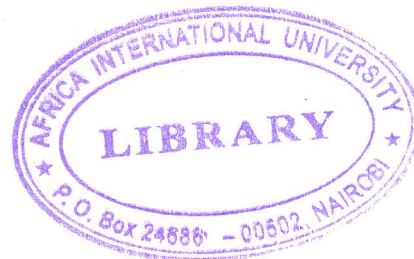


AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

**LUKE'S NARRATIVE LEGITIMATION OF PAUL AND THE GOSPEL
AMONG THE DIASPORA (ACTS 16-19)**

**BY
BEN BYERLY**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the narratives of Acts 16–19 against various proposals for the purposes of Acts. Applying the lenses of authorial audience criticism, narrative criticism, legitimation, and Social Identity Theory (SIT), this study highlights how 16–19 legitimates Paul—and by extension the gospel he proclaims—within the context of Diaspora Jewish concerns. Careful attention to Luke’s literary and social emphases shows how each narrative of Paul’s mission builds up to a public conflict or disturbance related to his ministry rather than being primarily an account of how the church expanded among Gentiles. The disturbances in Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1–15) and Corinth (Acts 18) are caused directly by unscrupulous Jewish opponents, while the disturbances in Philippi (Acts 16), Athens (Acts 17:16–34), and Ephesus (Acts 19) are generated by Gentile pagans responding to the impact of Paul’s ministry with implications for Jewish social identity concerns. These disturbances ultimately generate accusations against Paul’s reputation (e.g. Acts 21:21, 28; 24:5), and Paul’s formal defense, taking up the last quarter of Acts, responds directly to these accusations. In response to—and in narrative anticipation of—these types of accusations, each episode of Acts 16–19 helps legitimate Paul’s ministry and the gospel he preaches in the context of identity concerns Diaspora Jews have about Paul’s respect for Israel’s ancestors (piety) as well concerns about relationships with their pagan neighbors and Roman authorities (peace).