

THE CAREFULNESS OF LUKE THE PROPHET.

PROFESSOR HARNACK, whose candour and straightforwardness of mind in the best sense of those words have always been the admiration of his readers, says of St. Luke that "there is scarcely another writer in the New Testament who is so careless a historian as he.¹ He must indeed be called an artist in language, but in regard to his subject-matter, in chapter after chapter, where he is not an eye-witness, he affords gross instances of carelessness, and often of complete confusion in the narrative." He then proceeds to give instances.

I propose to submit some passages in the Acts, whether describing scenes of which he was an eye-witness or not (and on this question my sure conviction that St. Luke was Silas prevents me just now from agreeing with him), which to the patient examiner exhibit signs of a most unusual and careful elaboration. The formulated results of this examination, which was made long before Professor Harnack's work appeared, have not a little to do with the question of whether Luke was "a careful historian" in the sense of Professor Harnack's statement, which, taken apart from the context to which I refer the reader, might appear to be a much more sweeping statement than he probably intends it to be. Most readers would be disposed to group the instances quoted by him as minor discrepancies, slight omissions, iterations, anticipations, abbreviations in detail. But the present point is whether the "carelessness" of the historian is to be strictly limited to his statements of detailed occurrence in particular scenes and so amounts to nothing more than incomplete description, or, on the other hand, extends to a carelessness of writing, apart from the artistic merit that the critic has rightly attributed to St. Luke.

¹ *Luke the Physician*, p. 112.

It will appear that there is a balance of carefulness against the carelessness that has to be taken into account, and that moreover throws a light upon the innermost mind of St. Luke which can only lead us to further results of great importance bearing on the question of the authorship of "Acts."

Let us first take the three accounts of the "Conversion" of St. Paul, which happen to be the first of the instances mentioned by Professor Harnack, who adds: "Here the narrator alone is to blame, for he possessed only one account." It must be remembered that the "conversion" of Saul is a term which has no scriptural authority as applied to the great occurrence on the road to Damascus. St. Paul so far from applying it to himself gives no account of the event in his Epistles. And in one way it is an objectionable term, in that it implies that St. Paul was once converted from a sinful life. What St. Paul is reported as saying is that he "was exceedingly mad against" the saints, when "I lived according to the strictest sect of our religion, a Pharisee," "being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day." His persecution of the saints is a proof of zeal, not of sinfulness. His own consciousness of sin is quite apart from his having been a persecutor before baptism. He "is not fit to be called an Apostle because he persecuted the Church of God" (1 Cor. xv. 9), not however because that was "sin" at the time, but because it was madness or misdirected zeal, "being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. i. 14). The amazing contrast was indeed a complete turning round (Gal. i. 23) or conversion, but it was not so much a confession of previous sin as of previous insanity or error. The Apostle's self-reproaches of sinfulness in Romans vii. have no particular relation to his life before the occurrence.

However, it must next be observed that whatever fitness belongs to the term "conversion" in St. Paul's case, the same

is held by St. Luke to belong to the term in St. Peter's case. St. Paul was "converted" in Acts ix. because St. Peter was to be "converted" in Acts x. Let this not be misunderstood. Both events were historical and both, I believe, have been truly described by St. Luke. There was a parallelism in fact, and St. Luke has set forth this parallelism in history. Neither the description in Acts ix. nor that in Acts x. has been composed in order to make history; neither of them is a fiction for purposes other than the diffusion of the truth. The parallelism of the Acts is a fact and not a fancy,¹—a fact of critical importance,—but the reasons of it and the consequences of it generally do not now concern us more closely than the particular observation that Acts ix. is parallel to Acts x. It must suffice here to say that the predisposition of St. Luke's mind exhibited in the parallelism which he has drawn between St. Peter and St. Paul is abundantly illustrated in the pages of the New Testament. It is illustrated in the resemblance of events in one apostle's life and events in another's: in the resemblance of events in the life of the Master and that of the disciple (for instance, "Talitha, arise," Luke viii. 54, and "Tabitha, arise," Acts ix. 40; and the words on the Cross compared with those of Stephen at his death); in the resemblance of the historic occurrence and the prophetic prediction; in the resemblance of the New Testament chain of events and the Old Testament chain of events.

The latter is the most wonderful of all these kinds. If I were asked what was the most marvellous thing, apart from the Beauty of Holiness, in the whole Bible, I should have no hesitation in saying that it was the coincidence between the names in Joshua in the Greek Old Testament and the names in the map of Macedonia.² This coincidence,

¹ *St. Luke the Prophet*, p. 319.

² See EXPOSITOR, 1901; *St. Luke the Prophet*, ch. ii.

which is gathered from the pages of "Acts," but only remotely indicated by St. Luke, is marvellous, undeniable, unique, antecedently incredible, unaccountable except on the supposition of the accuracy of the travel-document, and at the same time altogether consistent with the other features of St. Luke's writing.

It is time that we came to close quarters with St. Luke's report of the "conversion" of Saul. It is written, not only with a sense of parallelism with the Old Testament, but upon the framework of a certain chapter of Daniel.

