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**Paul the Reluctant Witness: Power and Weakness in Luke's  
Portrayal [Review of the book *Paul the Reluctant Witness: Power  
and Weakness in Luke's Portrayal* by B. Shipp]**

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my article on 20:22 in *EvQ* 74 [2002]: 195–213). Her reading of 20:19–29 as the gathering of God’s household around the Eucharist seems fanciful; for example, the disciples behind shut doors *for fear of “the Jews”* in narrative time appears to have little in common with the closing of the doors to unbelievers to demarcate the “Mass of the Catechumens” from the “Mass of the Faithful” in later times (176–77), nor does Jesus’ invitation to Thomas to “touch” him relate easily to the “touching” of the bread in the Eucharist to experience Christ’s presence (185–89). Thus, to use her own words (172), Coloe ventures too often onto hermeneutical “thin ice.”

A few more comments. The book does not present a close-knit argument. Although her main thesis that the phrase “In my Father’s household are many dwellings” is an image of the community of believers in which God dwells through the Spirit is convincing, much material appears irrelevant to it and causes distraction. For example, the crux of chapter 2 (17–37) is only expressed on pages 33–36; some sections on the structure of a passage either appear unrelated to the main argument or could have been briefer (59–64, 84–85, 124–29); the review of her first book on pages 105–13 does not seem necessary to understand 12:1–8 (and should have been in the introduction). Regarding the scope of her research, she could have interacted more with alternative positions outside her own tradition, for example, the view that 14:2–3 refers to a heavenly temple (see S. Bryan, who interacts with Coloe in “The Eschatological Temple in John 14,” *BBR* 15 [2005]: 187–98); the understanding of 3:5 as a single birth “from above” against the backdrop of Ezek 36:25–27; and the influence of wisdom on the Fourth Gospel (C. Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom* [Mohr Siebeck, 2002]). Surprisingly, there is no reference to the commentaries by G. R. Beasley-Murray (1991) and C. S. Keener (2003) and only one reference to D. Carson’s commentary.

Overall, the book is stimulating and deserves to be read. Whether or not one agrees with Coloe’s findings, her twofold work on the temple motif in the Fourth Gospel demands the attention of Johannine scholars.

## ACTS

*Paul the Reluctant Witness: Power and Weakness in Luke’s Portrayal*, by Blake Shipp. Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2005. Pp. xiii + 174. Paper. \$22.00. ISBN 159752400X.

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That the Acts of the Apostles includes three slightly different accounts of Paul’s Damascus road encounter with Jesus has long presented a challenge to interpreters. In this book Blake Shipp seeks to understand the function of the three accounts in Acts 9, 22, and 26 within the larger narrative sweep of Acts by means of a rhetorical analysis. Critical of what he calls the chaotic state of current rhetorical criticism, Shipp also proposes guidelines for the application of rhetorical analysis of the New Testament, something he terms a “literary-rhetorical”

method. The bulk of Shipp's analysis of Acts consists of the application of his proposed method, which is noted briefly at the end of the first chapter but explained and justified in greater detail in an appendix to the book.

The book is organized into five chapters, the appendix on rhetorical criticism, and a bibliography. The first chapter largely consists of a review of the literature on the Damascus road accounts in Acts, setting the stage for a new proposal. Shipp highlights Ernst von Dobschütz's article, published in 1930, proposing that the repetition of the event in Acts served to emphasize its importance in connection with the mission to the Gentiles. Shipp then identifies five more recent important studies on which he draws: Charles Hedrick's proposal that the three presentation in Acts have cumulative effect; Beverly Gaventa's suggestion that the Damascus road narratives serve to define Paul, giving him an identity as the "reversed enemy of god" (16); Ronald Witherup's suggestion that the author has used a "functional redundancy" that presents Paul as increasing or growing as a witness (17); and, finally, Daniel Marguerat's suggestion that the repeated accounts serve a theological purpose related to the theme of Jesus' transformative power. In order to build on and bring together the separate insights of these studies, Shipp then turns to a paper by Gerald Stevens proposing that in addition to the central theme of the "forward progress of the gospel," two other themes run through the narrative of Acts: God is always active; and where God is active, God is also resisted, sometimes by people or forces outside of the movement, sometimes within the early church itself (15). The placement and function of the Damascus narratives are understood in the light of these three themes. A key to Shipp's reading of Acts is Stevens's proposal that much of the characterization of Paul from the second missionary journey on (15:37ff.) actually portrays Paul acting against God's will, that is, resisting God. Furthermore, Paul's final trip to Jerusalem, which will lead to his arrest and successive trials, is his own plan and runs counter to God's plan for Paul to go directly to Rome. That Paul in the end witnesses in Rome is God's doing; that he does so in chains is the result of Paul's own ill-advised choices.

Assuming this interpretation, Shipp's central proposal for understanding the function of the three Damascus road narratives is that the first account in Acts 9 presents a paradigmatic portrait of Paul's complete transformation from "[a] resisting enemy to [b] overcome enemy to [c] empowered witness" (22). The successive accounts, which frame the series of trials or in Acts 21–26, serve to portray Paul on different points of this three-stage transformation.

