

BOOK REVIEWS

**Doohee Lee, *Luke-Acts and 'Tragic History': Communicating Gospel with the World*,
Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen
Testament 2. Reihe, 346, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen,
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This volume is the revised form of the doctoral dissertation defended by Doohee Lee, a Korean scholar, in 2009 at the Graduate Theological Union and represents, as he confesses in the *Preface* (p. V-VI), a synthesis of his faith life and academic pursuit. This study emerged from his interest in the New Testament and classics and is a research on the relation between the New Testament and the Greco-Roman world as a context in which the New Testament writings were shaped. The special focus of this volume is to define how the 'tragic history' style used by Greek-Roman historiography to attract readers influenced the author of Luke-Acts in order to effectively communicate his faith and concerns. It contains three chapters preceded by an Introduction and succeeded by a Conclusion. The Introduction discusses the genre of Luke-Acts and the previous scholarship about 'Tragic History' and offers an introduction to the definition and origin of 'Tragic History'.

The first chapter entitled 'Tragic History' in Greco-Roman Historiographical Tradition is a detailed presentation of the tragic style in Herodotus's *Histories*, Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War*, by Duris of Samos and Phylarchus of Athens, in Polybius's *Histories*, in Dionysius of Halicarnassus's *Roman antiquities*, in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* and in Livy's *Ab urbe condita*. The second chapter continues the same kind of research into the Jewish-Hellenistic historiography, being limited only at Flavius Josephus's *Bellum Judaicum* and *Antiquitates*. The third chapter researches 'Tragic History' in Luke-Acts focusing on five different topics from the Book of Acts and Gospel of Luke: (1) tragic language and allusion to Greek tragedy in Luke-Acts. It analyzes the following texts: (a) the

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phrase “to Kick against the Goad” (Acts 26:14); (b) the term *theomáchos* (Acts 5:39); (c) the prison-escape scene in Acts 12 and 16; (2) tragic disasters in Luke-Acts caused by “Greed for more” – gr. *pleonexia*: (a) the tragedy of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-20); (b) the tragedy of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11); (c) reversal of fortune for the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31); (3) the tragic style in the portrait of king Herod (Acts 12). The author challenges the parallel portrait of Herod proposed by Flavius Josephus’s *Antiquitates* (19. 343-352), (4) the tragic style in Paul’s journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:1-21:16); (5) the tragedy of Israel in Luke-Acts. It analyses the following texts: (a) Peter’s Speech to Israel at Pentecost and in the temple (Acts 2:14-40; 3:11-16); (b) Paul’s Speech to Israel and God-fearers in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16b-41); (c) Israel’s tragic rejection of Paul (Acts 21-28).

Based on the exploration of these texts from the book of Acts, in the final conclusion of his book D. Lee offers a reconsideration of the literary genre of Luke-Acts. He affirms that previous studies which proposed novel, epic or biography as genre for Luke-Acts contributed to the understanding of the literary characteristics of Acts and brought knowledge to a better understanding of literary-historical context in which Luke wrote this book. They have not been “decisively persuasive”; however they were contributing to “growing scholarly awareness of the difficulties in drawing a sharp line between different genres” of Acts. More and more scholars recognize the “composite literary features in Luke-Acts that are affected by several different genres.” One of the genres that played a role in the composition of Luke-Acts was the historiographical style of ‘tragic-history’ which was “a feature that had been consistently employed by most ancient historians” (p. 281). Focusing more on the stylistic features of Luke-Acts, this study suggests a way to understand it as an historical narrative with tragic elements, without dismissing opinions of scholars who proposed other genres, because “historians’ employment of the tragic style in their historiography suggests the possibility that they could also rely on epic, biographical and novelistic styles for their historiography” (p. 282-283).

Lecturing Lee’s monograph, I formed the impression of reading a well written and well-argued book, whose hypothesis is solid. Doohee Lee’s knowledge of classics is also impressive and proves once again that Greek-Roman civilization, to which Christianity also belongs, can be successfully researched by scholars from any part of this world.

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