

## **INTRODUCTION**

Primary sources Acts - Pervo, Hermeneia Commentary Augsburg Fortress 2009; Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume 4 Luke/Acts; New Interpreter's Bible Commentary – Acts.

Earliest Witnesses:

Polycarp of Smyrna cites Acts around 130CE. It is possible that the author of the Pastoral Epistles was familiar with the book. Irenaeus used it in his attack against heretics. It promotes apostleship. It supports and is connected to the Gospels and the other apostolic writings. The author (Pervo) of this commentary feels it would have been read as contemporary literature of the time and was very popular.

Early commentaries said that the author may have had access to Josephus' writings and the Pauline Epistles.

The text of Acts is less preserved and sure than the Gospel Luke. Many different editions of the text exist and none in its current form until the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.

It is thought Acts was written around 115CE by an anonymous author whose perspective was that of Ephesus or that general area. "Christians were becoming a concern, for missionary and political reasons. The current research suggests the author was not a companion of Paul. The narrator exhibits limited knowledge of Palestine and the surrounding area. The author has intimate local knowledge of Ephesus as evidenced by use of other historical material. 7 percent of the text relates to Ephesus.

The ABD differs in that it concludes Luke wrote the combined works : Luke/Acts. The two works take up fully a quarter of the NT. ABD puts the date of composition between 80 and 85 CE. For the ABD the purpose of Acts is to show God fulfills promises.

NIBC says Acts is anonymous though traditions suggests Luke the evangelist wrote both Luke and Acts. There is nothing in the historic record to deny this. NIBC denies a knowledge of Pauline letters and too suggests a date of composition in the 80'sCE. However, they acknowledge that both suggests are currently challenged in recent scholarship.

Both books are written to Theophilus or God-fearer. NIBC suggests Acts was written as a writing against idolatry or against heretical forms of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

In Ephesus there is assumed to be a Library of Pauline works – some no longer existent. Also it would have been a rich source of the oral tradition of Paul.

No real information about Luke is found in written record. Irenaeus identifies Luke as the author of Luke/Acts as inseparable companions. The earliest argument for Luke the physician and companion of Paul as writer is based on deductions from other post-Pauline epistles. No independent of external tradition would have been available to Irenaeus. The early orthodox tradition supports the authorship of Luke and Acts as Luke. In recent years the authors limited knowledge of Judaism and strong familiarity with the Latin NT the LXX suggests a gentile who had thoroughly immersed himself in Greek Scripture, a believer of lifelong standing.

The author writes in Koine Greek - He writes in a middle of the road use of the language – not too scholarly – not of the common people. He has learned to write like other Scripture. His language improves as the plot progresses. When Paul faces a learned audience in chapters 17 and 26 the language matches the audience. Luke is an accomplished story teller. The overall narrative is cohesive and fluid. Luke narrates through showing than through telling.

There are many biographical parallels in Luke and Acts. There is continuity in salvation history from Abraham to Paul. This legitimizes the Jesus movement in the author's eyes.

The author points out many parallels between characters, Pervo suggests that the tensions between Peter and Paul amount to a second Passion narrative in the Luke Acts drama. Jesus, Paul and Peter speak God's truth in dynamic and prophetic ways. In Luke/Acts Paul becomes almost a savior figure.

Luke repeats for emphasis and to signify importance (Paul going to the Gentiles, the conversion of Cornelius). The repeat occurrences build in importance.

Money has a central place in Acts.

The right use of money is crucial, but money also functions as a revealer of people's hearts, minds, and souls.

Magic is the realm of Satan and vulgar religious practice.

One third of Acts deals with confinement, arrest, incarceration and bondage.

Luke writes Acts not so much as an accurate historical record but as a story telling a point of view of the subjects, yet it is not fantasy.

Sources:

It was once thought that Luke used Paul's letters, Josephus and possibly the Gospel according to Mark. It would seem impossible that Luke did not know the Pauline letters, but his chronology does not match that of the letters. It is current thinking that there were other source documents some call "Antioch Source, and Gentile mission source".

Acts is a history. The author has produced a coherent story in conformity with a plan and his subject includes historical persons, places and events.

When called upon to study Luke and Acts the student faces two challenges. Interrelationships and differences. Luke does not require Acts but it is hard to see Acts stand alone. In Luke Jesus is the proclaimer in Acts Jesus is the proclaimed.

