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## MARY, A MODEL OF *ECCLESIA-ORANS*, IN ACTS 1:14

### I. ACTS 1:14: A Redactional Study of the Text with Marian Implications

In studying the image and concept of Mary and Church in the Acts of the Apostles, the theology of Luke the evangelist and historian-writer<sup>1</sup> forms part of the background and context for understanding the meaning of the one text in which Mary the Mother of Jesus is mentioned, in the Acts 1:14. The fact that Luke-Acts<sup>2</sup> is the work of one writer gives us a fabric of texts which can be compared from the first volume (the Gospel) and the second (the Acts). The image of Mary and the image of Church in the Acts cannot be separated from what we know about her and the community of disciples in the Gospels.

Luke-Acts contains sermons, prayers, liturgical expressions and historical facts and opinions of one of the earliest writer-theologians.<sup>3</sup> The composition of such materials within his two volumes indicates that he is the first ecclesiologist of early Christianity. He also is the evangelist who interprets the woman of faith, Mary the Mother of Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), cf. pp. 90-112.

<sup>2</sup> To my knowledge, the first significant book to use the concept Luke-Acts is that of Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (London: S.P.C.K., 1961, but first published in 1927, by the MacMillan Company, New York), 385 pp.

<sup>3</sup> F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 5 of The Moffat New Testament Commentary (ninth impression, London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1960; first published in 1931), p. xvi: "Luke seems to have been able to give us an extraordinarily accurate picture of the undeveloped theology of the earliest Christians . . ."; cf. Haenchen, *The Acts*, p. 91.

Since Luke is considered as a second or third generation Christian, the writings he furnishes give us his own theological premises and questions. Even so, we are not more than half a century removed from the historical persons of Jesus and Mary of Nazareth. His ecclesiological concerns represent those of the Pauline Churches which he himself experienced in the 80s of the first century.

Luke does not use the word "ekklesia"<sup>4</sup> in his Gospel. For example, in the Acts of the Apostles the word *ekklesia* is used in 9:31: "*ekklesia* kath' oles tes Joudaias kai Galilaias kai Samareias . . ." with a meaning which goes beyond the local Christian community. Here it simply means the Church in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Luke's ecclesiology is neither systematic nor developed, but there are images of early Christian life and worship within his writings; moreover, certain persons like the twelve apostles, Peter, Stephen, Paul, and Mary are important witnesses and role-models for what it means to be a member of the *ekklesia*. These are the *πλιτεῦσάντες*, or those who have become Christian through their trust in the Word and their believing in the Lord Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

Luke is the first Christian writer who deals effectively with the burning issue that Jesus' preaching conveyed — an imminent expectation of his return, the *parousia*. He asked himself where and how the work of salvation, or God's plan for redeeming all, proceeds in time.<sup>7</sup> Both Hans Conzelmann and Oscar Cullmann have outlined the three periods of time involved in Luke's *Heilsgeschichte*. In a sense, Luke is the first to attempt an outline of Church history. Luke gives no name for the final period of time, but we may call it the age or period of the Church.<sup>8</sup>

What is important for our consideration of Acts 1:14 is the fact that Luke considers what is to happen in the upper room,

<sup>4</sup> R. Morgenthaler, *Statistik des neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes*, Zürich, Frankfurt am Main: Gotthelf-Verlag, 1958, p. 93 under "*ekklesia*."

<sup>5</sup> Haenchen, *The Acts*, p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> Haenchen, *The Acts*, p. 94.

<sup>7</sup> Haenchen, *The Acts*, p. 96.

