The opening sentence of the Gospel of Luke is a "remarkable specimen of fine and well-balanced structure, and at the same time of well-chosen vocabulary." The sentence spans the first four verses of the Gospel and inaugurates the document with admirable literary skill. There is, however, a problem with this opening sentence—it does not unambiguously signal the nature of the subject matter and the generic character of the work.

The preface to Luke has been investigated primarily in relation to historiographical prefaces. The development of prefaces to Greek and Roman histories, and the extensive investigation of them within scholarship, has encouraged this approach. But it is instructive to know that scholars uncovered good parallels in prefaces to medical treatises when they were seeking evidence of Luke’s knowledge as a physician. Consideration of the preface to Luke, by itself, leaves uncertainty concerning the generic nature of Luke-Acts.

Fortunately, the initial sentence of the Acts of the Apostles positions both Luke and Acts in relation to contemporary literature of its time: the first volume narrates the teaching and the actions of Jesus and the second volume presents the words and deeds of the apostles as they did the things Jesus commanded them to do. In other words, Luke and Acts are a two-volume biographical narrative. The first volume contains an

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1 Friedrich Blass, Philology of the Gospels, p. 7
account of the teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, from birth to death, and the second volume portrays the extension of this man's teaching and action through his major successors.3

If it is fortunate that the preface to Acts indicates the generic nature of the two volumes, it is unfortunate that prefaces to biographical literature are so disparate. The formal character of the prefaces to Luke and Acts suggests that special impulses have come to expression in them. This paper is designed to uncover the special influences that were playing a role as the author constructed the prefaces. First, then, the vocabulary, style, and structure of the prefaces to Luke and Acts will be set forth, and Greco-Roman literature containing the impulses that produce these literary features will be investigated. Second, the prefaces to Luke and Acts will be analyzed in relation to sections in Acts which contain parallel language and style. Third, a thesis will be introduced concerning the function of the prefaces in Luke and Acts.

Vocabulary, Style, and Structure in the Prefaces to Luke and Acts

Because a majority of extant Greco-Roman biographies are products of a multi-volume undertaking by one author, many of these works contain no preface. The author had little need to introduce yet one more life through a formally constructed introduction. Nevertheless, if the author writes an introduction, certain features are likely to appear. A number of these features are present in the prefaces to Luke and Acts. First, the initial sentence of a biography is likely to contain a statement about the person who is the subject of the Life. There is little surprise, accordingly, when the preface to Acts speaks of "all the things that Jesus began both to do and to teach" (poiein te kai didaskein). Perhaps the closest parallel to this exists in the first sentence of Eunapius' Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists: "Xenophon the philosopher, who is unique among all philosophers in that he adorned philosophy both with words and with deeds" (logois te kai ergois). But the biographical character of these features is expressed in detail, and emphasized, by the last sentence in Xenophon's preface to the Memorabilia (1.1.20):

I wonder, then, how the Athenians can have been persuaded that Socrates was a freethinker, when he never said or did (out'eiponta  ouc praxanta) anything contrary to sound religion, and his utterances about the gods and his behaviour towards them (legonta kai prattonta) were the words and actions (legon kai pratton) of a man who is truly religious and deserves to be thought so.

There should be no doubt that reference to the teaching and action (or words and deeds) of the sage is a stock feature of biographical literature about a philosopher-teacher. Its presence in Acts reflects the biographical enterprise undertaken by the author.

Second, it is customary for an author to refer to his biography as a δἰέγεσις, a narrative. Plutarch, in his comparison of Agis and Cleomenes with the Gracchi provides an example: "Now that I have brought this narrative (τῆς δἰέγεσεως) of the Gracchi also to an end, it remains for me to take a survey of all four lives in parallel" (1.1.). Further, near the beginning of his Lycurgus, Plutarch states: "However, although the history of these times is such a maze, I shall try, in presenting my narrative (ἀποδοναι τὴν διήγεσιν), to follow those authors who are least contradicted, or who have the most notable witnesses (γνωριμοτατοὺς μαρτυρας) for what they have written about the man" (1.3). The passage illustrates the relation between biography and history. While some historians felt ill toward biographers, most biographers looked with favor upon historians. Plutarch, as many other biographers, gleaned his information from historical accounts. He refers to his biographies as narratives (δἰέγεσε) and seeks reliable information.

