Conversion in Luke-Acts: The Potential of a Cognitive Approach

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The importance of conversion in the Lukan narrative is signaled immediately in the opening chapter of the Gospel,[1] in Gabriel's summary of the effect of John's ministry:

> *He will turn* many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God...he will go before him,
>> *to turn* the hearts of fathers to their children, and
>> *[to turn]* the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous,
>> to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:16-17)

Thus we learn from the outset that repentance in Luke-Acts will not be a theological abstraction, but rather aimed at a transformation of day-to-day patterns of thinking, feeling, believing, and behaving. Gabriel's sketch of John's vocation is profoundly *theo*centric: He will turn people to *the Lord*, go before *the Lord*, and prepare people for the advent of *the Lord*. God is at work, and this invites repentance, obedience, and restoration. What begins with the angelic message in Luke 1 continues throughout the Lukan narrative. Jesus articulates his mission as calling sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32) and reports rejoicing at the repentance of even one sinner (Luke 15:7, 10). The directed response to the good news is, "Repent, and be baptized..." (Acts 2:38). Paul summarizes his entire ministry as declaring "first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance" (Acts 26:20).

Heightened emphasis on Luke's part cannot be correlated with a significant array of studies of conversion in Luke-Acts, however, nor to general agreement around what "conversion" entails for Luke. My agenda is to join a small number of other students of Luke in addressing this lacuna. My interests will be guided by the potential contribution of the cognitive sciences to this inquiry. Having first surfaced some of the controverted issues, I will then turn to cognitive science, emphasizing two foci of cognitive-linguistic study: the experiential background of language-in-use and metaphor. I will demonstrate that the cognitive sciences both provide a prophylactic against the

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1. This is emphasized by Ronald D. Witherup, *Conversion in the New Testament* (Zaccaheus Studies: New Testament; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1994), 44-47.

facile dualisms or polarities (e.g., either repentance or conversion, intellectual or moral, internal or external, event or process) that have plagued much of the discussion heretofore, and help to map a more textured terrain of understanding of the ramifications of conversion in the Lukan narrative. Lukan scholars might already have enjoyed the benefit of some of these insights had they attended more rigorously to sociological and anthropological studies of conversion, since these generally underscore the psycho-social and/or physical embodiment of human thinking and action,[2] but even these are supplemented by cognitive science.

Questioning Conversion in Luke-Acts

Even though the concept of "conversion" has become associated especially with the Christian faith, it is not a particularly biblical term, nor in the ancient world is this concept peculiar to early Christian proclamation and literature.[3] As in Greek literature more widely, so in the NT, the concept is typically lexicalized with the terms μετάνοια ("repentance") and its verbal form, μετανοέω ("to change one's course"), or ἐπιστροφή ("a turning [toward]") and its verbal form ἐπιστρέφω ("to turn around"). On the basis of word-usage alone, a whole range of issues important to the interpreter remain ambiguous, and contemporary study — including recent dissertations by Guy Nave and

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2. Among NT scholars who have begun to exploit that wider literature, see Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* (OBT 20; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 18-36; Nicholas H. Taylor, "The Social Nature of Conversion in the Early Christian World," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; London: Routledge,1995), 128-36.

3. See, e.g., Thomas M. Finn, *From Death to Rebirth: Ritual and Conversion in Antiquity* (New York: Paulist, 1997); Philip Rousseau, "Conversion," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3d ed.; ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 386-87. The difficulties inherent in defining terms in a study of "conversion" in the NT are often acknowledged — e.g., Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 1-16; Richard V. Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1-14.

Fernando Méndez-Moratalla — has not resolved the matter.[4] An outline of the controverted issues would include the following:

- Is conversion a cognitive category (Taeger), a moral category (Dupont), or both (Stenschke, Talbert)?

- Are repentance and conversion discrete (Nave) or convergent (Méndez-Moratalla) categories?

- Should we seek the background to Luke's conception of repentance/conversion especially in the Greco-Roman world (Nave) or in Israel's Scriptures and history (Pao, Ravens)?

- Is Luke's (and the early Christian) conception of conversion unique in its world (*passim*) or almost entirely congruent with it (Nave)?

- Is conversion a crossing of religious boundaries and rejection of one manner of life, embracing more fully the life one has chosen, or both (see the semantic nuance in Gaventa)?

- What is the relationship between conversion as a "change of mind" and behavioral transformation (emphasized in Nave and Méndez-Moratalla, both of whom urge that the relationship is one of logical consequence)?

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4. In the summary that follows, I refer to the studies of François Bovon, *L'œuvre de Luc: Études d'exégèse et de théologie* (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 165-79; Jacques Dupont, "Conversion in the Acts of the Apostles," in *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 61-84; Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*; Fernando Méndez-Moratalla, *The Paradigm of Conversion in Luke* (JSNTSup 252; London: T&T Clark, 2004); Guy D. Nave Jr., *The Role and Function of Repentance in Luke-Acts* (SBLAB 4; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002); David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (WUNT 2:130; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); David Ravens, *Luke and the Restoration of Israel* (JSNTSup 119; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Christoph W. Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith* (WUNT 2:108; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999); J.W. Taeger, *Der Mensch und sein Heil: Studien zum Bild des Menschen und zur Sicht der Bekehrung bei Lukas* (SNT 14; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1982); Charles H. Talbert, "Conversion in the Acts of the Apostles: Ancient Auditors' Perceptions," in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson* (ed. Richard O. Thompson and Thomas E. Phillips; Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998), 141-53; Matthias Wenk, "Conversion and Initiation: A Pentecostal View of Biblical and Patristic Perspectives," *JPT* 17 (2000): 56-80.

- Is conversion an event or a process (Nave, Méndez-Moratalla, and many others portray conversion in event-oriented, static terms, even when parsing its logical consequences in terms of behavioral change)?
- Is conversion a matter of human self-correction (Taeger), or is it the consequence of divine initiative (Bovon, Stenschke, Wenk)?

This is not an exhaustive list,[5] but it does provide us with something of the horizons within which contemporary issues related to conversion in the Lukan narrative have been discussed.

Conversion and Cognitive Science

How might advances in cognitive science, and the neurosciences more generally, serve our interest in conversion in Luke-Acts? Most importantly, cognitive science underscores the fallacy of Descartes' notion of the mind, free to engage in its own operations (quite apart from the body and from other minds), countering with its nonnegotiable emphasis on embodiment — that is, "the role of an agent's own body in its everyday, situated cognition."[6] An index of related considerations would include the fallacy of imagining that intellect and affect are separable, the fallacy of imagining that mind and behavior are separable, the fallacy of imagining that conversion can be understood merely with respect to individuals, the inescapable conclusion that conversion is a process (even if it is an event-inaugurated process), and the ramifications of grasping metaphor as a way of construing the world rather than a means of decorating it. In this section, I want to clarify these claims as well as suggest how they provide a prism by which to see what we otherwise might have missed in our examination of conversion in Luke-Acts. Because of its exceptional nature, I will reserve for a subsequent section my entrée into the potential significance of conceptual metaphor.

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5. E.g., Méndez-Moratalla seeks to demonstrate "a coherent theological pattern of conversion particular to Luke" (*Paradigm of Conversion*, 2; cf. Ulrich Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte: Form- und traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* [3d ed.; WMANT 5; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1974], 180-82). Others have recognized formal characteristics of the conversion experience but denied an identifiably Lukan technique or pattern of conversion — e.g., Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 52-129; Robert F. O'Toole, *The Unity of Luke's Theology: An Analysis of Luke-Acts* (GNS 9; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 191-224.

