflects the routine use that biblical writers make of their sacred texts. Biblical texts need only mention a single familiar phrase or specific person to evoke the reader's memory of other well-known biblical texts and stories in which that phrase is used or person mentioned. Sometimes these texts are actually cited but more often echoed by reference to common words or narrative elements (e.g., people, places, events). The anticipated result of finding these citations or hearing the echoes of one text in another is to link the two texts together as participants in a reflexive, mutually informing conversation—hence, the word, *intertextuality*. Significantly, the earlier text, cited or echoed in a newly composed text, not only recalls a particular story or idea but also a history of reception that adds still other layers of information to the interpretive matrix; the result is that a fuller, richer meaning unfolds for the reader.¹ A biblical text occupies a space in which different "voices" congregate and enter into conversation with each other and in which the interpreter is present as an eavesdropper.

Not only does this interplay take place between two discrete biblical writings, but Shemaryahu Talmon has called attention to a lesser-known "exegetical rule of the Sages," that "one verse may help in ascertaining the sense of another" within the same composition.² Thus, the full meaning of an idea unfolds within the writing when the repetition of key words or phrases used within different compositional settings to define the idea articulates different aspects of its whole meaning.

In both of these examples of textuality, the texture of a particular text is thickened and its meaning expanded by its relationship with other texts, especially when the reader recognizes that the repetition of similar phrases and subject matter cues parts of an integral whole, whether that whole is the entire biblical canon or an entire biblical writing. I would add that the interpreter who pays attention to these echoes and arranges appropriate texts to facilitate the mutual exchange of information is typically constrained by the theological conviction that "diverse components of the biblical anthology share a common world view, (where) innumerable strands link together the constitutive units (to form) a literary and ideological entity."³

1. This historical-critical task of finding echoing predecessors prevents a version of intertextuality that is purely literary and of the present moment; see Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 18-19.

2. S. Talmon, "Emendation of Biblical Texts on the Basis of Ugaritic Parallels," in *Studies in the Bible* (ed. S. Japhet; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986) 280 (see pp. 279-300 for extended argument of his point).

3. *Ibid.*, 279.

2. THEOLOGY OF SCRIPTURE ACCORDING TO ACTS

One more quick note is essential before pressing on with my example of intertextuality from the book of Acts. The study of intertextuality in Acts presumes that the narrative's use of Scripture is guided by the narrator's theology of Scripture. While Luke's hermeneutic is also shaped by the currents of his Greco-Roman world, his use of Scripture in Acts is essentially Jewish (Jervell): thus, Acts employs the idiom of his Jewish Scriptures and envisages a theology that is consonant with the Church's Jewish theological heritage: that is, Scripture is produced by the Spirit of God, whose word continues to address the people of God as this same Spirit leads interpreters to render Scripture's divinely intended meaning in public proclamation (17:3).⁴ In this way, Scripture is rightly used to supply evidence that "these things that have happened among us" follow God's prophesied plan for Israel's promised restoration.

3. THE FUNCTION OF LXX HABAKKUK 1:5 IN ACTS 13:41

Most commentators of Acts note the programmatic importance of Paul's inaugural speech in 13:16–41 for interpreting both his commission (13:2; cf. 9:15–16) and his mission within this narrative world. The subject matter of Paul's speech concentrates the big ideas of Paul's gospel, according to Acts, and his sharp response to the reaction he provokes in 13:46 helps to supply this narrative's justification for his Gentile mission (cf. 18:6; 28:28). Sharply put for our present study, then, the rhetorical importance of his speech merely underscores the rhetorical importance of the quotation from LXX Hab 1:5 that concludes the speech in Acts 13:41 and contextualizes

4. Luke's belief in the simultaneity of these sacred texts is clear by the several formulae that claim that all Scripture is rightly interpreted by a Christian theological typology (24:14; 26:22) or, similarly, that all Scripture "speaks" about the Christ event or the events that follow after him (3:18, 24; 10:43; 17:3; 18:28; 24:14; 26:23). Luke's composition, then, is itself a Christian midrash of selected biblical texts, a synecdoche for all Scripture, which demonstrates that this is precisely the case: not only are all of the prophecies of Scripture being fulfilled, but their divinely intended meaning is now being rendered by memories of Jesus and his apostolic successors, now "reported" (see διήγησις, Luke 1:1) by the Evangelist. The tragic irony for Luke, of course, is that, even though Scripture belongs to Israel, Israel fails to understand its true, christological meaning. The salvation of Israel is at stake when Scripture is not understood in light of the messiahship of Jesus and the experiences of his converted people, who now live under the aegis of the Spirit. Likewise, the identity of a true Israel, constituted by these Christian converts, is disclosed by a believing response to Scripture's prophetic message.

