



Bovon, François

Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950–2005)

2nd edition

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Christoph Stenschke
Bergneustadt, Germany

Many of us who worked our way into Lukan scholarship remember the first edition of the present volume, Bovon's *Luc le théologien: Vingt-cinq ans de recherches (1950-1975)* (Neuchâtel-Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1978) or its English expansion (a poorly edited and less than perfect English translation), *Luke the Theologian: Thirty-Three Years of Research (1950–1983)* (PTMS 12; Allison Park: Pickwick, 1987). Although dry and little inspiring, it was nevertheless a helpful volume with a strong focus on Luke's Gospel, rather than a balanced treatment of Luke the theologian of Luke's Gospel and the books of Acts.

In the meantime, several volume on the theology of Luke's Gospel (J. B. Green), of Acts (e.g., J. Jervell, I. H. Marshall, D. Peterson, eds.) or on Luke-Acts have appeared (see P. Pokorny), as well as a good number of commentaries on both books and an unending stream of monographs on all aspects of Lukan theology. Thus many students of Luke-Acts were waiting for a major English survey of recent research. François Bovon, one of the European doyens of Lukan scholarship, has put us in his debt for providing this.

The volume starts with a reprint of the prefaces of the first (French) edition (1976, vii–x), to the English edition of 1987 (xi), and to the present second English edition (xiii–xiv). This is followed by a revised reprint of the first English edition, which constitutes the bulk

of the volume (1–462). Bovon treats Lukan theology under the following seven headings: the plan of God; salvation history and eschatology; the interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel; Christology; the Holy Spirit; salvation; the reception of salvation; and the church.

Next come Bovon's additional short essay from the first English edition: "What about Luke? (1983)" (463–78: "It brings up to date—in a form a bit different from the book—studies published ... between 1975 and 1983") and two further surveys of research by Bovon: "Studies in Luke-Acts: Retrospect and Prospect (1993)" (479–501, a reprint from *HTR* 85 [1992]); and a fresh survey called "Luke the Theologian, from 1980 to 2005" (503–64). This new chapter focuses on works that are relevant to the topics of the seven chapters of the first edition: theology, history, literature, the history of salvation, and eschatology; the Holy Scriptures; Christology; the Holy Spirit; conversion; ethics; ecclesiology, church, mission, baptism, meals and Eucharist, ministry, worship and prayer (a fresh outline would have done more justice to recent developments in Lukan studies! "New wine must be put into fresh wineskins" [Luke 6:38]). For Bovon, "It is evident that ... nowadays scholars attempt to determine Luke's theological intentions more from the composition of the double work and its literary genre than from the Lukan redaction of several sources or traditions. ... This second edition reveals, in the period 1980–2005, a renewed interest in the role of the Spirit and a shift from ecclesiology to ethics" (xiv). Bovon selectively discusses and assesses major contributions to each theme and for many studies refers to reviews of them.

The volume closes with several appendices: a bibliography of books on Luke-Acts published between 1980 and 2005 (567–622, strangely omitting C. H. Barrett's two ICC volumes on Acts [1994 and 1998] and J. Jervell's 1998 KEK volume in the list of commentaries!) and three new indices—a "Bibliographic Index on Luke 1–24, 1980–2005" (623–25); a "Bibliographic Index on Acts 1–28, 1980–2005" (627–29, strangely C. Breytenbach's monograph on Acts 13–14 appears for almost every chapter of Acts); and a "Bibliographic and Thematic Index on Luke-Acts, 1980–2005" (631–45, including theological problems, text-critical issues, historical problems, and literary questions)—and a selective index for the whole volume (647–73, references to Luke-Acts, authors, and subjects).

