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Luke the Artist, a review of Jean-Noël Aletti's *L'art de raconter Jésus Christ: L'écriture narrative de l'évangile de Luc*

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part of the life cycle, and it names as sadomasochistic fantasy his solution of rising above nature by acts of brutality.

Andree Collard died of cancer in 1986. I assume that her opposition to animal experimentation was unchanged in her final year. As one who has battled cancer and who underwent a year of chemotherapy six years ago, I have asked myself lately the hypothetical question: If I have a reoccurrence, and if animals must die in order for the drug to be found to cure me, would I approve of their death? No, I would not. But the question and its premises, I am beginning to see more clearly, are wrong. We need to talk about this.

JANE SCHABERG

LUKE THE ARTIST

Jean-Noël Aletti, S.J., New Testament exegesis professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, is one of the first to apply narrative methods to the Gospel of Luke primarily in its plot order. His *L'art de raconter Jésus Christ: L'écriture narrative de l'évangile de Luc* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989) begins with two episodes that illustrate the main Lukan narrative techniques (Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10) and plot dynamics (the programmatic Nazareth scene in Luke 4:16–30). He ends with Luke's prologue because its special difficulties were best handled after treating the whole Gospel (p. 14). Otherwise he generally follows the Lukan plot line: the art of beginning a narrative in Luke 1:5–25; the identity of Jesus in Luke 4:14–9:50; the journey to Jerusalem; from Jesus narrated to Jesus narrator of parables (a topical insertion); the trial and death of Jesus as paradoxical recognition; and recognition and coherence in Luke 24. His second to the last chapter discusses Jesus as prophet, Jesus and God his Father, and the dimensions of the Lukan narrative. His final chapter deals with the author, reader, and narrative in the prologue, Luke 1:1–4. For brevity, he calls the narrator Luke without thereby confusing him with the author and provides a glossary of his narratological terms. He adds eight pages of select bibliographies, mostly on narrative approaches.

Aletti presupposes that the Lukan Gospel is a true narrative, not a mere compilation of traditional episodes. His approach emphasizes contemporary narrative criticism from analysis of recent literature, more than comparison to other first-century narratives. Although Luke and Acts together form a diptych, leaving the Gospel narrative somewhat *open* at its ending, the Gospel has enough closure to warrant treatment separate from Acts. Aletti wisely chooses a primarily narratological over a semiotic approach, and a narrative over structural method, thus avoiding most of the arcane jargon of semiotics and structuralism. His eclectic approach analyzes particular Lukan texts on the following levels: *formal* (composition, style, type of narrative, narrative techniques), *historical* (Luke and the literature and techniques of his time), and *theological* (narrative analysis helps solve disputed points, e.g., 10).

Aletti refuses to treat the Lukan narrative as a closed system (à la de-

construction) but in light of the saving events to which it refers (10). He presupposes some familiarity with the nature of narrative and simply applies such approaches to the narrative sections at hand, without discussing contemporary theories. His focus is threefold: (1) narrative sequences and modalities; (2) prolepses and analepses, the time of the narrative, biblical analepses, and the point of view and type of narrative; (3) the passages and their narrative context (12).

In his conclusion, Aletti has to justify certain gaps. In following the plot line of Luke he did not treat Luke-Acts as a two-volume whole, nor the place and role of place names (especially Jerusalem and the Temple), nor opponents, the growth of the disciples. Nor has he discussed the genre of Luke. Neither popular epic narrative nor ancient biography quite fit, for biblical and other allusions make it hard to reduce Luke to a simple genre. Luke's own reticence in calling his writing simply a *diēgēsis* (Luke 1:1) or *logos* (Acts 1:1) invites similar caution in labeling his work.

In one *crux* Aletti's exclusive focus on the Gospel seems to hamper insight: he is not able to explain fully why the narrator said that Pilate and Herod became friends (Luke 23:12, p. 166), which the use of Ps. 2:1–2 in Acts 4:24–28 resolves.