the audience's divided response to Paul's gospel, according to 13:44–47.⁵

A few summary observations. The use of Hab 1:5 in this narrative setting agrees broadly in language and spirit with its original sense in the prophecy of Habakkuk: even as the prophecy issues God's warning of imminent destruction to an unfaithful Israel,⁶ its use in Acts appeals to a later generation of Israel to believe this new report of God's work: by "reporting" (ἐκδιηγέομαι) the details of God's "work" through Messiah, Paul continues the prophet's vocation of announcing God's word to Israel. In this essential way, then, the performance of the antecedent text and its carrier has insinuated itself upon Paul and his gospel to make more clear to the current audience that the stakes for listening to Scripture's prophetic announcement of God's work among them remain as high as ever.

Although on balance the original meaning of the prophecy is not distorted, a close reading evinces its slight modification to exploit its new setting in Acts 13—an expectation of a second horizon of meaning cued by the quotation's added postscript, ὑμῖν ("to you"): even as Habakkuk's prophecy spoke God's word to Israel long ago, so now it mediates God's word "to you." The proof-from-prophecy method employed by Luke does not in this case intend to supply details of his christological reading of Scripture but, rather, to indicate that the current generation of Diaspora Jews finds itself at a moment in salvation's history similar to the one facing Habakkuk's Judah, when their response to God's word will determine their future destiny. The most important change to this citation, presumably to adapt it more precisely to its new setting in Acts, is the addition of a second

5. The Lukan Paul appeals to Scripture to settle two theological problems that continue to provoke controversy during his mission: (1) The first problem participates in a wider intramural debate, within Judaism, between messianic and nonmessianic Jews a problem envisaged in Acts by the fact that Paul's interpretation of Scripture is typically located within a Jewish synagogue and provokes controversy among other Jewish conversation partners, such as James and Diaspora Jews. Within this Jewish setting, Paul's strategy, following Peter's before him, is to posit a proof-from-prophecy that claims it is necessary (δεῖ) for God's Messiah to suffer so that God might raise him from the dead; and that this prophesied Christ is realized in the suffering and resurrection of Jesus from Nazareth. (2) Besides this christological meaning, Scripture is also used by Paul to explain the conflict and conversion that result from his christological midrash.

6. The text of Hab 1:5 begins an oracle of judgment addressed to the prophet's Judean community by observing with fearful "astonishment" that the Chaldeans have become a national enemy of considerable power and resolve. The prophet notes in particular the execution of their violent "work" about to be experienced in Judah a "report" of coming calamity, the prophet says, that Judeans will simply not "believe" because of pride and unrighteousness (cf. Hab 2:4; 1QpHab 2:1-6). Of course, the prophet's ultimate intent is to bring about that very faith which will avert the imminent disaster.

ἔργον ("work").⁷ In my judgment, the repetition of "work" in the citation emphasizes its thematic importance for Acts. Let me quickly suggest two features of this thematic at play in this particular narrative setting: (1) The prophecy's idea of "work" is glossed by its earlier reference in Acts 13:2, where we read that Paul has been commissioned by the Holy Spirit to do God's "work"—a mission we presume agrees with Paul's commission at his conversion (9:15-16). This missionary meaning of "work" is confirmed by its use in 14:26 as a feature of Luke's summary of the founding of a Gentile Eicariaria: Paul and Barnabas have accomplished the missionary "work" that the Holy Spirit had commissioned them to do. The repetition of "work," first in 13:2 and then in 14:26, brackets off the narrative field within which the divinely intended referent of Habakkuk's prophecy about God's work is made clear: God's "work" in this new situation is mediated through Paul's prophetic "work" among the Gentiles (cf. 15:12).

