

LUKE 1:1-4 AND TRADITIONSGESCHICHTE

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Of all the canonical gospels, Luke alone discusses the methodology used in the composition of his gospel. His prologue therefore is the most explicit statement available as to the transmission of the gospel traditions from the time of the historical Jesus to their incorporation into Luke's gospel. Scholars would of course like to have had Luke elaborate and comment a great deal more on the subject and to have been more explicit, but our disappointment over the brevity of Luke's statement should not cause us to forget how fortunate we are that he commented at all. Despite its brevity the Lukan prologue provides us with much useful material that enables us to understand what took place during the second and third *Sitz im Leben*(s) of the gospel tradition.

The prologue itself ranks among the very best Greek literature of the first century. In style and vocabulary it is similar to other writings of the day, and this along with the non-Lukan nature of much of the vocabulary¹ reveals that we have in the Lukan prologue a conventional form of introduction that was rather common in his day.² The purpose of this paper is to investigate the Lukan prologue in order to see what light it may shed on the *Traditionsgeschichte* of the gospel materials. The prologue itself consists of three parts. The first, consisting of vv 1-2, is an explanatory clause in which Luke informs Theophilus of his predecessors in the history of the gospel traditions; the second, consisting of v 3, is the main clause of the prologue in which Luke gives his "credentials" for writing his gospel; and the third, consisting of v 4, is a purpose clause in which Luke informs Theophilus of his purpose in writing the gospel of Luke.³ In this paper we shall deal with each of these sections selectively and briefly.

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¹Four terms in the prologue are *hapax legomena* in the NT: *epeidēper*, *anataxasthai*, *diēgēsēsin* and *autoptai*. Two additional terms in the prologue are found nowhere else in Luke-Acts: *peplērophorēmenōn* and *parēkolouthēkoti*.

²See H. J. Cadbury, "Commentary on the Preface of Luke," in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake; London: Macmillan, 1922), 2. 492-510; I. I. Du Plessis, "Once More: The Purpose of Luke's Prologue (LK 1:1-4)," *NovT* 16 (1974) 259-263; R. J. Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project from His Prologue (Luke 1:1-4)," *CBQ* 43 (1981) 205-206. Perhaps the best example by way of comparison is Josephus, *J.W.* 1.17. Cadbury, "Commentary" 490, states concerning the Lukan prologue that "its very brevity is an admirable illustration of obedience to ancient maxims on preface writing."

³It is generally acknowledged that Luke-Acts is better understood as two parts of a single work than as two separate but related works. As a result it is probable that the Lukan prologue alludes at times to the book of Acts as well. Nevertheless in the light of vv 1-2 it would seem reasonable to conclude that the Lukan prologue has primarily the gospel of Luke in mind. See G. Schneider, "Der Zweck des lukanischen Doppelwerks," *BZ* 21 (1977) 47-48. For the view that the Lukan prologue does not in any way refer to Acts see E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 136 n. 3.

I. THE LUKAN PREDECESSORS (VERSES 1 AND 2)

1. "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative." In the opening words of the prologue Luke speaks of those who have written on the subject before him. Several things should be observed with regard to these opening words. One important issue involves the term *polloi*, "many." Does this expression suggest that before Luke "dozens" of people had already written a "life of Christ"? Can we limit "many" to only a couple of sources such as "Mark" and "Q" as the two-source hypothesis suggests, or to "Mark," "Q," "L" and "M" as the four-source hypothesis suggests?⁴ Of cardinal importance to this question is the fact that *polloi* or its related expressions appear frequently in rhetorical prefaces. We can see this conventional usage of the term in the NT (Acts 24:2, 10; Heb 1:1; John 20:30; 21:25), the intertestamental literature (Wisdom: prologue), the early Church fathers, Josephus who provides us with an excellent parallel (*J.W.* 1.17), and secular Greek literature as well.⁵ Its use in general introductory formulas indicates that it functioned as a *topos* and that we should therefore beware of placing too great an emphasis on this word. The fact that Luke is using a stylistic convention in his prologue both with regard to vocabulary and style demands this. What is clear is that before Luke wrote his gospel, others had also written similar accounts. Unfortunately just how many there were is uncertain. Some scholars have suggested that three would have been sufficient for Luke to use *polloi*,⁶ but it seems wisest at this point to confess that we simply cannot be certain as to how many predecessors are to be included in the "many" of the prologue.