<sup>8</sup> Haenchen, *The Acts*, p. 96.

namely, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the believers, as a chronological sequel and an historical event to the life of Jesus.<sup>9</sup> The birth of the Church basically is the presentation of the power of the Spirit of Jesus in the apostles, Mary, and the brethren of Jesus. The life of Jesus was similarly announced, by the power of the Spirit, upon the virgin Mary in the Annunciation (1:26-38). Both births occur at the beginning of each of Luke's writings through the action of the Holy Spirit. The literary genres are different, but the content and message are the same. Mary was told, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; hence, the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The faithful followers of Jesus are told not to leave Jerusalem for "within a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). They, in turn, will continue the mission of Jesus: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

There is evidence that the group gathered in the upper room are the *disciples* who are mentioned in Acts 1:2. Eleven are named and are also called Apostles elsewhere (Luke 6:13). Mary the Mother of Jesus is named, while the women and the brothers of Jesus are merely mentioned. Though it is not customary to associate the women among the disciples in the ministry of Jesus, here they are together united in prayer which is characteristic of the emerging Church in the Acts of the Apostles. Mary is a strong woman of faith and prayer in the Gospel of Luke (Cf. her dialogue with Gabriel, 1:26-38; her song of praise, 1:46-55; and the two references to her reflective disposition of mind and heart, 2:19 and 2:31.). Her presence in the upper room is more than symbolic. Among all of the names mentioned in Acts 1:13, she is the person who actually has given witness to a prayer-life modeled on the psalms and to personal reflective prayer. Though we know the Apostles frequented the Temple at the hours of prayer, she alone gives us the content of her prayer and

<sup>9</sup> Haenchen, *The Acts*, p. 97.

her personal pondering over of the events (*rhēmata*) in the early life of her son. She is a model for the disciples in the prayer of the emerging Church. If later on the twelve decide to continue devoting themselves in prayer and the ministry of the word (*ἡμεῖς δὲ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ διανοίᾳ τοῦ λόγου προσκαρτερήσομεν*), it is evident that their gathering in the upper room was a significant experience at the inception of the "Church" (*οὗτοι πάντες ἦσαν προσκαρτεροῦντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν τῇ προσευχῇ*). Mary and the women and brothers of Jesus shared in that prayer with them. Before the Spirit descended upon them, prayer was what united them; after the coming of the Spirit, prayer continued among the followers of Jesus.

It is clear from the text of Acts 1:14 that Mary was a full member of the group. People of "one mind" cannot possibly have second-class members in the group. Mary is fully "church" inasmuch as the Church is at prayer. She is not mentioned, however, as being sent out on a mission by Jesus nor do we have any further mention of her in the Acts. If we are to speak of Mary as a model or image of the Church, then we cannot simply identify Church with mission anymore than we can identify discipleship with mission.

Frequently, Luke shows himself as an evangelist sharing the same themes as the Fourth Gospel. With Mary's presence after the Ascension in Jerusalem and in the upper room, we have the only parallel of her being present after the death of her Son in John 19:25-28a. The latter scene is bound into the ecclesiology of the Fourth Gospel and could give evidence that Luke, too, was aware of a tradition-piece of her presence not at Calvary but at Pentecost when the Christian Church is born. The sign-symbolism of John is suggestive of the birth of the Church, while for Luke the assembly of God's People waiting for the descent of the Spirit is evocative of the ecclesiology which will be so characteristic of Luke in the rest of the Acts.

The text in giving us the name of Mary posits her as the only woman in the New Testament who is specifically mentioned in Luke-Acts' description of the "ecclesia-orans" in the upper-room. Though later on an upper room is named as the posses-

sion of another woman named Mary, the mother of John Mark, the latter woman is not mentioned in connection with Acts 1:14. This is important; for the room could be the same one that later on is mentioned in Acts 12:12. The only woman who is even remotely possible as an image of the Church is Mary the Mother of Jesus. We must also remember that Luke-Acts, as a two-volume work of the same author, has a definite pattern of paralleling events from the first book with those of the second. Just as Mary was physically the mother of her son, so also she actively assists at the birth of the Church.<sup>10</sup> Through her prayer—a prayer of waiting and expectation of the fulfillment of the promises of the Risen Lord—Mary becomes again an active instrument or better, a consenting human person who disposes herself once again as at the Annunciation to receive the gift of the Spirit. The overshadowing of the Spirit brought about the birth of Jesus, the son of Mary. Now the descent of the Spirit impregnates all present in the upper room to preach and witness to their new birth experience as the community of Jesus, or as it will come to be known, the “Church.” Mary’s place is important both symbolically and historically, for without her no woman would have been named in the emerging Church. Luke’s universalism and his concern for salvation history did not allow him to avoid mentioning Mary. She consistently is presented as a woman of faith and prayer, whether that be at Galilee for the Annunciation event, or in the Temple for the rites of purification or for the Passover, or, finally, in the upper room in Jerusalem awaiting the descent of the Spirit promised by her son Jesus.

