

I am circling around the ultimate question of this thread, whether Luke, the companion of Paul, wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. A big reason this matters: if Paul's companion, "the gentile physician," wrote Acts, he had first-hand knowledge of Paul's life and teachings. That would certainly increase the likelihood that he was giving an authoritative account!

The first step to answering the question — was it written by Luke? — was to show that Paul never *mentions* Luke as a gentile physician in any of his undisputed letters. The second step involves asking the question of whether *any* companion of Paul - whether Luke or anyone else - wrote these books. The argument that a companion of Paul did write the books is based on the "we-passages" that I mentioned in the previous post. Now I want to advance the argument by saying that I don't think the we-passages indicate that a companion of Paul wrote Acts (or, by inference, Luke) because I think there is good counter-evidence to indicate that Acts (and Luke) were decidedly NOT written by someone who was familiar, personally with Paul.

Here I'll reproduce my comments on it from my college-level textbook, more accessible than some of my other posts recently. The basic point I'm making at this stage is that the book of Acts is not very reliable in its report of Paul. The implication of that will be (in a subsequent post) that a companion of Paul almost certainly didn't write it. That in turn will mean that the "we-passages" have to be explained on other grounds. And more germane to our point, it will suggest that Luke/Acts was not written by Luke the gentile physician (or more accurately: if they were, we have no evidence of it).

So, for now, let me lay out the argument for thinking a companion of Paul did not write Acts, namely, that its author does not seem to have known about Paul's life and teachings very well.

For a historically reliable account of what Paul said and did, can we rely on the narrative of the book of Acts? Different scholars will answer this question differently, some trusting the book of Acts with no qualms, others taking its accounts with a grain of salt, and yet others discounting its narrative altogether — that is, discounting its *historical* credibility for establishing what Paul said and did, not necessarily discounting its importance as a piece of literature.

My own position is that Acts can tell us a great deal about how Luke *understood* Paul, but less about what Paul himself actually said and did. For discerning the reliability of Acts we are in the fortunate situation that Paul and Luke sometimes both describe the same event and indicate Paul's teachings on the same issues, making it possible to see whether they stand in basic agreement.

What is striking is that in virtually every instance in which the book of Acts can be compared with Paul's letters in terms of biographical detail, differences emerge. Sometimes these differences ...

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