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

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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**


**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 proposals 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**


Collected Essays


Bibliographical Tools


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