"A People for His Name" A Guide to Resources on the Book of Acts

Randall C. Chesnutt
randall.chesnutt@pepperdine.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven
Part of the Biblical Studies Commons, Christianity Commons, and the Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol5/iss2/5

This Resource Guide is brought to you for free and open access by the Religion at Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Leaven by an authorized administrator of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact Kevin.Miller3@pepperdine.edu.
Compiling a helpful bibliography on the book of Acts is a daunting task for at least three reasons. First, major resources on the Gospel of Luke must also be considered, because Luke and Acts clearly were composed by the same author and share common literary and theological agendas. Second, Luke and Acts are the two longest New Testament books, together comprising more than one-fourth of the New Testament and representing the largest contribution to the New Testament by a single writer. Third, a recent surge of scholarly interest in Luke and Acts from an ever-widening range of disciplines and methods has generated an enormous body of literature which is as diverse as it is voluminous. These factors preclude anything approximating a comprehensive bibliographical survey here. Rather, only selected works in English that represent the range of scholarly views and that provide handles on the major issues in the interpretation of Luke-Acts are included.

Landmark Studies

Two classic works have so influenced and informed the modern study of Acts that their lasting contributions should be mentioned at the outset. First is the massive five-volume work edited by F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I: The Acts of the Apostles (1920–33; reprint, 1965–66). Volume 4 provides a translation and detailed commentary on the Greek text. The other volumes treat the historical setting (vol. 1), issues of composition and purpose (vol. 2), text-critical matters (vol. 3), and miscellaneous topics (vol. 5). Although flawed in many ways and, of course, quite dated, this landmark work remains a valuable resource.


Orientation


Social and Historical Setting

The most extensive and up-to-date collection of information on the social and historical setting of Acts is the monumental work edited by Bruce W. Winter, The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting (1993–96). Of a projected six volumes, five are now available. These deal with the literary setting (vol. 1), the Greco-Roman setting (vol. 2), Paul in Roman custody (vol. 3), the Palestinian setting (vol. 4), and the Diaspora setting (vol. 5). Older but still useful is Henry J. Cadbury, The Book of Acts in History (1955). Jerome H. Neyrey, ed., The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation (1991), reviewed in this issue, is a good example of the use of social-scientific models to illuminate early Christianity.


Genre and Purpose


to Rome and allegiance to Christ are not incompatible. Richard Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (1987), argues that Luke does not try to foster compatibility between church and state, but to encourage Christians to obey God rather than human authorities in the face of inevitable incompatibility between church and state. Charles H. Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics: An Examination of the Lucan Purpose* (1966), suggests that Acts is a defense against Gnosticism. The nineteenth-century view of F. C. Baur and the Tübingen School that Acts was written to reconcile the Petrine and Pauline factions in the early church has been rightly rejected by most but is still subtly influential. Again, these diverse approaches are not all mutually exclusive, and there is likely some merit to many of them; one need not suppose that Luke had a single, overarching purpose.

**Commentaries**


**Literary Approaches**


**Luke as Historian**


The question of what sources Luke may have used in writing Acts and their historical basis has invited much speculation but no consensus. In addition to the commentaries and other works cited above, see Jacques Dupont, The Sources of Acts: The Present Position (1964).

Similarly, much discussion has centered on the extent to which the speeches that comprise thirty percent of the book of Acts represent actual early Christian preaching as opposed to Lukan literary creativity. C H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments (1936), is the classic statement of the view that these speeches do preserve the essence of the apostolic proclamation. For a recent discussion and references to the flood of literature on this subject, see Marion L. Soards, The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns (1994).

Luke as Theologian


Studies too numerous to list here examine individual theological topics in Luke-Acts, such as riches and poverty, the Holy Spirit, Christology, ecclesiology, the role of women, and eschatology. Reference to many of these can be found in the more general theological studies, which cover a range of themes rather than focusing on one. Two slender volumes of this type, highly recommended for beginner and specialist alike, are Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching (1989); and Howard C. Kee, Good News to the Ends of the Earth: The Theology of Acts (1990). Other general theological studies include John Navone, Themes of St. Luke (1970); I. Howard Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian (1970); Eric Franklin, Christ the Lord: A Study in the Purpose and Theology of Luke-Acts (1975); A. J. Mattill, Luke and the Last

Collected Essays


Bibliographical Tools


Randall D. Chesnutt teaches New Testament at Seaver College, Pepperdine University, Malibu, California.