Another important term in this clause is *epecheirēsan* ("undertaken"). Does this imply that Luke sees these former attempts as having been unsuccessful and that his attempt sought to remedy this? Support for such a view can be found in the fact that Luke uses this term in only two other instances (Acts 9:29; 19:13), and both describe unsuccessful attempts. Such an interpretation of this term has an ancient history that dates back at least to Origen.⁷ Most scholars today, however, reject a pejorative interpretation of the term and tend to interpret it either positively or at least in a neutral way.⁸ This is due to at least four reasons. For one, the term also appears to be a *topos* or conventional term used in literary introductions,⁹ and as such it was frequently used in a positive or neutral sense.

⁴So Dillon, "Previewing" 207.

⁵See Cadbury, "Commentary" 492-493; Du Plessis, "Once" 261; and esp. J. Bauer, "ΠΟΛΛΑΙ: Luk I, 1," *NovT* 4 (1960) 263-266.

⁶See Bauer, "ΠΟΛΛΑΙ" 266.

⁷Dillon, "Previewing" 207.

⁸Ibid., pp. 207-208. J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930) 251, after listing a number of examples of the use of this term in the papyri, states: "These examples show that any idea of failure, though often suggested by the context, does not lie in the verb itself." See also R. Glöckner, *Die Verkündigung des Heils beim Evangelisten Lukas* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1975) 11-12.

⁹Du Plessis, "Once" 261-262.

More important still, however, is the fact that Luke associates his own work with that of his predecessors by the *kamoi* ("to me also") of v 3. *Kamoi* in this verse is clearly not a reproach of these other attempts but rather an identification of Luke with them. Perhaps the most important factor that will decide the issue, however, is the question of how one "solves" the synoptic problem. If Luke did make use of some of these other attempts such as the two- or four-source hypothesis suggests, then a pejorative interpretation of the verb must be rejected. Finally, the positive attitude of Luke toward the witnesses and ministers of the word found elsewhere in Luke and Acts (cf. Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 26:16; etc.) means that Luke 1:2 must be understood positively, and this in turn means that Luke 1:1 must be understood positively.

One final term that should be discussed in this section is *diēgēsīn* ("narrative"). Attempts have been made to distinguish between a "narrative" and a "proclamation." Some scholars have suggested that whereas Mark is a gospel of proclamation and therefore "kerygmatic," Luke is a gospel of narration or "salvation history," and thus Luke is guilty of the sin of "historicizing" the gospel. Such an interpretation, however, is based not on exegesis but on an existential hermeneutic whose bias ignores the fact that the verbs "to narrate" (*diēgeomai*) and "to preach" (*kēryssō*) are used interchangeably by Luke. This is most evident in Luke 8:39 where the Gergesene maniac is told to "narrate" what God has done for him and goes out "preaching" how Jesus healed him.¹⁰

2. "*Of the things that have been accomplished among us.*" The "things" referred to in this clause can be interpreted as a reference to the OT prophecies fulfilled in the life of Christ that the gospel of Luke records and to the events in the life of the Church to which Acts refers. The expression "have been accomplished" (*peplērophorēmenōn*) then would best be translated "have been fulfilled." It seems better, however, not to restrict the definition of "things" so narrowly but to include with the theme of OT fulfillment¹¹ all the events of Jesus' life as well, for Luke did not distinguish between them.¹² Furthermore, if the teachings of Jesus found in the gospel came, in part at least, from the sources mentioned in this verse, these teachings could not be included in any narrow interpretation of the fulfillment of OT promises.

Closely related to this issue is the meaning of the expression "have been accomplished." The term can mean "have been completed or experienced" among us. This would then imply that Luke was claiming to be a personal witness of these things either in the sense of participation in the "we sections" of Acts, or in the events recorded in the gospel of Luke, or both.¹³ One problem with this view is the fact that the subject of the verb is not Luke, however, but rather the "many" already referred to. Furthermore, what value would participation in

¹⁰See Dillon, "Previewing" 208-209.

¹¹That this is an important theme in Luke is evident from the following: Luke 4:16-21; 18:31; 22:37; Acts 2:16-21, 25-31, 34-36; 3:18-26; 10:43; 13:27, 29, 32-37, 40-41.

¹²Du Plessis, "Once" 263. Cf. also Acts 3:24; 10:43; 13:27.