Bovon does not offer a fresh, synthetic appraisal of Lukan scholarship of the past fifty-five years but a collection of several older and newer surveys of research. It would have been interesting to read Bovon's assessment of the first thirty years of Luke the theologian in view of the present emphases in Lukan scholarship and from Bovon's own present perspective after his completion of one of the most exhaustive commentaries written on Luke's Gospel (three volumes in German, French, and Spanish on Luke 1–19; vol. 1 on Luke 1–9 available in English and Italian [504]).

While no author of a work such as this can consider all contributions to the debate, a number of omissions are surprising. For example, Bovon does not discuss M. Bachmann's *Jerusalem und der Tempel*, A. Neagoe's *The Trial of the Gospel: An Apologetic Reading of Luke's Trial Narratives*, D. Rusam's *Das Alte Testament bei Lukas*, M. Böhm's *Samaritanen und die Samaritanen bei Lukas*, J. Weatherly's *Jewish Responsibility for the Death of Jesus in Luke-Acts*, or E. J. Schnabel's detailed treatment of Acts (including theological issues) in his two-volume *Early Christian Mission*. Some of these and other titles appear without discussion in the bibliography and the bibliographic and thematic index (631–45), but they are not included in the selective index of authors (661–73). In addition, one may argue with Bovon about the space given to individual contributions (e.g., would Pokorny's *Theologie der lukanischen Schriften* [1998] not deserve more attention than twenty lines on page 508?) or the various Lukan themes or, obviously, about Bovon's assessment of the contributions.

In short, this second edition will do for today and some years to come what the first edition did in the past. It is more of a selective assessment of the details of Lukan scholarship than an interpretation or bird's-eye view of scholarship on Luke-Acts. Bovon would have been one of those Lukan scholars able to provide such a wider picture. The few indications to this end are noteworthy, as when Bovon notes in the conclusion to the new essay "Luke the Theologian, from 1980–2005" surprising omissions in the bibliographies of French, Spanish, and Italian scholarship and many repetitions in recent research: "Opinions and positions are claimed to be new, but they are simply the remaking or refurbishing of old hypotheses" (563). On shifts in methodology Bovon notes: "Many ... have abandoned redaction criticism for a literary approach. The adoption of this new methodology is legitimate and beneficial, but from a historical and theological point of view it is an error to neglect the question of the materials, sources, and traditions that biblical authors use" (563). Bovon further notes that the theological, religious, and ideological situation has changed:

Some works reflect the very secular practice of the academy, particularly the American academy. Others—on the opposite end of the spectrum—seem cautious and conventional, harmonizing Luke with Paul or Matthew; creating a catechetical understanding of the NT theology. New accents are also perceivable. The anti-Judaism of Luke-Acts ... is still discussed in great detail. The presence and—at the same time—silence of women in Luke-Acts, particularly in Acts, lies at the origin of several monographs. (564)

More of this kind of conclusion, criticism, and a prospect of further development would have been helpful.

In view of an increasing number of new studies of historical issues in Luke-Acts and a more positive assessment of the historical value of Acts (see H. Botermann, "Der Heidenapostel und sein Historiker: Zur historischen Kritik der Apostelgeschichte," *TBei* 24 [1993]: 62–84), one wonders whether the time has come or will come to give up the artificial distinction between Luke *the theologian* and Luke *the historian*, which, in the wake of Bovon's first edition reflecting the Lukan scholarship between 1950 and 1975, still lies at the heart of Bovon's new appraisal. Is it time to study Luke the historian and Luke the theologian together again (I. H. Marshall)? How helpful and legitimate has this distinction been for the study of an author who presents his theology by means of a historical narrative? In addition, can a survey of Lukan theology do without a section on Luke's portrayal of Peter, of Paul, and of his controversial Gentile mission, as if all of that had nothing to do with Luke's theology. After all, the defense of the legitimacy of this disputed mission is Luke's theme in the last quarter of Luke-Acts. Should his two volumes be read far more consistently in view of this last quarter? Does the key to Luke's purpose and theology perhaps lie where we least expected it to be? Would this lead to fresh perspectives for the next fifty-five years?