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The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period Before Irenaeus [Review]

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Book Review

BY RUBEN DUPERTUIS

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Andrew Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus*. WUNT 2 Reihe, 190. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck (2003), pp. xv + 426.

In this book, a revision of the author's 2001 Oxford dissertation, Andrew Gregory has set for himself the daunting task of determining when we can definitively say that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are being used by later Christian authors. The greatest contribution of this book is that it treats in one study a broad range of texts and scholarly discussions on this question—according to the author, the first time this has been done.

Brief introductory and concluding chapters flank the two major sections of the study, an assessment of the evidence for the reception of Luke (seven chapters), and an assessment of the evidence for the reception of Acts (five chapters). The parameters of the study are set by the date of composition of Luke and Acts, which Gregory places around 80-90 C.E. (without, unfortunately, any justification), and Irenaeus' clear references to the four canonical gospels and Acts in approximately 185 C.E. For both Luke and Acts, Gregory considers a broad and comprehensive range of texts. In his discussion of Luke, for example, Gregory assesses evidence from early manuscripts, from narrative outlines of Jesus' life and from sayings of Jesus. His discussion of outlines of Jesus' life includes the Gospel of John, Ignatius of Antioch, the Ascension of Isaiah, the Gospel of Basilides, the Valentinians, the Longer Ending of the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of the Ebionites, the Proteoangelium of James, Papyrus Egerton, the Didache, the Apocalypse of Peter, Clement of Alexandria, and Polycarp.

In brief, Gregory argues that there is almost no conclusive evidence for the use of a gospel attributed to Luke or the Acts of the Apostles prior Irenaeus. This conclusion is significant, particularly since it goes against much of recent scholarship on second-century early Christian writings. In his discussion of Luke, Gregory does allow for two exceptions: both Marcion and Justin Martyr show possible signs of knowledge of Luke. His treatment of both these writers represents creative and significant contributions. Contrary to the widely held opinion that Marcion abridged the third gospel, for example, Gregory suggests that Marcion used a shorter version of Luke—one not containing a birth narrative. The implication for the question of direct influence, then, is mixed: while Marcion appears to know Lukan material, it is possible that what he has is an early version of Luke. Similarly, while some of the parallels between Luke and Justin Martyr can be understood in terms of literary dependence, Gregory suggests the possibility that Justin drew on sources also used by Luke. The two strongest cases for later use of Luke and Acts before Irenaeus, then, are inconclusive.

Gregory's rather conservative conclusion is, as he admits, partly the result of his methodological choices and assumptions, three of which loom large in this study. First, the relatively early date of Luke and Acts is unfortunately not discussed, but simply presented as a starting point. The question of the date is surprisingly not revisited at length after arriving at the conclusion that no evidence for use of Luke and Acts exists before approximately 185 C.E. And while probably outside of the scope of the study, the inconclusive evidence for the use of Luke and Acts in the late first and early second century C.E. surely raises the possibility that Luke and Acts are, in fact, later texts that might be dated closer to Irenaeus' specific reference to them.

A second important methodological issue is Gregory's answer to the question of how one detects the literary influence of one text in another. In the case of Luke, it is difficult to determine whether a later author is reflecting Luke's account of Jesus' life, possibly another canonical gospel, or sources on which Luke drew. Gregory deals with this difficulty by choosing an "intentionally rigorous and narrow" definition of literary influence to determine reception that essentially requires showing clear philological dependence (p. 13). To this end he follows Helmut Koester, who in working on similar questions of reception in early Christian literature developed a criterion that requires evidence of Lukan redactional activity in a later text in order to establish literary dependence. Although the criterion is helpful in Gregory's treatment of Luke, except for those sections that are unique to the third gospel, it is not helpful in his treatment of Acts. The criterion, while yielding some conclusive results, rests on assumptions about how one assesses literary relationships about which there is no consensus.¹

A third important methodological issue is the considerable weight Gregory places on the possibility of second-century texts being influenced by earlier texts that are no longer extant. Following Martin Hengel, Gregory estimates that we now have approximately 15% of early Christian texts from the period, making the possibility of drawing clear conclusions regarding later authors' use of Luke or Acts difficult, at best, since we are missing significant data (p. 17). While other texts that would have served as sources for second-century authors would have been rendered redundant by the later prominence of the four canonical gospels, Gregory finds evidence for a four-gospel collection before Irenaeus inconclusive, thereby allowing him to place much weight on the possibility of second-century texts being influenced by sources unknown to us today. This is not an insignificant point; nevertheless, as essentially an argument from silence and one used repeatedly throughout the study, it is at times not as convincing as one would wish.

Gregory covers a lot of ground, discussing the possible use of Luke and Acts in an impressive number of late first- and early second-century texts. And while the range of texts covered is an asset to the study, more detailed and in-depth comparisons of the primary texts would have been desirable. Related to this, Gregory proceeds primarily by discussion of scholarly

¹ See, for example, Thomas Brodie, "Greco-Roman Imitation of Texts as a Partial Guide to Luke's Use of Sources," in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives for the Society of Biblical Literature*, edited by Charles H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 17-46; and Dennis R. MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven and London: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Book Review

BY BIRGER PEARSON

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Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums, edited by Jörg Frey and Udo Schnelle. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 175. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004. Pp. ix + 799.

