

recognition of moral standards and judgments, and of life according to the inner law known even among the Gentiles must not be overlooked. But lastly, that polytheism, and especially the mythology of Greece and Rome, exercised an adverse moral influence can scarcely be doubted. The moral conscience was often in advance of the popular religion. Plato's care about the selection of the tales to be told in the education of the citizens in his model-state is one evidence that immoral views about the gods might inflict moral injuries. Is not Lucretius' passion against the wrongs religion had inflicted another proof that religion may corrupt morals? Can we wonder, then, that Paul connected the gross immorality of paganism with its debased religion? In this statement the principle is recognized that sin itself may be punitive of previous sin, that one consequence of wrongdoing is a tendency towards worse doing, that sin grows from the less to the greater. Here, as in other statements of Paul regarding sin, we are not concerned merely with speculations of the schools, but with realities of man's life. There is the husk of traditional views, and we should freely cast that away; but there is also the kernel of real experience of himself and of the world. The guilt and the power of sin were facts for him; these are facts for us. In these facts is to be found the need of the salvation in Christ, with the nature of which the next Study will deal.

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THE ASCENSION IN LUKE AND ACTS.

THAT the writer of our Third Gospel and of Acts is the same individual is an established fact of modern criticism. In accordance with tradition we will designate him "Luke," without committing ourselves on the hotly debated question of his identity. It seems to be almost an axiom, however,

with all schools, that this author, "Luke," has contradicted his "former treatise" in his second, on the important point of the date of the Ascension. Whether the critic be engaged, like Harnack, in the ardent defence of the tradition of Lukan authorship, or as ardently opposing it, like Schmiedel, seems to make no difference, save that the assumed contradiction is in the former case a difficulty to be accounted for, even if "Luke" must be supposed to have twice over substituted a later and more legendary form of the tradition for the more authentic obtained in personal interviews with eye-witnesses in Jerusalem¹; while in the latter case it is simply one of many instances to prove the carelessness and inaccuracy of the unknown compiler in fitting together his sources.

To the present writer, whose personal convictions are on the side of Schmiedel rather than Harnack, and who accepts the main results of B. Weiss, Spitta, Jüngst, Clemen, Hilgenfeld and others in their efforts to prove the use in Acts i. of a Palestinian source also employed in Luke xxiv., any evidence of disagreement between the two representations would certainly not be unwelcome, since it would merely tend to confirm similar evidence in Luke xxiv. itself.² And yet as a candid interpreter the present writer feels compelled to challenge the assumption, ancient, general, perhaps universal, as it is.

The ordinary interpretation of Acts i. 3, which regards

¹ *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1908, p. 128.

² The narrative of vers. 36-43, in which the disciples are first "terrified and affrighted" at the appearance of Jesus, then, after the effort to overcome their incredulity, still "disbelieved for joy and wondered," *must* originally have related a *first* appearance. It cannot possibly have been framed to stand after ver. 33-34, in which the two from Emmaus find "the eleven gathered together and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." The impossibility of crowding the events of this chapter into the limits of time allowed by vers. 29, 36, 50 is a further proof of compilation. As it stands, the ascension from Olivet would have to take place at midnight!

the period of "forty days" as terminated by the ascension into heaven described in verses 9-11, is at least as old as the Alexandrian form of the text in Luke xxiv. 51, which omits the words "and was carried up into heaven." Plummer's statement, "No motive for their omission, if they were in the original document, can be suggested,"¹ is correct if we add to it "except the desire to avoid contradiction with Acts." This, however, is just such a motive as would avail to produce the cancellation in our Alexandrian authorities. That the clause *was* understood to contradict Acts is very certain from the Church calendars, which date the Ascension "forty days" after the Resurrection. Even if we cancel it we shall but leave a palpable lacuna. The sense will still require us to assume that the preceding words "he parted from them" are to be understood of something more than an ordinary leave-taking. Thus internal and transcriptional evidence as well as the earlier, "Western" form of the text are in favour of the judgment of the Revisers of 1881 in retaining the clause. And indeed Luke himself has really placed the matter beyond reasonable dispute by his own subsequent references. Twice over (Acts i. 1-2 and 22) he refers to the period of the ministry as extending "from the baptism of John until the day that he was received up from us," and in the former instance expressly states this event to have been included in his "former treatise," which related the things done and taught by Jesus "until the day in which *he was received up.*"

But we are told that the clause in Luke xxiv. 51, even if genuine, is a mere prolepsis. Although verse 50 seems to be continuous with verse 49, and verse 44 with 43, an interval of "forty days" must be understood to intervene at some point, else there is contradiction with Acts i. 3.