6. Raymond W. Gibbs Jr., *Embodiment and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

The most basic and significant contribution of cognitive science is its irreducible emphasis on somatic existence as the basis and means of human existence, including the exercise of the mind. Today it is widely acknowledged among cognitive scientists that thought is embodied, for the most part unconscious, and metaphorical. "Thought," including conceptualizations associated with the so-called hard sciences, is not literal, not ethereal, not objective. Religious experience and the language by which we articulate it — these, too, are embodied and metaphorical.[7]

Neural Plasticity

As neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux colloquially puts it, "People don't come preassembled, but are glued together by life."[8] LeDoux thus highlights the effects of environment on human development, drawing attention to how formative influences are encoded in the synapses of the central nervous system, those points of communication among the cells of the brains, or neurons. Even if the organization of the brain is hardwired genetically, genes shape only the broad outline of our mental and behavioral functions; the rest is sculpted through our life-experiences. Hence, although our genes bias the way we think, feel, believe, and behave, the systems responsible for much of what we do and how we do it are shaped by learning. What is more, "learning" (or "training") is the

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7. See, e.g., George Lakoff, "How the Body Shapes Thought: Thinking with an All-Too-Human Brain" and "How to Live with an Embodied Mind: When Causation, Mathematics, Morality, the Soul, and God are Essentially Metaphorical Ideas," in *The Nature and Limits of Human Understanding* (ed. Anthony J. Sanford; The 2001 Gifford Lectures; London: T. & T. Clark, 2003), 49-73, 75-108. I recognize that this claim raises a host of questions important to theologians, ethicists, and philosophers, not the least of which have to do with the nature of "truth" and its relation to human perception and the challenges attending any physicalist portrait of the human person. Here, I can do little more than point to the helpful discussion of such issues in, e.g., Jean-Pierre Changeux, *The Physiology of Truth: Neuroscience and Human Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Gregory R. Peterson *Minding God: Theology and the Cognitive Sciences* (Theology and the Sciences; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); idem, "Minding *Minding God*: A Response to Spezio and Bielfeldt," Zygon 39 (2004): 605-14; Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Current Issues in Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). I address these issues in Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Carlisle: Paternoster; Grand Rapids, MI; BakerAcademic, forthcoming).

8. Joseph LeDoux, *Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2002), 3. Cf. Peter R. Huttenlocher, *Neural Plasticity: The Effects of Environment on the Development of the Cerebral Cortex* (Perspectives in Cognitive Neuroscience; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

product especially of interpersonal experiences, which directly shape the ongoing development of the brain's structure and function.[9] In short, from birth, we are in the process of becoming, and this "becoming" is encoded in our brains by means of synaptic activity as both nature and nurture yield the same effect — namely, sculpting the brain (and thus shaping the mind) in ways that form and reform the developing self.

Two consequences immediately follow. First, "who we are" can never be divided into "parts." To speak of "conversion" or, more basically, of "religious or moral formation," is always to speak of persons and not parts of persons. Transformation of "my inner person" can be nothing more or less than transformation of "me," understood wholistically. This perspective takes seriously not only the biblical witness to a wholistic anthropology, but also neuroscientific research.[10] If human identity is grounded in consistency of memory; if the differentiating marks of the human person are the development of consciousness, individuality within community, self-consciousness, the capacity to make decisions on the basis of self-deliberation, planning and action on the basis of that decision, and taking responsibility for these decisions and actions;[11] and if these have a neural substrate, then we can speak only of human existence fully embodied. What is crucial for our purposes is this: If the capacities uniquely constitutive of the human being are biologically anchored processes, if what makes us singularly human is the complexity of the human brain — or, better, the properties and capacities that have this complex brain as their anatomical basis[12] — then there can be no (trans)formation that is not fully embodied.

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9. So Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (New York: Guilford, 1999).

10. See, e.g., Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 566-94; Malcolm Jeeves, "Human Nature: An Integrated Picture," in *What About the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology* (ed. Joel B. Green; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 171-89.

11. This list is adapted from Philip Hefner, *The Human Factor: Evolution, Culture, and Religion* (Theology and the Sciences; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 118-19.

12. Silvia Helena Cordoso and Renato M.E. Sabbatini, "What Makes Us Singularly Humans?" *Brain & Mind* (2000) http://www.epub.org.br/cm/n10/editorial-n10_i.htm; accessed on 21 January 2002. Cf. Thomas Metzinger, ed., *The Neural Correlates of Consciousness: Empirical and Conceptual Questions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000).

Second, what is more, if the neurobiological systems that shape how we think, feel, believe, and behave are forever being sculpted in the context of our social experiences, then in a profound sense we can speak of personal (trans)formation only in relational terms. Our autobiographical selves are formed within a nest of relationships, a community.[13] Jim Grigsby and David Stevens summarize:

> Personality is shaped by the interaction of constitutional processes and the experiences of individuals in unique environments. In other words, we are, at least in part, who we learn to be. As a result of these experiences, learning drives the acquisition and refinement of a wide repertoire of enduring perceptions, attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors. The relative permanence of learning and memory reflects the operation of processes that modify the microscopic structure of the brain, yielding changes in different aspects of functioning over time as a result of the individual's interactions with the world.[14]

The ecclesial context of "conversion" could scarcely be more sharply emphasized.[15]

Believing Is Seeing

In his introduction to "the machinery of the cerebral cortex," Christof Koch observes the general deficit of incoming sensory data necessary for an unambiguous interpretation of the object of our perception. This is true from the seemingly more mundane activity of our visual systems to larger-scale hermeneutical concerns, our reflection on and the practices of human understanding. Our limitations notwithstanding, our "cortical networks *fill in*. They make their best guess, given the incomplete information.... This general principle, expressed colloquially as 'jumping to conclusions,' guides much of human behavior."[16] Through "filling in," we recognize Beethoven

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13. Cf. Todd E. Feinberg, *Altered Egos: How the Brain Creates the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

14. Jim Grigsby and David Stevens, *Neurodynamics of Personality* (New York: Guilford, 2000), 39.

15. This is a central emphasis of Paul N. Markham, "Conversion Converted: A New Model of Christian Conversion in Light of Wesleyan Theology and Nonreductive Physicalism" (Ph.D. diss., Durham University, 2006).

16. Christof Koch, *The Quest for Consciousness: A Neurobiological Approach* (Englewood, CO: Roberts, 2004), 23.

playing his piano in a cloud formation, see words rather than individual letters when we read, generally apply old paradigms in new contexts, or prejudicially categorize people by any number of criteria (e.g., accent, gender, race, or the condition or color of their teeth). Various terms name the structures by which we "fill in" — "imagination" ("a basic image-schematic capacity for ordering our experience"[17] or "...the power of taking something as something by means of meaningful forms, which are rooted in our history and have the power to disclose truths about life in the world"[18]), for example, or "conceptual schemes" (which are at once *conceptual* [a way of seeing things], *conative* [a set of beliefs and values to which a group and its members are deeply attached], and *action-guiding* [we seek to live according to its terms]).[19] To put it differently, in order to make life-events meaningful, we must conceptualize them and we do so in terms of imaginative structures or conceptual schemes that we implicitly take to be true, normal, and good.[20]

Our hermeneutical equipment, then, is formed at the synaptic level, is capable of reformation, and is even now providing the conceptual schemes or imaginative structures by which we make sense of the world around us. My "perception" of the world is based in a network of ever-forming assumptions about my environment, and in a series of well-tested assumptions, shared by others with whom I associate, about "the way the world works." Ambiguous data may present different hypotheses, but my mind disambiguates that data according to what I have learned to expect. Patients who have experienced selected lesions to the brain demonstrate the inability to see what they cannot believe to be true,[21] just as those of us with unaffected brains operate normally with a strong hermeneutical bias on the basis of prior beliefs, so that we actually perceive stimuli when

17. Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987), xx.

