

Chapter III

The Speeches in Acts— Thirty Years After

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I

On December 19, 1942, I Delivered The First Tyndale New Testament Lecture. It was later published in pamphlet form by the Tyndale Press, London, under the title *The Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles*.¹ The lecture was a by-product of a commentary on the Greek text of Acts, on which I was then engaged, and which was eventually published—again by the Tyndale Press - in 1951.

When that lecture was delivered I was a teacher of classical Greek, and treated Acts (together with Luke, of course) as a historical document in the tradition of Thucydides and Polybius. I have not renounced this understanding of the book, but have learned to make room for other perspectives to which in those days I was a stranger. When the lecture was published, it was greeted with general approval by my classical colleagues. They had little fault to find with my conclusion: "Taken all in all, each speech suits the speaker, the audience, and the circumstances of delivery; and this, along with... other points we have considered, gives good ground, in my judgement, for believing these speeches to be, not inventions of the historian, but condensed accounts of speeches actually made, and therefore valuable and independent sources for the history and theology of the primitive Church."² My old teacher, Alexander Souter, professed himself to be in entire agreement with it—"but then", he added, "in my case you were preaching to the converted".³ But these friends, being (like myself) classicists, did not perhaps appreciate the inadequacy of some of the arguments on which this conclusion was based. Another friend, a distinguished New Testament scholar and a student of Acts against its biblical background, found my convictions characterized by a "disarming ingenuousness".⁴ Had he been a follower

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of the Dibelius-Haenchen-Conzelmann line, I might have taken this criticism as a matter of course; as it is, I am disposed to treat it seriously and to concede that it has some substance.

If one valid perspective on Acts is to view it as a historical work in the tradition of Thucydides, the question immediately arises: Are the speeches Thucydidean? The answer, I

¹ Later Tyndale New Testament Lectures dealing with aspects of this general subject are N. B. Stonehouse, *The Areopagus Address* (London, 1949), and H. N. Ridderbos, *The Speeches of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles* (London, 1961).

² *The Speeches in Acts*, p. 27.

³ Private letter.

⁴ J. Dupont, *Les Problèmes du Livre des Acts d'après les Travaux Ricents* (Louvain, 1950), p. 47, reprinted in *Études sur les Acts des Apôtres* (Paris, 1967), p. 42.

think, must be Yes. But it is good to remind ourselves what "Thucydidean" speeches really are. Early in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides says:

As to the speeches which were made either before or during the war, it was hard for me, and for others who reported them to me, to recollect the exact words. I have therefore put into the mouth of each speaker the sentiments proper to the occasion, expressed as I thought he would be likely to express them, while at the same time I endeavoured, as nearly as I could, to give the general purport of what was actually said.⁵

This last clause is the expression of Thucydides's historical conscience. Close attention has been paid to the probable meaning of his phrase "the general purport of what was actually said";⁶ it seems clear, however, that while he disclaims anything in the nature of precise verbatim reproduction, he does claim to express the sense and intention of the speaker's words on each occasion. Thucydides chose his language with care. Naturally, since he reported the various speeches in his own language, a general similarity can be traced in the style of them all,⁷ but this similarity of style does not extend to the sentiments expressed: Pericles expresses Periclean sentiments, while Cleon says the sort of things that Cleon would say.

The situation in Acts is analogous to that in Thucydides. Speeches freely composed as rhetorical exercises by lesser historians (like Josephus) and put into the mouths of *dramatis personae* with little regard for verisimilitude, are not Thucydidean speeches properly so called. The speeches in Acts are not mere rhetorical exercises, nor are they introduced simply as vehicles for the author's own reflections or interpretations. The critical attitude to the Jerusalem temple in Stephen's speech, for example, is not Luke's own attitude, which is much more positive. Again, we must bear Thucydides's last clause in mind when we read the following words of Hans Conzelmann on Acts 17:22-31:

Inasmuch as Luke draws upon the form of secular historiography, we must interpret the Areopagus Speech first of all as a literary speech of Luke, not a real sermon by Paul. We take this procedure for granted in our interpretation of the speeches of Thucydides, for example. It is no less relevant for the

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interpretation of Acts 17. Luke makes Paul say what he considers appropriate to the situation.⁸

But, if the Thucydidean analogy be valid, we should also expect Luke to "give the general purport of what was actually said" and not to ascribe to the speaker sentiments or utterances out of keeping with his true beliefs and teachings.

⁵ Thucydides, *History* i. 22. 1 (B. Jowett's translation).

⁶ Cf. M. Dibelius, *Aufsditze zur Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1951), pp. 122 f.; E.T., *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (London, 1956), pp. 140 ff.

⁷ As was pointed out in the 1st century B.C. by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Epistula ad Pompeium* 3. 20.

⁸ "The Address of Paul on the Areopagus", in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (Nashville/New York, 1966), p. 218.