Certainly it is the same scene which is more fully recapit-

¹ *International Critical Commentary on Luke*, p. 565.

tulated in Acts i. 6-14. Once more the Eleven are gathered together. Once more the mission to the Gentiles is presented as a necessary preliminary to the Coming and Restoration of the Kingdom. Once more they are bidden to await in Jerusalem the outpouring of the Spirit, and "power from on high." Once more they are commissioned as "witnesses." Once more Jesus is "received up into heaven." Once more they return to Jerusalem "from the Mount called Olivet," and are "continually in the Temple."

But Acts i. 1-5, it is said, cannot refer to the same. True, verse 6 seems to be continuous with verse 5. There is no mention of any interval, no disappearance and reappearance of Jesus, or the like. The question "Dost thou at this time restore the kingdom?" follows naturally for a Jew familiar with the prophecy soon to be quoted (Acts ii. 17-21) of the outpouring of the Spirit "before the great and notable Day of the Lord," upon the promise "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The introductory words of verse 6, "They therefore (*οὐδὲν* resumptive), when they were come together," seem to refer to verse 4, "being assembled together with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father." Even if we take the possible alternate reading "eating with them," the reference will still be the same.

But no; there must be an interval of "forty days" interjected here, because in i. 1-6 the author is still speaking of what he had related in "the former treatise." Moreover the reference to the injunction "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father" is too manifestly a reference to Luke xxiv. 48-49, and especially that of the "eating together" (if that rendering be followed) to Luke xxiv. 43, to permit this scene to be dated "forty days" after the first appearance.

But we have no analogy in the earliest Christian writings

for regarding the ascension as marking the end of the forty days period of manifestations of the risen Lord, and on the contrary several unmistakable indications that it was understood to mark its *beginning*.

Thus in John xx. 17-18 the appearance to Mary Magdalene corresponding to Matthew xxviii. 9-10 is set in striking contrast with those which subsequently are granted to "the disciples," by the fact that Jesus tells her: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go unto my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." Thereafter (vers. 19-25) comes the manifestation to the disciples corresponding to Luke xxiv. 39-40, in which Jesus "shewed them his hands and his side," with the more specific direction to the doubting Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand and put it into my side, and be not faithless but believing." Into the hotly contested debate of the period from Paul to Ignatius, "With what body do they come?"¹ Was the risen Christ "in the flesh" or "a bodiless dæmon?"² our Fourth Evangelist interjects his harmonizing combination of both the earlier and later form of Synoptic tradition. Jesus' appearance at the sepulchre itself to Mary was—to use the Pauline expression—"unclothed," not yet clothed upon with the "house which is from heaven," since He was "not yet ascended." There is introduced, therefore, a tacit correction of Matthew xxviii. 9, "They (the women) came and *took hold of his feet* and worshipped him." Per contra, at the promised manifestation to the disciples, "when it was evening" on the same "first day of the week," as described by Luke xxiv. 36-43, and in a supplementary manifestation on the ensuing "first day" for the express purpose of removing all remaining doubt

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 35-45.

² Ignatius *ad Smyrn.* iii.

upon the question, increased emphasis is laid upon the tangible and corporeal nature of the resurrection body. To our Fourth Evangelist accordingly the ascension marks the *beginning*, not the end, of the period in which Jesus "shewed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them (the disciples) by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God."