18. David J. Bryant, *Faith and the Play of Imagination: On the Role of Imagination in Religion* (StABH 5; Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1989), 5.

19. Owen Flanagan, *The Problem of the Soul: Two Visions of Mind and How to Reconcile Them* (New York: Basic, 2002), 27-55.

20. Cf. Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), ch. 8.

21. E.g., V.S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakeslee, *Phantoms in the Brain: Probing the Mysteries of the Human Mind* (New York: William Morrow, 1998); V.S. Ramachandran, *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness: From Imposter Poodles to Purple Numbers* (New York: Pi, 2004), ch. 2.

none are physically presented.[22] That is, embodied human life performs like a cultural, neuro-hermeneutic system, locating (and, thus, making sense of) current realities in relation to our grasp of the past and expectations of the future.[23]

The irreducible collocation of conceptual, conative, and behavioral implications of conversion thus comes into focus.

No Pure Thinking

Although in doing so I am anticipating my later discussion of conceptual metaphor, I need here to comment on the impossibility of "pure reason," or, more generally, of the error made by Descartes and those who would follow him of imagining that we might engage in "thinking" or "rationality" or "cognition" apart from the influence of our emotions, as if our decisions might be made on the basis of "cool reason." On the one hand, the work of Joseph LeDoux and others, discussed in *The Emotional Brain*, has demonstrated that the amygdala, that structure of the brain implicated in emotion, is networked with the brain's decision-making center such that, in normal brains, "thinking" is inescapably emotion-laden. In fact, the amygdala is the site of two neural pathways implicated in decision-making — the one more quick and reflexive, the other more slow and deliberate, but both emotionally engaged.[24] On the other hand, in his celebrated work *Descartes' Error*, Antonio Damasio both argues against the illogic of "cool reason" in decision-making, since so many options are available at any point in time that it is simply impossible to analyze each, and demonstrates in cases of brain injury that damage to the emotion-processing center of the brain impedes real-life rationality and decision-making.[25] Even when capacities for memory and abstract reasoning are intact, robbed of the biasing function of emotional responses (a somatic marker

22. See Aaron R. Seitz et al., "Seeing What Is Not There Shows the Costs of Perceptual Learning," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 102, no. 25 (21 June 2005): 9080-85. More generally, see William Hirstein, *Brain Fiction: Self-Deception and the Riddle of Confabulation* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005).

23. See Stephen P. Reyna, *Connections: Brain, Mind, and Culture in a Social Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 2002).

24. Joseph LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998).

25. Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Avon, 1994).

expressed, usually unconsciously, as a "gut feeling" of attraction or repulsion in the face of a given choice), persons prove to be incompetent decision-makers. Subsequent empirical study has only proven further the role of emotion in decision-making.[26]

In the literature on conversion in Lukan perspective, scholars have sometimes operated with distinctions between "thinking" and "feeling," "thinking" and "morality," "thinking" and "acting," and so on. Accordingly, it might be imagined, conversion comprises an "intellectual" change, itself the consequence of a rational demonstration of the logic of the gospel. This is not the case.

Embodied Conversion

Conversion, then, necessarily involves bodily existence centered on a change of moral dispositions and behavior. From a cognitive-scientific perspective, this change is facilitated through relational interaction and engagement in the practices by which the Christian community is constituted. Put sharply, conversion involves human biological metamorphosis, transformations at the level of neural networks. Indeed, a growing body of empirical research is demonstrating the neural correlates of moral (trans)formation.[27]

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26. For research reviews, see Morten L. Kringelbach, "The Human Orbitofrontal Cortex: Linking Reward to Hedonic Experience," *Nature Review Neuroscience* 6 (2005): 691-702; Jorge Moll et al., "The Neural Basis of Human Moral Cognition," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 6 (2005): 799-809. Recent studies include Allison N. McCoy and Michael L. Platt, "Risk-sensitive Neurons in Macaque Posterior Cingulate Cortex," *Nature Neuroscience* 8 (2005): 1220-27; Giorgio Coricelli et al., "Regret and Its Avoidance: A Neuroimaging Study of Choice Behavior," *Nature Neuroscience* 8 (2005): 1255-62.

27. See, e.g., Jorg Moll et al., "The Neural Correlates of Moral Sensitivity: A Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging Investigation of Basic and Moral Emotions," *Journal of Neuroscience* 22 (2002): 2730-36; Jorg Moll et al., "Functional Networks in Emotional Moral and Nonmoral Social Judgments," *NeuroImage* 16 (2002): 696-703; Jeffrey M. Schwartz, "A Role for Volition and Attention in the Generation of New Brain Circuitry," in *The Volitional Brain: Towards a Neuroscience of Free Will* (ed. Benjamin Libet, Anthony Freeman, and Keith Sutherland; Thorverton: Academic, 1999), 115-42; Jeffrey M. Schwartz and Sharon Begley, *The Mind and the Brain: Neuroplasticity and the Power of Mental Force* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002); Heather L. Urry et al., "Making a Life Worth Living: Neural Correlates of Well-Being," *Psychological Science* 15 (2004): 367-72. For analogous research in the influence of psychotherapy on neural networks, see, e.g., Louis Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy: Building and Rebuilding the Human Brain* (New York: Norton, 2002).

It now remains for me to tie these neuroscientific observations more generally into Luke's presentation of conversion. In doing so, I want at the same time to address some of the issues raised by recent discussion of conversion in Luke-Acts. What emphases come to the fore on account of sensibilities shaped by cognitive science?

(1) Repentance versus Conversion: Some recent literature on conversion has focused on an understanding of conversion as a crossing of religious boundaries. Accordingly, "repentance" would be expected of the Jewish people, "conversion" of Gentiles. Some evidence, especially within the speeches of Acts, might initially support such a distinction. Peter and Paul call their Jewish audiences not to serve a new God but to return to the God of their ancestors.[28] As Odil Steck has shown, prophetic speeches calling Israel to repentance follow a well-established tradition in Israel's Scriptures and the literature of Second Temple Judaism,[29] and the preaching of Peter and Paul among Jewish audiences in Acts conforms to this pattern.[30] Conversely, in those situations in which Paul addresses specifically Gentile audiences, he refers to "the living God" (as opposed to worthless idols — Acts 14:15) and proclaims that this God "commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). At Lystra and Athens, that is, Paul's concerns are more narrowly *theo*logical, while among Jews Peter and Paul alike proclaim that Jesus is the Christ. For Jews, the needed response is a reorientation toward the God of Israel and his purposes, known in the advent of Jesus Christ. For Gentiles, the needed response is a departure from idolatry in order to join the people of the God who raised Jesus from the dead.

As helpful as such a distinction might be, though, from the perspective of cognitive science it is phenomenologically unsustainable, since at the level of neuronal processes, the one metamorphosis is like the other. Nor is this distinction supported by the text of Acts. (A) Many

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28. Cf. Acts 2:38; 3:17-20; 5:31; 13:38-41. Martin Dibelius ("The Speeches in Acts and Ancient Historiography," in *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* [London: SCM, 1956], 138-85 [165]) observes that the exhortation to repentance is stereotypical in the speeches in Acts; cf. Petr Pokorný, *Theologie der lukanischen Schriften* (FRLANT 174; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 122-24.