II

As I re-read what I said thirty years ago, I note with interest the scholars to whom reference was made in the lecture. They include Israel Abrahams, B. W. Bacon, Friedrich Blass, F. C. Burkitt, F. H. Chase, F. J. Foakes Jackson, Percy Gardner, J. Rendel Harris, Kirsopp Lake, Edward Meyer, J. H. Moulton, Eduard Norden, W. M. Ramsay, C. C. Torrey, Johannes de Zwaan and C. H. Dodd among the illustrious dead, and H. J. Cadbury who is still happily with us. All of them made distinguished contributions to the study of Acts, but most of them (to our impoverishment) receive but a bare mention when the problems of the book are discussed today. To the illustrious dead belongs also Martin Dibelius; the lecture contained a quotation from a work of his first published in 1926:

These speeches, without doubt, are as they stand inventions of the author. For they are too short to have been actually given in this form; they are too similar to one another to have come from different persons; and in their content they occasionally reproduce a later standpoint (e.g. what Peter and James say about the Law in chap. xv).⁹

But, in the years that followed, Martin Dibelius made contributions to the study of the speeches in Acts of such quality as to exercise the profoundest influence on most subsequent work done on these speeches.

Already in 1939 he had communicated a paper on Paul's Areopagus address to the *Akademie der Wissenschaften (philologisch-historische Klasse)* at Heidelberg,¹⁰ to which in the published text of my lecture I could give no more than a footnote reference.¹¹ Five years later he communicated to the same body a further paper on the speeches in Acts as a whole in the context of ancient historiography.¹² This latter paper, which was not published

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until 1949 (the year after Dibelius's death), is one of the most important and influential studies of the subject ever to have appeared.

His thesis is that Luke has not only composed all the speeches in his own individual style but is responsible for their structure. In the first half of Acts, the speeches repeatedly begin with (i) an introduction relating the situation of the speech to its subject-matter; this is followed by (ii) an account of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection. (In this last regard the personal testimony of the speakers is usually emphasized; oddly, however, Paul at Pisidian Antioch does not claim to be an eyewitness himself, but tells how the risen Christ "appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people".¹³) After this account comes (iii) confirmatory evidence from the scriptures, the

⁹ *A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (London, 1936), p. xv; E.T. of *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1926).

¹⁰ *Paulus auf dem Areopag* (Heidelberg, 1939), reprinted in *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte*, pp. 29 ff.; E.T., *Studies in the Acts*, pp. 26 ff.

¹¹ *The Speeches in Acts*, p. 16, n. 3. (The outbreak of World War II in 1939 had impeded access to German literature.)

¹² *Die Reden der Apostelgeschichte and die antike Geschichtsschreibung* (Heidelberg, 1949), reprinted in *Aufsätze*, pp. 120 ff.; E.T. in *Studies*, pp. 138 ff.

¹³ Acts 13:31.

whole being concluded by (iv) an exhortation to repentance. This, Dibelius concludes, is how the gospel was preached when Luke was writing (c. A.D. 90, he thinks), and this is how Luke thought the gospel must always have been preached, by Peter or by Paul, to Jews or to Gentiles. But, of course, there were different categories of Gentiles: an approach which was appropriate to a God-fearer like Cornelius would have been inappropriate for people whose religious outlook was completely pagan, and so a different kind of structure is recognizable in the speeches at Lystra (Acts 14:15-17) and Athens (17:22-31). Again, quite different structures are discernible in the apologiae addressed by Stephen to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:2-53) and by Paul to the elders of the Ephesian church (20:18-35), to the hostile mob in the temple court (22:3-21) and to the younger Agrippa (26:2-23).

The speeches, Dibelius notes, are introduced at crucial points in Luke's narrative, underlining and amplifying its dominant motifs, such as the Jews' refusal of the gospel and the Gentiles' acceptance of it. They are woven into the narrative by a repeated device in which one after another is brought to an end by some external factor such as an interruption or (as in the speech in the house of Cornelius) the descent of the Spirit. Thus to say as J. A. Bengel does at the end of Paul's Athenian speech, "He would have said more had they wished to hear more",¹⁴ is to overlook the fact that the audience's breaking it off in Acts 17:32 is Luke's literary way of concluding a well-constructed and self-contained speech.

Dibelius does not go so far as to deny the historicity of the various speeches; he prefers to ignore it. On Paul's address to the elders from Ephesus he says: "Luke may have known of individual occasions when Paul spoke there. He may also have had information about the *ξόμπασα γνώμη*¹⁵ (general purport) of the speaker or of the speech in individual instances; he may even have been an eye-witness..."¹⁶—but all these

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possibilities are beside the point, since the author is not concerned with the historical relevance of the speeches but with their stylistic appropriateness.

In dealing with another part of Acts Dibelius refers to "the older school of criticism, which thinks only of the event and not of the account."¹⁷ With his emphasis on style criticism¹⁸ Dibelius redressed the balance, but to such a degree that he lays himself open to the counter-charge of thinking only of the account and not of the event. The question of the historicity of the speeches is not beside the point in the study of a work which claims to be a historical narrative.

Dibelius does indeed allow that Luke incorporates into his speeches "older formulae of a kerygmatic or liturgical nature".¹⁹ The type of presentation which they reproduce is an ancient

¹⁴ *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (Tübingen, 1742), on Acts 17:31.

¹⁵ Thucydides, *Hist.* i. 22. 1.

¹⁶ *Aufsätze*, p. 141, n. 1; E.T., *Studies*, p. 164, n. 55.

¹⁷ On the voyage and shipwreck narrative of Acts 27 (*Aufsätze*, p. 95; E.T., *Studies*, p. 107).

