

Fairly late in the book (254–69), B. reverts to the Greek *euangelion* when he discusses its literary genre, but it would have been more appropriate to introduce the Greek word at the outset. (Oral tradition might have been more properly called “good news” rather than “gospel.”) For example, did the author of Mark intend his work to be understood as the good news of Jesus the anointed one or as the Gospel of Jesus Christ? By referring to both the oral precedents and the written texts as developments of the Gospel (with a capital G), B. reveals the evangelical assumption that what we have in the New Testament is in faithful continuity with the earliest preaching and, indeed, with the words and deeds of the historical Jesus. However, there is room for believing that *euangelion* did not designate a literary form until the second or third century when gnostic and other gospels appropriated the title even though they had little in common with the genre of Greco-Roman biography.

Despite some minor shortcomings, B.’s book is a thorough introduction to the Gospels, suitable for theologically conservative graduate students, or for older academics and ministers who can use a refresher course on the subject, regardless of their theological bent.

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The Roman Army and the Expansion of the Gospel: The Role of the Centurion in Luke–Acts.
By Alexander Kyrychenko. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche
Wissenschaft. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014. Pp. ix + 228. \$126.

This volume is based on Kyrychenko’s revised dissertation defended at Emory University in 2013. His methodological goal is to “analyze, compare, and contrast the treatment of the Roman soldiers in general and Roman centurions . . . in the Greco-Roman and Jewish sources” in order to “provide the context and insight for explicating the role of the centurion in Luke’s writings” (7).

The goal of K.’s analysis is to demonstrate that “(1) contemporary evidence reveals a common perception of the Roman centurion as a principal representative of the Roman imperial power, and that (2) based on that perception, Luke–Acts employs centurions in the role of prototypical Gentile believers in anticipation of the Christian mission to the Empire” (8). The former has been demonstrated previously by H. M. D. Parker (*The Roman Legions* [1928]); Brian Campbell (*The Roman Army, 31 BC–AD 337* [1984]); J. E. Lendon (*Soldiers and Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity* [2006]); and more recently, J. R. Howell (“The Imperial Authority and Benefaction of Centurions and Acts 10:34–43: A Response to C. Kavin Rowe,” *JSNT* 31 [2008] 25–51). The latter is also the conclusion of my own work (“Unmet Expectations: The Literary Portrayal of Soldiers in Luke–Acts” (PhD diss., 2009); and *Soldiers in Luke–Acts: Engaging, Contradicting, and Transcending the Stereotypes* (2014). K. attends broadly to primary sources, particularly the Jewish pseudepigraphic literature, and includes nonliterary evidence where available.

In chapter 3 K. explores the image of the Roman soldier found in Greco-Roman literature, and to that end, he provides a summary from the works of history, biography, and other literary genre. Since soldiers populate the histories, K. must necessarily be selective in his summary of each author's work, highlighting those passages that contribute to his thesis. Drawing out some of the unique perspectives of each writer could have enhanced his investigation. For example, K. overlooks Polybius's complicated personal history vis-à-vis Roman power and authority. Polybius was among a thousand Greek leaders accused of opposing Rome's campaign against Macedonia in 168 BCE. The trial never took place, and after 16 years some 300 detainees were free to return home. During that time Polybius became a tutor for the Scipio family. One wonders how this personal history might have colored the historian's report on the Roman military. Likewise, K. fails to acknowledge the historian's rhetorical purposes.

The majority of K.'s monograph provides a description of the centurion within the Roman army and auxiliary, and reviews Greco-Roman and Jewish literature in search of the portrayal of the Roman military (133 pages). The remaining pages focus on the texts of Luke–Acts, specifically those passages that mention soldiers and centurions. In this latter section, K. highlights Luke's positive depiction of the Roman army and the Lukan Roman centurion as “play[ing] the role of the prototypical Gentile coming to Christ” (143). K.'s argument would be better served with more focused exegetical attention to individual pericopes. For example, K. discusses the soldiers coming to John for baptism (Lk 3:14) and presumes they are Roman soldiers (144) without exploring the actual vocabulary (*strateuomenoi*, according to Greek lexicons, means “those serving as soldiers” and could refer to Herodian soldiers) or exploring the likely possibility that they are Jewish, particularly in light of their statement, “We have Abraham as our father” (Lk 3:8). Though K. does discuss Luke's redaction of the centurion of Capernaum in relation to Matthew's version, the analysis's strength is in exploring how historical evidence can paint a fuller picture of the story's backdrop. This strength is particularly true in K.'s presentation of Cornelius, the centurion of Caesarea (164–70).

The bibliography is broad and up-to-date, but noticeable absences remain. One would expect a monograph on Luke–Acts to include references to François Bovon, Henry Cadbury, Michael D. Goulder, Mikael Parsons, and Alfred Plummer, and a treatise concerned with the military to cite Denis B. Saddington's “Roman Military and Administrative Personnel in the New Testament” (1996), but K.'s does not. Based on the evidence presented, K.'s conclusions are reasonable, although it is difficult to see what those conclusions add to previous studies. Though K. says that he will examine, scrutinize, and analyze, much of his monograph is descriptive. A more explicit methodology and clearly defined terminology—what are the expectations and qualities of a Lukan “believer” to which we can compare Cornelius?”—would bolster K.'s scholarly efforts.

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