29. Cf. Jer 3:12-16; 7:3-25; 14:6-7; Ezek 18:30; Zech 1:3; 7:8-10; Mal 3:7; Odil Hannes Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten*, WMANT 23 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1967).

30. So Hans F. Bayer, "The Preaching of Peter in Acts," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 257-74 (262-65).

Gentiles within the narrative of Acts need no conversion to the God of Israel *per se* but, like the exemplary Cornelius (Acts 10:1-4), already worship this God. They are recipients of the gift of repentance in the same way that the Jews are. Indeed, the Jerusalem leaders announce that "God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life" (11:18), a claim that parallels Peter's pronouncement regarding Jesus, that "God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (5:31). (B) A major component of conversion in Israel's Scriptures as well as in Acts is a turning from idolatry (e.g., Acts 14:15).[31] Importantly, then, Luke underscores the idolatry of even the Jewish people; the Jerusalem temple itself has become a manifestation of Jewish idolatry, according to Stephen's speech (compare 7:48; 17:24-25). Indeed, membership among the people of God cannot be assumed simply on the basis of Abrahamic ancestry (Luke 3:7-14), with the result that the privilege of God's grace is no presumption of the Jewish people.[32] (C) When Paul recounts before King Agrippa his commission, he proclaims that Jesus sent him "to open their eyes so that they might turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God" (26:17-18). In this case, Luke draws on the familiar language of religious conversion,[33] but interprets it so as to situate the redemptive purpose of God within the cosmic battle of competing kingdoms. It is an important component of this text that Gentiles and Jews alike need deliverance from darkness (cf. Luke 1:78-79). As Paul goes on to observe, obedience to the heavenly vision entailed declaring "first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem

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31. This is noted, e.g., Christopher J.H. Wright, "Implications of Conversion in the Old Testament and the New," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28 (2004): 14-19 (15, 18).

32. To what degree is a conversion from idolatry the same for Jew and Gentile? For the Gentile, such conversion had immediate and far-reaching social consequences, since this entailed separation from ordinary socio-religous life (cf. Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1994], 104-05). This was less true for the Jew, at least in the period covered by Luke's narrative.

33. Cf. *Joseph and Aseneth* 8:10; 15:12; 1 Thess 5:4-7; Col 1:12-13; Eph 5:8; 1 Pet 2:9; Dennis Hamm, "Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke," *Bib* 67 (1986): 457-77. See also Isa 42:7, 16; Luke 2:32. Some scholars (e.g., Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostle* [SP 5; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992], 436-37) take Luke's εἰς οὕς as a reference to the Gentiles alone, but a Pauline mission inclusive of Gentiles and Jews is supported by the Isaianic echoes, and by Luke 1:78-79; 2:32; Acts 9:15; 26:20, 23. Cf. Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* [KEK 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 594; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 759-60.

and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance" (Acts 26:19-20). The same response is expected of Jew and Gentile alike.[34] (D) Finally, we should note that in Israel's Scriptures the call to radical and ongoing conversion is addressed above all to God's people. They may serve as agents for the conversion of others, but they themselves have a continuous need for conversion.[35]

(2) A New "Conceptual Scheme": According to the first public address in Acts, the exaltation of Jesus and the consequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit have signaled a dramatic transformation in history (2:14-41). Here and elsewhere within the speeches of Acts, Jewish people might hear the familiar stories borrowed from their Scriptures, but these stories have been cast in ways that advocate a reading of that history that underscores the fundamental continuity between the ancient story of Israel, the story of Jesus, and the story of the Way. Israel's past (and present) is understood correctly and embraced fully only in relation to the redemptive purpose of God, but this divine purpose can be understood only as articulated by authorized interpretive agents — first, Jesus of Nazareth, and then his witnesses. Thus, for example, Paul's question to King Agrippa, "Do you believe the prophets?" (Acts 26:27), concerns not simply a commitment to the prophets, but to the prophets *as they have been expounded by Paul*. The coming of Jesus as Savior may signal the fresh offer of repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel (Acts 5:31; 13:38-39), but the acceptance of this

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34. This is emphasized in Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait of Gentiles*; Méndez-Moratalla, *Paradigm of Conversion.*

35. Wright, "Implications of Conversion"; see also Andrew F. Walls, "Converts or Proselytes? The Crisis over Conversion in the Early Church," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29 (2004): 2-6 (3). It is especially on this point that Nave's study (*Role and Function of Repentance*) founders, since he rejects a connection between שׁוּב in the Israel's Scripture and Luke's concept of repentance. The result is a useful emphasis on Greco-Roman background, which overturns earlier scholarly allegations about the uniqueness of the concept of repentance and/or conversion in Lukan or early Christian usage; but also a failure to recognize that שׁוּב, נָחַם, μετανόεω/μετάνοια, and -στρεφω verbs belong to the same semantic domain (the LXX uses -στρεφω to translate שׁוּב and μετανόεω to translate נָחַם, but cf. references to the "turning" of Ninevah: μετανόεω in Luke 11:32; and, in Jonah 3:8, 10, שׁוּב in the MT and ἀποστρέφω in the LXX); see the summary comments in Jonathan M. Lunde, "Repentance," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 669-73 (669). Nave thus denudes Luke's concept of its covenantal basis in Yahweh's initiative and call, emphasized recently in Ravens, *Luke and the Restoration of Israel*, 139-69; Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, e.g, 118-20, 138-40.

offer by Jewish people is dependent on their embracing *this interpretation of God's salvific activity*. Greek audiences, too, are asked to adopt a new way of viewing the world. Note how, at Athens, Paul distinguishes between how God worked in the past (17:30a; cf. 14:16) and how he will now operate (17:30b) — a distinction that calls for repentance.

For Luke, embracing this new conceptual scheme is a new way of seeing things, an opening of the mind to understand what was previously incomprehensible (cf. Luke 24:30-32, 44-48), that takes as its starting point the mission and message of Jesus, culminating in his death, resurrection, ascension, and outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. Among the scenes depicting this conceptual transformation, two are tied together by their common reference to "inspired speech" (ἀποφθέγγομαι), Acts 2:1-13 and 26:1-29. In the wake of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus' disciples are accused of drunken babbling (2:13) not because their words are incomprehensible ("we hear...in our own native language," 2:8) but because of its preposterous content. Their doxology apparently includes among "the great things of God" (2:11) unexpected events and an alien representation of God's salvific representation, centered around the death and resurrection of Christ (cf. 2:14-41, also the product of "inspired speech"). During Paul's speech before Herod Agrippa II and Porcius Festus, Festus interrupts with this outburst, "You have lost your mind!" Paul counters with a claim to inspired, sober speech (26:24-25). The basis of Festus' interruption is not Paul's ecstatic or hysterical speech (which one might expect, given Festus' characterization of Paul — μαίνομαι / μανία, "to be crazy," "absurdly unlikely"), but rather Paul's exposition of Scripture as witness to Jesus. As Fitzmyer observes, "Festus protests first over Paul's erudition, his strange way of arguing, and his allusions to Moses and the prophets. Festus has difficulty in following all this argumentation and especially in admitting such a thing as resurrection."[36] That is, lacking the conceptual categories to make sense of Paul's argument, Festus presumes that Paul is the one lacking in cognitive equipment.