¹⁸ His earliest contribution to the study of Acts was devoted to style criticism: "Stilkritisches zur Apostelgeschichte" in *Eucharisterion für H. Gunkel*, ii (Göttingen, 1923), pp. 27 ff., reprinted in *Aufsätze*, pp. 9 ff.; E.T., *Studies*. pp. 1 ff.

¹⁹ *Aufsätze*, p. 10; E.T., *Studies*, p. 3.

F. F. Bruce, "The Speeches In Acts—Thirty Years After," Robert Banks, ed., *Reconciliation and Hope. New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L.L. Morris on his 60th Birthday*. Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1974. pp.53-68.

one, as may be seen in the rather primitive christological titles which they contain.²⁰ The type, in fact, reappears in the summary of the preaching common to himself and the Jerusalem apostles which Paul quotes in I Cor. 15:3-5: "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." On this ground, in fact, Dom Jacques Dupont associates Dibelius with C. H. Dodd,²¹ but Professor Dodd makes a much more positive historical assessment of the speeches in Acts than Dibelius did. The author of Acts, he suggests, used his Thucydidean privilege "with considerable restraint". The Pauline speeches "in some cases at least... are not, indeed, anything like verbatim reports (for the style is too 'Lucan' and too un-Pauline for that), but are based upon a reminiscence of what the apostle actually said"; and "there is good reason to suppose that the speeches attributed to Peter... are based upon material which proceeded from the Aramaic-speaking church at Jerusalem, and was substantially earlier than the period at which the book was written."²² With this estimate of the matter I find myself in substantial agreement, as I did in 1942.²³

Dibelius's influence may be seen in much subsequent work produced on the speeches in Acts, especially by German-speaking scholars. The commentaries by E. Haenchen and H. Conzelmann provide illustrious examples of his influence. The situation is summed up by Eduard Schweizer:

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Ever since Martin Dibelius' essay about this subject, it has been more and more widely recognized that the speeches are basically compositions by the author of Acts who, to be sure, utilized different kinds of material for particular passages. This can be supported by analysis of the speeches which contain the missionary proclamation of the apostles to Jews and Gentiles.²⁴

III

The treatment of this subject was carried farther in 1961 by Ulrich Wilckens in his monograph on the missionary speeches in the first half of Acts²⁵—five delivered by Peter (2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-43) and one by Paul (13:16-41). After a detailed analysis of all six, he concludes that they follow a common plan (as C. H. Dodd had pointed out a quarter of a century before), but that this plan is entirely Lukan and does not reflect an earlier kerygmatic tradition (as Dodd and Dibelius had held). The missionary speeches to pagans (delivered at Lystra in Acts 14:15-17 and at Athens in 1-7:22-31) are based on a schema which is attested in Paul's letters (cf. I Thess. 1:9 f.), but no such schema is attested for the missionary speeches to Jews and God-fearing Gentiles in the earlier part of the book.

²⁰ M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen, ¹1919), pp. 7 ff. (³1959, pp. 15 ff.); E.T., *From Tradition to Gospel* (London, 1934), pp. 16 ff.

²¹ J. Dupont, *Études sur les Actes des Apôtres*, pp. 135 ff.

²² C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London, ²1944). pp. 17 ff.; cf. his *History and the Gospel* (London, 1938), pp. 72 ff.

²³ Cf. I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter, 1970), pp. 157 ff.

²⁴ "Concerning the Speeches in Acts", in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Keck and Martyn, p. 208. Cf. G. Bornkamm, *Paul*, E.T. (London, 1971), p. xvii.

²⁵ U. Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte: Form- und traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Neukirchen, 1961).

The terms in which the gospel was presented to pagans may indeed be discerned in the letters of Paul and others, but these were addressed to Gentile churches. If we had letters addressed to converts from Judaism we should be able to judge more adequately if the missionary speeches in the earlier part of Acts are constructed on the pattern which was actually followed in the evangelization of Jews. As it is, the only New Testament letters which can with some show of reason be regarded as addressed to Jewish Christians are that of James and that to the Hebrews. The former does not indicate how its readers came to place their faith in "the Lord Jesus Christ, our glory" (Jas. 2:1); the latter was sent to people who had received the gospel from the lips of those who heard the Lord speak and experienced its confirmation by manifestations of the Spirit when they placed their faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God, but we have no detailed account of the form in which the saving message was presented to them. We are left, then, with the speeches in the early chapters of Acts as our sole means of information about the presentation of the gospel to Jews, and if Wilckens' analysis of these speeches were adequate, a verdict of *non liquet* would be the most that could be returned on the question of their relation to the primitive preaching to Jews.

But if the speeches to Jews in Acts are constructed on a constant pattern, it could be because this was the pattern on which the most primitive

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preaching was regularly constructed. True, Luke recasts it to some extent in his own style, but there is much in the content that is not essentially Lukan. The regular appeal to Hebrew scripture in these speeches is not something otherwise characteristic of Luke's narrative. "He, at all events, does not turn aside to tell us that 'Then was fulfilled that which was spoken of by the prophet'. If Luke does not use the method of *Testimonies* on his own account, he is quite clear that it was the Apostolic method. It was either what they actually said or what they ought to have said".²⁶ It was, on the other hand, characteristic of the gospel presentation common to Paul and those who were apostles before him. If Paul proclaimed in Corinth—in the synagogue to start with, according to Acts 18:4—that it was in accordance with the scriptures that Christ died and rose, we might *a fortiori* expect the same emphasis to characterize his preaching and that of his predecessors to Jews and God-fearers at an earlier date in Palestine and Asia Minor.

