
Foreword

Perhaps it is best to begin by stating what this book is *not*. This book is not a commentary on the Lukan writings; it does not attempt to provide a sequential, passage-by-passage interpretation of the text. Nonetheless, one will find plenty of exegesis of specific passages throughout the book. Nor is this book a monograph proper; that is to say, the book does not argue a sustained thesis from beginning to end about some particular Lukan theme(s) or purpose(s). The book is not an introduction to Luke-Acts, either, though the reader of this text will indeed have been introduced to many of the central issues involved in interpreting the Lukan corpus. Finally, this book is not focused on the history of Lukan research, though as one can tell from the nearly 400 notes in the text, Lukan scholarship is hardly neglected.

Rather, this book represents a series of forays into the Lukan terrain from three different angles—Luke as storyteller, Luke as interpreter, and Luke as evangelist.¹ Since the book is organized around these rubrics, a brief explanation of what each of these terms represents is in order.

Following a survey of the traditions surrounding the author of Luke and Acts, known as “Luke” at least since the second century, we turn, in the first major section, to the first rubric. “Luke as Storyteller” suggests taking seriously the rhetorical and theological artistry of the Third Evangelist. Recent studies in narrative criticism have certainly highlighted Luke’s storytelling abilities, but as we shall see, the recognition of Luke’s rhetorical skills is an ancient one. Rather than present a narrative-critical study of Luke and/or Acts,² I have decided to explore various aspects of Luke as storyteller within the context of ancient rhetorical criticism as practiced in the Hellenistic world and as represented by the Hellenistic rhetorical tradition, especially the progymnasmata. This

section contains two chapters, one in which I explore, in a preliminary way, the texts of Luke and Acts in light of Theon's progymnasmata for examples of how the rhetorical tradition influenced "how" Luke said what he said. In the second, I take one specific passage, the Lukan prologue (Luke 1:1–4) and try to show how that knowledge of rhetorical conventions might shed light on Luke's opening argument.

Luke as Interpreter presents the opportunity to explore the author's treatment of traditional materials and social conventions. In three chapters, I explore Luke as an interpreter of pagan, Jewish, and Christian traditions. In each case, I have tried to pursue "a path less traveled by" in order to offer some fresh insight into this otherwise very familiar territory. In the chapter on pagan traditions, I explore the relatively uncharted territories of ancient physiognomy and friendship, seeking to show how knowledge of these larger Greco-Roman thought patterns and customs illuminate certain aspects of Luke and Acts. In the chapter on Jewish traditions, rather than a global analysis of the well-worn question of Luke's use of the Jewish Scriptures, I have chosen to compare Luke's view of Jerusalem with the place the holy city held in first-century Jewish thought, followed by an exploration of the much-disputed use by Luke of the suffering servant image of Isa 53 in Acts. In the chapter on Luke's interpretation of Christian tradition, I have, for the most part, eschewed the typical redaction-critical wanderings in the labyrinth of the Synoptic Problem in favor of looking at how Luke may have dealt with a pre-existing "L" parables collection and what that collection may tell us about the overall emphasis of the journey narrative in which those parables are set. The second half of that chapter explores how Luke's characterization of Paul in Acts would have been heard by an audience already familiar with the "Paul of the letters." The conclusion reached there, going against Philipp Vielhauer and scholars with similar views, is that there is remarkable coherence between these two portraits.

In the final section, Luke as Evangelist, I explore Luke's view of the Jesus event as a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of the people of Israel (see Luke 2:32). One specific text, the conversion of Cornelius (and Peter; Acts 10–11), allows us to examine Luke's view of the inclusion of Jew and Gentile in the eschatological community of God. In all these cases, the attempt is to be illustrative not exhaustive, providing some models of how one might approach these or similar questions.

Notes

1. The title of the book, *Luke: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, is taken from the first in a series of companion volumes, Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996). Though not originally conceived as a series, the other “companion” volumes in this series (Francis Moloney, *Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003] and Warren Carter, *John: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006]) share a certain family resemblance in that each one attempts, in its own way, to address their respective Gospel from these three perspectives.

2. There are numerous studies already that analyze Luke’s writings from the perspective of modern narrative criticism, beginning with Robert Tannehill’s two-volume work, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986, 1991). My own attempt at this kind of work, focusing especially on narrative beginnings and endings, may be found in my book, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context* (JSNTSSup 21; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987).