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Re-reading the Gospel of Luke Today

PhD, Andrew Curtis

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From a First Century Urban Writing Site to a Twentieth Century Urban Reading Site

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Abstract

Postmodern theorising has presented the reader as an active agent in the process of the interpretation of texts. Sociology of knowledge approaches have identified both the author *and* the reader of texts as socially embodied within a context. This study presents a unique collection of readings in the Gospel of Luke by ordinary real-readers from a disadvantaged and/or marginalised social and ecclesial location, within an affluent first world context. These readings, transcribed in Volume Two, present empirical reader research for analysis, through dialogue and conversation with professional readings in the Gospel of Luke, in order to assess what contribution the former might make to contemporary hermeneutics. Identifying contemporary human experience of ordinary real-readers as the starting point in their reading of the Lukan text, the study illustrates how these readings act as a useful tool of suspicion in conversation with readings that claim to be objective and value-neutral, and how they facilitate critical reflection on the ideological and theological commitments of the dominant classes in society and church. The value and legitimacy of the readings of ordinary real-readers is discussed, and how their social and ecclesial marginalisation and disadvantage provides a nontotalising presence in biblical interpretation, a presence that guards against the claims of permanence made by those in the academic and ecclesial world. Identification of contemporary human experience as inevitably influencing the process of interpretation leads to a consideration of the place of the historical-critical paradigm in biblical studies. The value and legitimacy of ordinary real-readers as active agents in the process of interpretation, and the contribution they make to contemporary hermeneutics, requires a consideration of safeguards against reading anarchy. The process of self and social analysis, and an openness to dialogue and conversation with those outside our own contexts, including our ancestors in the faith, is considered as a way forward, utilising ordinary and professional real-readers in the ongoing process of biblical interpretation.