It may well be that in these earlier speeches, as Wilckens says, we miss the explicit ascription of saving significance to the *death* of Christ.²⁷ The reason for this could lie not in Luke's own theology but in the circumstances of the primitive community. That God had raised the crucified Jesus to life again was the great new fact which, in their eyes, dwarfed all others. The claims of Jesus, disallowed by his judges, had been confirmed by God: he was divinely vindicated as both Lord and Messiah, and as such he should be acknowledged by the whole house of Israel.²⁸

²⁶ J. Rendel Harris, *Testimonies*, ii (Cambridge, 1920), p. 80. J. Dupont, in a review of Wilckens' monograph, points out that Acts 10:36-38 presupposes a unitive application of Isa. 52:7 and 61:1 (linked by the common verb εὐαγγελίζεσθαι) in a fuller form of this kerygma, of which Luke here preserves only an abridgement (*Études*, pp. 139 ff.).

²⁷ *Die Missionsreden*, pp. 184, 216.

²⁸ Acts 2:36.

Ernst Käsemann has contended vigorously that this emphasis bears the marks of primitive catholicism; the genuine *theologia crucis* has been displaced by a *theologia gloriae*.²⁹ But, essential to the authentic gospel as the *theologia crucis* is, can we say that historically it precedes the *theologia gloriae*? The *theologia gloriae* is implicit in the resurrection faith: God has exalted his Servant Jesus, who had been humiliated and put to death. Probably all evangelical Christians will sympathize with Professor Käsemann's insistence on the *theologia crucis*, whether or not they stand, as he does, in direct succession from Luther; but the vindication of the Crucified One is proclaimed at the threshold of the apostolic age. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, but by virtue of that same cross *Christus patiens* is *Christus victor*. No cross, no crown. If the proclamation of *Christus victor* is a mark of primitive catholicism, then such catholicism is primitive indeed. The *theologia gloriae* ceases to be apostolic when it is maintained in a form which

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imagines that the church militant here in earth is already the church triumphant, as the Corinthian Christians mistakenly supposed (I Cor. 4:8). For believers on earth the fellowship in Christ's sufferings is now; participation in his glory lies in the future (Rom. 8:1-7). Luke knows this as well as Paul does: "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

IV

In two sections in the earlier part of Acts we have explicit evidence of a "Servant" Christology—in the sequel to the healing of the lame man in the temple court (3:11-4:31) and in Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40).

In the former of these two sections the "Servant" motif appears twice: in Peter's address to the crowd in Solomon's colonnade (3:12-26) and in the disciples' prayer after the release of Peter and John by the Sanhedrin (4:24-30). When Peter, at the beginning of his address, announces that "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his Servant Jesus" (3:13), we recognize an echo of the opening words of the fourth Isaianic Servant Song, "Behold, my Servant... shall be exalted and highly glorified" (Isa. 52:13, LXX), with a gloss identifying the Servant with Jesus. The gloss is then expanded so as to show how the Servant's humiliation and exaltation were realized in history: "you denied the Holy and Righteous One,... and killed the Author of life; but God raised him from the dead, and of this we are witnesses" (3:14 ff).

The most substantial indebtedness to the Servant Songs is found in Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian God-fearer. This man was beguiling his homeward journey from Jerusalem by reading aloud part of the fourth Servant Song—in the Greek version, of course. When Philip approached his chariot, he heard the words of Isa. 53:7 ff. being read, and on being invited to join the reader in his chariot and explain their meaning to him, he made them the text from which "he told him the good news of Jesus" (Acts 8:30-35). The words quoted speak of the

²⁹ E.g. "Neutestamentliche Fragen von Heute", *ZThK* 54 (1957), pp. 20 ff.; E.T., *New Testament Questions of Today* (London, 1969), pp. 21 ff.

Servant's uncomplaining patience in face of humiliation, injustice and death: they do not explicitly mention his sin-bearing ministry. Yet it is difficult to think that either Luke or Philip would have ignored completely the context in which those words occur.³⁰ Wherein, we may ask, did the record of the Servant's suffering constitute "good news" for the Ethiopian if not in its atoning efficacy, in that he gave his life as an *'asham*, a reparation-offering (Isa. 53:10)?³¹ Luke indeed does not say this expressly, but it is a fair inference—

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if we accept that it is a real historical incident that he is relating. We may agree with Professor Conzelmann that the way in which Luke uses Isa. 53 "does not prove... the presence of any theory of atonement" in his thinking, but when he says that it "disproves" it, he outruns the evidence at one extreme as much as those who treat it as proof do at the other extreme.³²

So far as Luke's Servant-terminology in general is concerned, C. F. D. Moule's conclusion is cogent: there is no clear evidence either that it was "exclusively primitive, or that Luke was inventing its application: it would appear, more likely, to belong by idiosyncratic use (perhaps Petrine) or by liturgical appropriateness on the lips on which it is, in fact, placed. The likelihood is that in Christian liturgical contexts, especially when under the influence of Jewish *berakôth*, 'thy Servant Jesus' was a common usage, perhaps for a considerable period".³³

Twice in the early speeches Jesus is described by the title ἀρχηγός, which means something like "pioneer", the one who leads the way or blazes the trail for others.³⁴ G. W. H. Lampe has drawn attention to his identification in this rôle with the Servant; the Servant "suffers and ascends as the ἀρχηγός of his people. He goes on before as the guarantor of his followers' own entry".³⁵ The paradox of the Servant's passion is emphasized in Acts 3:15 in that it was the "Pioneer of Life" who was so unjustly put to death, while in 5:30 f. it is proclaimed that, after he was "hanged on a tree", God exalted him at his right hand as Pioneer and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins".