(2) This leads me to suggest another layer of meaning that this same idea of "work" acquires in Acts. Recall that in its original prophetic setting, the cited text functions as part of an oracle of divine judgment, since Israel will "never believe" the prophet's report of God's work, thus forfeiting God's covenant promise of eternal life. The appeal to this prophecy in Acts contextualizes the deep logic by which the narrative unfolds: the reader should not be the least bit surprised by Paul's response to unbelieving Israel, who listen to the word of the Lord (13:44) and then contradict it (13:45), which makes them "unworthy of eternal life" (13:46).⁸

The texture of the quotation's meaning is thickened still more by the reflexive interplay of its other vocabulary within Acts. For

7. The repeated use of ἔργον in the citation raises an important text-critical issue. In a number of later mss (e.g., D E L P), the second ἔργον is omitted. B. M. Metzger (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1971] 416) hypothesizes that later scribes thought it redundant or wished to bring the Acts citation into agreement with the LXX. If true, the scribes failed to recognize the repetition of ἔργον as a Lukan gloss on the biblical text. Ironically, D adds εἰσέγησαν to the citation, which Luke uses in his narrative of the Jerusalem Synod (15:12, 13) to describe the congregation's attentiveness to Barnabas and Paul's testimony (15:12), presumably contributing to their positive response to their report and (in wider context) to God's echoed warning. But the scribes who deleted the second ἔργον surely did not have this in mind when adding εἰσέγησαν to Habakkuk!

8. In a private conversation, Prof. John Sailhamer reminded me that the LXX shifts the focus of the text from "nations" to "scoffers" (καταφρονηταί), which is then followed by 1QpHab. While one might argue that this shift results from a misreading of the Hebrew phrase "among the nations" (בְּגוֹיִם) as "scoffers" (בּוֹגְדִים), Sailhamer suggests that the change in the LXX is intentional and may well reflect an intramural conflict within the LXX community similar to the one that Paul addresses in Antioch of Pisidia. In my judgment, his suggestion seems right and only strengthened by the

example, the reader of Acts may already have anticipated Israel's negative response to Paul's report of God's work by the antecedent uses of "to wonder" in Acts (2:7; 3:12; 4:13; 7:31).⁹ In every case, the word is used in Acts to characterize an affective (and ambivalent) response of outsiders to the Spirit's empowerment of the apostolic witness to the risen Christ. The careful reader of Acts may well anticipate the uncertain response to Paul's speech and recognize that those who respond to his gospel in "wonder" (or certainly with "jealousy") rather than in faith are marked as outsiders to the salvation of God.

Similarly, the prophecy's reference to Israel's lack of "belief" forms a crucial contrast with its prior, positive use in Paul's speech (13:38-39; cf. Hab 2:4; 1QpHab 2:1-6).¹⁰ The soteriological importance of this contrast for Acts is significant, since Paul's prophetic preaching of the gospel sharpens the intramural conflict within Israel between those who define the covenant by Moses and those who define it by Messiah. In fact, the Habakkuk prophecy supplies a fuller biblical setting by which Acts renders God's salvation: whether Jewish or Gentile, membership in God's covenant community is conditioned upon belief that Jesus is God's Messiah and the τέλος of Torah (Rom 10:4). The peril of not believing is that the community's promise of eternal life is forfeited. Clearly, as will soon be evinced in Acts 15, this conflict between faith and law stands at the center of Paul's continuing conflict with the Jews.¹¹

repetition of "scoffer" in LXX Hab 2:5, where again the contrast is made between the righteous life of faithful Israel (2:4) and the condemned life of scoffing Israel—the very point implicit in Paul's use of Habakkuk. In fact, this very conflict between scoffing and believing Israel is not new to Paul or to Jesus' mission; it is the very nature of Israel's spiritual condition all along.

9. Luke omits θαυμάσια from his quotation, leaving only its verbal form from the LXX, θαυμάσατε, presumably for stylistic reasons, since only the verbal form is used in Luke and Acts.

10. This anticipates its programmatic interpretation by Paul in Rom 1:17; for this point, see my "Israel and the Gentile Mission in Acts and Paul: A Canonical Approach," *Witness to the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 437-57. It is interesting that the Acts quotation is at critical points closer to the midrash-pesher on Hab 1:5 found in 1QpHab 2:1-6 than to the LXX: (1) the audience is addressed as "treacherous ones"; (2) the people disbelieve the oral report, which (3) is given by God and therefore (4) consists of God's word; (5) they have broken the covenant with God as a result.