¹³*Peplērophorēmenon* can also mean "to be fully believed" as Rom 4:21; 14:5; Col 4:12 reveal, but one would expect the present tense if such were the case in the Lukan prologue.

the events recorded in Acts be for establishing the "certainty" of the accounts recorded in the gospel? Verse 2 even more clearly forces us to reject such an interpretation, for here Luke distinguishes between these events and himself. The events are not contemporaneous with him but predate his own experience of the Christian faith and even the passing on of those traditions. The term "accomplished" is best understood therefore as an intensive synonym for *plêroō* and as referring to the events that have taken place in the Church's experience of the coming of Christ (no doubt in fulfillment of the OT) whose salvific effects and consequences still remain.

3. "*Just as they were delivered to us.*" It is important to note that "delivered" (*paredosan*) is a technical term used to describe the passing on of authoritative tradition.¹⁴ Despite the various weaknesses present in the theories of Harald Riesenfeld and Birger Geerhardsson,¹⁵ probably the most helpful analogy available of how the "delivering process" proceeded is the rabbinic model they espouse.

The interpretation of the "us" in vv 1-2 is somewhat debated. If they refer to the same group, this causes several difficulties. The second "us" is clearly a group separated from the events themselves, for why would these "things" be delivered to a group who personally witnessed them? The "us" of v 2 is therefore clearly removed from the actual events, in that they were neither "eyewitnesses" nor the "many" who had written. The first "us," however, is involved in the "events" or "things" that have been fulfilled. One attempt to resolve this issue is to interpret the "things fulfilled" as referring to the events of the book of Acts. By so doing the term "us" can refer to the same specific group of people who have witnessed the fulfillment of these things in the post-Pentecost situation and have also had the pre-Pentecost traditions delivered to them. A better resolution of the problem, however, is to interpret the two uses of "us" in a broader way as referring to the Christian Church as a whole. This would enable one to interpret the "things fulfilled among us," as we have done above, as referring to the events of the new covenant that have taken place in the coming of Christ (the first "us") and in which the Church now shares personally (the second "us") through the eyewitnesses. Understood in this broad corporate sense, the term "us" can be both specifically different and yet broadly the same.¹⁶

4. "*By those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word.*" Two major issues present themselves in this passage. The first involves the designation "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (*hoi ap archēs autop-tai kai hypēretai*), and the second involves the relation of the participle "were" (*genomenoi*) to these two terms. With regard to the latter question the phrase can be interpreted in two ways: (1) "those who were from the beginning eyewitnesses and ministers of the word," or (2) "those who were eyewitnesses from the

¹⁴See Mark 7:13; Acts 6:14, 1 Cor 11:2, 23; 15:3; 2 Pet 2:21; Jude 3. The term refers much more easily to the gospel traditions found in Luke than to the Book of Acts and whatever sources may have been used therein.

¹⁵H. Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970); B. Geerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Lund: Gleerup, 1961).

¹⁶See I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 41, for a similar view.

beginning and became ministers of the word." In respect to the latter interpretation it can be argued that if Luke wanted to say (1) he could have used *ontes*, which would have fit better. His use of *genomenoi* fits the second possibility better. Cadbury, however, remarks: "The fact that *ginesthai* is almost invariably used in Greek writers with *autoptēs* favours assigning the participle to both nouns rather than merely to the nearest."¹⁷ One other argument in favor of the first reading is the way the terms "servant" and "witness" are related in Acts 26:16. The total expression "servant and witness," which refers to the same person, goes with the relative pronoun (*hōn*) that follows, and this style is much like what we find in Luke 1:2. It seems best therefore to translate *genomenoi* as "were" and connect it to both of the nouns that make up the expression.¹⁸