The kernel of this massive book consists of papers presented at a joint conference of New Testament scholars from the theological faculties of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg held in November, 2001. The first part of the book consists of two lengthy introductory essays by the editors. Frey presents a history of scholarship on the question of the religious-historical context of the Fourth Gospel. Schnelle explores the hermeneutical aspects of the historical study of the development of early Christian traditions, with special attention to relationships between the Pauline and Johannine varieties of early Christian theology.

Part II is devoted to "early Jewish and Hellenistic contexts," with nine contributions. Ruben Zimmerman discusses the Old Testament allusions in the Gospel of John, with special attention to "shepherd" themes in chapter 10. Jörg Frey devotes a very lengthy study to the question of the influence of the Qumran texts on Johannine "dualism." While a number of earlier studies dating back to the 1950's stressed the connections between the Qumran texts and John, more recent scholarship has concluded that the picture is much more complicated. Carsten Claussen compares the prayer of Jesus in John 17 with prayers from contemporary Jewish pseudepigrapha, with special focus on prayers in 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch*. Michael Becker compares the Johannine vocabulary devoted to miracles ("signs") with miracle traditions in early rabbinic sources. Folker Siegert compares the "Logos" theology of the Johannine Prologue with that of the Hellenistic Judaism represented especially by Philo of Alexandria. The Logos theology of the Johannine Prologue and that of Philo are also taken up in the following chapter by Jutta Leonhard-Balzer. Michael Labahn explores the innovative use made of the philosophical notion of "freedom of speech" (*parrhesia*) in the Gospel of John. Manfred Lang compares the farewell discourses in the Gospel of John with Roman Stoic "consolation" literature, especially that of Seneca. Klaus

Scholtissek discusses John's use of Hellenistic ethics of "friendship," with special focus on John 15:9-17.

Part III is devoted to "early Christian contexts," with eight papers. Michael Labahn and Manfred Lang discuss the perennially controversial issue of the relationships between John and the Synoptic gospels, with special attention to scholarship since 1990. They find no unanimity on the issues involved, but note that scholarship is now tipping more on the side of Johannine dependence (in some fashion) on the Synoptic gospels. That position is represented by Zbyn_k Studenovsk_in the following chapter, in his study of the references to Galilee in Mark and John, with special attention to the Johannine epilogue (ch. 21). Thomas Popp sees in the Gospel of John a "work of art," and analyzes its use of repetition, variation, and amplification, with special attention to John 6:60-71. Christina Hoegen-Rohls studies the history of scholarship on the question of the relationship between the Johannine and Pauline theologies. While Rudolf Bultmann saw them as independent, more recent scholarship has shown that the Johannine writings bear the impulse of Pauline thought. Ulrich Heckel compares the ecclesiology of the Gospel of John with that of the deutero-Pauline Epistle to the Ephesians, and finds that they are close to one another in their stress on the church's unity. Enno Edzard Popkes compares the use of the "light" metaphor in John and the *Gospel of Thomas*, and argues that the Coptic version of Thomas reflects the influence of the Fourth Gospel. Titus Nagel sees in the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1; BG, 2) an example of the "Gnosticizing of Johannine tradition." An originally non-Christian Gnostic myth has been turned into a "Secret Gospel of John" with the addition of the frame story and the questions put by John to the Savior. Bernhard Mutschler raises the question of just how much Irenaeus knew about the historical context of the Gospel of John. He finds that Irenaeus, in his use of second-century Asian traditions, actually melds into one character four distinct figures: the anonymous evangelist, the beloved disciple, John "the Presbyter" in Ephesus, and John son of Zebedee. Several indices round out the book: modern authors, ancient sources, subjects, and terms in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

Readers of German will find in this carefully edited book a wealth of cutting-edge scholarship on many of the issues involved in the study of the Fourth Gospel and its religious-historical context.

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proposals on the relationship between Luke or Acts and other Christian texts, and not by extensive discussions of the primary literature. Unfortunately, despite the book's strengths, it still bears the marks of having been written as a dissertation, and as a result is at times difficult to read, being very detailed in some areas and not enough in others. Most unfortunate are the high number of typographical errors that plague the book, the worst of which is an entire paragraph in the body of Gregory's argument that is mistakenly set in Greek font instead of English.

This book will be of greatest interest to specialists in the area, particularly those interested in authors such as Justin and Marcion, to whom Gregory devotes entire chapters. The extensive use of untranslated Greek and Latin will prevent a wide readership from engaging this book. Gregory's breadth of knowledge is clearly in evidence in this book. I look forward to further contributions for this author. His conclusion, that there exists little evidence for the use of Luke and Acts before approximately 185 C.E., merits careful attention and invites further study and discussion.