Twice the crucifixion is referred to as "hanging on a tree" (ξύλον): in the apostles' defence before the Sanhedrin (5:30) and in Peter's preaching in the house of Cornelius (10:39). So also Paul at Pisidian Antioch says that after Jesus' death "they took him down from the tree" (13:29). The expression "hanging on a tree" is an echo of Deut. 21:22 f., where it is laid down that if the body of an executed criminal is hanged on a tree, "his body shall not remain all night upon the tree.... for a hanged man is accursed by God". From Paul's application of these words to Jesus in Gal. 3: 13³⁶ we may gather that the mode of Jesus' death was recognized as

³⁰ Cf. E. Lohmeyer, "Vom urchristlichen Abendmahl", *Theol. Rundschau*, 9 (1937), p. 181.

³¹ If Mark 10:45 (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν) echoes Isa. 53:10-12 (and even if it does not), it is significant that this note is absent from the parallel in Luke 22:24-27.

³² H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit* (Tübingen, 1954), p. 202, n. i; E.T., *The Theology of St. Luke* (London, 1960), p. 230, n. 1.

³³ "The Christology of Acts", in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Keck and Martyn, p. 170. Cf. the liturgical use of "thy Servant Jesus" in *Didache* 9:2 ff., 10:2 ff., and repeatedly in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus.

³⁴ The other two occurrences of the noun in the NT are in Heb. 2:10; 12:2 (also in reference to Jesus).

³⁵ "The Lucan Portrait of Christ", *NTS* 2 (1955/56), p. 167.

³⁶ Cf. 1 Pet. 2:24. In all five NT passages where ξύλον is used in this sense NEB (1970) gives the rendering "gibbet".

F. F. Bruce, "The Speeches In Acts—Thirty Years After," Robert Banks, ed., *Reconciliation and Hope. New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L.L. Morris on his 60th Birthday*. Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1974. pp.53-68.

a stumbling-block in the way of accepting his Messiahship—a stumbling-block which Paul removes by the exegetical device of *gezerah shawah*. Behind Luke's use of the expression we may discern the recognition that

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the Deuteronomic passage was applicable to the death of Jesus. If (as is conceivable) the application was first made by those who found here an argument against his messianic identity, it was quickly accepted by Christians who must have found means of coming to terms with it—if not those which Paul found, then others which commended themselves as satisfactory. If, as the phrase "hanging on a tree" implies, Jesus submitted to the divine curse, an answer must have been given sooner rather than later to the insistent question: Why, or for whom, did he endure this curse?³⁷ It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that his endurance of the curse, as well as his subsequent exaltation in glory, provided the ground for the salvation and forgiveness of sins repeatedly announced in his name in those early speeches.³⁸

V

At the end of the sermon in Pisidian Antioch not only is "forgiveness of sins" proclaimed through "this man" but "by him every one who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by Moses' law" (Acts 13:38 f.). It may be that the reference to justification is added here because justification was known to be a key-term of Paul's, but that in the present context it means little more than being "freed", as the R.S.V. has it, and does not have the Pauline force.³⁹ It is misinterpreting Luke, however, to suppose that he is suggesting that Moses' law "justifies" from some things, but that faith in Christ avails to "justify" from those things—whatever they were—from which Moses' law provided no justification.⁴⁰ The only people whom Moses' law justified were those who kept it. The law-breaker was not justified by that law in any degree; he was condemned by it. But the justification which no sinner could find in Moses' law was available to every believer in Christ. Luke does not spell out the doctrine as Paul does, but if any doctrine of justification is implied in these words, it is the Pauline doctrine.

The style criticism to which Dibelius and Wilckens have subjected the speeches in Acts must be supplemented by studies of their form conducted along other lines. Mention should be made of J. W. Bowker's examination of some of them in the light of what can be discovered about early synagogue practice—his argument, for example, that the address of Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16-41) reveals, on analysis, indications of proem homily

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³⁷ Cf. G. B. Caird, *The Apostolic Age* (London, 1955), p. 40; E. M. B. Green, *The Meaning of Salvation* (London, 1965), pp. 145 f.

³⁸ For the concept of salvation, comprising *inter alia* "forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit", as the central motif of Luke's theology, cf. I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, p. 9 *et passim*.

³⁹ Cf. O. Bauernfeind, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1939), P. 177; H. Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1963), p. 77.

