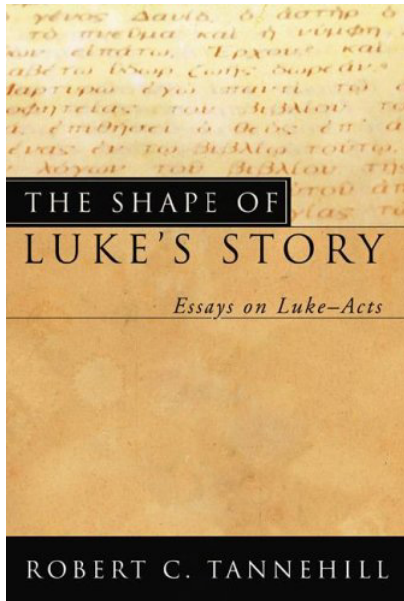


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**Tannehill, Robert**

***The Shape of Luke's Story: Essays on Luke-Acts***

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Robert F. O'Toole  
Gregorian University Foundation  
New York, New York

Tannehill, Professor Emeritus of New Testament at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, presents some of his essays written between 1974 and 2004. He arranges them into four parts. Six essays in part 1 consider Luke's theology, poetry, and rhetoric; part 2 contains three essays about Luke and the Jews. "Acts as Narrative" is the description of the four articles in part 3, while the last three articles in part 4 are hermeneutical experiments. Tannehill explains the aim of each essay. He achieves these aims, and the essays definitely demonstrate his ability to work with various methodologies and why he is a leading interpreter of Luke's thought. In this review I will provide brief summaries and some observations about each essay and at the end bring up two major concerns.

In "The Mission of Jesus according to Luke 4:16–30," Tannehill uses redaction criticism to detect Luke's theological intentions. Tannehill wanted to see how a key passage functions within the larger work and its connection with Luke's theological themes. Why did Tannehill not work with Luke 4:14–44, the unity of which is very strongly supported by the same Greek words at its beginning and the end? Moreover, in verses 16–30 I would contend that Luke also portrays Jesus as Servant of Yahweh and eschatological prophet.

Tannehill wrote “The *Magnificat* as Poem” to experiment with a poetic unit that was somewhat longer than the short sayings treated in *The Sword of His Mouth*. The goal of his interpretation is not only to state more clearly what the *Magnificat* said but to examine what is gained by how it is said. This is an excellent, thorough, and spiritually enriching study of the *Magnificat*.

In “What Kind of King? What Kind of Kingdom?” Tannehill asks if the narrative invites us to revise our understanding of kingship and kingdom as they apply to Jesus; his kingdom has some distinctive concrete social policies. On page 49, Tannehill does not appear to recognize the parallel between Luke 2:25–35 and 4:16–30, and on page 55 his statements about church appear confessional.

“The Lukan Discourse on Invitation” emphasizes the continuity of discourse in Luke 14:7–24 and argues that the Lukan narrator has placed the parable of the great supper (vv. 16–24) in a double interpretative frame. Tannehill pursues this possibility in other of the essays and asks whether careful study of the text permits such interpretations. In the present essay he suggests that literary theory and social-science theory may function in complementary ways. The possible weakness of the argument depends on the accuracy of social-science theory in analyzing data from centuries ago.

“The Story of Zacchaeus as Rhetoric” is an example of “narrative rhetoric,” for Tannehill views Luke-Acts as “system of influence which may be analyzed in literary terms.” This essay applies to a single scene. The interpretation of Luke 19:8 on 75–76 is surely clever but not totally convincing; the same should be said about the bottom of page 79.

Tannehill, in “Repentance in the Context of Lukan Soteriology,” argues that repentance is an integral part of the good news of salvation and fulfills divine promises that are central to Luke-Acts. So, the theme has more theological depth than is often recognized and continual relevance in the present world. This is a fine article. However, Paul’s speech at Pisidia Antioch does not have a call to repentance; the aftermath should be taken with the speech and speaks of a lack of repentance (Acts 13:46).

“Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story” views the treatment of the Jewish people in Luke-Acts: at the beginning there is an expectation of their salvation and at the end their lack of response. It is a tragedy for them and for the implied author, for the promises of salvation for both Israel and the Gentiles are to be fulfilled through Jesus. Other essays in this collection as well as *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* address this concern. My question is: How much weight should we give to this position without distorting Luke’s story about the success of what God did in Christ? Also, is “Israel” the right expression, since Luke views Christianity as the new Israel? Finally, the end of Acts is much like the end of

chapter 13, where it looks as if Paul will never again preach to Jews, yet the next chapter begins with just that (but see 137 and 140 top).

“The Story of Israel within the Lukan Narrative” restates and supplements the arguments in the previous essay but introduces some new perspective, such as the promise traditions in Luke 1–2 that reappear in Acts. Tannehill is not claiming that salvation is now limited only to the Gentiles.

“Rejection by Jews and Turning to Gentiles: The Pattern of Paul’s Mission in Acts” develops the above perspective by considering the Pauline mission in Acts. There is a pattern of public Jewish opposition, followed by announcements that the mission is turning to the Gentiles, and Acts ends with a strong example of this pattern. An obvious possible reaction would be that Luke wants us to imagine this pattern continuing.

Tannehill introduces in “The Functions of Peter’s Mission Speeches in the Narrative of Acts” a narrative-critical perspective by viewing the speeches as actions within a developing plot. Themes are repeated, but each speech is more closely related to its specific situation than is commonly recognized.

In “The Composition of Acts 3–5: Narrative Development and Echo Effect,” Tannehill moves beyond the previous essays and discusses literary patterns in an extensive narrative. Literary theorists outside biblical studies can assist us, and a good reader follows the plot and listens for enriching echoes of similar events. At the end of the essay appears a summary of the significance of repetitive narrative patterns not presented elsewhere. Tannehill surely makes his point, but the joy of the lame man is much stronger than he indicates on page 189, and the harsh warning about being “destroyed from the people” brings into question Tannehill’s contention that Luke’s reader is not being directly addressed. Finally, no mention is made of the parallels between Acts 4 and 5.

“Paul outside the Christian Ghetto” presents the complex interaction and conflicts of the Christian mission with the surrounding culture. Furthermore, the sea storm in Acts 27 is viewed as an example of salvific interaction across religious lines. However, I doubt that this last contention is Luke’s, and Gallio’s refusal to intervene in the conflict between Christians and Jews is more Luke’s defense of the former than Gallio’s contempt for Jews.

Tannehill feels that “The Narrator’s Strategy in the Scenes of Paul’s Defense” is a clearer and more compact account of the narrator’s rhetorical strategy than in his *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (vol. 2). We find political apologetic and confirmation of the Christian faith but also a reasoned basis and so a model for interacting with a suspicious audience. Tannehill’s use of “a zealot” (241–42) to describe Paul could prove confusing; I also doubt

that the dramatic climax is the evangelistic appeal to Agrippa rather than Paul's innocence (247).

"Should We Love Simon the Pharisee? Reflections on the Pharisees in Luke" considers the role and freedom of the reader who is respectful of the text. Simon in Luke 7:36–50 can be viewed as an open character, not totally evil and capable of change, a "neighbor" we can love. My reaction is that this essay bears on Tannehill's consideration of Luke's treatment of Jews.

Tannehill presents in "Freedom and Responsibility in Scripture Interpretation" six reasons why narratives such as Luke's Gospel do not and cannot fully control readers' responses. He highlights their freedom and ethical responsibility and the influence of historical reconstructions on interpretations. Very good, but an interpretation can be so subjective that it lacks academic relevance.

"'Cornelius' and 'Tabitha' Encounter Luke's Jesus" is an experiment, using two Lukan characters, to reckon with different social positions as a factor in the reading process. For Tannehill, a narrative suggests rather than controls (297). I seriously doubt that the control is only the reader's; otherwise, there is no real dialogical process with the text.

Libraries, biblical scholars, and students, especially of Luke-Acts, will want to read this collection of essays; Tannehill is a fine thinker and impressive exegete who knows and appreciates what is going on in biblical scholarship. However, I do have two major concerns. He seems uncomfortable with finding creedal statements in the text; however, is this Luke's position? Moreover, Tannehill has put excessive emphasis on Jesus as Messiah as opposed to Luke's overall presentation of Jesus. Here is not the place to discuss my concern; what I view as a more accurate understanding can be found in my *Luke's Presentation of Jesus: A Christology* (Subsidia Biblica 25; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2004).