

Lorenzo Rossi, *Pietro e Paolo testimoni del Crocifisso-Risorto: La synkrisis in Atti 12,1-23 e 27,1-28,16. Continuita e discontuita di un paralelismo nell'opera lucana* (Analecta Biblica 205; Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2014). Pp. 512. € 35. ISBN 88-765-36-671

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The book is a presentation of L. Rossi's doctoral dissertation written in 2013 under the direction of Jean-Noël Aletti at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. Its author currently teaches at both the Theological Institute in Mantua (affiliated with the Theological Faculty of Northern Italy, Milan) and the Superior Institute of the Religious Sciences devoted to Saint Francis.

Rossi starts his book with a short note about the parallels known to exist between the main literary characters in Luke-Acts, which have been studied for decades. He focuses on three of these, namely Jesus, Peter and Paul. Being aware of the many similarities in their narratives, and of the fact that the stories of the apostles in Acts are in some ways modeled on the example of Jesus' story in the Gospel, he chooses to study two particular texts belonging to the final stages of their narrative stories. On the one hand he focuses on the scene of Peter's imprisonment and his miraculous delivery from the hands of King Agrippa I (Acts 12:1-23). His second point of reference is a passage about Paul's sea journey to Rome, the result of a trial organized by Festus in Caesarea Maritima (Acts 27:1-28:16). Here Rossi reveals already the main goal of his entire study: giving evidence as to how the two scenes correspond to each other and to what degree they are similar to the final narrative threads dealing with the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in Luke 22-24.

According to Rossi, up until now worldwide New Testament scholarship has lacked a systematic and thorough study with a special focus on these literary units. The absence is even more evident if one looks for a study applying narrative methodology. Meanwhile, such a narrative approach is deemed critical for revealing how the process of modeling functions in these parallel passages by Luke (*synkrisis*). Thus, in Rossi's opinion the study is worth undertaking in order to determine the extent and function of the phenomenon of modeling which is present in Luke-Acts.

Over more than thirty pages (p. 13-46), the Italian exegete draws an extensive panorama of the previous scholarly research on Luke's comparisons between Jesus and each of the two chosen apostles. Rossi's *status quaestionis* starts with the studies of the first half of the XIX century and covers the whole bibliography up to the most recent of studies. Thus he mentions H.J. Cadbury, F.C. Baur, M. Schneckenburger, and other scholars from Tübingen, as well as B. Bauer, H. Evans, R. Rackham, M. Goulder, C. Talbert, A. Mattill, W. Radl, and G. Muhlack. Among the most recent studies he lists those of R. O'Toole, S. Praeder, D. Moessner, A. Clark, and J.-N. Aletti. He especially focuses on the last of the listed authors, openly stating that this narrative approach to the issue of Lucan parallelisms has strongly influenced his own study.

In the last part of the introductory paragraph the author explains his methodology. He limits the textual basis for his study to the Alexandrian tradition, leaving behind the so-called Western text (D). He also mentions his predilection toward a synchronic approach in order to determine the objective method used by Luke in composing his narrative. Further, Rossi talks about the various analytical positions identified by A. Neagoe in interpreting the goal of the work of Luke, of which he chooses the "redefining of Christian identity in the age of the passing away of eye-witnesses to the founding events" [reviewer's translation from the Italian]. Drawing a general sketch of the socio-political environment of the primordial Church, Rossi assumes that Luke wanted to authenticate episodes not only from the life of Jesus but also those of His first followers (including Paul). The third evangelist does this through his composition of the parallel lives of the key characters of his work. The addressees of his work are Christians, citizens of the Empire whom Luke would like to convince of the plausibility of the Gospel.

Two interdependent sections constitute the bulk of Rossi's work. The first three chapters are devoted to the study of Acts 12:1-23, while the three successive ones concentrate on Acts 27:1-28:16. As mentioned above, in order to evaluate the chosen parallels Rossi has decided to employ a synchronic-narrative type of approach, executing this systematically in three consecutive steps. First, the studied text is carefully examined and its compositional structure established. Afterwards, its literary characters and perspectives are analyzed so that the narrative dynamic of the plot might be revealed. In the second stage, the web of intertextual relationships is unfolded, beginning with the *synkrisis* between the paschal narrative and the whole of the Lucan two-volume work. Thus, in Chapter Two Rossi focuses on the parallel of Jesus and Peter while in Chapter Five he studies the *synkrisis* of Jesus and Paul. The last pair of chapters (3 and 6) are dedicated to the two passages' external intertextualities, with relevant examples given of either OT typology or other connections to texts outside of Luke-Acts.