Third, therefore, Luke shares with other biographers a reference to accuracy (ἀκριβοσαι). The concern for accuracy pervades all kinds of prefaces in Greco-Roman literature, but its role in biography is well illustrated in Philo's Life of Moses:

But I will...tell the story of Moses as I have learned it, both from the sacred books, the wonderful monuments of his wisdom which he has left behind him, and from some of the elders of the nation; for I always interwove what I was told with what I read, and believed (ἐδοξα) myself to have more accurate knowledge (ἀκριβοσαι) than others of his life (τα peri ton bion).

Philo of Alexandria composed a biography of Moses in the style of Greco-Roman Lives. He draws information not only from written biblical sources but from oral traditions circulating among the Jewish elders. Following the convention of contemporary biographers, he asserts that his account, based on written and oral traditions, is more accurate than any other.

Prefaces to literature in Mediterranean Antiquity share much in common, but particular features may characterize a preface within any genre. Tore Janson has illustrated this well in his study of oratorical features in Latin prose prefaces. The prefaces to Luke and Acts reflect features related to oratory and letters. Since speeches and letters are standard components of biography, this influence is paralleled by other biographical prefaces.

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4Tore Janson, Latin Prose Prefaces: Studies in Literary Conventions, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis: Studia Latina Stockholmiensa XIII.
First, direct address in the preface (Lk 1:3: kratiste Theophile; Acts 1:1: o Theophile) derives from Athenian oratory. Usually a person writes a letter to address a second party directly, and the person to whom the correspondence is addressed is referred to in dative case. But it was customary to send written discourses in Mediterranean Antiquity, and direct address in the preface characterizes these speeches. Three works of Isocrates—To Demonicus, To Nicocles, and To Philip—exhibit this phenomenon exceptionally well. In addition, the prefaces to these and other discourses by Isocrates contain language closely related to the Lucan prefaces. Selections from To Philip 1-4 illustrate the parallels:

Do not be surprised, Philip (o Philipphe), that I am going to begin my discourse (tou logou poiēsomai ten archen) not with speech which is to be addressed to you and which is presently to be brought to your attention, but with that which I have written about Amphipolis (tou peri Amphipoleōs graphentos)...it was not in a moment of folly that I undertook to write my address to you (epethemen graphein ton pros se logon)...For when I saw...the war in which you and our city had become involved...I endeavoured to express opinions regarding this city (epexêrêsa legein peri te tēs poleōs)...you and the Athenians were mistaken about the real state of affairs (tōn pragmatōn)...I so impressed my hearers by my statement of the case that not one of them thought of applauding my oratory (ton logon) or the finish and the purity (akribos kai katharos) of my style, as some are wont to do, but instead they marvelled at the truth of my arguments (tēn aletheian tōn pragmatōn)...

While direct address was not a standard feature within historiographical prefaces, it was common within biography. It was natural to include features of discourse in biographical prefaces since sayings and speeches were abundant throughout the work.

In Hellenistic times, direct address appears also in letters, and it is only one of several features from written discourses that influenced epistolary style. Direct address appears at the opening of the Letter of Aristeas, the Epistle to Diognetus, the Letter of Melito, and Theophilus’ To Autolycus. Moreover, the two letters of Dionysius of Halicarnassus to Ammaeus contain direct address within the body of the letter. In return,
written discourses can be prefaced by the characteristic opening of an epistle.\textsuperscript{10} The interplay between epistolary and discourse style helps to explain the role of direct address in the prefices to Luke and Acts.

Second, the expression edoxe kamoi...soi grapsei (it seemed good also for me...to write to you) is common in letters and orations. Dionysius of Halicarnassus opens Letter to Ammaeus II with:

\begin{quote}
I thought I had sufficiently indicated the characteristics of Thucydides when describing the most important and remarkable of these peculiarities which seems to me (edoxen moi) to distinguish him from all previous orators and historians (1. 4-10). 
\end{quote}

Likewise, Letters to Ammaeus I features Dionysius writing: “And you seemed to me, further, to be right (edokeis te moi kai), in counselling me...” (II.9). If this expression appears to be too commonplace in Greek literature to be an important feature, one should bear in mind that discourses and letters are the setting in which a person is expected to state his or her views (ta dokounta). The central role that one’s views play in the composition of letters and discourses is illustrated in Letter to Ammaeus I when Dionysius writes that he will state his views in a separate work (111.1 : en idia dëlosó graphè ta dokounta moi). Further, the common ground of letters and orations is captured by Dionysius when he cites the opening line of an oration in Letter to Ammaeus I: ò andres Athënaioi moi dokei (IV.27).\textsuperscript{11} People write letters and discourses for the expressed purpose of communicating their views to other people. Therefore, direct address and the statement “it seems good to me” go hand in hand in speeches—written or spoken—and letters. Their presence in the preface to Luke reflects oratorical and epistolary influence.