In the same way that, in a Gestalt shift, what was previously seen as a duck is now seen as a rabbit, so conversion signals not simply the introduction of new ideas into an old imaginative framework, but a transformed imaginative framework within which what was previously inconceivable is now matter-of-fact. This emphasis is set out programmatically in Luke 4:18-19,

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36. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 763.

where Jesus' missionary program includes proclaiming "sight to the blind" — a statement that anticipates the recovery of sight instigated by physical healing, to be sure (Luke 18:35-43; Acts 9:18-19), but even more so portends the provision and reception of divine revelation, the passage from darkness to light, the movement from ignorance to insight — and, so, entry into salvation and inclusion in God's family (e.g., Luke 1:78-79; 2:9, 29-32; 3:6; 24:13-35; Acts 26:18).[37]

(3) Conversion and Socialization: If conversion is grounded in a fresh comprehension of the purpose of God as this is plotted in Scripture, then it is manifest in the community of God's people who are constituted by this biblical narrative, and whose practices embody this spirituality and leverage the ongoing conversion of its membership. Conversion as an ongoing process of socialization needs particular emphasis here, both because it is often neglected in discourse about conversion in Luke-Acts and because it is so vital to the Lukan narrative. Seen from this vantage point, conversion entails autobiographical reconstruction.[38] Conversion shatters one's past and reassembles it in accordance with the new life of the converted; former understandings of one's self and one's experiences are regarded as erroneous and are provided new meaning (cf. Luke 9:23). Of course, the prime example of this emphasis in the Lukan narrative is Paul, and especially his narration of his experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:4-29). More pervasive are those instances where one's reformed allegiances and dispositions are expressed in terms that reflect a creative imagination, especially with regard to revisionist conceptualizations of the character of the people of God — and, thus, of Yahweh's purpose and Israel's history. Converts find explanations for phenomena in terms that are appropriate to the pattern of life they have embraced and that are often distinctive from the conceptual patterns held by persons outside the community of the converted.

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37. See further, e.g., Hamm, "Sight to the Blind"; R. Alan Culpepper, "Seeing the Kingdom of God: The Metaphor of Sight in the Gospel of Luke," *CurTM* 21 (1994): 424-33.

38. Cf. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 160: "Everything preceding the alternation is now apprehended as leading toward it..., everything following it as flowing from its new reality. This involves a reinterpretation of past biography *in toto*, following the formula 'Then I *thought*...now I *know*.'" See further, David A. Snow and R. Machalek, "The Convert as a Social Type," in *Sociological Theory 1983* (ed. R. Collins; San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1983), 259-89 (266-69).

Interestingly, this symbolic world comes to expression most fully in the context of one of the characteristic practices of the Christianity community. This is prayer, which provides the opportunity for the disclosure of God's salvific purpose especially at pivotal points in the mission. Acts portrays prayer as a community-defining practice that directs the expansion of the community. This is because the habits of prayer counseled by Jesus serve as an ongoing catalyst for the conformation of the community around the unlimited mercy of God (cf. Luke 6:35-36; 11:1-13). Prayer of this sort allows for the infusion of a life-world centered on the gracious God, on dependence on God, on the imitation of God, and on the disclosure of God's purpose for humanity, all understood against an eschatological horizon in which the coming of God in sovereignty and redemption figures prominently.

In Acts conversion also entails incorporation into a new community, including adopting the rituals and behaviors peculiar to or definitive of that new community. This is evident immediately in Acts 2:42-47, the first in a series of summaries that dot the landscape of the narrative of Acts — this one serving the dual function of exhibiting the communal dimension of the consequence of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and demonstrating the quality of daily life characteristic of those who are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.[39] The generalizations about the community of Jesus' followers sketched here amplify the response urged by Peter in 2:38, "Repent and be baptized!" Baptism functions, on the one hand, as the medium by which repentance comes to expression and, on the other, as the sign that forgiveness has been granted.[40] To put it differently, baptism serves a community-defining role — communicating on the part of the baptized an unswerving loyalty to the

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39. Cf. Henry J. Cadbury, "The Summaries in Acts," in *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol 5: *Additional Notes to the Commentary* (ed. F.J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake; BC 1; London: Macmillan, 1920), 392-402; Maria Anicia Co, "The Major Summaries in Acts: Acts 2,42-47; 4,32-35; 5,12-16. Linguistic and Literary Relationship," *ETL* 68 (1992): 49-85; Matthias Wenk, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts*. (JPTSup 19; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 259-73.

40. See Lars Hartman, *'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus': Baptism in the Early Church* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 130; Joel B. Green, "From 'John's Baptism' to 'Baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus': The Significance of Baptism in Luke-Acts," in *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross; JSNTSup 171; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 157-72.

Lord and on the part of the church the full incorporation of the baptized into the community. Baptism is both response and gift. What is more, baptism in Acts has as its consequence, among other things, economic koinonia (e.g., 2:41-47) and the extension of hospitality (e.g., 10:47-48; 16:14-15, 28-34) — behaviors, then that must be included under the heading of "fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:7-14).

(4) A Community Formed and Forming: If repentance signals an essential reorientation of life, repentance is also something that persons "do." "Bear fruits worthy of repentance," John proclaims early in Luke's Gospel, before spelling out behavioral exemplars of repentance from the realm of socio-economic relations (Luke 3:7-14; cf. Acts 26:20). If we have learned in the last two or three centuries that "being" and "doing" are separable, we should not project such distinctions into the biblical materials, wherein the assumption that a person *is* one's behavior is more at home. We do what we are — that is, one's deepest commitments are unavoidably exhibited in one's practices, so that attention focuses on "embodied life," disallowing the possibility that the "real" person might be relegated to one's interior life.[41]

What are these community-constituting practices? Though they scarcely exhaust the possibilities resident in the Lukan narrative, three are of special interest for their pervasiveness and profundity: economic koinonia, prayer, and witness. *Economic koinonia* surfaces most explicitly in two summary statements, Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35, both of which exhibit the communal dimension of the consequences of the outpouring of the Spirit at the same time that they demonstrate how the message of Jesus' resurrection manifests itself in the nature of the community. Luke's portrait of God's people thus places a premium on care of the needy, portrays the community of believers as an extended kin-group, and ties the life of this community into the formation of God's people in exodus (cf. Deut 15:1-18). Summaries, like these two texts in Acts, serve as interpreting "headings," so it is not surprising that Acts also narrates other instances of economic interest — e.g., partnership between communities of believers (e.g., 11:27-29), Paul's claim that he was no lover of money (20:33-35), and especially the persistent correlation of embracing the Christian message with extension of hospitality (e.g., 10:44-48; 16:14-15, 30-34).

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41. See, e.g., Robert A. Di Vito, "Old Testament Anthropology and the Construction of Personal Identity," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 217-38; Klaus Berger, *Identity and Experience in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

It is crucial that we recognize that, as "fruits worthy of repentance," practices of economic community and hospitality are not "things to do" for the converted. Such practices are not simply "logical consequences" of conversion, as some interpreters might have it. The relationship is more organic, so that conversion generates such behaviors, is demonstrated in them, and is fueled by them.

Among the Gospel writers, Luke devotes an inordinate amount of attention to *prayer*, emphasizing especially the revelatory function of prayer.[42] This emphasis begins as early as Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:21-22),[43] and continues into the book of Acts, where the community of God's people likewise experiences the revelatory function of prayer — that is, prayer as revelatory moment and as invitation to align oneself with the aim of God thus revealed (e.g., Acts 9:10-16; 10:9-16; 22:17-21).