⁴⁰ Cf. B. W. Bacon, *The Story of St. Paul* (London, 1905), p. 103, n. 1.

form, based (it may be) on Deut. 4:25-46 as *seder* and II Sam. 7:6-16 as *haftarah*, with I Sam. T3:14 (apparently in Targum form) as the proem text, or that James's summing up at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:14-21) is a genuine *yelammedenu* response and may even be understood as all, that survives of a *yelammedenu* homily.⁴¹

Much, in fact, depends on the way in which one's mind has been conditioned to approach such a subject. I suspect that, despite years of intensive study of Paul's letters, my training as a classicist continues to influence me. For instance, when Professor Haenchen quotes my observation that Luke, being present when Paul addressed the Ephesian elders at Miletus, "may even have taken shorthand notes", the only comment which he can make on such a preposterous suggestion is a parenthetical exclamation mark. After all, Dibelius has "finally proved the speech to be Luke's work and evaluated it".⁴² But, on reconsidering the matter, I remain of the same opinion as before, on the following grounds: (i) This is the only Pauline speech in Acts which can be paralleled (and that pervasively) from the Pauline letters, of which otherwise Luke betrays no knowledge; this suggests strongly that its content is Pauline, not Lukan. (ii) This speech is set in the context of a "we" section, and the most probable explanation of the "we" sections still seems to me to be that this is the author's way of indicating unobtrusively that he took part in the journeys which they record. (iii) Shorthand was not an unknown device in the first century A.D., and a man such as the author of Acts reveals himself to have been just the kind of person to make use of it.

This speech contains the most explicit mention of the redemptive efficacy of the death of Christ to be found anywhere in the Lukan history. "Feed the church of God", says Paul to the elders of Ephesus, "which he won for himself by his own blood"—or rather "by the blood of his Beloved"⁴³ (verse 28). We may discern an echo of Psalm 74:2a, but the statement of the price of acquisition is added here. If the speech is composed by Luke, the reference to the blood of Christ is surprising. To say, with Professor Conzelmann, that it "probably adopts a turn of phrase current in the Church (perhaps to give a speech a Pauline stamp?—such tendencies are occasionally to be noted in Luke)",⁴⁴ is to admit that it is non-Lukan and ostensibly Pauline. True, Paul himself does not characteristically use the word "blood" in the sense of the "death" of Christ; where such language occurs in the Pauline corpus (as in Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7) it has been thought to point in the majority of instances to

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the citation of a pre-Pauline formula, but the same might well be true of Acts 20:28. "This is Paul, not some other speaker; and he is not evangelizing but recalling an already evangelized community to its deepest insights. In other words, the situation, like the theology, is precisely that of a Pauline epistle, not of preliminary evangelism".⁴⁵

⁴¹ J. W. Bowker, "Speeches in Acts: A Study in Proem and Yelammedenu Form", *NTS* 14 (1967/68), pp. 96 ff.; he refers to J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospel and Acts* (Assen, 1954), pp. 175 f, for a demonstration that the discourse of Acts 13:26 ff. was composed by someone who had "an excellent command of hermeneutics as practised in rabbinic Judaism".

⁴² E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, E.T. (Oxford, 1971), p. 590.

⁴³ Taking τοῦ ἰδίου as dependent on, not qualifying, τοῦ αἵματος.

⁴⁴ *Die Mitte der Zeit*, p. 175; E.T., *The Theology of St. Luke*, p. 201.

⁴⁵ C. F. D. Moule in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Keck and Martyn, p. 171.

VI

The treatment which the Areopagus speech receives from many scholars provides a good illustration of the tendency to be "more Pauline than Paul",⁴⁶ a tendency which, in this kind of situation especially, does less than justice to Paul's plain statement of his policy to make himself "all things to all men" (I Cor. 9:22).

Take the writer of Rom. 1:18-23, with his insistence that the Creator's "eternal power and divinity" can be recognized from his works, to a point where failure to recognize them is inexcusable. Bear in mind that his evangelization of the Gentiles thus far has been remarkably successful—a fact which (for all his modest disclaimer in I Cor. 2:1-5) implies considerable persuasiveness in speech and approach, including the ability to find an initial area of common ground with his hearers, apart from which any attempt at communication would be ineffective. Bring him to Athens and invite him to state his case against idolatry and for the true knowledge of God before an audience of Athenian citizens. What will he say? I find it difficult not to imagine him as saying something very much along the lines of the summary in Acts 17:22-31. Here he is talking to pagans, not writing to Christians; he will not cut off his hearers' ears as the first step towards gaining their attention. But he will say that idolatry is inexcusable, because the true knowledge of God was available to all men in his works of creation and providence; he may even point out that some of their own thinkers have perceived that men are the offspring of the supreme God who is the source and ground of their being. Even if the writer to the Romans is quoting a pre-Pauline form of words when he speaks in Rom. 3:25 of God's passing over former sins in his divine forbearance, he approves of the idea thus expressed; he may well therefore tell the Athenians that hitherto God has overlooked their culpable ignorance of his nature, but that the resurrection of Christ has introduced a new dispensation, in which God calls for their repentance in view of the coming judgement to be executed by the risen Christ. Here too we may discern a theme emphasized in the letter to the Romans, with its reference to "that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus" (2:16).