We can assume from both Luke-Acts and from John’s Gospel that Mary was an important figure in the communities represented by these two evangelists.<sup>10b</sup>

In the first great summary statement of Luke (Acts 2:42-47) about this nascent Church community, the same words as Acts

<sup>10</sup> B. Prete, “Il sommario di Atti 1, 13-14, e suo apporto per la conoscenza della Chiesa delle origini,” *Sacra Doctrina*, 18, 69-70 (1973): 65-124, see p. 70.

<sup>10b</sup> *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (Raymond E. Brown et al., eds.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 19, 24, 210, 287-289.

1:14 are used for describing the special characteristics of the Church. Mary exemplifies the fourth characteristic: prayer:

Acts 2:42 ἦσαν δὲ προσηκροῦντες . . . καὶ ταῦς  
προσευχαῖς

Acts 1:14 πάντες ἦσαν προσηκροῦντες προσευχῇ.

The difference in the verses is, of course, the plural "in the prayers" with the singular of Acts 1:14 "the prayer." Thornton may see in this a precise *place of prayer*, perhaps even the synagogue, for the same expression "προσηκροῦν τῇ προσευχῇ" is found in a synagogue inscription dating from the first century.<sup>11</sup> But how could the women and the men as Jews be in the same place praying? This was not allowed, either in the Temple or in the synagogue. An ingenious idea is presented by the English scholar B.B. Thurston.<sup>12</sup> For him, the "hyperōon" is neither the scene for the Last Supper nor the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, but a room built into the outer wall of the Temple (Cf. Joshua 2:15.). Women were permitted to enter that area; the Sanhedrin even convened in such a location. Hence, he concludes, such a room would be large enough to accommodate the 120 persons who are mentioned in Acts 1:15.

In Bultmann's classic commentary on John, the text of Acts 1:14 is cited in connection with the final appearance of Jesus' Mother in the Fourth Gospel. It bears out the scholar's contention that she (Mary) was an important figure in the Lukan and Johannine circles. Here, both evangelists converge to correct the impression taken from the Synoptics that she did not at all belong to the group of followers. The Fourth evangelist solves the problem for Mary's faith in her son, but not the brothers of Jesus (Cf. John 7:5.). Luke, the universalist, has both the Mother of Jesus and the brothers together in the upper room. Bultmann is convinced: "According to Acts 1.14, certainly, she belongs to the first community, along with the brothers of Jesus, although

<sup>11</sup> T. C. G. Thornton, "Continuing Steadfast in Prayer—New Light on a New Testament Phrase," *ExpT* 83, 1 (1971): 23-24.

<sup>12</sup> B.B. Thurston, "To hyperōon in Acts 1, 13," *ExpT* 80, 1 (1968): 21-22.

[in Luke] no mention is made of her relationship to the 'Beloved Disciple.'"<sup>13</sup>

In John's Gospel, the interest is centered on only one of the women, the Mother of Jesus. Likewise in Acts 1:14, Mary the Mother of Jesus is the only woman named and, thus, is central to the short summary text of Luke.

Bultmann does give an ecclesiological interpretation to 19:27, but through Johannine symbolism, not through historical fact.