Third, it is unusual for a preface to suggest that the account presents information concerning things about which the recipient has been informed (katêcheomai). This feature of the preface to Luke has been complicated by the absence of this verb from pre-Hellenistic Greek literature.\textsuperscript{12} But this impulse has a natural place in biography. Though information about a person may be abundant in various kinds of literary works, that information is not satisfactory so far as a biographer is concerned. Historical accounts give so much detail about battles and political intrigues that they lose sight of the person himself, while other accounts give fragmented insights into the thought and action of the person. Therefore, the biographer presents a succession of brief scenes,


\textsuperscript{11}Cf. Isocrates, On the Peace I.1; To Nicocles II.1.

\textsuperscript{12}See Cadbury, ibid., pp. 508-9.
crucial events, poignant statements, and highpoints of interaction with other people to show the importance and influence of the person who is the subject of the biography. The biographer does not hesitate to write his biography when an abundance of information is known to people. In other words, sometimes a biographer writes about a person when little information is available in public circles, but a biographer writes to organize information around a particular perspective. Often an abundance of information is available, and often the biographer thinks that erroneous impressions accompany that information. He writes his biography to re-organize perceptions so that the speech and actions of the person favorably influence the reader.

Oratorical features emerge naturally in a biographical preface when the author knows that information is available about the subject of his biography and he desires to present this person in such a way that people will receive a particular type of influence from him. Plutarch’s preface to Aratus provides an illustration:

There is an ancient proverb, O Polycrates (ὁ Polukrates), which it seems to me (moidokei) the philosopher Chrysippus puts not as it really is, but as he thought better: “Who will praise a father, except happy sons?”...But surely for a man...like thee, who patterns his life after the fairest examples in his family line,—for such men it will be good fortune to be reminded of their noblest progenitors, ever and anon hearing the story of them or telling it themselves....And therefore, now that I have written the life of Aratus, who was thy countryman and forefather, and to whom thou thyself are no discredit in either reputation or influence, I send it to thee, not as though thou hadst not been at pains from the beginning (ἐκ ἀρχῆς) to have the most precise (ἀκριβέστατα) knowledge of thy ancestor’s career (παράξεις), but in order that thy sons Polycrates and Pythocles may be reared, now by hearing and now by reading, after examples found in their own family line—examples which it well becomes them to imitate (I.1.1-4).

This preface contains many points of relation to the prefaces in Luke-Acts. Plutarch presents an account of the actions (praxeis) of Aratus to Polycrates so that the life of Aratus may play a role in forming appropriate thought and actions among his descendants. Plutarch knows that Polycrates has much information about Aratus. Yet he composes this account, and sends it to Polycrates, so that the career of Aratus will stand as a paradigm for later action. He envisions that Polycrates will not only read this biography, and give it to his sons to read, but he will transmit the information orally to them. His interest in oral transmission is captured in the oracular features in the preface itself. Since the goals of biography can be met best when people both hear and read the information, Plutarch composes a preface to the Life that speaks directly to Polycrates and introduces an oracular context for his narrative.

13 See, e.g., Plutarch, Alexander I.1-3.
The linguistic features of the first verses in Luke and Acts suggest a context paralleled by other biographers in the Greco-Roman culture. Luke has constructed biographical prefaces in an oratorical style related to epistolary discourse. The prefaces were not expanded through rhetorical flourish like many Latin prose prefaces. Instead, they begin the account with an abruptness characteristic of biographical literature. The oratorical and epistolary nature of the prefaces to Luke and Acts creates an interrelationship with the speeches and letters in Acts.


