

# Spring Meeting 2008

## Report on the Acts Seminar

Dennis E. Smith, Chair

The Acts Seminar papers for March 2008 addressed a variety of issues related to the author's use of stylistic and apologetic devices in his story of Christian origins. Rubén Dupertuis's paper, "*Parrēsia*, Opposition and Philosophical Imagery in Acts," analyzed the use of the term *Parrēsia* ("free speech" or "bold speech") in Acts. Dupertuis proposed that the term was part of a larger apologetic theme in Acts to portray early Christian leaders as philosophers, modeled after the literary portrayal of Socrates and other

### Ballot 1 • Acts Seminar *Parrēsia*, Opposition and Philosophical Imagery in Acts Ruben Dupertuis

Q1 *Parrēsia* ("free speech") is used in Acts in an intentional attempt to echo philosophical literary imagery.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.78 Red	57% R	30% P	03% G	10% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.87 Red	64% R	34% P	01% G	01% B

Q2 *Parrēsia* is consistently associated with stories of opposition in Acts.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.87 Red	71% R	18% P	11% G	00% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.78 Red	41% R	55% P	01% G	03% B

Q3 *Parrēsia* is used in Acts in contexts which evoke the claim of a divine commission authorizing the right to speak "with boldness."

<b>Fellows</b>	0.90 Red	75% R	21% P	04% G	00% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.93 Red	80% R	19% P	01% G	00% B

Q4 *Parrēsia* is used in Acts to portray Christian leaders as Socratic figures.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.76 Red	52% R	28% P	17% G	03% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.82 Red	56% R	34% P	10% G	00% B

Q5 The use of philosophical imagery in Acts is an apologetic device to legitimate Christianity as a movement led by true philosophers.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.77 Red	48% R	41% P	03% G	07% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.82 Red	56% R	36% P	08% G	01% B

Q6 The characterization of the early Christian leaders as "bold speakers" is an historical datum.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.18 Black	00% R	12% P	31% G	58% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.12 Black	02% R	05% P	19% G	74% B

## Explanation of voting

<b>Black</b>	not true (0-.25*)	
<b>Grey</b>	probably not true (.2501-.5)	
<b>Pink</b>	probably true (.5001-.75)	
<b>Red</b>	true (.7501-1)	*Weighted average

### Ballot 2 • Acts Seminar Historical Issues in Acts 28:11-31 Gerd Lüdemann

Q1 Since Luke places himself in the context of ancient historical writings, he deserves to be measured on the basis of the ancient standards of historiography.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.80 Red	61% R	21% P	14% G	04% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.79 Red	64% R	18% P	08% G	10% B

Q2 The simple, linear narrative structure of Acts is indicative of its artificial nature.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.82 Red	66% R	21% P	07% G	07% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.81 Red	59% R	25% P	14% G	02% B

Q3 Luke's favorable portrayal of Romans is a noteworthy theme in Acts.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.90 Red	69% R	31% P	00% G	00% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.93 Red	79% R	20% P	01% G	00% B

Q4 Luke's bias against Jews plays an evident part in Acts.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.87 Red	62% R	38% P	00% G	00% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.81 Red	50% R	44% P	05% G	01% B

Q5 Luke-Acts is a skillfully crafted work of theological propaganda masking as a historical account.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.87 Red	68% R	25% P	07% G	00% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.85 Red	64% R	30% P	04% G	02% B

Q6 Luke's ultimate concern is to inculcate his view of salvation history.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.83 Red	59% R	30% P	11% G	00% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.87 Red	71% R	21% P	06% G	02% B

Q7 In Luke's view, God has a plan for human salvation that involves the conversion of the Gentile world to Christianity

<b>Fellows</b>	0.88 Red	70% R	22% P	07% G	00% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.90 Red	76% R	20% P	03% G	01% B

Q8 Although Acts occasionally offers accurate accounts of historical events, it includes a number of serious and fundamental distortions

<b>Fellows</b>	0.95 Red	89% R	07% P	04% G	00% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.92 Red	79% R	17% P	04% G	00% B

Q9 Luke tells us nothing of early Christian communities in northern Palestine and Rome.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.79 Red	61% R	18% P	18% G	04% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.82 Red	62% R	23% P	13% G	02% B

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**Q10** By its very nature objective history excludes theological presuppositions.