The Mother of Jesus, who carries by the cross, represents Jewish Christianity that overcomes the offense of the cross. The beloved disciple represents Gentile Christianity, which is charged to honour the former as its mother from whom it has come, even as Jewish Christianity is charged to recognise itself as "at home" within Gentile Christianity, i.e. included in the membership of the one great fellowship of the Church. And these directions sound out from the cross; i.e. they are commands of the "exalted" Jesus. Their meaning is the same as his words in the prayer, 17:20 f., the request for the first disciples and for those who come to faith through their word: ὙΠΑ ΠΑΝΤΕΣ ΕΝ ὩΣΙΝ.<sup>14</sup>

In my opinion, Luke also gives an ecclesiological interpretation to Mary's presence with the eleven. She is the *named* model believer among women (Cf. Luke 1:45.) who will usher in the age of the Church, just as she brought forth Jesus into a world history that because of his birth becomes salvific. In John's Gospel, she alone is commissioned for such an ecclesiological role; in the Acts, she who is named Mary has a unique role as woman in the first community. Luke will never mention her name again, but her role, which was so clearly described in the infancy narrative, is no less included in the community that has just been born.

Bultmann interprets the scene at Calvary as symbolic for Church unity "ὙΠΑ ΠΑΝΤΕΣ ΕΝ ὩΣΙΝ." Can we not see in the

<sup>13</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray et al. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), p. 672 (in *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, p. 520).

<sup>14</sup> Bultmann, *The Gospel*, p. 673.



persevering prayer of the eleven, Mary, the women and brothers of Jesus the unified community that will also persevere in oneness (koinōnia)?

## II. ACTS 1:14:

### An Initial Summary-Statement with a Marian Implication

The text of Acts 1:14 is classified as a summary statement. Jacques Schlosser, in a recent paper, demonstrated that the first section (Acts 1:14A) is characteristic of Luke's vocabulary, while the second branch (Acts 1:14B) may be a "tradition piece" that Luke received from the Jerusalem community.<sup>15</sup> Several exegetes have noticed it as an unexpected reference for the literary critic.

These summary statements are important for Luke's development of the structure and content of Acts. Besides being considered as a Lukan technique for linking the actions of scenes, they are important statements of Luke's theological understanding of what he has written. Often they are sutures which keep the entire fabric of Acts together. They are more than simply a commentary of Luke when it becomes apparent that some traditional material is handed on to the reader.

These summary statements are, therefore, signals to the reader which make one aware of the "progress of the spreading the Word of God is making despite the author's preoccupation with details."<sup>16</sup> These summaries are of three sorts 1) major (2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:11-16), 2) minor (1:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30-31) and, 3) numerical (2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:31; 11:21,24; 14:1; and 19:20).

The minor summary of Acts 1:14 would belong to the Jerusalem or Palestinian source. (*The Jerome Biblical Commentary* has Acts 1:16-2:40 belonging to such a source: JBC 45:6, p. 167.) There is a similarity and continuation of the meaning of Acts

<sup>15</sup> J. Schlosser, "Marie et la Priere de l'Eglise d'après Lc 1:48 et Ac 1:14," in *EtM* 39 (1982): 15.

<sup>16</sup> *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, vol. II, 45, Acts of the Apostles (R.J. Dillon, J.A. Fitzmeyer), p. 166.

1:14 in the first major summary of Acts 2:42-47, which is central to the forming of the Jerusalem Church.<sup>17</sup>

If we read continuously the summary statements, (about thirty lines of Acts), a certain development and progress is seen in the "ecclesiology" that Luke presents:

- Acts 1:14: the Jerusalem community is at prayer
- Acts 2:42-47: the golden moment and ideology of the Jerusalem community
- Acts 4:4: the growth in the Jerusalem community
- Acts 4:32-35: the unity of the Jerusalem community
- Acts 5:11-16: the marvels of the Jerusalem community
- Acts 6:1-7: the first sign of internal conflict, and yet widespread growth
- Acts 9:31: the first "ekklesia" (Church) text
- Acts 11:21,24: continued growth in numbers, belief
- Acts 12:24: The Word continues to grow and spread
- Acts 14:1: Jews and Gentiles believe
- Acts 16:5: the "Churches" grow
- Acts 19:20: the power of the Word; more widespread growth
- Acts 28:30-31: the last proclamation and teaching of Paul in Rome.

Notice that Acts 1:14, though considered a minor summary, is the first summary used by Luke.

