

Fall Meeting 2008

On the Voting Results for the Acts Seminar

Dennis E. Smith, Chair

At the October 2008 meeting of the Acts Seminar, the papers addressed how Acts portrays Paul in a number of guises, including traveler, practicing Jew, and miracle worker. Our goal was to determine what might qualify as fact and what might likely be fiction.

The first set of papers, by Perry Kea and Chris Shea, analyzed the texts about “Saul,” the character who comes to be identified in Acts as “Paul.” In Perry Kea’s paper, he noted how Acts 8:1-3 and 9:26–31, which tell of Paul persecuting Christians in Jerusalem, on the one hand probably derive from Paul’s own references to being a former persecutor of Christians (Gal 1:13), but on the other hand contradict Paul’s insistence that he was unknown to Christians in Jerusalem until well after his conversion (Gal 1:22). The story in Acts 13:1–3, in which Saul and Barnabas are appointed missionaries by the church in Antioch, coordinates with the fact that Paul was connected with the church in Antioch early in his career (Gal 1:21, 2:11). But the detail about the ceremony of laying on of hands seems anachronistic and most likely represents practices from Luke’s own time. Therefore, based on the arguments in Kea’s paper, both the Fellows and Associates voted consistently with his recommendations that the details of these stories are not historical. The one exception was his recommendation that the names of leaders in Antioch mentioned in Acts 13:1 should be given a benefit-of-the-doubt pink vote, based on the possibility that there was an Antioch source used by Luke that might have been historical and that mentioned names of leaders. Fellows and Associates maintained their scepticism, however, and only allowed a gray vote.

The famous text in Acts 13:6–12, in which “Saul” is first called “Paul,” was analyzed in Chris Shea’s latest study of

names in Acts. She pointed out that the text has long been considered enigmatic by scholars, since the author is not at all clear why he chooses to present a name change at this point in his story. The enigmatic nature of the text is not an argument for historicity, however. After all, Paul’s letters never refer to his having a second name. The author of Luke-Acts, on the other hand, has a tendency toward providing appropriate names for characters to fit his story (see, for example, “Stephanos” [or “crowned”] as the name of the first Christian martyr in Acts 7). Fellows and Associates concurred with Shea’s recommendations that the

Ballot 3 Miscellaneous Saul Stories in Acts Perry V. Kea

Q1 Saul/Paul was present at the stoning of Stephen.

Fellows	0.02	Black	00%	R	00%	P	07%	G	93%	B
Associates	0.02	Black	00%		00%		07%		93%	

Q2 Saul/Paul persecuted Christians in Jerusalem/Judea.

Fellows	0.03	Black	00%	R	03%	P	03%	G	93%	B
Associates	0.04	Black	00%		00%		12%		88%	

Q3 The dispersal of Jesus’ followers from Jerusalem because of a persecution precipitated the spread of the Jesus movement.

Fellows	0.06	Black	00%	R	00%	P	17%	G	83%	B
Associates	0.04	Black	00%		02%		07%		90%	

Q4 Soon after his conversion in Damascus, Paul attempted to join the Christian community in Jerusalem.

Fellows	0.00	Black	00%	R	00%	P	00%	G	100%	B
Associates	0.03	Black	00%		03%		05%		93%	

Q5 At Antioch, Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul were recognized as teachers and prophets.

Fellows	0.40	Gray	00%	R	37%	P	47%	G	17%	B
Associates	0.43	Gray	00%		33%		63%		05%	

Q6 Barnabas and Saul were appointed to do missionary work on behalf of the church at Antioch.

Fellows	0.39	Gray	03%	R	33%	P	40%	G	23%	B
Associates	0.39	Gray	00%		28%		63%		10%	

Q7 Barnabas and Saul were appointed to do missionary work on behalf of the church at Antioch in a ritual that included the laying on of hands.

Fellows	0.12	Black	00%	R	00%	P	37%	G	63%	B
Associates	0.12	Black	00%		00%		35%		65%	

Explanation of voting

Black	not true (0–.25*)
Grey	probably not true (.2501–.5)
Pink	probably true (.5001–.75)
Red	true (.7501–1) *Weighted average

Ballot 4
Names in Acts 2
Chris Shea

Q1 Paul the letter writer was once called Saul.

Fellows	0.20	Black	03%	R	13%	P	25%	G	59%	B
Associates	0.20	Black	03%		11%		32%		55%	

Q2 Paul converted a Roman official named Sergius Paulus.

Fellows	0.08	Black	00%	R	03%	P	16%	G	81%	B
Associates	0.11	Black	05%		03%		13%		79%	

Q3 The Sergius Paulus story in Acts is derived from a story found in Galen.