The vocabulary and style characteristic of the Lucan prefaces appear also in the last half of Acts (chaps. 15-28). In other words, the openings of both Luke and Acts contain a linguistic and structural relation to the final portion of the second volume. For the most part, the parallels appear in the two letters and ten speeches within the narrative. These parallels reveal a relation among the prefaces, letters, and speeches that indicates the special nature of the prefaces and the two-volume biography Luke composed.

The language and style of the prefaces reappear in the narrative when the apostles and elders decide to compose a letter to set forth the conditions under which the Gentile mission is to be conducted. Features of the prefaces appear initially in the narrative that precedes the letter, and these features continue in the letter itself. In Acts 15:22-23, the apostles and elders accept a position analogous to the position Luke adopts when he writes to Theophilus:

> Then it seemed good (εδόξε) to the apostles and the elders...having chosen men from among them (ἐκλεξαμένους ἀνδραίς ἐκ αὐτῶν), to send them to Antioch...having written by their hand (ἐγράψαντες διὰ χειρὸς αὐτῶν),...

In a parallel manner, Luke says (Luke 1:1,3) that it seemed good to him to write to Theophilus (εδόξε καμοί...σοι ἐγράψαι) as others had taken such a task in hand (ἐπεχείρησαν). Also, he refers to the apostles who were chosen (Acts 1:2: τοῖς ἀποστολοῖς...χους ἐξελέξω) to do the things commanded to them. The same style and vocabulary pervade the letter (Acts 15:24-29):

> Since (επειδὴ) we have heard that some persons from us (ἐξ ἡμῶν) have troubled you with words (λογίσ), unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions (ἵοις οὐ διεισελέμαθα), it has seemed good to us (ἐδόξημεν) in assembly to choose men (ἐκλεξαμένους ἀνδραίς) and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have delivered (παραδέδωκοσι) their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things through word (διὰ λογοῦ). For it seemed

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good (edoxen) to the Holy Spirit and to us....If you...you will do well (eu praxete).

This letter contains many points of relation to the prefaces to Luke and Acts. People in various cities have heard information about Christian activity that is disturbing and inaccurate. Therefore, it seemed to be a good thing to write to the people in these cities and to have this information delivered by men specially chosen for the task. That which is written will be confirmed by that which is spoken, and if people follow the guidelines as set forth, they will act properly.

The story of Apollos at Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28) presents the next setting which contains language characteristic of the prefaces:

This one had been informed (katéchemenos) about the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately (akribos) the things concerning Jesus (ta peri tou lesou), though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately (akribesteron). And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples (egrapsan tois mathetais) to receive him...

In the same way in which Luke is concerned that Theophilus be presented with an accurate account of things about which he has already been informed, so Priscilla and Aquila expound a more accurate understanding to Apollos concerning that which he has been informed. After they have transmitted this more accurate understanding to Apollos, they write a letter asking the disciples to receive him.

After these two episodes, features characteristic of the prefaces are absent until Paul returns to Jerusalem and visits James in the company of the elders (Acts 21:17-18). At this point, James gives a speech that shows various points of relation to the prefaces:

You see, brother (adelphe), how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; they are all zealous for the law, and they have been told (katechthesan) about you, that you teach (didaseis) all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses...What then is to be done?...Do therefore what we tell you (touto oun poieson ho soi legomen)...Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you (kai gnósontai pantes hoti hon katechentai peri sou ouden estin)...But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter (epesteilamen)...(Acts 21:20-25).

Again, where features of the preface emerge, there is formal speech and reference to a letter. Both the speech and letter are designed to give information to people who have already been informed (katécheomai) so that they may understand teaching and actions more accurately.

Soon after this, Paul delivers a formal defense speech before the people of Jerusalem (22:1-21.)15 When the tribune who has been in

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15For an excellent study of the defense speeches, see Fred Veltman, “The
charge of the proceedings writes a letter to be taken along with Paul to Felix (23:26-30), features characteristic of the prefaces reappear:

Claudius Lysias [the tribune] to his Excellency (tō kratistō) the governor Felix, greeting. This man was seized by the Jews, and was about to be killed by them, when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. And desiring to know (boulomenos te epignonai) the charge on which they accused him, I brought him down to their council. I found that he was accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you (epempsa pros se), ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him (legein pros auton epi sou).

