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A table of contents for *Journal of Biblical Literature* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php

The Vocabulary of Luke and Acts

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IT would seem as though almost every possible experiment and investigation as to the relations between Acts and the Gospel of Luke must have been made, but the statistics of Lucan vocabulary seem never to have been minutely and comprehensively dealt with. Such aspects of New Testament vocabulary have not indeed been wholly neglected, although not all that has been claimed in this direction has actually been accomplished. Nestle in his Introduction (Eadie's translation, 1901), p. 48, says, "Graux has counted not only the words but the letters in the various books." But the references Nestle gives in support of this statement (*Revue de Philologie*, ii., and Zahn, *Geschichte*, i., 76) do not even suggest that Graux counted the words, and show that his count of letters laid no claim to precision: "comptons, avec une approximation suffisante, le nombre des lettres," p. 98; "Évangile selon St. Mathieu calculé à 89,295 lettres" (p. 118), and similarly of the other books of the New Testament. Nestle's remark would seem to be doubly misleading. His reference to the statistics given in Schaff's *Companion*, pp. 57, 176, is open to the same criticism, for Professor Schaff does not claim to have counted the number of words in the Synoptic Gospels, but only to have estimated them. A more accurate statement on the matter is found in M. W. Adams's monograph on St. Paul's Vocabulary (Hartford, 1895), p. 28, where statistics are given compiled by J. Ritchie Smith (*Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, Oct., 1891). Mr. Smith's figures, which seem to be exclusive of proper names, are as follows:

| | WHOLE NUMBER | TOTAL VOCABULARY | PECULIAR WORDS |
|---------|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| Luke | 85,239 | 2697 | 715 |
| Paul | 31,457 | 2446 | 797 |
| John | 27,185 | 1396 | 212 |
| Matthew | 17,921 | 1542 | 111 |
| Mark | 10,720 | 1259 | 77 |

These figures of Mr. Smith's seem to be the results of counts, not of estimates, and are of some weight for that reason. They are disappointing to the critical student, however, because they do not distinguish between Luke and Acts, between the pastorals and the ten letters of the primary Pauline canon, or even between the Revelation and the Fourth Gospel.

With the generous aid of my friend, Rev. A. R. Stark, Ph.D., I have recently undertaken a modest experiment in the study of Lucan vocabulary, our premise being that if Acts and the Third Gospel are from the same hand they should exhibit a considerable common base of vocabulary. Our statistics are made up from a careful page-by-page examination of Geden's *Concordance*, which we have treated as a somewhat objective standard. We have, however, added *καί* and *δέ*, disregarded different forms of the same word, and different uses of it (*e.g.* *εἰ μή, οὐ μή*), and we have included proper names. While our figures represent repeated recounts, we present them not as final, since there is room for wide difference of view as to what constitutes a word, but as on the whole presenting a fair proportionate view of the vocabulary phenomena of Acts and Luke's Gospel.

The Gospel of Luke contains 2080 different words, Acts 2054. Luke and Acts use in common 1014. A further count, strictly unnecessary, but undertaken as a partial check upon the first, shows the total vocabulary of Luke and Acts together (including every word used in either or both) to be 3120 (Mr. Smith's figure, 2697, is exclusive of proper names). Nearly half the words in Luke are thus shared with Acts, and nearly half those in Acts are common to Luke.

It is natural to inquire whether this is a large proportion of common vocabulary, or whether any other document might not relate itself to Acts much as Luke has done in this par-

ticular. To satisfy ourselves on this point we have chosen the Gospel of Matthew, a document of very little less extent than Luke (68 pp. in Westcott-Hort, as against 72), dealing with the same general matters, and based largely upon the same sources with Luke. We find that Matthew has a vocabulary of 1711 words, of which 845 are common to Acts.

| | | |
|------------------------------|------|-----------------|
| Luke exhibits | 2080 | different words |
| Acts “ | 2054 | “ “ |
| Luke and Acts share | 1014 | “ “ |
| Luke or Acts or both exhibit | 3120 | “ “ |
| Matthew exhibits | 1711 | “ “ |
| Matthew and Acts share | 845 | “ “ |

The first impression of these figures is perhaps disappointing. Irrespective of any theory of the relation of Luke and Acts, based on other considerations, a more decided showing in one direction or another might have been hoped for. But it appears that Matthew, like Luke, shares slightly less than half its vocabulary with Acts. In this aspect the inquiry is not particularly suggestive. Upon closer inspection, however, it appears that Luke is much nearer Acts than is Matthew in the range of its vocabulary. It does not essentially reduce the force of this to recall that much of this excess of vocabulary is proper names, for a large use of proper names is as individual a characteristic as a large use of common nouns. One man in telling a story will give no names, another will name everybody. It is worth noticing, further, that while the common vocabulary base of Matthew and Acts is 845, that of Luke and Acts is 1014, or 20 per cent larger. From both points of view, therefore, these results tend to ally Luke with Acts in actual vocabulary exhibited.

But whatever inferences may be drawn from them, and of course no large claims are to be made for the argument from mere range and identity of vocabulary, unsupported by other facts, these figures are offered here as a contribution to the materials of Lucan criticism, and with the hope that, if they are not sufficient to justify any very striking generalizations, they may at least prevent unguarded ones on the matter of Lucan vocabulary.