The first chapter of the book starts with the analysis of two identified phases of the narrative of Acts 12:1-23: the liberation of Peter from the hands of Herod and then Herod's destiny. The two threads are kept separate and yet they are connected in a *synkrisis* mode. Then, Rossi discusses various character-based viewpoints (Peter, Rhoda, soldiers, Herod) as well as the plot of the narrative, which he claims is revelatory in character.

Chapter Two contains a thorough comparison of the focal text in Acts with the paschal scenes from the Gospel, those concerning both Jesus' passion (the question of chronology, the attitude of the people, Herod, prayer, angelology, the dream of Peter and its fulfillment) and his resurrection (meeting at the house of Mary, the lack of faith among the disciples, explanation of the Apostle, and Peter's departure). The author studies also lexical similarities, the dynamics of the disciples' recognition of Peter, and other chronological aspects of the narrative. The second paragraph is devoted to the numerous features of Peter's testimony, i.e. the authentication of his apostolic testimony, his life- and word-testimony about the Risen Christ, and the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. Some preparatory activity to the Pauline testimony is also noted. Finally, Rossi discusses the post-apostolic era of witnesses of Christ.

In the third chapter the author searches for some distant parallels to Acts 12. Rossi notes a number of similarities with the narrative of the Exodus (nocturnal environment, intervention of the angel, the punishment of the persecutor, as well as lexis and phrases) and also lists some examples of other deaths of persecutors or allusions in this direction (Tyre and Sidon; king of Tyre [Ez 28]; worms as a punishment from God; the reversal of roles between Herod and Peter). The last paragraph of the first part points out examples of interdependence between the liberation of Peter and the death of Herod, viewed from a wider perspective (references to Ananias and Saphira, Elymas, and liberation narratives both in the Bible and in Greek-Jewish literature).

Since the passage about the sea journey of Paul to Rome (Acts 27:1–28:16) is much broader, the second part of the book is also much bigger. In Chapter Four Rossi analyzes systematically four stages of the Pauline trip (beginning of the journey, shipwreck, over-wintering in Malta, and the approach to Rome). Then he continues with analysis of the literary characters (Paul, the centurion Julius, journeying companions, barbarians, Paul's group – "we"). The last part of the chapter discusses the plot of the narrative from various viewpoints (Paul, Julius, God, Maltese). This time the plot of the narrative is defined as solution-revelation in character.

Chapter Five follows the same pattern as Chapter Two. Thus, elements similar to Christ's passion and resurrection are stressed (inevitable journey toward Jerusalem/Rome, Jesus' announcements of his passion and Paul's obedience,

Jesus' entry to Jerusalem and the detention of Paul, four trial scenes, being handed over by Romans, nocturnal prayer, angelophany and God's support, Paul's meal at sea [Acts 27:35] and his experience of shipwreck as a symbol of Easter). Correspondingly, in the second paragraph Rossi discusses one function of the parallelism, which he defines as indirect authentication. For example, just as Jesus Christ was presented as the righteous among the unrighteous, Paul is pictured the same way (in the middle of the sea-storm, in Malta).

Intertextual connections outside of Luke's work is the content of the sixth chapter. The sea-storm leads Rossi to some possible counterpoints in other narratives (Jonah, Hellenistic literature, Ulysses). Lastly, he studies the foundation of *synkrisis*, giving the reader a theological synthesis of the narratives (authentication of Paul as a witness, juxtaposing Peter and Paul as witnesses alongside the testimony of the reader and the "truthfulness" of Jesus).

Rossi's extensive conclusions (32 pages) are not limited to simply summing up the results of his previous chapters. At first, he lists a number of parallels noted between Peter and Paul: election, mission, proclaiming the Gospel under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (even the structure of their discourses), performing miracles, confronting magic, directing the Good News to the gentiles, experiencing sufferings and persecutions, imprisonment, etc. According to the author, even though these similarities are not perfectly linear, one can still talk about *synkrisis*.