In the Third Gospel, prayer serves as a boundary marker, employed by the Pharisees, for example, to identify themselves over against others. In them we see that the habit of prayer is a catalyst for community formation. The question is, What sort of community? In Luke 5:27-39 and 18:9-14, prayer functions among Pharisees as an identity marker oriented toward maintaining clear lines of demarcation between groups — in these instances, as behaviors that separate Pharisees from toll collectors and sinners. Jesus' response is reminiscent of the prophetic criticism of pious acts when those acts are segregated from acts of justice and mercy (e.g., Isa 58:3-9; Jer 14:12; Zech 7:5-6), which apparently include the humility necessary to extend hospitality and other signs of God's care to the marginal of society. For Luke, prayer is a practice that grows out and is formative of one's convictions and commitments. It is for him the conceptual scheme of the converted in practice. It is metonymic for one's character. Moreover, as we have already seen, prayer is for Christians in Acts a community-defining practice, leading to the conformation of the community around the gracious God.

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42. See especially, David Michael Crump, *Jesus the Intercessor: Prayer and Christology in Luke-Acts* (WUNT 2:49; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); also Daniel K. Falk, "Jewish Prayer Literature and the Jerusalem Church in Acts," in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. Richard Bauckham; A1CS 4; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 267-301; Joel B. Green, "'Persevering Together in Prayer' (Acts 1:14): The Significance of Prayer in the Acts of the Apostles," in *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 183-202.

43. See also Luke 2:36-38; 9:18-27, 28-36; 10:21-22; 23:34, 46; 24:30-31.

The missionary portfolio Jesus gives to his followers in Acts 1:8 centers on practices of *witness*: "Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." This mandate is especially interesting since it is self-evident that the significance of Jesus' words was not immediately obvious to his followers. The formation of disciples, as Luke develops it, is a process of conversion. It entails a reconstruction of one's self within a new web of relationships, a transfer of allegiances, and the embodiment of transformed dispositions and attitudes. The parade example of the interwoven nature of conversion and witness is the complex narration of the encounter between Peter and Cornelius and its aftermath in the Jerusalem church, in Acts 10:1-11:18. Cornelius is introduced first, with the result that we might gain the mistaken impression that this text centers on his conversion and that of his household. Instead, Luke's focus is on Peter and the Jerusalem church, and especially their ethnocentric practices. The significance of what transpires is accentuated by multiple evidences of the divine hand at work (e.g., 10:3-16; 10:44-47), which validate the practice of full fellowship between Jew and Gentile — the character of which was at stake in the protestations first of Peter (Acts 10:28a) and then of the circumcised in the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:2-3). Cornelius is converted, to be sure, but so are Peter and those of the Jerusalem community — Cornelius, in that he moves from his position as a God-fearer on the margins of the Jewish religion to full membership within the community of God's people for whom Jesus is Lord; Peter and the Jerusalem community to a more full embodiment of their newly embraced life-world, expressed in the confession that Jesus is, indeed, "Lord of all" (Acts 10:34-36).

In short, the practice of the church in Acts was, finally, to welcome Gentiles into their communities with a status equal to that of existing members, but this was so only as Jesus' followers involved themselves in witness, engaged with persons outside their own number, and came to embrace more fully the terms of their own faith. By engagement with persons at the "end of the earth," they were pressed in the direction of an end-of-the-earth "conceptual scheme"; having embraced God's perspective on things, having relocated themselves in the story-line of God's ancient purpose, they found themselves in a process of transformation, being shaped so as more faithfully to incarnate this pattern of faith and life.

Conclusion

For Luke-Acts, "converts" might be "passive" (e.g., Acts 9:1-20) or "active" (Luke 3:10, 12, 14; Acts 2:37; 16:30: "What should we do?") — to use the paradigmatic categories of agency discussed by Kilbourne and Richardson.[44] In the end, however, in Luke-Acts passive and active flow together theologically, ecclesially, and sociologically. Theologically, repentance is both divine gift (passive) and call (active) (e.g., Luke 5:31-32; Acts 5:31; 11:18). Ecclesially, repentance is signified by baptism — a quintessentially passive act (one does not baptize oneself, but is baptized) for which one must actively present oneself; and a ritual act by which the converted are embraced within the community of believers. Sociologically, conversion is not an event or static occurrence, but must be understood in terms of embodiment within a community. Converts require a community of reference and formation as they (re-)learn how to think, believe, feel, and behave — that is, as they embrace and embody fresh patterns for ordering life.[45]

"Conversion" Metaphors

As a particular expression of the cognitive linguistic emphasis on embodiment, work on conceptual metaphors, their derivation and use, remains largely ignored in biblical studies. Given that biblical studies typically defines itself first in philological terms and its consequent emphatic interest in how words are involved in the construction of meaning, the potential contribution of this metaphor theory is significant.

Those of us weaned on the contextual particularity of biblical texts may be caught off guard by the title of Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's book on metaphor: *The Way We Think*.[46] In this case, "we" really is "all of us," the human race, as Fauconnier and Turner make a general or universal anthropological claim regarding cognitive linguistics — in this case, conceptual blending theory. In doing so, they are following the path already taken in the important study of *Philosophy in the Flesh*, by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, for which neuroscientists, like V.S.

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44. Brock Kilbourne and James T. Richardson, "Paradigm Conflict, Types of Conversion, and Conversion Theories," *Sociological Analysis* 50 (1988): 1-21.

45. See Kilbourne and Richardson, "Paradigm Conflict," 15.

46. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic, 2002).

Ramachandran, have provided some empirical evidence.[47] Fauconnier and Turner sketch a theory of human information integration that turns on conceptual blending.

In a typical instance of conceptual metaphor, metaphor carries structure from one conceptual domain ("source") to another ("target") directly. For the commonplace expression, "I see what you mean," for example, we recognize the following metaphorical map: KNOWING IS SEEING. Similarly, "gas prices are sky high": MORE IS UP. In blending, however, both domains are source domains, and together they contribute to a third. As an example, Fauconnier and Turner write, "A conservative parent who keeps his money in his mattress may express disapproval of an adult child's investing in the stock market by saying, 'You are digging your own grave.'"[48] This is not simply FAILED FINANCIAL PLANNING IS GRAVE-DIGGING, since there is no necessary causal relation from grave-digging to death, but a blend of two source domains: GRAVE-DIGGING and UNWITTING FAILURE. "The blend in *digging one's own grave* inherits the concrete structure of graves, digging, and burial, from the 'digging the grave' input. But it inherits causal, intentional, and internal event structure from the 'unwitting failure' input."[49] Luke's metaphors for conversion are of this complex variety.

In order to lay the groundwork for my observations on Luke's metaphors of conversion, three background claims need to be brought into the foreground. First, metaphor is not a linguistic category but a conceptual one, grounded in the experience of human embodiment. Second, conceptual blending is governed by the need to "achieve human scale" — that is, to achieve imaginative transformations of elements and structure that are easily apprehended by human beings.[50] Third, recalling my earlier comments about the role of emotions in decision-making, let me add that conceptual blending joins the primary metaphor in promoting or fueling certain ways of feeling (that is, certain somatic markers) and so have a role in biasing persons, often at an un-self-

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47. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic, 1999); Ramachandran, *Brief Tour*, esp. ch. 4: "Purple Numbers and Sharp Cheese." Cf. Jerome A. Feldman, *From Molecule to Metaphor: A Neural Theory of Language* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006).

