

Luke's Literary Achievement
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C.M. Tuckett

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LUKE, DISCIPLE OF THE DEUTERONOMISTIC SCHOOL*

Thomas Römer and Jean-Daniel Macchi

The Deuteronomistic Material

Ever since the publication of Martin Noth's *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*,¹ the deuteronomistic material has occupied a dominant place in Old Testament research. Noth had tried to show the unified nature of the body of material lying between Deuteronomy and 2 Kings, which, since then, has been called the deuteronomistic historiography. According to Noth, this great historical panorama was the work of a single author, writing in Palestine at a specific historical point in time, during the period of the Exile between 562 and 540 BCE. The theological aim of the writer was to provide an explanation of the tragic end of the Judaeen kingdom in the light of Yahweh's history with his people. The exile was then understood as the definitive divine punishment against the people and their leaders for refusing to obey the law of Deuteronomy.

The deuteronomistic redaction is characterized by so-called 'chapters of reflection' which come at the end and at the start of an epoch and which summarize the way in which the Deuteronomist thinks of it. Thus there is the 'Testament of Moses' in Deuteronomy 32 with its introduction in ch. 31; similarly one gets the 'Testament of Joshua' in Joshua 23 with its introduction in 21.43-45. Then there is the introduction to the book of Judges in ch. 2, the 'Testament of Samuel' in 1 Samuel 12 which concludes the era of the judges, Solomon's great speech of the dedication of the Temple in 1 Kings 8, and the explanation of the Fall of

* We would like to express our gratitude to Ms A. Champendal for the English translation.

1. M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 3rd edn, 1967); *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup, 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 2nd edn, 1991).

the Northern Kingdom in 2 Kgs 17.7-23. These sections are characterized by similarity in both style and thought.

According to Noth, the editing of the deuteronomistic work took place within a specific historical context. However, subsequent research on the deuteronomistic historiography has quickly altered this view of the matter, ascribing the work to a more extended chronological period. Despite important differences in interpretation and exegetical method which we cannot discuss here, both American² and German³ scholarship has extended the period of the redactional activity of the Deuteronomist to cover the time from the Assyrian era to the Persian era, that is, from the seventh to the fourth century BCE.⁴ However, one should go even further and note that deuteronomistic material is not confined to the editing of the books from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings.

Several scholars have pointed out that the so-called Yahwist (J), once considered the first document containing the narrative plot of the Pentateuch, also reflects a theology and a literary style close to that of the deuteronomistic school. Thus the Yahwist appears as a deuteronomist of the second or third generation.⁵ In the prophetic literature, the

2. F.M. Cross, 'The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History', in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 274-89; R.E. Friedman, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative: The Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Priestly Works* (HSM, 22; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981); R.D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup, 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981).

3. R. Smend, *Die Entstehung des Alten Testaments* (ThW, 1; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978); W. Dietrich, *Prophezie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT, 108; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972); cf. also W. Roth, 'Deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk/Deuteronomistische Schule', *TRE* 8 (1981), pp. 543-52.

4. E. Cortese, 'Theories concerning Dtr: A Possible Rapprochement', in C. Brekelmans and J. Lust (eds.), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies: Papers Read at the XIIIth IOSOT Congress. Leuven 1989* (Leuven: University Press and Peeters, 1990), pp. 179-90; N. Lohfink, 'Kerygmata des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks', in J. Jeremias and L. Perlitt (eds.), *Die Botschaft und die Boten* (FS H.W. Wolff; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), pp. 87-100 (= N. Lohfink, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur*, II [SBAB, 12; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991], pp. 125-42).

5. M. Rose, *Deuteronomist und Yahwist: Untersuchungen zu den Berührungspunkten beider Literaturwerke* (ATANT, 67; Zürich: Theologischer

idea of a deuteronomistic edition of books such as Amos, Hosea and above all Jeremiah is almost universally accepted.⁶ Some recent studies have even noted this style in very late prophets such as 'Deutero-Zechariah'.⁷ Within the Writings, some psalms presupposing the final form of the Pentateuch (e.g. Ps. 106⁸), as well as the books of Chronicles,⁹ clearly adopt a frame of reference inspired by the deuteronomistic ideology. As we shall see, such observations can also be made about texts from literature which is later still.