**Fellows** 0.64 Pink 39% R 32% P 11% G 18% B  
**Associates** 0.71 Pink 52% R 21% P 15% G 12% B

**Q11** Luke purposely omits any mention of Paul's death not only to finesse Rome's undoubted responsibility, but also to avoid sully his picture of the Apostle's triumphant life with the report of a gory end.

**Fellows** 0.81 Red 50% R 43% P 07% G 00% B  
**Associates** 0.78 Red 45% R 46% P 09% G 01% B

**Q12** Paul was imprisoned in Rome.

**Fellows** 0.64 Pink 15% R 63% P 22% G 00% B  
**Associates** 0.73 Pink 30% R 61% P 07% G 02% B

**Q13** Paul was executed by imperial authority in Rome.

**Fellows** 0.69 Pink 23% R 65% P 08% G 04% B  
**Associates** 0.71 Pink 27% R 60% P 12% G 01% B

**Q14** Paul engaged in unhindered preaching in Rome.

**Fellows** 0.11 Black 00% R 07% P 19% G 74% B  
**Associates** 0.14 Black 00% R 02% P 37% G 61% B

**Q15** Acts 28:1–16 is historically accurate in reporting that Paul was transported from Malta via Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli to Rome.

**Fellows** 0.37 Gray 07% R 22% P 44% G 26% B  
**Associates** 0.41 Gray 01% R 36% P 47% G 15% B

**Q16** Paul was guarded by one soldier (Acts 28:16)

**Fellows** 0.27 Gray 00% R 15% P 52% G 33% B  
**Associates** 0.35 Gray 02% R 16% P 67% G 15% B

**Q17** Paul practiced his craft and underwrote the expense of his guard.

**Fellows** 0.27 Gray 00% R 12% P 58% G 31% B  
**Associates** 0.34 Gray 02% R 07% P 82% G 09% B

**Q18** Paul met Jewish leaders in Rome.

**Fellows** 0.14 Black 04% R 04% P 23% G 69% B  
**Associates** 0.12 Black 01% R 04% P 24% G 70% B

philosophers in the Greco-Roman world. More specifically, according to Dupertuis, Acts utilized the term *Parrësia* in stories of opposition and stories which evoke the claim of a divine commission, all of which served the larger apologetic purposes of Acts. Therefore, Dupertuis argued, Acts' portrayal of early Christian leaders as "bold" speakers derives from Acts' apologetic agenda and not from historical memories. Both Fellows and Associates concurred, and so voted black on the historical datum that early Christian leaders were bold speakers.

Gerd Lüdemann's paper, "Historical Issues in Acts 28:11–31," supported a long list of ballot items detailing

characteristic literary and theological themes in Acts, many of which had been discussed in previous seminar papers. Fellows and Associates voted red on the entire list save for one. Item 10, "by its very nature objective history excludes theological presuppositions," while it received a pink vote, nevertheless received quite a bit of discussion about how the terms of the statement were to be interpreted. The discussion revealed significant uneasiness in the seminar about how to assess this proposal, but the vote indicated a desire to affirm it in principle.

Lüdemann's paper also proposed historical judgments about Acts 28:11–31. Based on supporting data

# Eyes That See Not

## The Pope Looks at Jesus

Gerd Lüdemann

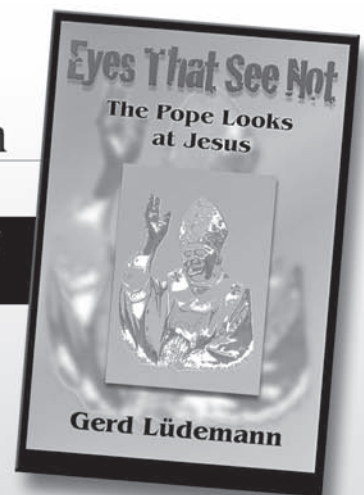
*The perfect study guide to the Pope's book on Jesus!*

"Lüdemann's brilliant, readable book dismantles the Pope's argument and will open readers' eyes to see who Jesus really was."

—James M. Robinson, author of *The Gospel of Jesus*

"Highly recommended for anyone interested in issues of who Jesus was, and why the academic portrayal of him differs from the doctrinal."

