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Religion & Spirituality / Christianity / New Testament

Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51-19:27 (Hermeneia) by François Bovon, translated by Donald S. Deer, edited by Helmut Koester (**Hermeneia: a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible Series**: Fortress Press)

Luke 2 is the second volume of François Bovon's three-volume commentary on the Gospel of Luke, covering the narration of Jesus travel on the road to Jerusalem, the occasion in Luke of most of Jesus teachings to the disciples regarding faithfulness, perseverance, and the practice of justice and mercy. Bovon's theological interest in Luke is at the forefront in **Luke 2**: as he declares in the preface, "I wish to examine his Gospel with the sober reserve of a scholar and with the confidence of a believer. For I hope in this manner to arrive at genuine understanding." Also distinctive is Bovon's attention to the history of interpretation of this Gospel through time.

Bovon is Frothingham Professor of the History of Religion at Harvard Divinity School. His publications have appeared in French, German, and English; his English-language books include *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research and New Testament Traditions and Apocryphal Narratives*.

Volumes two and three of the French edition (1996 and 2001), and the German (1996 and 2001) and Spanish (2002 and 2004) translations of Bovon's commentary on Luke are published in **Luke 2** in English in one volume, as they are in the Italian translation. The content, however, of these volumes remains the same in all editions and translations. The advantage of merging these two volumes into one is to insist, even typographically, on the unity of Luke 9:51-19:27, the central section of the Third Gospel, the so-called travel narrative.

The very existence of the Lukan travel narrative, that is, the redactional intention to create a long and decisive turn from Galilee to Judea, more precisely to Jerusalem and in Jerusalem to the Temple, has been doubted recently by some scholars, particularly Reinhard von Bendemann (*Zwischen AOZA und ETATPOE: Eine exegetische Untersuchung der Texte der sogenannten Reiseberichts im Lukasevangelium*). But while Jesus' teaching is of prime importance in these chapters, the redactional clues underscoring Jesus' movement toward Jerusalem are also evident and meaningful. They bear witness to the ineluctable manifestation of Jesus not only as a generous healer and a powerful messiah, as he appears in the Galilean period (Luke 3:1-9:50), but also as servant messiah ready to suffer and to die (Luke 9:51-19:27). This particular emphasis of the travel narrative goes hand in hand with another Lukan conviction: during the travel from Galilee to Jerusalem, Jesus insists on the formation of his disciples as future leaders of the Church. Luke 9:51-19:27 offers key elements of Luke's Christology and his ecclesiology. That the evangelist was not the only one – nor the first one – to insist on the travel narrative is evident in Mark's gospel.

The structure of volume two, **Luke 2**, of this commentary remains the same as volume one. After the bibliography and the translation of the biblical passage, the first part, called "Analysis," examines carefully the way the evangelist rewrites his sources: Mark, Q, and the Special material. The second part, the "Commentary," underscores Luke's literary talent and his theological orientation. The third part, called "History of Interpretation," is expanded in **Luke 2** beyond that in volume one. The same will be true of volume three. It is Bovon's opinion that interpreters in the period prior to the Renaissance and the

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Enlightenment, even if they did not have at their disposal the scholarly methods of the modern age, knew how to practice a religious reading of the text that was in harmony with the original intention of the Gospel writers.

In terms of its immense and wide learning, fullness of comment, and depth of insight, I reckon that this commentary is without rivals. – I. Howard Marshall, *Journal of Theological Studies*

Bovon has provided a very reliable and helpful reference commentary that must be consulted by scholars and has pastoral sensitivity as well. – William S. Kurz, SJ, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

The research is extensive, the arguments judicious, the conclusions cautious. It is a research commentary to consult regularly. – Charles H. Talbert, *Biblica*

Bovon lays claim to his theological commitments and ecclesial location, not as hindrances to but as partners in the interpretive enterprise.... Here is critical scholarship in the service of those communities of faith who turn to the Gospel of Luke as Scripture. – Joe B. Green, Asbury Theological Seminary, *Review of Biblical Literature*

Francois Bovon is well equipped to write this kind of commentary because of his long years of study of Luke and Lukan scholarship. [Luke 1] ... shows mature judgment in dealing with ... many issues. – Robert C Tannehill, Methodist Theological School in Ohio

Extremely well researched, Bovon in Luke 2, by balancing objectivity and faith, achieves a deep understanding of the Gospel.