11. The quotation's phrase "in your days" recalls the similar formula "in these last days," which is added to preface the programmatic Joel citation in Acts 2:17, to gloss the Day of Pentecost as heralding the Day of the Lord. The interplay of these two similar formulae may well link their respective prophecies in a reflexive way that then suggests that the pervasive misunderstanding of Paul's work and word among the Gentiles is also a constant feature of "these last days," the time-zone of the entire narrative world of Acts.

4. HEARING AN ECHO OF HABAKKUK 1:5 IN ACTS 15:3

Literary critics recognize, of course, that a series of tests must be conducted to determine the volume of an intertextual echo.¹² At the same time, these tests are performed on an apparent echo to determine whether it is an intentional repetition or merely the author's selection of a familiar word previously used without prejudice. The interpreter should suppose authorial intent when the following three essential tests are passed: (1) the echoed text has broad importance within the narrative, which Hab 1:5 surely does;¹³ (2) the episode in which an apparent echo is heard is related either by thematic continuity or narrative logic to the earlier episode that frames the echoed text; and (3) the peculiar linguistic makeup of the intertextual echo is best explained as the explicit repetition of an earlier text. In my judgment, Acts 15:3 passes these tests and sounds a loud echo of Hab 1:5, recalling its meaning in Acts 13 to thicken our understanding of the intramural conflict that convened the Jerusalem Council, according to Acts 15:1-5.

(1) The narrative importance of Acts 15 can hardly be exaggerated and remains a storm center in Acts criticism.¹⁴ As a story of conflict resolution, a precise definition of the conflict, which functions as preface to the climactic speech of James that resolves it (15:13-21), is of course pivotal for the telling of the story. On the face of it, the success of Paul's first mission, which concludes with the grand declaration of all that God has done among the Gentiles (14:27), provokes a protest in Antioch between teachers of the Jewish church and Paul's supporters there (15:1-2). The apparent conflict in Antioch is over soteriology, specifically the redemptive roles of Torah and the rite of circumcision within these new Gentile congregations founded by Paul's mission (15:1). This disagreement over Moses in Antioch continues in Jerusalem, according to 15:4-5, where Paul and Barnabas have come to meet with the church's elders to confirm their personal experiences of Gentile

12. Hays outlines seven similar tests in *Echoes*, 29-32, including (1) availability of known traditions/texts; (2) the degree of explicit repetition of words or literary patterns; (3) recurrence of a text of considered importance; (4) thematic coherence within the composition; (5) relevance/coherence to intended readers/auditors; (6) coherence within history of interpretation; (7) positive effect on the meaning of surrounding discourse.

13. In fact, one could argue that Luke's interest in Habakkuk is not posited upon his *Paulusbild* but derives directly from Paul. Moreover, as Hays also notes, Paul "showcases" Hab 2:4 in Romans since the apostle's response to the problem of theodicy is parallel to the prophet's.

14. The extensive reworking of 15:1-5 in the Western text suggests that this "storm" predates the modern period of textual analysis; see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 426-28. What is striking about the final shape of the Western text is its Jewish cast; the Antiochean controversy summarized in 15:1 is expanded to include lifestyle: ". . . and walk according to the custom of Moses."

conversion (cf. 15:12).¹⁵ There, a faction of "certain" Jewish believers from the Pharisee party, concerned as they would be about issues of purity, assert that Gentile proselytes must be treated the same as Gentiles who convert to and are purified by the traditions of Judaism: they must be circumcised and observe the Torah of Moses (15:5).

While the precise reasons for their protest remain contested between Acts scholars,¹⁶ what is apparent is that this present conflict within the church at Antioch of Palestine continues the narrative interests of earlier conflict between Paul and Diaspora Jews at Antioch of Pisidia. According to Paul's speech, everyone including Gentiles who trust that Jesus is Messiah are saved from all sins (13:39) for eternal life (cf. 13:46), which is evidently a result that neither Torah nor tradition could produce in Israel. Of course, this conflict within Israel over the soteriology of the Gentile mission, begun in the Diaspora and now continuing in Palestine, has already been glossed by Luke's narrative midrash of Peter's Pentecost quotation of Joel's "Day of the Lord" prophecy (cf. Acts 2:17-21): sharply put, the church's mission from Jerusalem to "the end of the earth" (Rome) confirms the point of Paul's speech that everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus in faith will be *saved* from his or her sins (cf. Acts 2:21; 4:12). The Jewish believers who contend according to 15:1, that "unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be *saved*" (15:1) are therefore simply wrong. In any case, I would argue that the Acts narrative of the Jerusalem Council is related thematically and logically to Paul's inaugural speech and the conflict that it provoked; moreover, in my judgment, the earlier speech supplies a critical subtext that helps to explain the purchase of the Council's deliberations.