We see, therefore, that the deuteronomistic school cannot be restricted to a group or a well defined 'movement'; rather, it is a matter of a large current of thought spreading across the whole of Israelite intellectual history from the Assyrian period right up to the first centuries of the Christian era. This phenomenon can be explained by a style and a theology which are both attractive and also easily imitated.

The deuteronomist language has certain 'baroque' features and is characterized by a very stereotyped phraseology. Several scholars have drawn up lists—more or less exhaustive—of the deuteronomistic language.¹⁰ Generally speaking, these formulae are connected with Moses' mediation of the law, a view of the origins of the true Israel based on the Exodus, and an exhortation addressed to the people to obey the divine precepts. Among other things, they serve to set the divine promises of the land or the covenant over against the perpetual disobedience of the

Verlag, 1981); 'La croissance du corpus historiographique de la Bible—Une proposition', *RTP* 118 (1986), pp. 217-36.

6. W.H. Schmidt, 'Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches. Zu den theologischen Unterschieden zwischen dem Prophetenwort und seinem Sammler', *ZAW* 77 (1965), pp. 168-93; W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremiah 26-45* (WMANT, 52; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981).

7. E.g. R.F. Person, *Second Zechariah and the Deuteronomistic School* (JSOTSup, 167; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

8. H.J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, II (BK, XV/2; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960), p. 728.

9. The situation is more complicated in the case of Chronicles, in that the author knew the books of Samuel and Kings and made a midrash from them. Cf. especially S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1993); S.L. McKenzie, *The Chronicler's Use of the Deuteronomistic History* (HSM, 33; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1984).

10. M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972); W. Thiel, *Redaktion*.

people who are hardened, stiff-necked, and so on, but who are constantly warned by the prophets, the 'servants of Yahweh'.

Deuteronomist Ideology in the Christian Era

In view of what has been said above, it is not at all surprising that the deuteronomistic style and ideology can be found in still later writings. O.H. Steck¹¹ has shown that the deuteronomistic motif of the prophets being sent by Yahweh and rejected, even killed, by all the people (2 Kgs 17.13-14; Jer. 7.25-27; Neh. 9.26 etc.) is widely attested in rabbinic literature (*Pes. R.* 138a), in the intertestamental literature (*Jub.* 1.7-26; 2 Esd. 14.27-35), in Paul¹² and in the Synoptic Gospels.

Even the Koran is influenced by deuteronomistic ideas. Sura 5.70-71 says, 'We have taken the covenant of the children of Israel, and we sent to them messengers. Whenever a messenger came to them with what they themselves did not desire, some they accused of mendacity, and some they slew...so they were blind and deaf.'¹³

Luke and Deuteronomistic Influence

One of the authors most influenced by the deuteronomistic style is undoubtedly the evangelist Luke. The fact that he is the only evangelist to supplement his Gospel with a 'historiography' could be the first indication of deuteronomistic influence. Further, it has often been pointed out that it is the programmatic speeches, the so-called 'missionary speeches'¹⁴ addressed to Jews and Gentiles, which give coherence to Luke's work and which enable him to express his major theological ideas through the mouth of one or another character. According to Conzelmann, the writing of Acts can be seen as a reaction to the crisis

11. O.H. Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten* (WMANT, 23; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967); cf. also M. Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1987).

12. J.M. Scott, 'Paul's Use of Deuteronomistic Tradition', *JBL* 112 (1993), pp. 645-65.

13. Translation by M.M. Khatib, *The Bounteous Koran* (London: Macmillan Press, 1986).

14. U. Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden in der Apostelgeschichte: Form- und traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (WMANT, 5; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961).