The same is admittedly true of the *Epistle of Barnabas*. In arguing against the observance of the seventh day with the carnal-minded Jews (xv. 8-9) the author quotes the Isaian "Your new moons and your sabbaths I cannot away with,"¹ and adds, "Ye see what is his meaning; it is not your present sabbaths which are acceptable, but the sabbath which I have made, in the which, having given rest to all things (Gen. ii. 2, 3, Heb. iv. 3-10), I will make the beginning of the eighth (creative) day, which is the beginning of another world. Wherefore also we (Christians) keep the eighth day for rejoicing, in the which also Jesus rose from the dead, *and having been manifested ascended into the heavens.*"

In the *Gospel of Peter* we have a more or less confused combination of early sources, so that it is not easy to determine whether the author thinks of the ascension as taking place at the moment of Jesus' expiring cry, which in Mark is given as "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"² or, as *Ev. Petri* renders it, "My Power (controlling spirit), my Power, thou hast forsaken me," in Luke as "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit";³ or whether in the night before the resurrection day. In the former case⁴ the distinctive term is used, "And as soon as he had spoken he was taken up (*ἀνελήφθη*) into heaven." In the latter⁵ we have a description of the spirit of Jesus in gigantic form,

¹ Isa. i. 13.

² Ps. xxii. 2.

³ Ps. xxxi. 6.

⁴ *Ev. Petri*, v. 19.

Ev. Petri, x. 38-42.

his head towering "above the heavens," escorted by angels into heaven. Whichever is taken as the equivalent of the Lukan tradition of the ascension, or "taking up" of Jesus, in either case it *precedes* the appearances to the disciples.

Returning to the representations of the New Testament itself, it is clear that Paul, the earliest of our witnesses, knows nothing whatever of an occurrence such as a visible "taking up" or departure into heaven, dividing his own experience of the manifestation of the risen Lord from those experienced by "Cephas, the twelve, the five hundred, James, and the apostles." The appearance to Paul is simply the "last of all" in an unbroken series of similar experiences. Luke himself, who interjects in Acts i. 3 a general summary of the appearances to the disciples as having covered a period of "forty days," in no way brings out the fortieth day as signaled by any particular occurrence. It is not connected in any way with the occurrences of Pentecost on the fiftieth day from the sabbath of the crucifixion. The entire verse 3 is interjected parenthetically, simply to inform the reader that the main manifestations already related were not the only ones, but that the appearances to the disciples continued for "forty days." True this "forty days" may well be regarded as an invaluable datum of early tradition fixing in round numbers the period covered by the appearances referred to by Paul.¹ This period began with the appearance "to Peter," the occasion of his "turning again and stablishing his brethren,"² an occasion almost certainly to be dated later than "the third day" (or "after three days") from the crucifixion. It may therefore very well have ended with Pentecost, which Dobschütz and others have identified as the occasion in Paul's mind in the statement "then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 3-8.

² Luke xxii. 32.

once." As Luke, like the rest of our Evangelists, has cancelled the story of the appearance to Peter, that most fundamental and critical of all the resurrection appearances, the significance of the traditional datum of "forty days" remains as unintelligible in his narrative as the other references to Peter's "turning again and stablishing his brethren,"¹ the Lord's having "appeared to Simon,"² and Peter's unexplained reappearance as acknowledged leader after the story of his flight and disgrace.³

If, however, we simply regard the whole interjected verse Acts i. 3 as the historian's more or less inadequate attempt to compensate for these omitted traditions, all the difficulties surrounding the relation of this chapter to Luke xxiv. will completely vanish. Acts i. 4, so obviously referring to Luke xxiv. 48-49, and Acts i. 6-11, so clearly continuous with the preceding paragraph, so obviously referring to the same ascension story as Luke xxiv. 50-53, this in its turn continuous with its preceding context, will really refer to the same occasion, if only on the simple principle that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other. Moreover, "Luke" will not have contradicted his own "former treatise," nor will he have departed from the standpoint of *all* the testimony available from the apostolic and post-apostolic age, that the ascension was conceived to have occurred *at the beginning*, not the end, of the period of appearances to the disciples.

This seems to the present writer a more probable view than that in this account of the ascension Luke has "twice over exchanged his better knowledge for a later and inferior tradition."

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¹ Luke xxii. 32. ² Luke xxiv. 34.

³ Acts i. 15 ff.; cf. Luke xxii. 54-62.