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Paul had ample precedent in the Hebrew scriptures for his exposure of the perverseness of idolatry and the folly of imagining that the most high God could be accommodated in a material building, as also for his insistence that God makes provision for all his creatures and allots the nations their living-space, while he himself is not dependent on anything that they can give to him. Naturally he will not refer his hearers to the testimony of the Hebrew scriptures, from which such liberal quotation is made in the Pauline letters and in the preaching to Jews and God-fearers in Acts; but if men whom his hearers do recognize as authorities have spoken to the same effect, he will quote their words—giving them a biblical sense as he does so. Many a Scots preacher has warned his congregation that "Pleasures are like poppies spread...", while he and they know quite well that Burns was no Christian moralist and that *Tam o' Shanter* was not seriously written to call sinners to repentance. It is underestimating Paul's versatility to suppose that he could not have presented the essence of Rom. 1:18-23 and 2:12-16 to pagans along such lines as those of Acts 17:22-31. True, Luke

⁴⁶ Cf. H. Küng, "Der Frühkatholizismus im Neuen Testament als kontrovers-theologisches Problem", in *Das Neue Testament als Kanon*, ed. E. Käsemann (Göttingen, 1970), p. 192.

F. F. Bruce, "The Speeches In Acts—Thirty Years After," Robert Banks, ed., *Reconciliation and Hope. New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L.L. Morris on his 60th Birthday*. Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1974. pp.53-68.

did not hear Paul address the Areopagus, but he knew how Paul was accustomed to adapt his *praeparatio evangelica* to an audience of this kind.⁴⁷

VII

If in the Areopagica the resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of coming judgement, elsewhere in Paul's speeches in Acts it is integral to the hope of resurrection.

At his interview with the leaders of the Jewish colony in Rome, recorded at the end of Acts, Paul tells them that "it is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20). The "hope of Israel" is the hope of resurrection in general,⁴⁸ lately given concrete historical shape by the resurrection of Jesus, which declared him to be Lord and Messiah. So, before the younger Agrippa, Paul affirms (Acts 26:6-8):

I stand here on trial for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

When, in Rom. 1:3 f., Paul says that Jesus, son of David "according to the flesh", was "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead", he puts the last word in the plural (ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν) because the resurrection of Christ

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in particular is part and parcel of the resurrection of the dead in general—"Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ", as he puts it in I Cor. 15:23. The same point as is made in Rom. 1:4 is made in Acts 26:22 f., by means of the same Greek phrase, when Paul goes on to assure Agrippa that his gospel consists of

nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead (ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν), he would proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles.

Christ, in short, is the hope of Israel, as he is the hope of all mankind, by virtue of his rising from the dead. The salvation and eternal life which his people have through faith in him are completely bound up with his resurrection. "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.... If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied" (I Cor. 15:17, 19). Whatever other differences may appear between these words of Paul and those quoted from Acts, the founding of the wider resurrection hope on the particular resurrection of Christ is common to both.

⁴⁷ See especially B. Gartner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (Uppsala, 1955). H. D. Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition* (Tübingen, 1972), p. 38, suggests that Luke depicts Paul in Athens as a latter-day Socrates.

⁴⁸ Cf. Acts 23:6.

When, in Acts 24:15, Paul tells Felix that he shares the "hope in God" cherished by many of his opponents, "that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust",⁴⁹ expression is given to an aspect of the resurrection doctrine which is unparalleled in the Pauline letters. Paul may well have believed, as many Pharisees did, that the unrighteous would be raised from the dead in addition to the righteous, but in his letters—perhaps because they were written to Christians—it is resurrection with and in Christ that he expounds.

The earliest reference to the hope of Israel in the speeches of Acts comes in Peter's address to the crowd in Solomon's colonnade after the healing of the lame man. Here the exhortation to repentance is amplified in a fashion unparalleled elsewhere in the book. "Repent, therefore", says Peter, "and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah designated for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the times of the establishment of all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old" (3:19-21). Then follows a quotation of the prediction of the prophet like Moses in Dent. 18:15 ff. But the noun rendered "establishment" (Gk. ἀποκατάστασις) is reminiscent of the verb ἀποκαθίστημι used of the ministry of the returning Elijah in Mal. 4:6 ("he will restore the father's heart to the son") especially as interpreted, e.g., in Mark 9:12, "Elijah indeed comes first and restores (ἀποκαθιστάνει) all things". This contact with the Elijah expectation has led O. Bauernfeind to the view that the whole section beginning "whom heaven must

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receive..." is drawn from a Jewish form of words (perhaps liturgical in character) originally referring to Elijah (who must remain in heaven, to which he was transported in a whirlwind, until the time comes for his eschatological ministry), now adapted to a Christian context by the substitution of "the Messiah designated for you, Jesus" for "Elijah" (perhaps amplified by a participial phrase as "Jesus" is in our present text).⁵⁰ J. A. T. Robinson, while recognizing that the Elijah expectation in some way underlies the passage, does not agree that Luke has adapted a Jewish form of words but discerns here "the most primitive Christology of all" in which Jesus in his earthly ministry as Servant (3:13) and Prophet (3:22 f.) is "the fore-runner of the Christ he is to be".⁵¹ Thus far he is *Christus designatus*; only when he is sent back from heaven to earth will he be effectively the Christ. If it be asked how this interpretation can be squared with the expression in verse 18, "that his Christ should suffer" (παθεῖν τὸν χριστὸν ὑποῦ), the answer is that this is a well recognized Lukan form of words (cf. Luke 24:46).⁵² In Acts 3:19-21, then, it is at his return from heaven that Jesus begins to exercise his messianic function; in 2:36, which expresses another christological perspective, it is his resurrection that proclaims him to be "Lord and Christ" (cf. Rom. 1:4), while for Luke he already suffers as the Messiah.