(2) Acts criticism has generally failed to note the rhetorical importance of the brief travel summary found in 15:3, sandwiched between the repetition of the conflict thematic in 15:1-2 and 15:4-5. Perhaps this is due to the economy of its expression, which simply notes that Paul and Barnabas "reported on the conversion of the Gentiles" as they traveled between these two loci of controversy. Yet, the

15. Craig C. Hill (*Hellenists and Hebrews* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992] 109-10) has argued that the Antioch conflict deals with Jewish obedience (issues related to purity and mixed fellowship), while the Jerusalem Council deals with *Gentile* admission to the church.

16. Most suppose that this Jewish protest against Paul's Gentile mission stemmed from these Jewish believers' perception that Paul circumvented the protocol of Judaism, which constituted a political threat to the future of a Christian mission among Gentiles (since Judaism did not sponsor one) as well as undermining Judaism's pattern of salvation. For this reason, the eventual resolution of the present conflict was critical to the eventual expansion of the Christian mission to Rome and beyond.

careful design of this description of conflict to preface the narrative of the Council's deliberation indicates its pivotal value to the whole narrative, since it concentrates our attention on the reason for the controversy that now threatens the solidarity of faithful Israel. I would also note that the sounding of joyful response to their report is less a harbinger of a positive verdict in Jerusalem, which is still an open question in 15:3, than it is an indication of God's favorable verdict about Gentile conversion in dire contrast to the opinion of those in Antioch and Jerusalem who might disagree with it. Isn't this what Peter later suggests in 15:10, when accusing this protest movement in Jerusalem of testing God?

The importance of the travel summary is underscored by a Council convened to discuss and debate (cf. 15:2) the legality of Paul's "conversion of the Gentiles" and the founding of independent Gentile congregations in the Diaspora.¹⁷ Upon closer reading, however, our attention is more keenly posited, not upon the subject of the report, but rather upon the activity of "reporting" itself. The verb, ἐκδηγέομαι, is striking and exceptional; indeed, its only other use in the NT is as the concluding word of Habakkuk prophecy used in Acts 13:41, "even if someone reports." The use of it here is all the more striking when comparison is made with the more familiar vocabulary used in Acts for reporting conversions.¹⁸ Given this added linguistic evidence, then, my judgment is that the ἐκδηγέομαι in Acts 15:3 sounds an explicit—that is a *loud*—echo of the Habakkuk prophecy of Acts 13:41 and functions to recall that earlier episode to contextualize the conflict which has now convened the Jerusalem Council: Paul's use of

17. The precise nature of the conflict that convened the Jerusalem Council remains debated. Recently, Ben Witherington has argued, against scholars who suppose that the conflict was over defining Gentile purity on traditional Jewish terms (e.g., Noahic food laws), that the real issue at stake in the decree (15:20) was to prevent Gentile converts from retaining their membership in pagan temples and their activities. This allows B. Witherington (*Acts of the Apostles* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998] 430-38) to coordinate better what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 8-10 and what Luke writes in Acts 15, when arguing against Vielhauer and others who claim that a theological dissonance exists between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the NT letters.

18. J. Louw and E. Nida place ἐκδηγέομαι within the "communication" domain in a field of "informing or announcing" vocabulary of 29 words (§§33.189-33.217), several of which are used in Luke-Acts and would have made sense of Paul and Barnabas' activity described in 15:3, including ἀναγγέλλω used nearby in both 14:27 and 15:4 or other members of the -αγγέλλω family (ἀπαγγέλλω/διαγγέλλω/καταγγέλλω/εὐαγγέλλω) used often in Acts (and Luke); or διηγέομαι (8:33; 9:27; 12:17) and κηρύσσω/εὐαγγελίζω sometimes employed in Acts to characterize this very same activity of reporting Christian conversions. This observation intends only to underscore the narrator's intent in using this particular word, I presume as a gloss on its earlier use in 13:41 (Louw and Nida [eds.]; *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* [2d ed.; 2 vols.; New York: UBS, 1988-89]).