Fellows	0.33	Gray	03%	R	16%	P	58%	G	23%	B
Associates	0.54	Pink	11%		51%		27%		11%	

Ballot 9
Circumcision in Paul and Acts 16:1–5
Nina E. Livesey

Q1 Paul circumcised Timothy.

Fellows	0.11	Black	07%	R	07%	P	00%	G	86%	B
Associates	0.06	Black	00%		03%		12%		85%	

Q2 The theme of matrilineal descent in Acts 16:1–5 identifies the text as a product of the second century.

Fellows	0.30	Gray	04%	R	18%	P	43%	G	36%	B
Associates	0.37	Gray	06%		29%		35%		29%	

Q3 Luke's Paul bends to the wishes of the Jews.

Fellows	0.85	Red	70%	R	22%	P	00%	G	07%	B
Associates	0.76	Red	47%		41%		06%		06%	

Q4 Luke creates a Paul who continues to engage in Jewish practices.

Fellows	0.89	Red	78%	R	15%	P	04%	G	04%	B
Associates	0.70	Pink	39%		42%		10%		10%	

name change story is not historical, and that the Paul of the letters was never historically known as Saul. Shea also proposed that Luke may have used as a source a story found in Galen about an individual named Sergius Paulus. Fellows were sceptical and only gave this proposal a gray vote; Associates, however, voted pink.

In Acts 16:1–5, Paul is said to have circumcised his co-worker, Timothy, born to a Jewish mother and a Greek father, in order to appease the Jews with whom they were to come in contact. Yet in Galatians 2:3 Paul strenuously resisted having the Greek Titus circumcised when he accompanied him to Jerusalem. In an extensively argued paper, Nina Livesey analyzed the Paul of the letters and the Paul of Acts using a systems development approach as her model. There are three phases to the model, a definition

Ballot 10
A Mimetic Interpretation of Prison Breaks in Acts
Dennis R. MacDonald

Q1 Acts 5:17–33 is written to emulate the prison break of the maenads in Euripides' *Bacchae*.

Fellows	0.78	Red	54%	R	31%	P	12%	G	04%	B
Associates	0.87	Red	71%		24%		03%		03%	

Q2 Acts 5:17–33 is a Lukan fiction.

Fellows	0.87	Red	69%	R	23%	P	08%	G	00%	B
Associates	0.88	Red	74%		21%		03%		03%	

Q3 Acts 12:1–17 is written to emulate Priam's escape from Achilles in the last book of the *Iliad*.

Fellows	0.76	Red	50%	R	31%	P	15%	G	04%	B
Associates	0.88	Red	71%		23%		03%		03%	

Q4 Acts 12:1–17 is a Lukan fiction.

Fellows	0.83	Red	65%	R	23%	P	08%	G	04%	B
Associates	0.87	Red	71%		24%		03%		03%	

Q5 Acts 16:13–40 is written to emulate the prison break of Dionysus in Euripides' *Bacchae*.

Fellows	0.79	Red	58%	R	27%	P	12%	G	04%	B
Associates	0.90	Red	74%		23%		00%		03%	

Q6 Acts 16:13–40 is a Lukan fiction.

Fellows	0.86	Red	65%	R	27%	P	08%	G	00%	B
Associates	0.87	Red	70%		24%		03%		03%	

phase, a development phase, and an installation phase. Livesey argued that the Paul of the letters exhibits the first phase, in which his insistence that circumcision was not to be required of either Jews or Gentiles "in Christ" was still a new and difficult idea. Acts, however, represents the third phase, in which the ideas of Paul are adapted to a new situation. Livesey argued that Acts contradicts Paul to such an extent that it loses credibility as history. Fellows and Associates were persuaded by Livesey's arguments and voted that Acts 16:1–5 does not represent the historical Paul but rather represents an attempt by Acts to picture Paul as more compatible with Jewish practices than he was in his letters.

Dennis MacDonald analyzed three stories of prison breaks in Acts and found parallels in Greek literature. His study reminded us that "sources" for Acts must also include literary prototypes of Luke's day. With his highly developed method for identifying mimesis (literary imitation) in early Christian literature, MacDonald demonstrated how Acts 5:17–33 and 16:13–40 used prison break stories from Euripides' *Bacchae* and how Acts 12:1–17 emulated Priam's escape from Achilles in the last book of the *Iliad*. Both Fellows and Associates found his arguments convincing and concurred with his recommendations that these stories represent mimesis and therefore are not historical. **4R**