⁴⁹ For "the resurrection of the just" cf. Luke 14:14.

⁵⁰ *Die Apostelgeschichte*, pp. 66 f.; cf. his "Tradition and Komposition in dem Apokatastasisspruch Apostelgeschichte 3, 20 f." in *Abraham unser Vater*, ed. O. Betz, M. Hengel and P. Schmidt (Leiden, 1963), pp. 13 ff.

⁵¹ "The Most Primitive Christology of All?" *JTS* n.s. 7 (1956), pp. 177 ff., reprinted in *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London, 1962), pp. 139 ff.

⁵² Cf. also Acts 26:23, εἰ παθητὸς ὁ χριστός.

But this interpretation depends on our understanding of the participle προκεχειρισμένος in verse 20 and the noun ἀποκατάστασις in verse 21. As for the former word, Luke is the only New Testament author to use it, and its two other occurrences in his work refer to Paul's divine election to be a herald and witness of the risen Christ (Acts 22:14; 26:16). And here it is much more likely to denote Jesus' being foreordained to be his people's Messiah than to imply that, pending his parousia, he remains Messiah-designate.⁵³

As for ἀποκατάστασις, it must be understood in its whole setting. It cannot have the sense of "restoration" here, for "the restoration of all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old" is meaningless, whereas "the establishment of all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets..." is not only intelligible but is in keeping with Lukan language elsewhere (cf. Luke 1:70, a specially close parallel; also 24:25-27, 44). But if "establishment" is the force of the word here, then the link with the Elijah expectation is superficial, not essential.

Luke is generally believed to reflect the outlook of the second Christian generation which had come to terms with the "postponement of the

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parousia". For him the period of the church's existence has assumed independent significance as the sequel to the Christ-event at the mid-point of time.⁵⁴ It would be preferable to say that for Luke, as for Paul, the period which followed the Christ-event was the age of the Spirit, even if Paul's appreciation of the Spirit's anticipatory role is absent from Luke's thought. But one thing is certain: the eschatology of Acts 3:19-21 is neither Luke's nor Paul's. It implies that early repentance on the part of the people of Jerusalem would speed the parousia. In Luke's own perspective such an expectation finds no place, and if Paul does envisage a large-scale turning of Israel to the Lord, as the prelude to the parousia, it is as a sequel to the completion of the Gentile world-mission.⁵⁵ In Acts 3:19-21 we may not have "the most primitive Christology of all", but it might well be argued that we do indeed have the most primitive *eschatology* of all.

* * * * *

Leon Morris has made outstanding contributions to many areas of New Testament study. His main contribution to the study of Luke's writings is made in two chapters of *The Cross in the New Testament*. The second of these two chapters deals with the preaching of the cross in Acts, and naturally concentrates on the speeches. While he says truly of the earliest Christian preachers that "the wonder of the resurrection gripped their minds and their imaginations" and that "the new-found power of the indwelling Spirit of God transformed their innermost being", he also insists, with regard to their experience and their witness alike: "Nothing here makes sense apart from the cross whereon men's salvation was accomplished."⁵⁶ It is a

⁵³ Cf. C. F. D. Moule in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Keck and Martyn, p. 168.

⁵⁴ This is the significance of the title of H. Conzelmann's *Die Mitte der Zeit*; it is obscured in the title of the English translation (*The Theology of St. Luke*).

⁵⁵ Rom. ii:11 ff.; cf. J. Munck, *Paulus and die Heilsgeschichte* (Aarhus, 1954). Pp. 242 ff.; E.T., *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London, 1959), pp. 247 ff.

⁵⁶ *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids and Exeter, 1965), p. 108.

F. F. Bruce, "The Speeches In Acts—Thirty Years After," Robert Banks, ed., *Reconciliation and Hope. New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L.L. Morris on his 60th Birthday*. Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1974. pp.53-68.

pleasure to present these desultory reflections on Luke's record of the apostolic witness to one whom for many years I have admired as a scholar and valued as a friend.⁵⁷

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Also available:

H. N. Ridderbos, *The Speeches of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles* (London, 1961):
http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/speeches_ridderbos.pdf

N. B. Stonehouse, *The Areopagus Address* (London, 1949):
http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/areopagus_stonehouse.pdf

⁵⁷ This paper was completed and sent to the editor before I saw E. Kränkl, *Jesus der Knecht Gottes: Die heilsgeschichtliche Stellung Jesu in den Reden der Apostelgeschichte* (Regensburg, 1972).

One aspect of the speeches in Acts on which this paper has not touched is the possibility that in some of them, outstandingly Stephen's speech, Samaritan influence is to be discerned. This possibility has been ventilated in appendices by A. Spiro ("Stephen's Samaritan Background") and C. S. Mann (" 'Hellenists' and 'Hebrews' in Acts 6:1") in J. Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Anchor Bible, 1967), pp. 285 ff., 301 ff., by M. H. Scharlemann, *Stephen: A Singular Saint* (Rome, 1968), and more recently by C. H. H. Scobie, "The Origins and Development of Samaritan Christianity", *NTS* 19 (1972/73), pp. 390 ff. The features to which these writers draw attention are perhaps features not of Samaritanism in particular but of a wider nonconformist tradition in Israel.