The use of the single article for both "eyewitnesses" and "ministers" indicates that Luke is referring to a single group of people. Cadbury points out that Luke's use of "eyewitness" in contrast to "witness" emphasizes the actual presence of such people at the events whose traditions they were delivering.¹⁹ This seems to be a valid conclusion even though the term is somewhat a *topos* in historical works.²⁰ The claim to be an eyewitness "from the beginning" should not be pressed, however, to include such events as recorded in Luke 1-2 but should be understood in the sense of Acts 1:21-22—i.e., the beginning of Jesus' ministry, which Luke locates in his baptism.²¹ As in the case of the secular historians, by his use of the term "eyewitness" Luke no doubt sought to gain credence from his reader as to the truthfulness of the events recorded in his gospel, for these eyewitnesses "could not but speak of what they had seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). It has rightly been pointed out that this group cannot be limited to the twelve alone,²² for Luke sees the group of eyewitnesses as more inclusive than that (as is evident from Luke 6:12-13). No doubt Luke would have included in this group the seventy mentioned in Luke 10:1-2, and perhaps others such as Paul and Stephen. It should be noted, however, that Paul is described in similar language in Acts 26:16, but instead of the expression "eyewitness and minister" the expression used for Paul is "minister and witness." There may be here a conscious distinction between Paul and the eyewitnesses on the part of Luke. Even if, however, the expression "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" cannot be narrowed down to mean the "twelve," it still remains true that for Luke the twelve are *par excellence* "the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word." One cannot help seeing them as standing in the forefront of this group.

¹⁷Cadbury, "Commentary" 498.

¹⁸It is furthermore difficult to believe that in Luke's mind the followers of Christ only became ministers of the word after Pentecost, for in Luke 24:48 the disciples are called "witnesses," which in Acts 26:16 is a synonym for "minister," and the promise of the Holy Spirit is still future in Luke 24:48. Also it is difficult to understand what the seventy were doing in Luke 10:1-2 if they were not ministers of the word.

¹⁹Cadbury, "Commentary" 499.

²⁰Du Plessis, "Once" 265.

²¹Cf. Acts 10:36-37.

²²Dillon, "Previewing" 216-217; see also Glöckner, *Verkündigung* 21-23.

II. THE MAIN CLAUSE (VERSE 3)

1. "It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past." With v 3 Luke begins the second and main clause of the prologue. Here Luke shares with Theophilus his procedure in writing his gospel. The *crux interpretum* in the entire prologue centers around the phrase "having followed all things closely for some time past." The use of the aorist "seemed" could be interpreted to mean that Luke appended the prologue to his gospel after he had written the entire work, but Cadbury's suggestion that the aorist refers here to Luke's decision to write, rather than to the actual writing itself, seems more correct.²³ The term "followed" can mean a number of things: (1) the studying or reading of the various narratives referred to in v 1 (the "things" as they were handed down); (2) having become acquainted with the events that had happened (the "things" as they had happened); (3) having participated in the events themselves.²⁴ The decision of how to interpret this word depends on a number of issues. One involves how to interpret *anōthen*. Should it be translated "from some time past" or "from the beginning"? Is the purpose of Luke in his prologue to show the duration or length of his research (i.e., he followed or investigated for a long time), or to show the extent or scope of his research (i.e., he followed or investigated from the beginning)? In other literature *anōthen* is frequently used to mean either.²⁵ The term appears only one other time in Luke-Acts. In Acts 26:5 Paul tells Agrippa that the Jews have known his Hebraic background "from the beginning." This example is interesting in that the preceding verse contains the prepositional phrase *ap archēs*, which we likewise find in the verse preceding Luke 1:3. It does not appear that certainty can be reached as to how to interpret this term in the prologue. Scholarship is divided on this issue.²⁶ To the present writer the context suggests that Luke is primarily concerned here in the prologue not so much with telling Theophilus how long he has researched this material but rather with his having covered the entire scope of the subject. The fact that he begins his gospel immediately after the prologue with the birth narratives supports this view, for certainly this is the story of Jesus "from the beginning." The heavily Semitic nature of Luke 1:5-2:52 also seems to indicate that the "things fulfilled among us" that Luke investigated involved Semitic sources that contained this "from the beginning" kind of material. In light of this it may even be that *anōthen* surpasses in scope the *ap archēs* of Luke 1:2.²⁷

²³Cadbury, "Commentary" 500-501.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 501-502; cf. also Du Plessis, "Once" 267. A. J. B. Higgins, "The Preface to Luke and the Kerygma in Acts," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 82, seeks to combine all three possibilities in Luke's use of the term.

²⁵See Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary* 50.

²⁶In favor of the idea of duration ("for a long time") we can list RSV and Marshall, *Gospel* 43; in favor of the idea of extent ("from the beginning") we can list NIV; Dillon, "Previewing" 218-219; W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 179.

²⁷So Dillon, "Previewing" 218-219; H. Schürmann, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den synoptischen Evangelien* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1968) 258; G. Klein, "Lukas I, 1-4 als theologisches Programm," in *Zeit und Geschichte* (ed. E. Dinkler; Tübingen: Mohr, 1964) 208.