However, the parallelisms are valid not only between the two apostles. In Rossi's opinion Luke has composed a certain triangular *synkrisis*, with the life of Jesus serving as the model for his two disciples. Thus, passion narrative elements from the Gospel of Luke might be interpreted as relatively close to events like the prophecies of Agabus, imprisonment of the apostles, employing a Jewish festivals chronology in the crucial moments of their lives, angelophanies, liberation from the hands of the apostles' enemies, recognition by God, open rejection of divinization, and divine punishment. Death and resurrection, for obvious reasons, cannot be applied to Peter and Paul, thus Rossi proposes to treat the apostles' parallels here as "narrative and symbolic evocation" and point toward scenes that deal with divine liberation from human or natural perils. Another reason for such a composition is also possible. The narrative tool of *synkrisis* could just as well serve to legitimize Paul. Drawing events from Peter's life in close parallel to those presented in the narrative of Paul helps the reader to understand that Paul likewise is a true apostle of Jesus Christ.

The second part of Rossi's conclusion is devoted to the broader panorama of *synkrisis* usage in the Hellenistic world, in order to explain the function of the technique evident in Luke-Acts. He mentions briefly Isocrates, Xenophon, Aelius Theon, and Aristotle and their contributions to the *synkrisis* method, but

he elaborates especially on the achievements of Plutarch. That writer's use of *synkrisis* in his *Parallel Lives*, according to the Italian scholar, is the closest example from Hellenistic literature to the technique employed by Luke. Here Rossi stresses especially the compositional form which does not simply juxtapose two life-narratives, but one of them actually functions as a model for the other. The goal of such a procedure is to impress upon the reader a traditional ethos that is worth following. Plutarch does not hesitate to modify the other life-narrative, in terms of events and chronology, in order to present more clearly the quality of character compared to the model, even using similar terms or themes in both narratives.

Observing such an editorial tendency in Plutarch's texts, Rossi is convinced that one can notice many correspondences in the Lucan two-volume work. Even though the character of these texts is different (biography versus history), and the goals of the authors are not the same (promoting virtues versus giving testimony to the Gospel), Luke does re-elaborate his material according to the historiographic canons of his time, making the Gospel narrative a model and the point of reference for the other two narratives (Peter and Paul). Luke also draws the two apostolic narrative threads as close to each other as possible. The Lukan strategy of employing *synkrisis* is summarized in four points: as a means of achieving literary unity; as a kind of "genealogical certificate" for the heralds of the Gospel; as a method of applying his theological vision to the complexity of primordial Christianity; and, as a way of encouraging the reader to fully join in the Christological event.

The book finishes with a list of abbreviations, followed by a bibliography divided into two parts: sources and then studies and other tools, covering altogether roughly twenty pages. The very last part contains indexes of references to the ancient sources: biblical, Jewish, apocryphal (OT and NT), and others, both classical and Christian.

Rossi's book is no doubt an example of insightful and comprehensive research into two relatively ignored passages. The originality of his study consists in a very coherent, meticulous and disciplined argumentation revealing the Lucan editorial strategy, namely modeling the two chosen texts about Peter and Paul (Acts 12:1-23; 27:1-28:16) in accordance with final events of Jesus' earthly life (Luke 22-24). The idea itself is not new to worldwide scholarship, but Rossi certainly has pushed forward discussion on the matter. However, certain suggestions of the Italian scholar may raise some questions. The theme of sufferings is rather obvious on the various sides of Lucan *synkrisis*, but one of the weaker points of Rossi's claims might be his insisting on resurrection parallels in the lives of the apostles. The same might be said about the validity of the chosen passages themselves, for even though Rossi calls them "final scenes" in the lives of Peter and Paul, both personages clearly have further activity within the Lucan narrative.

Nonetheless, Rossi's book is definitely a mature piece of scholarly work and is a must for all specialists in the two-volume Lucan work. Other biblical scholars and those who study Hellenistic literature should find it very profitable as well. Among other things, the text also serves as a kind of commendation awarded to the earlier proposals of Rossi's biblical supervisor, J.-N. Aletti.