LUKE\textsuperscript{5} AND ACTS

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Our task here is to deal with the historical reliability of the Special Lukan material about Jesus in the Gospel and of the Jesus material in Acts. As a starting point we may, with R. Brown,\textsuperscript{1} estimate the extent of Luke\textsuperscript{5} as between thirty-three and forty percent of the Gospel—something like 380 to 460 verses. This is a very significant part of what Luke has to say about Jesus, which makes of considerable significance the question of how one should relate to the materials as historical sources. Is it appropriate with Meier to treat Luke\textsuperscript{5} as a minor source, and more or less leave these materials out of consideration in our attempts to reconstruct the historical Jesus?\textsuperscript{2} Or do the materials justify a more generous assessment? Acts offers us much less about the historical Jesus; nonetheless there are summary outlines and individual details in relation to which questions of historical reliability may be put. Initially the two bodies of material, Luke\textsuperscript{5} and Acts, will be discussed separately, but the two streams will be drawn together at the end of the chapter.

1. Luke\textsuperscript{5}

The present treatment of Luke\textsuperscript{5} will be concerned primarily with the question of whether its general historical reliability should be viewed any differently to, say, that of the Markan traditions. The question will primarily be that of whether there are any special considerations to be brought to bear on the evaluation of these materials. Nobody starts with Luke\textsuperscript{5} if they want to develop a critical portrait of the historical

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Jesus, if for no other reason than the fact that Luke⁵, as normally understood, consists in essence of those parts of the Lukan portrayal that are not also attested in other parts of the gospel tradition. Multiple attestation is foundational for historical reconstruction and we do not, at least in the normal view, have this for Luke⁵ materials (though it will emerge below that much more of Luke⁵ than is normally recognized is paralleled at some level in other gospel materials). It would be possible in a study of the historicity of Luke⁵ to bring to bear on the particular Luke⁵ materials a set of criteria developed for the evaluation of any gospel materials. But such an approach has not been adopted here. From time to time there will be some attention to the evaluation of the historicity of specific parts of the tradition, but that will not be the main place of investment. Some of the points made will have implications for assessing the historicity of other gospel materials as well, but are offered here in relation to Luke⁵.

1.1. Luke⁵ and the Synoptic Problem

It is all very well to define Luke⁵ by reference to what is not found in Mark and Matthew, but a negative definition of this kind throws no light on the question of what we are actually dealing with in Luke⁵. So a first question here could be whether the issue of synoptic sources throws any light on the nature of Luke⁵ and therefore, potentially, on the question of the historical reliability of its materials. In a chapter of limited scope, however, this is not possible, and I must content myself with reporting that my attempts to look at Luke⁵ in relation to each of the main theories of synoptic relations indicates that although preferred solutions to the synoptic problem have some bearing on how we approach the evaluation of the historicity of Luke⁵, all the solutions leave the question basically open.

I unapologetically belong to what is still the consensus view.³ That is the view that i) Mark is our earliest Gospel; ii) it, or something very like it, was used by both Matthew and Luke to provide the backbone for their own Gospels; and iii) Matthew and Luke also had available to them a second (most likely written and most likely a single document) source (labeled “Q” for convenience), possibly in different editions, ³ For my own examination of gospel sources for Luke and Matthew, see J. Nolland, Luke, WBC 35A–C, 3 vols. (Dallas: Word, 1989–93), passim; Matthew, NIGNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), passim.