"All things" in turn is best understood as referring to the "things accomplished among us" in Luke 1:1. In light of this it would seem best to paraphrase this section as follows: "It seemed good to me as well since I have investigated from the beginning with care²⁸ all these events and the narratives others have written." This seems the best interpretation of these words, for Luke clearly did not participate in the events of Luke 1-2. The use of *akribōs* ("with care"), which goes with the participle rather than the infinitive "write," also favors this interpretation, since one cannot participate "with care" whereas one can investigate "with care."²⁹ Luke's mention of the other written (and oral) accounts of these events in vv 1-2 seems to imply that he has made use of or read them, for to say what he does in vv 1-2 and then conclude "but I paid no attention to them" would clearly have caused a loss of confidence in his own account on the part of his reader(s). Luke "investigated" these things in the sense of having both read carefully what others had written as well as investigating on his own, when possible, the accounts found in his gospel.³⁰

2. "*To write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.*" Having investigated carefully all these things from the beginning, Luke then sought to write "an orderly account" (*kathexēs*). Here again we have a problem as to exactly what this term means. Generally the term refers to some sort of a sequence or order, but this can be (1) a geographical or temporal sequence (Luke 8:1), (2) a temporal sequence (Acts 3:24), (3) a geographical sequence (Acts 18:23), or (4) a logical sequence (Acts 11:4). The latter is found in the fact that Peter in Acts 11:15 states that the Spirit came upon Cornelius *as* he began to speak, whereas in Acts 10:44-45 the Spirit came *after* Peter had spoken for some time. This indicates that Luke's "sequence" in Acts 11:4 is a logical one rather than a temporal one. Since the term *kathexēs* can at times refer to a logical rather than a chronological sequence and since "Luke's actual procedure may seem to rule out the idea of chronological exactitude,"³¹ it appears best to interpret "orderly" here as a synonym for "organized" or "logical."

III. THE PURPOSE OF LUKE (VERSE 4)

"*That you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.*" In this the third and final section of the prologue, Luke gives his purpose for writing his gospel. Again our interpretation of this section is not self-contained but dependent on one's conclusions as to how the previous section is to be interpreted. If the "orderly" nature of Luke's account involves chronological precision, then Luke seeks to convince Theophilus of the factual exactness of the chronological data as well as its theological exactness. On the other hand if the "orderly" nature of Luke's account refers to a logical precision, then it is more

²⁸Cf. Acts 18:25-26; 23:15, 20; 24:22.

²⁹So Kümmel, *Introduction* 179.

³⁰Traditional scholarship has frequently associated such verses as Luke 2:51 with Luke's own "investigative reporting."

³¹Marshall, *Gospel* 43.

likely that Luke is seeking to convince Theophilus of the truthfulness of the data concerning the life of Christ, and this may not always involve chronological exactness. (In other words some material may be arranged in Luke on a basis other than chronology.) To claim that Luke is not interested in the historical facts or events recorded in his gospel but only with their kerygmatic value, however, would be to go too far. Such a distinction is frequently found among twentieth-century existentialists, but such a distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* would not only be denied by Luke; it would probably not have been understood by him.

One final issue that must be dealt with in v 4 is the verb "taught" (*katēchēthēs*). The term can mean "to report (or inform)" or "to instruct."³² If the latter is intended by Luke, then Theophilus was a Christian. In favor of the former view, however, is the fact that in Acts 21:21, 24 the same verb is used with the preposition *peri* just as we have in Luke 1:4, and here the verb clearly means to inform. It is probably best therefore to interpret the verb in Luke 1:4 in a similar manner.

CONCLUSION

Having investigated rather hurriedly the Lukan prologue, we must now seek to ascertain what the prologue may say concerning the various disciplines of literary criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, the quest for the *ipsissima verba*, and *Traditionsgeschichte* in general. We must be careful in this regard not to read into the text personally cherished and/or critically accepted conclusions. We must also be aware that the prologue may be ambiguous on certain issues and silent on others. What then can we learn concerning the history of the gospel materials from the Lukan prologue?

1. Luke knew of at least three separate situations or *Sitz im Leben(s)* of the gospel materials. These are (1) the situation of the events themselves—i.e., the situation of the historical Jesus in which the "things fulfilled among us" took place; (2) the situation in which the eyewitnesses "delivered" orally these things; and (3) the situation in which others wrote down these "things delivered by the eyewitnesses" and to which Luke and his work belong.