The remaining chapters of the book develop this idea, with one chapter devoted to each of the three Damascus road accounts in Acts, followed by a concluding chapter summarizing the results. Shipp's analysis follows his proposed three-step rhetorical methodology. The first step is to define the boundaries of the rhetorical unit. The second is to identify the rhetorical situation of the unit, "distinguishing the possible *stasis*, genre, and overall rhetorical intent of the author." The third and last step is an "analysis of the rhetorical style and literary movement of the unit in order to follow the logic of the text" (26). With the exception of Shipp's treatment of the genre of Acts, by and large his analysis deals minimally

with other secondary literature on the subject, relying primarily on the categories presented in the rhetorical handbooks of Quintilian, Cicero, Pseudo-Cicero, and Theon's *progymnasmata*. These specific rhetorical handbooks were chosen for being roughly cotemporary with the composition of Luke and Acts.

The majority of second chapter is devoted to an analysis of Acts 9:1–26a, suggesting that this particular version of Paul's Damascus road experience shows the transformation of Paul from an empowered but resisting enemy who is overcome by Jesus' power to an empowered witness. Of interest, but not entirely convincing to me, is Shipp's finding that Acts does not fit well into any of the genre categories typically suggested, including biography, historiography, or romance. As a result, Shipp proposes that Luke and, perhaps especially, Acts are part of the author's creative manipulation of existing Hellenistic genres resulting in a "theography," a writing or history about God (39).

Shipp's third chapter addresses Acts 22, arguing that Luke has used this account to characterize Paul as again resistant to God's will. Following Stevens, Shipp understands the larger context for this account to be Paul's refusal to follow God's plan for him to go to Rome, choosing to go to Jerusalem instead (which is based, following Stevens, on Acts 19:21; 20:22–23; 21:4, 11–12; 22:17–21; 23:11). As a result, in this second account of the Damascus road experience Paul is ineffective in his witness, something that is signaled especially by the presence of an encounter with the Lord in which Paul defends his trip to Jerusalem (Acts 22:17–21) and by the fact that Paul's speech is interrupted by the shouts of the crowd (22:22).

In the fourth chapter Shipp examines Acts 26, noting that, in between the second and third accounts of Paul's encounter with Jesus, God has begun the transformation of Paul to empowered witness by means of a vision in which God assures him he will witness in Rome as he did in Jerusalem (Acts 23:11). Given the Shipp's understanding of the failure of Paul's witness in Jerusalem, this statement is understood as ironic. This last account is "mixed," in that Paul's transformation has begun, its movement toward empowered witness is projected, but it is not yet complete.

I found Shipp's argument interesting and suggestive, if not entirely convincing. One of the difficulties is his heavy reliance on Gerald Stevens's paper, which was presented at the 1999 Southwest Regional SBL meeting and, as far as I can tell, remains unpublished. Shipp's understanding of the function of the three accounts of Paul's conversion depends on and assumes Stevens's argument that Paul is acting against God's will in much of Acts 19–23. I am not sure I can adequately assess the argument based solely on Shipp's summary and found myself going back over the footnotes several times in or order try to reconstruct the argument. Given the relative short length of the book (175 pages), I wonder if it would have been somehow possible to include Stevens's essay.

Another challenge for me is that Shipp often asserts and thereafter assumes important points rather than making a case for them. For example, that the "forward progress" of the gospel is Acts' central theme is asserted numerous times

without fleshing out what this means. Also, that Acts 23:11 is ironic begs to be explained further. Why is this ironic? What function would this irony serve in Shipp's proposed reading? Shipp also seems to stop short of rounding out the portrait of Paul he paints. He relegates to "future research" the question of whether Paul has been rehabilitated by the end of the narrative, something that is made difficult by the fact that the narrative ends with Paul in prison.

An unfortunate aspect of the book is Shipp's unnecessarily harsh criticism of other scholars, often without sufficient justification. To give one example, Shipp dismisses Jerome Neyrey's proposed structure of Paul's speech before Agrippa (Acts 26), noting that it "is too convoluted to be of any assistance" (104). A footnote on the same page explains that "Neyrey's forensic outlines display a misunderstanding of Hellenistic rhetoric resulting in a chaotic and overlapping outline in which portions of the speech function as different parts simultaneously." This strikes me as a difference of opinion regarding the understanding and practice of rhetoric that needs to be argued and justified.

There are some fine moments in this book, which will be of interest primarily to specialists working on Acts and interpreters interested more generally in rhetorical criticism of the New Testament. I found Shipp's treatment of rhetorical approaches (in the appendix) particularly interesting. He makes clear distinctions between rhetorical approaches informed by modern theory and those informed by rhetorical conventions likely to have influenced the authors of the New Testament. Shipp advocates the latter. Although, in my judgment, he too quickly dismisses some rhetorical approaches, his urging of New Testament scholars to pay more attention to the *progymnasmata* and the process of Greek education more generally is pertinent and timely.



*The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition; Volume 2: Acts 6:1–12:25: From Judea and Samaria to the Church in Antioch*, by Josep Rius-Camps, and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger. Library of New Testament Studies 302. New York: T&T Clark, 2006. Pp. xiii + 400. Hardcover. \$130.00. ISBN 0567040127.

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This monograph is the second in a projected four-volume series that analyzes the narrative of Acts as it appears in Codex Bezae (D) and compares it to the Alexandrian Text (AT) in Codex Vaticanus (B). Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger begin with a "General Introduction" (an abbreviated version of the "General Introduction" to volume 1 in the series) that succinctly states their basic argument and presuppositions. The method of this study could be characterized broadly as a blend of textual criticism and discourse analysis. In lieu of a substantive discussion of methodological parameters, the authors refer the reader to the introduction of their first volume and two articles they published elsewhere in French. Following the introduction, the rest of the volume is organized much like