For the first time since Luke 1:3, the honorific adjective kratistos occurs, and the recipient of the address is a Roman official. The tribune’s action is motivated by the desire to know (epiginoskein) accurate information about the situation. After he has made a judgment about Paul’s activity, he writes a letter and sends people along who will state their accusation orally.

When Tertullus, the oral accuser, speaks to Felix, his opening statement contains the direct address kratiste Phēlix (24:3). He concludes his formal accusation (24:8) with:

By examining him yourself you will be able to learn from him about everything of which we accuse him (peri panton touton epignōnai hōn hemeis kategoroumen autou).

When Felix motions for Paul to respond, Paul offers “a typical apology” (24:10-21)\(^{16}\) beginning with:

Realizing that for many years you have been judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. As you may ascertain (dunamenou sou epignonai) it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem...

At the end of Paul’s speech stands an editorial comment by Luke:

But Felix having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way (akribesteron eidos ta peri tes hodou), put them off, saying, “When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case.”

In this narrative sequence before Felix, Luke uses language characteristic of the prefaces. Tertullus addresses Felix in the same manner as Luke addresses Theophilus, and Tertullus proposes that Felix should scrutinize the facts himself so that he may know (epignōskein) the truth of the accusation. In return, Paul tells Felix that he is able to know (epignoskein) the actual situation by checking out what he is being told. In the end, Felix having a more accurate knowledge of the Way (than the

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\(^{16}\)Veltman, ibid., p. 334.
accusers?), refuses to pronounce a verdict of guilty. The interaction between Paul and Felix is reminiscent of the appeal in the preface to Luke, and the Roman official Felix responds in a most careful manner because of his more accurate information.


But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried; to the Jews I have done no wrong, as you know very well (hôs kai su kallion epignôseis). If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything (pepracha ti) for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death; but if there is nothing in their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar."

When, after a few days, King Agrippa and Berenice visit Caesarea, Festus presents Paul's case to them. This account is skillfully composed by Luke, since Felix, a Roman governor, now transmits orally to King Agrippa the information that Luke has just transmitted to his readers through written narrative. Moreover, in a formal trial setting on the following day, Festus reiterates his statement with a significant additional component (Acts 25:24-27):

And Festus said, "King Agrippa (Agrippa Basileu) and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. But I found that he had done nothing deserving death (meden axion auton thanatou peprachenai); and as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to send him. But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him (peri hou asphales ti grapsei to kurio ouk echo). Therefore, I have brought him before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write (schô ti grapso). For it seems to me (moi dokei) unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him.

Festus transmits orally, in both private and public session, the information he has about Paul. He transmits the information to a higher Roman official so that, through consultation, he may know what to write to a yet higher Roman official, the emperor himself. The role of Festus in this setting is remarkable. On the basis of his present information, he has become an advocate of Paul. Still he feels that he has nothing certain (asphales) to write to the emperor. Therefore, he seeks more specific information through consultation with higher officials which provides the setting for Paul to rehearse the details of his career (Acts 26:1-29).

In this setting that Festus has created, Paul delivers an account of his career from the beginning (26:4: ap' archês). He asserts that the Jews, if they are willing to testify (26:5: ean thelôsi marturein), have known for some time past (anôthen) that he has lived according to the strictest (akribestatên) party of their religion. At first it seemed to him (26:9: ego...
men oun edoxa emauto) that he should do (praxai) things against the
name of Jesus of Nazareth. But after a heavenly vision in which Jesus
confronted him, he declared to both Jews and Gentiles that they should
repent and perform deeds worthy of their repentance (26:20: axia tès
metanoias erga prassontas). This speech by Paul is saturated with
language reminiscent of the prefaces. Moreover, as with the speech by
Festus, so here Paul recounts information that Luke has previously
presented in biographical narrative form.

After this speech by Paul, language characteristic of the prefaces
does not reappear in Acts. Paul is taken to Rome where he addresses the
Jewish leaders and is allowed to go about “preaching the kingdom of
God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and
unhindered” (Acts 28:31). The language and style characteristic of the
prefaces emerges in the letters and speeches in the last half of Acts, and
these features appear when a person or a group of people is transmitting
information to another person or group. Most often in these settings
reference is made to both written and oral transmission of the
information. Also, usually people who are being addressed, either by
written document or by speech, already have information concerning the
matter about which they are being more specifically informed.