Hab 1:5 to warn those who might "scoff" as his prophetic report of God's work of grace is imported to this new setting, where Paul's report of God's conversion of the Gentiles carries with it an implicit warning to the Jewish protesters within the Judean church to receive it, as the others have, "with great joy."¹⁹

Let me review my thesis to focus in on my concluding remark: in my judgment, the function of Hab 1:5 in Acts is to issue a stern warning to *all* Israel that not to believe Paul's "report" of God's "work" (i.e., his gospel) is to reject "the word of God" and to face the judgment of God, leading to forfeiture of God's blessing of eternal life (13:46). The purchase of the Habakkuk prophecy for the Acts narrative of the Jerusalem Council thickens the reader's perception of the real crisis to be settled at the Jerusalem Council. At the surface of the narrative, the conflict settled is whether Gentile conversion should be predicated on observing the law of Moses or on believing in Messiah; that is, the conflict settled is not whether Gentiles should share Israel's salvation but on what terms. The rhetorical effect of placing a reasonably loud echo of Hab 1:5 between two statements of the conflict thematic in 15:1-5 is to recall the earlier story of conflict in the Diaspora over Paul's gospel in order to gloss the present one. The subtext of the Jerusalem Council according to Acts now comes to light: according to Paul's earlier commentary, the failure of Jewish believers to accept Paul's report of God's "work" among the Gentiles results in divine judgment and perhaps even in the forfeiture of eternal life (cf. 13:46).²⁰ The sense of urgency that convenes the Jerusalem Council,

19. In its earlier setting in Acts (see above), the "work" cited by Habakkuk now refers to Paul's mission and message (13:2), the success of which among the Gentiles is now reported by Paul and Barnabas on their way to Jerusalem (15:3). The echo of LXX Hab 1:5 simply underscores what the reader already knows: Paul's "work" among the Gentiles, which now has provoked protests from certain groups within the Jewish church, is commissioned by the Spirit to broker the saving grace of God for the Gentiles (14:26-27). Paul's mission demonstrates the radical extent to which God's promise of universal salvation is now being fulfilled.

20. The urgency of the present situation in Jerusalem is thus framed by the rejection thematic in Acts. Recalling an OT typology of rejection, God's messenger is sent twice to visit the people, who are graciously given two chances to accept God's saving word. The first time the people reject the prophet, who then returns in greater power to determine once for all the redemptive status of his people (7:35-39; cf. 3:15-20). Consistent with this narrative thematic in Acts, then, Paul's poor reception by the Jews in the Antioch of Pisidia on "the next Sabbath" (13:44-45) leads Paul to condemn them as "unworthy of eternal life" (13:46); that is, they have been given two chances to repent and fail to do so. The result is that the promise goes elsewhere, to the Gentiles who are more apt to receive God's word gladly. Likewise, recall that Peter's conversion of the Gentile Cornelius, rehearsed again at the Jerusalem Council (15:6-11), has already been criticized by a similar group in the Jerusalem church (11:2). The apparent resolution of this earlier intramural conflict in Jerusalem is obviously short-lived; in fact, the volume

then, is not merely Israel's failure to embrace Paul's Torah-free mission to the Gentiles; rather, it stems from the fact that the eternal life of those very Jewish believers who now protest it is now imperiled by their ignorance (cf. 3:17). Indeed, the Council's success in settling this dispute is retaining these believers from the party of the Pharisees within the restored Israel.²¹

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of their protest seems to have escalated from "criticism" (11:2, διακρίνομαι) to outright "conflict" (15:2, στόσις). In effect, the importance of the Jerusalem Council is to give this particular group of Jewish believers another chance to respond favorably to Peter's second report of what God is doing among the Gentiles (15:6-11), which is now strengthened by Paul's direct testimony (15:12).

21. The reflexive character of an intertext may well commend an expanded meaning of the Habakkuk text as well when glossed by its use in Acts: within the Christian Bible, Habakkuk's oracle of divine judgment expresses astonishment that some within Israel would forfeit the promise of restoration by their rejection of Messiah.

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