which the delay of the parousia caused for Christians towards the end of the first century.¹⁵ Even if this theory is today widely disputed, Acts still displays concerns which are similar to those of the deuteronomistic historiography. Like the Deuteronomists, Luke is trying to provide his addressees with a theodicy. The opposition faced by the preachers of the gospel should not discourage Christians: it is foreseen in divine teaching and confirms Israel's obduracy and the necessity of the gospel to move outside Jerusalem. In this connection, a comparison of the end of the two historiographies is extremely interesting.¹⁶ Both 2 Kgs 25 and Acts 28 conclude with an end that is not an end. We find neither a final interpretation of the story, nor a clear happy ending. In both cases we are told what happens to a prisoner, a key figure in the story. These two prisoners obtain a privileged status: Jehoiachin is received at the King of Babylon's table, and Paul is in a position to preach the gospel. Nevertheless, the two remain subject to the control of a foreign power. In Luke, as with the Deuteronomists, we find the same literary strategy: an open ending which can therefore be interpreted in different ways. The reader is thus caught up in a dynamic hermeneutic which compels him or her to take a position in relation to this story.

Stephen's Speech in Acts 7

The parallels which we have outlined above can be confirmed by the Lukan speech which is placed on the lips of Stephen in Acts 7. This text occupies a key position in the understanding of Acts and can be regarded as a pivot. This important speech is inserted at a crucial moment in the history of the Church and is reminiscent of the deuteronomistic technique of marking turning points in Israel's history by great speeches.

Besides the problem of the sources used by the evangelist, many scholars have noted the very well organized structure of the speech. For example there is a development in the narrative which, between its beginning in v. 2a and its conclusion in vv. 51-53, is divided into four parts dealing with Abraham (vv. 2-8), Joseph (vv. 9-16), Moses

15. H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke* (London: Faber & Faber, 1960), pp. 95-97.

16. This comparison has been suggested to us by Professor P. Davies of Sheffield University.

(vv. 17-43) and then the holy place (vv. 44-50).¹⁷ The text can equally well be structured according to the way in which the facts are presented, in one way 'objectively' (vv. 2-34, 44-47), in another way 'polemically' (vv. 35-43, 48-50).¹⁸ However, J. Dupont is certainly right to point out the parallelism between Stephen's speech and the pattern of ancient rhetorical argumentation. The speech opens with a *narratio* (vv. 2-34), enclosed by two theophanies (vv. 2-4, 30-34), and giving a virtually neutral account of past events. This is followed by the *argumentatio* which is much more virulent after the turning point in v. 35. This *argumentatio* is divided into two main parts, one about Moses (vv. 36-43) and one about the temple (vv. 44-50).¹⁹

In each part within this structure, there are phrases and expressions which are frequently used by the Deuteronomists in the books of the Old Testament.

The oppression of the fathers in Egypt, mentioned in Acts 7.19, is a constantly recurring theme in the deuteronomistic credos (cf. Num. 20.15; Deut. 26.6 etc.). Then again, the image of the signs and wonders performed by Yahweh during the Exodus (Acts 7.36) is one of the most common in the deuteronomistic literature (Deut. 4.34; 6.22; 26.8; Jer. 32.21 and several other instances). We can, for example, compare Acts 7.36 ('He led them out of Egypt having performed signs and wonders in the land of Egypt') with Deut. 6.21-22 ('and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, upon Egypt').²⁰

The disobedience of the people and their 'stiff-neck' (Acts 7.39, 51) is

17. J. Kilgallen, *The Stephen Speech: A Literary and Redactional Study of Acts 7.2-53* (AnBib, 67; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976). Variants of such narrative approaches are mentioned by Dupont (see n. 19 below).

18. See M. Dibelius, 'Die Reden der Apostelgeschichte und die antike Geschichtsschreibung', in *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte* (FRLANT, 42; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1953), pp. 120-62 (ET in *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* [London: SCM Press, 1956], pp. 138-85).

19. J. Dupont, 'La structure oratoire du discours d'Etienne (Actes 7)', *Bib* 66 (1985), pp. 153-67; this is adopted in part too by S. Légasse, *Stephanos: Histoire et discours d'Etienne dans les Actes des Apôtres* (LD, 147; Paris: Cerf, 1992).

