

ACTS AND ROMAN AUTHORITIES

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Abstract. Die Sicht des Lukas auf das Verhältnis der christlichen Gruppen zum Imperium Romanum ist immer wieder einer Kritik unterzogen worden. Doch gilt es, das Bild einzelner römischer Herrscher nach sozialem Stand und geographischer Herkunft des antiken Betrachters zu differenzieren. Auch musste Lukas unter den Bedingungen fehlender Meinungsfreiheit abwägen, wen unter den Personen der Vergangenheit er kritisieren konnte, ohne sein Anliegen zu gefährden: Er wollte Christinnen und Christen zurüsten, ihren Glauben zu bezeugen und gegenüber korrekten und korrupten Machthabern offensiv für die Belange einer politisch loyalen, aber religiös anderweitig gebundenen Minderheit eintreten.

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Both our experience with different real political systems and our political ideals sublimely shape our approach to the biblical traditions on this subject. Those cannot remotely be brought down to a common denominator. The Old Testament already harbours monarchy-affirming passages in coexistence with monarchy-critical ones and in the New Testament, Luke coexists with John the Seer whose rather great divergence in position is commonly acknowledged by classical research. Moreover, the scopes of influence for those who are not involved in government are quite different, considering the bible as a whole. It is said about Isaiah that he confronted the king as a free man (Is 7); Paul encounters several Roman proconsuls merely as a defendant instead of comporting himself as someone who could influence the right form of government or at least the right perception of governing. Different political circumstances suggest different conceptions for different biblical authors. This is why it is not possible to use directly biblical propositions as a response to the question of how the relation between religion and politics is supposed to be designed today.

My assumption is as follows: Luke wants to enable an infinitesimal minority within the Imperium Romanum to missionary-offensively champion its standpoint of outer loyalty. The implementation of this thesis requires several further steps, though, as the history of research will show.