Among results of his work, Aletti names the ability of the narrative approach to distinguish whether gaps are significant or not. Point of view and focalization determine the status respectively of the narrative, narrator, and reader. Luke's narration shows coherence on several levels: between Jesus' identity and titles and his activities, between the beginning and end of the Gospel, between the time of the narrative and both the biblical past and apostolic future. The narrator's art is to intervene explicitly only rarely in the process of verification [*asphaleia*, Luke 1:4]: the characters in the narrative progressively recognize Jesus for who he is (236). The narrator especially allows his protagonist Jesus to explain events as omniscient prophet and interpreter of events and Scriptures, whose all-powerful word determines events and thus the episodes of the narrative (237).

Beginning his analysis of Lukan narratives with the Zacchaeus episode enables Aletti to illustrate important Lukan techniques, without having to deal with nonnarratological difficulties like Luke's beginning an account aimed at full assurance [*asphaleia*] with the vision of an angel (37–38). Aletti illustrates these Lukan traits: (1) the tendency of the narrator to let the characters, especially Jesus, provide motivations and opinions; (2) emphasis on knowledge over action, especially on actions leading to revelation or recognition of identity; (3) an oblique reprise of previous pericopes, so that episodes act as analepses of what precedes and prolepses of what follows. The episode focuses on the encounter between Zacchaeus and Jesus, whose meaning is summarized by Jesus rather than the narrator: "For the son of man came to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

Aletti observes that the narrator is reserved in using omniscience, leaving most of its manifestations to heavenly messengers before and to Jesus after the Nazareth episode (222–23). Regarding the kind of readers implied by the narrative, Aletti observes that they were informed of these events, and that *katēcheō* in Luke 1:4 could well imply catechesis (224). The fre-

quent indirect allusions to the Scriptures presume readers well versed in them. The narrator's reference to Jesus as "the Lord" presupposes a Christian audience. The readers know more than the actors in the narrative, with a few possible exceptions like Mary, but parables such as in Luke 19:11–28 tend to abolish the knowledge advantage of reader over characters. In Luke 24, the readers actually know *less* about the scriptural arguments than the disciples and first hear them from the disciples in the speeches in Acts. This corresponds to the narrator's admission in Luke 1:1–2 that his information comes from the first witnesses.

Aletti very observantly notes how the readers are invited not just to observe but to take part in the narrated events. When "the Lord" speaks, it is not just to past disciples but to current readers. The narrator's approach seems that of "faith seeking understanding." Narrating means to show the logic of a story in its remote biblical preparations. Against difficulties raised by S. D. Moore about whether the Gospels are true narratives or merely redactions, Aletti emphatically affirms that Luke is a great narrator (232).

Aletti has provided a very perceptive analysis of the Gospel of Luke as narrative. He supplements his exegetical expertise with familiarity with the most productive contemporary narrative approaches and the connatural insight into the meaning of the narrative that comes from faith. I strongly recommend this book.

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A VIEW FROM THE PARTHENON

Guilia Sassa's *Greek Virginity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990) seeks to clarify our understanding of Greek images of virginity through careful examination of myths, vase paintings, literary texts, and medical writings. She is convinced that our ignorance of how different the ancient Greek conception of the female body is from ours occludes our understanding of women in the pre-Christian world and may blind us to some of the peculiarities of *our* view.

The first section of her book focuses on the relation of the virginity of the Pythia, Apollo's priestess at Delphi, to her oracular function. Unlike many other recent scholars Sassa gives credence (despite the absence of confirmatory archeological evidence) to ancient texts that testify to the Pythia's delirium and to vase paintings that represent her sitting above a vaporous fissure in the earth. Thus, the divine spirit, the *pneuma*, was believed to enter the priestess from below, whereas usually it descends from above. Early Christian writers interpret this pornographically: they describe the Pythia as a visible body obscenely possessed by a demonic Apollo and imagine the vapors entering her body by way of her genitals and filling her with delirious madness. But to Greek authors such as Plutarch it is "with the soul of a virgin that she approaches the god." Yet Sassa notes that despite the high degree of significance attached to the sexual purity of Pythia, there is no evidence that her virginity was ever tested before her appointment or verified later, and extensive testimony to suggest that



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