Several other things can be mentioned with regard to these three *Sitz im Leben(s)*. Luke's own perception of the oral period is that the process of the transmission of the materials was carried out by eyewitnesses. We have already pointed out that this group cannot be limited to the twelve, but it must also be pointed out that the term "eyewitness," although a common term in literary introductions, must be taken quite seriously in the Lukan prologue due to the qualifying "from the beginning." For Luke, it is quite clear that if a choice has to be made for the bearers of the oral tradition between the "anonymous herd" of the radical form critics and the "collegium of the Jerusalem apostles" of the Swedish school, the latter would clearly be Luke's choice.

It should also be pointed out that to see in the other narratives that Luke has followed or researched either the two-source (Mark and Q) or the four-source

³²The words "catechism," "catechize," etc. come from this Greek term.

(Mark, Q, L and M) hypotheses is illegitimate, for Luke is simply not specific enough. On the other hand Luke does refer to the investigation of and most probably the use of written sources, and this lends credence to such theories. Clearly such theories of literary dependence on the part of the evangelists can be neither ignored nor condemned by evangelical scholarship, for Luke, if our exegesis is correct, acknowledges such a dependence.

One final comment must be made with regard to what Luke states concerning the various *Sitz im Leben*(s). Whereas Luke associates the eyewitnesses with the process of oral tradition in the second *Sitz im Leben*, he distinguishes them from the writers of that tradition in the third *Sitz im Leben*—i.e., the “many” of v 1. Luke knows of no apostle or eyewitness who has written a “narrative” of the gospel events. This need not exclude apostolic participation in the writing of the gospels of Matthew and John, but if they are apostolic in part or in the main it would imply that Luke did not know of them. It may be therefore that a Lukan dependence on Matthew, as posited in the Griesbach hypothesis, can only be maintained on the assumption that Matthew is not apostolic in composition or that Luke was not aware of any apostolic association with that gospel. On the other hand Luke’s use of Mark and Q would not conflict with anything Luke says in the prologue.

2. Another helpful insight provided by the Lukan prologue is that both Luke and Theophilus were aware of and, at least in the case of Luke, acquainted with both the written and the oral tradition.³³ Gospel studies must become more aware of the fact that for a rather long period of time the gospel traditions were circulating simultaneously in both oral and written form. Papias likewise calls our attention to this fact.³⁴ No doubt during this period they mutually influenced each other. It may well be that the single most difficult problem facing the hypothesis of Markan priority, that of the Matthew-Luke agreements against Mark, can best be explained by their independent use of a common oral tradition against Mark. There is a growing consensus that no solution of the synoptic problem will prove successful that does not take into consideration the coexistence of both the oral and written forms of the tradition. Luke tells us that he was acquainted with both, and no doubt both played a part in his writing of his gospel.

3. A final insight that the prologue provides involves the issue of hermeneutics. Luke in his prologue tells us that he had a specific purpose for writing his gospel. An evangelical hermeneutic must keep foremost in mind the purpose of the divinely inspired author. This indicates that redaction criticism—and here I mean primarily the aims and goals of the discipline, not the various presuppositions that certain scholars bring with them to it³⁵—is not merely an option but a

³³This is suggested by the *epeidēper* of v 1. BDF 238 (#456 [3]) states that the term in Luke 1:1 implies a fact already well known.

³⁴Here the famous quote of Papias found in Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39 should be noted: “For I did not suppose that information from books would help me so much as the word of a living and surviving voice” (LCL).

³⁵To my listing of the goals of redaction criticism in “What is Redaktionsgeschichte?” (*JBL* 88 [1969] 54) I would include under “(3) What theological purpose or purposes does the evangelist have in writing his gospel?” what can be called “the theology of Luke”—i.e., all that which his gospel teaches.

divine mandate for evangelical scholarship. Whatever the value and the legitimacy of the quest of the historical Jesus and the *ipsissima verba*, or source analysis, or form criticism, or *Traditionsgeschichte* in general, the primary hermeneutical goal of the evangelical scholar must always be to seek the verbal meaning of the divinely inspired author as it is revealed in the text. The constant question that the interpreter of the gospel of Luke must ask himself is this: "How is Luke in this passage seeking to fulfill his divinely inspired purpose for writing this gospel?" Here, too, the Lukan prologue can be of great help.