The Function of the Prefaces to Luke and Acts

The oratorical and epistolary features in the prefaces to Luke and
Acts suggest that the direct address to Theophilus serves a larger
function than dedication to a patron. Theophilus is addressed as though
a special plea were being made through a written speech or letter. On the
basis of this and other data in Luke-Acts, C.A. Heumann proposed in
1721 that Luke had written an apologia, and H.J. Cadbury renewed the
assertion in 1921. The linguistic and stylistic parallels between the
prefaces and the defense speeches provide strong evidence for this
suggestion, but one must not focus on Paul’s defense oratory alone. The
defense speeches of Paul are functioning in an overall biographical
context, and this context determines the force of the speeches and
letters contained in it. In his final defense speech, Paul recounts his
career in relation to biographical impulses — his action and speech are
related to the action and speech of the prophets, Moses, and Christ:

I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing
the name of Jesus of Nazareth (26:9) ...And the Lord said, “I am Jesus
whom you are persecuting” (26:15) ...To this day I have had the help that
comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great,
saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to
pass: that the Christ must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from
the dead, he would proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles
(26:22-23).

17C.A. Heumann and Th. Hase, Bibliotheca Bremensis, Class IV, Fasc. 3
(1721) p. 489.
18Cadbury, “Purpose,” p. 437-41.
Moreover, the last words of Acts relate Paul’s activity to the life of Jesus:

And he [Paul] lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered (28:30-31).

Therefore, the poignant question is: What is the relation of the overall biographical narrative to the oratorical and epistolary character of the prefaces?

First, the oratorical and epistolary features in the prefaces introduce the primary impulse for Luke’s two-volume biography. This impulse is didactic in nature — Luke wants to inform Theophilus (and anyone else who reads the document) about the words and deeds of Jesus and his successors. Parallels to this function for oratory and epistles can be found in the Oration of Isocrates entitled To Demonicus and the Epistles of Dionysius of Halicarnassus to Ammaeus. As Isocrates wants Demonicus to know the principles underlying proper conduct and Dionysius wants Ammaeus to know the procedures of good literary criticism, so Luke wants Theophilus to know the ideology and goals of members of the Christian community. In like manner, the letter of the apostles and elders in Acts 15:23-29 contains a basic didactic impulse. The apostles and elders want the brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia to know the guidelines for inclusion of Gentiles in the Christian community. Similarly, Priscilla and Aquila expound to Apollos more accurate information concerning the way of God (Acts 18:26) after they have heard him speak boldly in the synagogue, and the brethren write a letter for him to take along as he travels. In other words, the underlying impulse of the oratorical and epistolary features in the prefaces is didactic, and this impulse is present in the first two contexts where this language reappears in the last half of Acts.

But the prefaces to Luke and Acts contain the semantic potential for extension beyond didactic oratory into defense oratory. This potential is realized in the letters and defense speeches that result from the arrest of Paul in Jerusalem. In the episode prior to the arrest, James and the elders instruct Paul to undertake action that will correct the inaccurate information that the Jews in Jerusalem have been told about Paul (21:20-25). The function of this speech is didactic, but its goal extends beyond instruction into pre-trial advice. The language represents a transitional stage between didactic oratory and defense oratory. In Paul’s trial speeches (Acts 22-26), the language functions directly as defense oratory. Even this context, however, exhibits the biographical nature of the literary enterprise. Paul’s defense is not just a defense of himself, but a defense of the life and death of Jesus and those who follow his teachings and actions. Accordingly, Paul recalls the death of Stephen in his first defense speech (22:20), and between the first and second speech Jesus appears to Paul at night and says, “Take courage, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also
at Rome” (Acts 23:11). Moreover, in the first conclusion to Paul’s final defense speech, King Agrippa says to Paul: “In a short time you think to make me a Christian!” (26:28). In other words, the end result of the trial speeches is not simply a defense of Paul but a presentation of Christ and his successors.

The defense oratory in Acts functions in the overarching context of a biographical account that presents the thought and action of a particular religious community. The prefaces prepare the way for a full defense of this religious community, but they show a restraint that is characteristic of didactic biography. Luke did not launch his work in the full context of defense oratory. Instead, he formulated his prefaces so that didactic biography was the medium for a full defense of his religious community.