—April DeConick, author of *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says*



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**Ballot 7 • Acts Seminar**  
**Christian Self-Definition and Anti-Judaism in**  
**the Second Century**  
**Joseph B. Tyson**

Q1–3 Tabled

Q4 Acts was pivotal in the development of early Christian views of the Hebrew Scriptures.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.83 Red	59% R	34% P	03% G	03% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.78 Red	51% R	36% P	08% G	05% B

Q5 The author of Acts defined Christianity in a way that would distinguish it from Marcionite Christianity and Judaism.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.93 Red	79% R	21% P	00% G	00% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.84 Red	60% R	34% P	03% G	02% B

Q6 Justin Martyr defined Christianity in a way that would distinguish it from Marcionite Christianity and Judaism.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.90 Red	79% R	18% P	00% G	04% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.81 Red	56% R	35% P	07% G	02% B

Q7 Justin’s non-literal interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures served to distinguish his methods of interpretation from both Marcionites and Jews.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.80 Red	60% R	27% P	07% G	07% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.76 Red	45% R	40% P	13% G	02% B

Q8 Justin theoretically constructs the Jews as those who normally interpreted the scriptures literally.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.84 Red	72% R	14% P	07% G	07% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.74 Pink	47% R	33% P	13% G	07% B

Q9 Despite the diversity to be seen among Marcion, the author of Acts, and Justin, one unifying factor was their anti-Judaism.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.73 Pink	52% R	30% P	04% G	15% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.60 Pink	32% R	31% P	23% G	15% B

Q10 What unifies Marcion, the author of Acts, and Justin is their effort to construct Christian self-identity on the basis of anti-Judaism.

<b>Fellows</b>	0.67 Pink	48% R	24% P	08% G	20% B
<b>Associates</b>	0.79 Red	56% R	30% P	09% G	05% B

from 1 Clement, Lüdemann was able to affirm as historical the data that “Paul was imprisoned in Rome” and that “Paul was executed by imperial authority in Rome.” Both Fellows and Associates voted pink on those items, indicating a willingness to affirm but acknowledging that the evidence was not unimpeachable. The details that “Paul engaged in unhindered preaching in Rome” and “met Jewish leaders in Rome” were both voted black since they

represented clear aspects of the apologetic themes of Acts. Other details about Paul’s imprisonment were affirmed by Lüdemann’s paper but did not pass muster in the votes. Thus both Fellows and Associates voted gray on the itinerary of Paul’s trip to Rome, Paul being guarded by one soldier (instead of the normal two soldiers), and the idea that Paul “practiced his craft and underwrote the expense of his guard.”

Joseph Tyson’s paper, “Christian Self-Definition and Anti-Judaism in the Second Century: Marcion, Acts, and Justin,” attempted to tease out further the implications of reading Acts as an early second-century document. Tyson’s target in this instance was the function of anti-Judaism as a component of the developing self-identity of second century Christianity. He chose three examples of this process to compare and contrast: Marcion, the author of Acts, and Justin Martyr.

Tyson pointed out that both the author of Acts and Justin Martyr constructed Christian self-identity over against Marcionism on the one hand and Judaism on the other, a proposal which both Fellows and Associates affirmed. Whereas Marcion rejected Jewish scriptures, the author of Acts and Justin affirmed them, but did so by proposing Christianity as the fulfillment of Jewish scriptures. Acts embedded this theme in its story. Justin distinguished his non-literal interpretation of scripture, which supported the promise-fulfillment theme, from the literal interpretation he proposed as characteristic of Judaism of his day.

In her response to Tyson’s paper, Amy-Jill Levine agreed that Acts played a pivotal role in the development of a Christian self-definition in which anti-Judaism was an essential component. She then proposed several areas in which we as scholars need to sharpen our analysis. Does the author of Acts, she asked, really engage the Judaism of its day or merely a caricature of it? And is the author’s use (and misuse) of the Torah always to be equated with “Jews,” “Judaism,” and “Jewish practices” of his day? Levine’s comments reminded the seminar always to take seriously the complex reality of first- and second-century Judaism as we develop our theses about Christian origins.

Tyson’s paper helped to broaden the case for the placement of Acts within debates about Christian self-identity in the second century CE. He argued that “despite the diversity to be seen among Marcion, the author of Acts, and Justin, one unifying factor was their anti-Judaism,” and “what unifies Marcion, the author of Acts, and Justin is their effort to construct Christian self-identity on the basis of anti-Judaism.” These items were affirmed by both Fellows and Associates, though the predominance of pink votes indicates a continuing debate about the definition of anti-Judaism as an apologetic motif in a second-century context. **4R**