Can any conclusions or insights be had about Luke's ecclesiology from these summaries? What are the components or elements for Luke's concept of the Church? Is Mary a significant person within Luke's ecclesiology?

First, it is my conviction that Luke's developmental concept of the Church is presented through these summaries which, for the most part, are his own creation. His ecclesiology is represented in those areas which come directly from his summary-statements

<sup>17</sup> *The Beginnings of Christianity: Part I, The Acts of the Apostles* (Foakes Jackson and Lake, eds.; 5 vols.; London, 1920-33; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), Vol. V: *The Acts of the Apostles: Additional Notes to the Commentary*; note ch. XXXI, "The Summaries in Acts," by Henry Cadbury, pp. 392-402, especially pp. 396-398.

about the emerging movement which will eventually be the universal or Catholic Church. Through the method of redaction criticism we know that the principal writers of the New Testament are "theologians" who direct their literary composition to specific goals, purposes, and needs of their own communities. It is commonly accepted that Luke is writing for the Gentile Churches, most probably those that Paul and other early missionaries established. The ideals and structures Luke presents represent his own experience of what he sees within these Churches at the time of his writing (80-85 A.D.). It is my contention that Luke expressed his ideal ecclesiology in his summary statements.

From the summary statements we learn much about his image of the Jerusalem community. Eighteen out of the twenty-nine lines of the summary statements deal with the ideal image of that Church. First of all, the *unanimity* (ὁμοθυμαδόν) of each community is based on *prayer* (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 2:46,47); faith, or *belief* (2:42; 4:4; 4:32; 5:14); *fellowship* or togetherness in community (1:14; 2:42; 2:44,46; 4:32 [*cor unum et anima una*]; 5:12). Quite essential to the Church are also the *teaching* of the *apostles* (2:42) and the *breaking of bread* (2:42).

Secondly, there is the phenomenal growth of this movement (2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 11:21,24; 12:24; 14:1; 16:5; 19:20). The growth is attributed to the presence and power of God. Almost as a refrain, Luke keeps repeating "And the Lord added to their number day by day" (Acts 2:47).

Finally, we can see that Luke would understand this ecclesia organism as the "way," or the sect or philosophy (Acts 24:14) and especially as the "Church" which has a mission. However, this aspect of the Church would be expressed in the mission discourses of Acts (2:14-39; 3:12-26; 4:9-12; 5:30-32; 10:34-43; 13:16-38).

They are not to be understood as witnesses to an early or to the earliest primitive Christian theology, but as Lukan theology of the end of the first century. There are certainly good traditions behind the work of Luke, but he has created a unified theological picture out

of the materials he received. Far from the literary drudge he was suspected of being, Luke emerges as a creative theologian.<sup>18</sup>

I think it is of significance to Luke's ecclesiology that mention of Mary is made in the very first summary statement. She, as the only woman so named, and as the mother of Jesus, is linked to the beginnings of Luke's story (Luke 1 & 2) and, as a memorable person, forms a continuity with Israel and the Jewish beginnings of the Church.<sup>19</sup> She is "with" the apostles of the eleven as well as "with" the women who most likely ministered to Jesus during his life, as well as being present with the brothers of Jesus. The unity of this primitive community is achieved through dedication to prayer. Thus Mary is a model for the components of faith, *prayer*, and community. She is not mentioned as actually preaching or bringing the message to others; rather she nurtures as mother those who are gathered in the upper room, just as she nurtured the Infant Jesus who would cause the fall and rise of many in Israel (Luke 2:34). Luke depicts Mary as an image of woman in this ecclesiology—a woman who believes beyond the death of her son, while uniting in prayer with others who await their empowerment from the promised Spirit when Jesus will again be born in his Body the Church.<sup>20</sup> She is the only woman who is called the mother of Jesus; could Luke be indicating that she is the only woman who could ever be called Mother of the Church?

From the context of Acts 1:14, Mary is an image of the *ecclesia-orans* in the nascent Church. In the Gospel she was portrayed

<sup>18</sup> R. Zehnle, *Peter's Pentecostal Discourse*, SBL Monograph series, 15 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 15-16.