48. Fauconnier and Turner, *Way We Think*, 131.

49. Fauconnier and Turner, *Way We Think*, 133-33.

50. Fauconnier and Turner, *Way We Think*, 312.

conscious level, in one direction rather than another. By fueling wanted or unwanted, positive or negative, welcome or unwelcome, somatic markers, metaphors shape (but do not determine) decision-making processes. Because metaphors are often associated with visceral responses (consider such associations as darkness or light, outcast or intimate, filthy or clean), the use of metaphors can recruit negative and/or positive associations in order to encourage one form of response over another.[51]

A perusal of the narrative of Luke-Acts brings to the surface a number of conversionist frames and complex metaphors. At their root is the JOURNEY. Statistically, this is marked by the prominent use of such terms as πορεύομαι (88 of 153 uses in the NT) and ὁδός (40 of 101 uses in the NT) in Luke-Acts; as Robert Maddox rightly observed, "the story of Jesus and of the church is a story full of purposeful movement."[52] Even more compelling are the thematic use of ὁδός in Luke 3:4 (cf. 7:27) to identify obedience as a "going" and God's will as a "path";[53] the identification of God's purpose as "the way" (Luke 20:21; Acts 18:25, 26; cf. Acts 16:17: "the way of salvation"); the language of traveling with reference to Jesus' journey to Jerusalem in the service of God's redemptive agenda (Luke 9:52; 10:38; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 19:4; cf. Acts 20:22), including Jesus' assessment of his journey through rejection and death to his exaltation as an ἔξοδος (Luke 9:31); and, especially, the use of ὁδός in Luke's identification of the community of Jesus' followers — together with their characteristic patterns of belief and practice — as "The Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). If Jesus' life and mission constituted a journey, so also his followers'. Indeed, the coming of a powerful savior is to this end: "to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79).

Lakoff and Johnson identify as primary such metaphors as STATES ARE LOCATIONS, CHANGE IS MOTION, ACTIONS ARE SELF-PROPELLED MOTIONS, PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, and PURPOSES ARE DESIRED OBJECTS.[54] The Lukan narrative deprioritizes STATES, even to the point of Stephen's critique of the Jerusalem temple (static location) in favor

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51. This is ably argued by Edward G. Slingerland, "Conceptual Blending, Somatic Marking, and Normativity: A Case Example from Ancient Chinese," *Cognitive Linguistics* 16 (2005): 557-84.

52. Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 11.

53. See François Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (vol. 1; EKK 3; Zürick: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1989), 110.

54. Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 52-53.

of the (portable) "tent of testimony in the wilderness" (Acts 7:44-50).[55] Instead, Luke's emphasis is on change, illustrating the complex metaphor A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY[56] — identifying the life of discipleship as a journey the destination of which is not so much a static location as dynamic service of the divine plan (βουλή). (This is not to say that the journey for Luke has no locative end but that this is not a major emphasis in his narrative; see below.)[57] Consequently, the portfolio given Jesus' witnesses is structured in terms of movement from Jerusalem to the "end of the earth" (i.e., socially defined geographical space of "marginality," not a location on the map; Acts 1:8; 13:47); and the Jerusalem-based apostles and leaders come in for criticism by the narrator (Acts 6:1-7; 8:1, 4) — who favors those who construct the theological bridge for moving away from Jerusalem (Stephen; Acts 7) and who participate in witness in terms reminiscent of Acts 1:8 (like the itinerating Philip and Peter; Acts 8:5-40; 9:32-11:18). Paul surfaces as the hero of Acts, on account of the dramatic reorientation of his life, his commission as a witness to the Gentiles, the lengthy itinerary by which he actualizes his commission (an account that occupies almost one-half of Luke's second volume), and the recurring evidence that his journeying is directed by God (e.g., Acts 16:6, 7, 9-10; 19:21; 23:11; 27:23-24). In this respect, Paul in Acts follows the example of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, whose ministry is an itinerant one, whose itinerary/journeying is an actualization of God's purpose (e.g., Luke 4:43; cf. Luke 9:51), and whose journey from Galilee to Jerusalem occupies almost one-half of the book.

If JOURNEY occupies center stage for Luke's portrayal of the concept of conversion, a host of additional metaphors plays a supportive role. A catalog of these would include the following:

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55. See, e.g., Alan Watson, *The Trial of Stephen: The First Christian Martyr* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 55-60; Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity 10; New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 308-18.

56. For this "complex metaphor," see Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 60-63. Although they do not occupy themselves with the Lukan narrative, Patricia M. Davis and Lewis R. Rambo develop the concept of conversion in the Christian tradition in these terms ("Converting: Toward a Cognitive Theory of Religious Change," in *Soul, Psyche, Brain: New Directions in the Study of Religion and Brain-Mind Science* [ed. Kelly Bulkeley; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005], 159-73).

57. Of the destinations that might have been highlighted for Luke, none is more strongly underscored than Jerusalem: Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem...his face was set toward Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51, 53); yet Jerusalem was less final destination and more way station, the site of Jesus' departure (9:31).

- Movement from Darkness to Light — with "darkness" (σκότος, σκοτεινός) correlated with death, disease, the devil, cataclysm, and blindness; and "light" (ἐπιφαίνω, φῶς, φωτεινός) with revelation, understanding, health, the age of salvation, sight, and the coming of the Lord (e.g., Luke 1:79; 2:32; 11:33-36; 16:8; 22:53; 23:44; Acts 2:20; 9:3; 12:7; 13:11, 47; 26:18, 23);

- Movement from Crooked to Straight — with "crooked" (σκολιός, διαστρέφω) correlated with deceit, disease, and villainy; and "straight" (εὐθύς, μή...ἀνακύπτω/ἀνορθόω) correlated with wellness and the way of the Lord (e.g., Luke 3:4-5; 13:11, 13; Acts 13:10);

- Movement from Out to In, mapped in myriad ways — e.g., with respect to frames of friendship and family (e.g., Luke 8:18-21; Acts 2:42-47), membership among the children of Abraham (e.g., Luke 13:10-17; 19:1-10), inside or outside an enclosure (e.g., deixis vis-à-vis the gate of an estate or its converse in Hades [Luke 16:19-26] or vis-à-vis the walls of the temple [Acts 3:2, 8], or being admitted to the "enclosure" of the community of believers via baptism [Acts 2:41, 47]), and practices of hospitality (e.g., Luke 10:5-9; Acts 16:15, 33-34, 40);

- Movement from Remoteness to Closeness — with Jesus offering restoration to persons separated from their communities, for example, by demonization and leprosy (e.g., Luke 8:26-56; 17:11-19); with God's promises addressed to "all who are far away" (Acts 2:39) and the portfolio given Jesus' followers to serve as Spirit-empowered witnesses to "the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8; cf. 13:47); and with Spirit-enabled koinonia (shared homes, shared possessions, shared practices — e.g., Acts 2:42-47) signifying the closeness of the community of Christ's followers, whose community is thus both an enclosure and a vehicle for traveling the Way;

- Movement toward Well-being and Wholeness — which Luke uses repeatedly as metonymic for salvation (e.g., Luke 8:48; Acts 3:16; a commonplace in Roman antiquity); and which is closely aligned with the movement from Unclean to Clean, the work of the Holy Spirit who cleanses the heart of both Jew and Gentile (Acts 15:8-9);

- Varied ways of identifying the journey's beginning as Divine Gift — e.g., as the impetus and empowerment for the journey (cf. δίδωμι [Acts 5:31; 11:18, with reference to μετάνοια] and δωρεά [Acts 2:38; 3:26; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17, with reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit as a blessing of salvation; cf. 3:6; 13:34; 20:32]); and in a divine "opening," whether the door of opportunity for mission (ἀνοίγω, Acts 14:27) or the heart for welcoming the gospel (διανοίγω, Acts 16:14);[58] and

- The promised Destination of Judgment, whether in terms of refreshment and restoration (e.g., Acts 3:20-21) or in terms of being "cut off" or "rooted out" (e.g., Luke 3: 9; Acts 3:23).