20. Acts 7.36: οὗτος ἐξήγαγεν αὐτοὺς ποιήσας τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα ἐν γῇ Αἰγύπτῳ καὶ ἐν Ἑρυθρῇ θαλάσσῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἔτη τεσσαράκοντα. Deut. 6.21-22 (LXX): καὶ ἐξήγαγεν ἡμᾶς κύριος ἐκείθεν ἐν χειρὶ κραταιᾷ καὶ ἐν βραχίονι ὑψηλῷ. 22. καὶ ἔδωκεν κύριος σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα μεγάλα ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἐν Φαραῶ καὶ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον ἡμῶν.

a cliché in the Deuteronomists' interpretation of the history of Israel (cf. Deut. 9.12; 2 Kgs 17.14 etc.).

In the structure outlined above, the *narratio* (vv. 2-34) and the *argumentatio* (vv. 35-50) are linked by the figure of Moses, whose life in Egypt in the wilderness is divided into three periods of 40 years (Acts 7.23, 30, 36). The third period is the time in the wilderness with the disobedience of the first generation (cf. Acts 7.42). This idea is clearly a direct reflection of deuteronomistic theology (cf. Deut. 1.3; 8.2; 31.2 etc.).²¹

Steck has shown how the deuteronomistic concept of prophecy survived into the Christian era, and this too is clearly present in Acts 7. Moses is the first of a long series of witnesses (Acts 7.37 citing Deut. 18.15) whom God has sent to his people to call them to repent. But each time these prophets have been rejected (Acts 7.52; cf. 2 Kgs 17.13; Jer. 7.25-26; 25.4 etc.). This idea is also reflected in Luke's Christology, where Jesus is the last of the series of the prophets. Already announced by Moses (Acts 7.37), he was rejected by Israel, like his predecessors (cf. Acts 7.52), but has been vindicated by God who raised him from the dead. This final rejection of God's messenger is clearly placed in parallel with the non-observance of the Mosaic Law (vv. 52-53).

Luke and the Fathers

Luke is the only New Testament author who uses the deuteronomistic expression 'God of the fathers'.²² We find it in Acts 3.13; 5.30; 7.32; 22.14. Elsewhere it occurs 11 times in the book of Deuteronomy, and comes most frequently in the books of Chronicles (26 times).

Luke uses this phrase for God only in speeches addressed to Jews.²³ In this way he tries to show continuity in history, but at the same time discontinuity: the God of the Christians is the same as the God of the Exodus. This is particularly clear in Acts 5.30: 'The God of *our* fathers raised Jesus, whom *you* killed by hanging him on a tree'.

In Acts 7, Luke only speaks of the God of the fathers in citing

21. J.A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy* (TOTC, 5; Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), p. 290.

22. Except Mk 12.8, quoting Exod. 3.6.

23. For the difference between speeches addressed to Jews and those addressed to Gentiles, see Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden*.

Exod. 3.6 (Acts 7.32). On the other hand, he often refers to 'the fathers', which is one of the most characteristic features of the deuteronomistic literature.²⁴ The frequent use of 'fathers' (Acts 7.2, 11, 12, 15, 19, 32, 38, 39, 44, 51, 52—i.e. 12 times²⁵) can be paralleled with several deuteronomistic texts. But the range of semantic meaning of the word within the same text reminds us of another speech with a rhetorical structure of a *narratio* and an *argumentatio*, viz. Joshua 24. Indeed Acts 7 could have been largely inspired by Joshua 24, a speech which is post-exilic—probably Hellenistic—and provides the conclusion to a presumed Hexateuch,²⁶ and which clearly derives a great deal from a deuteronomistic heritage. As in Joshua 24 and other deuteronomistic historical summaries, Stephen's speech develops at length the history of the origins of the people up to the time of Joshua (7.45). Curiously, nothing is said in Acts 7 of the era of the Judges, and David and Solomon are only mentioned briefly in relation to the building of the temple.

A comparison with Joshua 24 may also explain the stress in Acts 7.16 on Shechem. The double mention of Shechem, linked to the idea that the 12 patriarchs were buried there, has been a puzzle for exegetes. Some have thought that this verse might reflect a Samaritan tradition.²⁷ Moreover, it seems to us that this verse can very well be explained in the light of Joshua 24. As Blum has shown, the speech of Joshua 24 can

24. T. Römer, *Israels Väter: Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition* (OBO, 99; Freiburg [CH]: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990); cf. also 'Le Deutéronome à la quête des origines', in F. Haudebert (ed.), *Le Pentateuque: Débats et Recherches* (LD, 151; Paris: Cerf, 1992), pp. 65-98.