<sup>19</sup> B. Prete, "Il sommario di Atti 1, 13-14," p. 94. (See note 10 above for full bibliographic indications.) *N.B.*: This is the most significant study produced during the last twenty-five years on the important ecclesial and Marian text of Acts 1: 13-14. Prete's exegetical study is basically a search for the *INTENTIS AUCTORIS*; it is a contribution to the redactional study of Luke-Acts. It is especially the fifth part of his article that is of interest to the Mariological Society, namely, the meaning of Mary's presence as the mother of Jesus in the nascent Christian community of Jerusalem (pp. 94-102).

<sup>20</sup> B. Prete, "Il sommario di Atti 1, 13-14," p. 99.

as the youthful energetic virgin who was attentive to the Lord and who praised Him from the depths of her being. She continued to ponder over in her heart the events she experienced (Luke 2:19,51). In Acts 1:14 she is Mary, the fully matured woman of experience, the Mother of Jesus, who prays steadfastly with the eleven, with the women, and with the brothers of Jesus. It becomes evident that Luke's "primary interest is to show that prayer is the instrument by which God has directed the course of holy history, both in the life of the Son of Man and in the development of the Christian Church."<sup>21</sup> Mary is central to the birth of the Son of Man; she is also central as woman to the birth of the Church. Her attitude of expectant prayer and constant prayer without losing heart (Luke 18:1) is present in both the Infancy narrative and the Church-narrative of Luke. For Luke, she is the person who, after the example of her son Jesus, models for believers the prayer of Israel and the prayer of the Church.

We know that prayer is one of the important themes of Lukan theology. The verb "proseuchomai"—"to pray, to make petition"—occurs nineteen times in the Gospel of Luke and sixteen times in the Acts. The noun "proseuche" occurs three times in Luke's Gospel and nine times in the Acts. Luke uses the verb "to pray" thirty-five times out of the eighty-six appearances in the New Testament, while for the noun, twelve times out of thirty-six uses in the New Testament. There are also other words used for the prayer-motif in Luke-Acts (aineō, eulogeō, doxazō, eucharisteō, deomai, deēsis, agalliaō).<sup>22</sup> Trites' survey demonstrates that petitionary prayer is a theme of considerable significance in Luke-Acts. Mary is the woman who clearly emerges in a role-model manner for such prayer. She is *ecclesia-orans*.

In the Third Gospel, the atmosphere of worship (in the Temple), prayer, praise, and rejoicing is present. This atmosphere is likewise carried over into Acts (4:24; 11:18; 13:48; 16:25; 21:20).

<sup>21</sup> Allison A. Trites, "The Prayer Motif in Luke-Acts," in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (ed. by Charles H. Talbert), Special Studies Series No. 5 (Danville, Va.: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978), p. 169. (Cf. P. T. O'Brien, "Prayer in Luke-Acts," *Tyndale Bulletin*, 24 [1973]: 112.)

<sup>22</sup> A. A. Trites, "Prayer Motif in Luke-Acts," p. 169.

Both the Gospel and Acts give us such elements which are at the heart of Judaeo-Christian prayer. Luke sets the formation of the Church in this impressive atmosphere of prayer.

In the Acts of the Apostles, there are twenty-five significant passages about prayer.<sup>23</sup> The birth of the Church is presented as a result of prayer. The disciples, Mary, the women and the brothers were told to return to Jerusalem and to await the promise of the Spirit (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4,5). In obeying Jesus, they gathered in an upper room (Acts 1:13) and were of one mind steadfast in prayer (Acts 1:14).

After ten days of prayer, the feast of Pentecost came and the Holy Spirit descended upon the praying community. Luke then describes the result in his first major summary: Luke 2:42-47. "The new believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers" (2:42). Prayer was thus an integral part of the Christian movement from the start, and its vitality was closely related in Luke's eyes to the growth of the Church (2:47). Mary was a central figure in that initial gathering that experienced the birth of the Church through the coming of the Spirit.

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<sup>23</sup> A. A. Trites, "Prayer Motif in Luke-Acts," p. 179.