This aggregate of metaphors and frames lies close to the surface of the Lukan narrative, suggesting that further investigation would bring further metaphors to the surface — including those related to changing sides in a struggle (e.g., Acts 9:26-27), slavery and freedom (e.g., Acts 16:16-17), and more. Rather than pursuing this agenda further, however, I want to turn to three final observations that follow from the evidence already at hand.

Rhetoric of Conversion and the "Moment of Decision": First, we have found plentiful evidence to support the conclusion that, whatever else it does, the rhetoric of conversion in Luke-Acts works at a visceral level to encourage a decision in favor of change. Feelings of well-being and satisfaction — these somatic markers are unlikely to be generated by images of putref ication, disease, rejection, and death. Consequently, the language Luke employs implements a strong bias in favor of the gospel of the kingdom of God.

It is crucial that, in our analysis of the rhetoric of conversion, we account for more than "cool reason." When we do, other aspects of Lukan rhetoric can be grasped more fully. Let me give two examples. First, it is clear that the speeches in Acts directed at Jewish audiences (e.g., in Acts 2:14-36; 7; 13:16-41) as well the Lukan narrative as a whole re-narrate the story of Israel so as to demonstrate that the narrative of God's promises to Abraham comes to fruition in the advent of Jesus

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58. Interestingly, Luke uses the same verb, διανοίγω, with reference to Jesus' opening the eyes of his followers (Luke 24:33), his opening the Scriptures to them (Luke 24:32), and his opening their minds to understand the Scriptures (24:45).

and continues in the life of the community of Jesus' followers. Given the ancient valuation of "antiquity" (Luke 5:39: "the old is good"),[59] Luke's revisionist historiography exhibits an attempt to reform long-held patterns of faith and thought by its appeal to the antiquity of the Christian movement and, then, to the purpose of God on display in the Christian movement. (A contemporary analogy is found in the opposite claim: "new and improved.") Luke's conversionist appeal thus trades on the hopes and longings of ancient people, on widely held cultural values, as well as on reasoning and logic. Second, we may think it enough that the phrase associated with the work of Jesus and his followers in the book of Acts, "signs and wonders" (e.g., 2:22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12), would participate in the frame of Well-being and Wholeness in the service of conversionist rhetoric. However, this language is itself taken from the scriptural account of the exodus, where it broadcasts the actualization of God's redemptive purpose on behalf of his people and testifies to his commanding influence in history (e.g., Exod 7:3; Deut 4:34; 7:19; 26:8; 29:3; 34:11; cf. Acts 7:36). Accordingly, Luke portrays the hand of God on the side of the Jesus-movement — a powerful incentive favoring conversion to the Way. For those unfamiliar with Israel's Scriptures, analogous frames were available, since healing in Greco-Roman antiquity was associated with the ubiquitous gods, especially but not exclusively the cults and shrines honoring the healing deities (e.g., Hercules, Isis, Asclepius, Hygeia). (See Acts 14:8-13.) It almost goes without saying that evidence of healing would have been a profound validation of missionary testimony, not least for village and rural folk for whom the services of the "professional" physician were financially out of reach and who therefore would find the prospect of divine healing especially attractive. As Luke records of Paul and Barnabas in Iconium, "So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who testified to the word of his grace by granting signs and wonders to be done through them" (Acts 14:3).

In such ways, negative and positive somatic markers are recruited in favor of a decision for the gospel.

Moment of Decision and "Movement": This emphasis on conversion as decision-making needs to be tempered in two ways. First, for Luke, above all, conversion itself is the gracious gift

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59. See Peter Pilhofer, *Presbyteron Kreitton: Der Altersbeweis der jüdischen und christlichen Apologeten und seine Vorgeschichte* (WUNT 2:39; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990).

of God — as Peter announces in Jerusalem, "When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you, to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways" (Acts 3:26; cf. 5:31; 11:18). Second, if the rhetoric of conversion in Luke-Acts is oriented at least in part to promote a response in favor of the gospel, this should not be taken as evidence that conversion is realized in a single point of decision-making. Instead, conversion is a journey, not an instantaneous metamorphosis; even though points of decision-making can be traced in the Lukan narrative, these provide points of beginning and milestones along the way, rather than conclusion. Nuance of this kind coheres with Fauconnier and Turner's identification of "change" as a "vital relation," "connecting one element to another and suites of elements to other suites" by means of compression.[60] In this case, a *series* of transformations are compressed into a *single* moment, "conversion," to communicate efficiently and with global understanding; as such, this compression invites automatic decompression in order to account for the reality of progressive but incremental transformation over time.

The Dynamic of Conversion as Orientation and Movement: But if this is so, one might then inquire, Who, then, is a convert? From the metaphorical database constructed thus far, the simple answer would be, one who has undergone a redirectional rotation and is on the move in faithful service to the purpose of God as this is revealed in Jesus Christ and underwritten by the Spirit of God.[61]

Conclusion

Previous study has indexed Luke's interest in conversion in a variety of ways, especially with reference to the vocabulary and related episodes of conversion in his narrative. Coming to the study

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60. Fauconnier and Turner, *Way We Think*, 92-94.

61. Cf. Walls, "Converts," 6: "Conversion...is less about content and more about *direction*." This coheres somewhat with Paul G. Hiebert's description of the church as an "extrinsic well-formed (centered) set" — defined relationally by its center, Jesus Christ; with Christians those who have entered into the "set" and are moving toward the center ("The Category of *Christian* in the Mission Task," in *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 107-36 [122-31]). Luke's narrative differs from Hiebert's description in two significant ways. First, Hiebert's "center" is focused in an overly narrow way — christologically and confessionally, rather than theologically and narratively; and, second, Hiebert apparently prefers to use the term "conversion" for "entering the set," with "movement toward the center" a second kind of change.

of conversion in Luke-Acts from the perspective of cognitive science deepens our understanding of Luke's theology of conversion as it broadens our sense of what conversion entails. What is more, a number of the controverted issues surrounding the study of conversion in Acts find resolution when examined from the perspective of cognitive science.

Accordingly, conversion is inseparable from the human experience of embodiment, a reality that undermines claims that conversion is an "inner" change, or that conversion of individuals can be understood in individualistic terms, or that conversion might engage one's intellect but not one's affect (or vice versa), or that conversion might be pinpointed on a temporal map. Even the language of conversion in Luke-Acts, wide-ranging as it is, is somatically based, biasing recipients of the message toward a fully embodied, ongoing partnership with God's people in the service of God's agenda. Accordingly, the convert is one who has undergone a redirectional rotation and is on the move in faithful service to the purpose of God as this is revealed in Jesus Christ and underwritten by the Spirit of God.

Conversion, then, is a transformation of conceptual scheme — conceptual, conative, and behavioral — by which life is reordered; and this highlights the eschatological context of conversion for Luke. For him, conversion is eschatologically driven in the sense that the outpouring of the Spirit marks the turn of the ages, that motivates the Christian call to conversion, and that fosters ongoing conversion. Accordingly, conversion is both gift and response. Luke's perspective on conversion thus takes seriously that the first and initiating act is God's.

Luke's perspective thus refuses any facile distinctions between conversion as act and process, between cognitive and moral change, between external and internal transformation, between movement from one religion to another and deepening commitment within one's religion, and between personal and community formation. "To welcome the word," as Acts 2:41 has it, is a transformative act that places embodied life in a new light, that leads one inexorably into a multiethnic and communal existence with others who incarnate and propagate this vision of God's restorative purpose, and that cannot but be exhibited in behaviors congruous with the way of Jesus Messiah.