25. 'Father' in the singular occurs three times, referring to Abraham (v. 2), Terah (v. 4) and Jacob (v. 14).

26. Cf. J. L'Hour, 'L'Alliance de Sichem', *RB* 69 (1952), pp. 5-36, 166-84, 350-68; M. Anbar, *Josué et l'alliance de Sichem (Josué 24.1-28)* (BET, 25; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992); J. Van Seters, 'Joshua 24 and the Problem of Tradition in the Old Testament', in W.B. Barrick and J.R. Spencer (eds.), *In the Shelter of Elyon* (FS G.W. Ahlström; JSOTSup, 31; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), pp. 139-58; C. Levin, *Die Verheissung des neuen Bundes in ihrem theologisch-geschichtlichen Zusammenhang ausgelegt* (FRLANT, 137; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), p. 114-15; U. Becker, *Richterzeit und Königtum: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Studien zum Richterbuch* (BZAW, 192; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), pp. 69-70.

27. As cited by Légasse, *Stephanos*.

be understood as an appeal for the conversion of 'protosamaritans',²⁸ urging them to give up the worship practised by their fathers (Josh. 24.14) and to devote themselves to the true worship of Yahweh, the God of the Exodus. Similarly, Acts 7 brings about a break in the worship of the God of Israel, by dissociating from the behaviour of the fathers (Acts 7.51-52).²⁹

Let us return to the 'fathers'. Acts 7 uses the word in the same way as Joshua 24. First there is Abraham, who is called 'father' like his ancestors (Josh. 24.23; Acts 7.2-4). On the other hand, nowhere in these two texts is this title given to Isaac or Jacob.³⁰ The term 'fathers' begins to be used more generally when the action is taking place in Egypt (Josh. 24.6ff.; Acts 7.11ff.). We are then fully into deuteronomistic terminology where the 'fathers' are the generation in Egypt (Acts 7.15; Josh. 24.26), the generation of the Exodus (Acts 7.36; Josh. 24.7), the generation of the revelation of the Law (Acts 7.38) and of the conquest (Acts 7.45).³¹ In both texts there is a break between the ideal father, Abraham, and the more ambiguous fathers from the Exodus onwards. Basing himself on this line of fathers, who saw the miracles of Yahweh but nevertheless were not obedient (Acts 7.39), Luke can trace a line of constant refusal to hear the divine word as announced by Moses, the first prophet, right up to the murder of the last of God's messengers, Jesus. It is this murder which splits apart the common history of the Jews and the Christians. Thus at the end of the speech, 'our fathers'

28. E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT, 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984). Concerning the Samaritan schism, see J.D. Macchi, *Histoire d'une légende* (Le Monde de la Bible, 30; Geneva: Labor & Fides, 1994).

29. The idea that the tomb of the twelve patriarchs was in Shechem can be explained by a midrashic process. Since the Old Testament says nothing about what happened to the 12 patriarchs after their deaths (except in the case of Joseph), it is scarcely surprising that their tomb was located at the same place as that of their father and their brother.

30. In Acts 7.14 Jacob is called the 'father of Joseph', but this occurs in a context where no 'genealogical' link is made with the addressees of the speech. Cf. on the other hand Acts 7.2.

31. For the first Deuteronomists, the 'ābôt are never the patriarchs but either the Exodus generation or later ones. Cf. J. Van Seters, 'Confessional Reformulation in the Exilic Period', *VT* 22 (1972), pp. 448-59; *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), pp. 227-45; Römer, *Israels Väter*.

(Acts 7.38, 39, 44, 45) become a reality distinct from 'your fathers' (Acts 7.51-52).

Acts 7 presents a good example of the influence of the deuteronomistic ideology at the time of the first Christians. Luke has often been regarded as the evangelist most strongly influenced by Hellenism. Our enquiry shows that he is also an heir of the deuteronomistic theology, certainly effective, but in some ways equally debatable.