Second, the oratorical and epistolary features in the prefaces establish the importance of both oral and written transmission of information about Jesus and his successors. As Plutarch emphasized the importance of written and spoken transmission of information in his preface to Aratus, so Luke presents biographical information to Theophilus (and those who read the account) with the directness of a face-to-face speech or a personal letter. This directness enhances the presentation of didactic biography, and it prevails throughout Luke-Acts.

In Acts 15-28, language characteristic of the prefaces emerges persistently in contexts where speeches are delivered and letters are written that contain the content of the speech. This occurs at the Jerusalem council (15:7-29), the instruction of Apollos (18:24-28), Paul’s meeting with James and the elders (21:18-25), and the trial with the tribune Claudius Lysias (22:26-23:30). Porcius Festus presents Paul’s case to King Agrippa because he does not have anything definite to write to Caesar (25:26-27). This creates the context in which Paul has the opportunity to rehearse the long account of his career to a large public assembly (25:23-26:29). Throughout all of this, the author implies that neither written nor spoken information is satisfactory by itself. A context for both written and oral presentation of information must be provided or misinformation will reign supreme.

The emphasis on both written and oral transmission of tradition in the preface to Luke reaches its conclusion in Acts 28:21-22 when the leaders of the Jews in Rome tell Paul:

We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brethren coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.

Misinformation about this sect is abundant, but it circulates through unreliable oral transmission. As the Jews in Rome want to hear Paul himself — just as King Agrippa (25:22) and Festus (25:16) had insisted on hearing Paul — so Luke presents his information directly to Theophilus (Luke 1:3-4). But Theophilus should understand that Luke’s account is not simply a matter of written transmission of information. Couched in the
form of didactic biography, it contains an interplay between written and spoken information that should be self-confirming.

Third, the preface introduces a relationship between Luke and Theophilus that parallels the relationship between Paul and Festus in Acts. Only Theophilus and the Roman governors, Felix and Festus, are addressed by means of the honorific adjective *kratistos* (Luke 1:3; Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). Paul addresses only Festus by means of this adjective (26:25), and Festus functions as a governor should. The implications of this are close at hand for anyone in a position to be addressed by *kratistos.*

As Theophilus has received information about Christianity (Luke 1:4), so Festus received information about Paul (Acts 25:2). As Luke presupposes that Theophilus will give careful attention to his account of the information, so Festus provides the context for Paul himself to offer his version (Acts 25:4-6). The remarkable feature emerges when King Agrippa and Bernice visit Caesarea — Festus presents Paul's case to the king as an advocate of Paul. He has found Paul guilty of no serious offense, so he consults with a higher official. His consultation with this higher official provides Paul the opportunity to recount his career before a class of people more advanced in the social and political hierarchy. Festus' role is paralleled by Pilate's action when he arranges for Jesus to go before King Herod (Luke 23:7), who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time though none of the other Gospel writers know about it. There can be little doubt that Luke would expect Theophilus to play a similar role. After reading this account, Theophilus will have definite information that will make it possible for him to inform his superiors of the innocence of Christians. Moreover, he will be able to transmit their belief that Jesus rose from the dead (cf. Acts 25:19). If Theophilus does this, a unanimous decision should arise that followers of Christ "do nothing to deserve death or imprisonment" (Acts 26:31).

In summary, therefore, the prefaces contain oratorical and epistolary features that introduce the genre of didactic biography. As the narrative develops, this language is placed in the setting of assembly and trial which elicits defense oratory. As both written and oral information is interwoven throughout the narrative, the biographical account achieves the status of a reliable defense of the founder of Christianity and his successors. If the prefaces did not prepare Theophilus (and other readers) for a fully developed defense of Christianity, they created the context in which the defense was credible and self-confirming when it emerged.

Conclusion

For the most part, the prefaces to Luke and Acts have been investigated in relation to historiographical prefaces. But the oratorical and epistolary features in the Lucan prefaces are more common to biography than to historiography. The language and style of the prefaces
are characteristic of didactic biography, and Luke-Acts meets the requirements of this genre. In the last half of Acts, the style and language of the prefaces reappears in the context of defense oratory. By this means, didactic biography is used as the medium for a defense of Christianity. The prefaces, therefore, are a product of skillful composition. They are restrained enough that they do not offend the reader, yet they are direct enough that they elicit the reader's attention and create the context in which the narrative may persuade the reader of the innocence and courage of the members of this religious community.