St. Peter's conversion is directly stated to have been due to an ecstasy or state of trance, superinduced, physically speaking, by fasting (Acts x. 10). The question naturally arises whether the physical state of Saul on the road to Damascus was not equally one of ecstasy.¹ To some persons it may appear incredible that the persecuting Pharisee, however faint and weary with the heat of the midday sun and the fatigue of travel, could have fallen into a trance. Such persons would assuredly be disposed to say, as the men of old time "said one to another, Is Saul also among the prophets? Therefore it became a proverb" (1 Sam. x. 11, 12). But is it so unlikely that a state of trance which was habitual with the prophets—of this there is no doubt whatever—would not befall one who at that time was not himself a prophet? Does any student of the physiology of trance venture to say that a condition would not in the circumstances given in this particular case account for St. Luke's language, which we, for convenience, may fairly sum up in the statement that a trance or ecstasy fell upon Saul as it fell upon Peter at Joppa? The Greek Bible was known at that time to Saul, and he would be especially versed in the history of his namesake, Saul, son of Kish.

¹ This question is partly discussed in *St. Luke the Prophet*, p. 343 ff., but the following parallelism with Daniel had not been noticed by me then.

The words in 1 Samuel x. 2 would be present to his mind, "The Lord hath anointed thee for his inheritance to be a ruler": he was in fact charged with a High Commission to deal with certain sectaries accused of blasphemy. Acts xxvi. 11 implies this, which, however, is proved on other grounds. His destined "inheritance" seemed then to him to be "Israel after the flesh" (1 Cor. x. 18; Eph. ii. 11; Rom. ix. 3). How little did he dream then of its fulfilment in the "inheritance of the saints in light" (Eph. i. 18; Col. i. 12)! Then, further, he knew that it had been foretold of Saul, the son of Kish, that "the Spirit of the Lord shall *leap upon* thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man." It is a common way of speaking that prophecies tend to their own fulfilment, and it seems to be credible that this prophecy so tended in this case of the second Saul of the tribe of Benjamin. I do not find more than two traces of the narrative of 1 Samuel x. underlying the narrative of Acts, but these are worth noting. "It shall come to pass, when these signs shall have come upon thee, do all things that thy hand findeth to do, for God is with thee . . . and I *will tell thee what thou shalt do*" (1 Sam. x. 7, 8). In Acts ix. 6 Jesus says to Saul, "Enter into the city, and it *shall be told thee what thou must do*" (ix. 16), "for I *will shew him how many things he must suffer* (compare Acts xxii. 10). And the other trace is in the single but volume-speaking word, also of Jesus, to him (Acts xxvi. 18), "that they should receive remission of sins and an *inheritance* among the saints by faith that is in me."

This, however, is only by the way, except that it illustrates the profound permeation of St. Luke's mind with the phraseology of the Old Testament, such as no Gentile could ever have obtained. It is, I respectfully think, an omission of Professor Harnack's, that he has passed so very lightly over the question of St. Luke's (alleged) Gentile origin.

We come now to the passage of Daniel x., which underlies Acts ix., xxii., and xxvi., and it will appear to be a plain conclusion from the comparison of Acts with its original that the writer of Acts believed that a trance "leapt upon" Saul on the way to Damascus. The account in Daniel is abridged here.

LXX. of Daniel x.

(2) In those days I Daniel was mourning *three* weeks.

(3) I ate no pleasant food, and meat and wine entered not into my mouth.

(4) I was at the brink of the great river Tigris.

(5) And I lifted up my eyes and saw, and, behold, a man . . . and from his waist was *light*.

(6) Like brass *lightening* forth (*ἐξαστράπτων*).

(7) And I saw this great *vision* (*ὄρασιν* LXX, *ὄπτασιαν* Theodotion), and the men that were with me saw not this vision, and great *fear* fell upon them.

(8) And I was left *alone* and . . . there was not left *in me any strength*.

(9) And I heard not the voice of his *speaking* (*τὴν φωνὴν λαλιᾶς αὐτοῦ*): for I had *fallen* on my face *upon the earth*. (So LXX, but Theodotion has, "and I heard the voice of his words, and in my hearing of him (*αὐτοῦ*) I was dumfounded . . ." (*καταρηνυμένος*.)

(10) And, behold, he *led forth* a *hand* to me (*χεῖρα προσήγαγέ μοι*) and *raised* me upon my knees (*ἤγειρέ με ἐπὶ τῶν γονάτων*)

Acts ix. 3 foll., xxii. 6 foll., xxvi. 12 foll.

ix. He was *three* days without sight, and he ate not nor drank.

ix. As he drew near to Damascus there *lightened* round him (*περήστραψεν φῶς*) (also xxii.) a *light* from heaven.

xxvi. the heavenly *vision* (*ὄπτασις*).

ix. and the men that journeyed with him stood *speechless* hearing (part) of the voice but *seeing* no man (*ἀκούοντες μὲν τῆς φωνῆς μηδὲνα δὲ θεωροῦντες*).

ix. And when his eyes had been opened he saw nothing.

xxvi. We all *fell down to the earth*, I heard . . .

xxvi. 14 β. Because of the *fear*, I alone heard a voice (*φωνήν*).

xxii. Saw the light, but heard not the voice (*φωνήν*) of him that spake to me (*λαλοῦντος*).

ix. And he *fell upon the earth* and heard a voice (*ἤκουσεν φωνήν*).

ix. *leading* him by the hand they led him into Damascus (*χειραγωγούντες*, so xxii.).

xxvi. But stand up, and *stand*

on to the soles of my feet (*ἐπὶ τὰ ἔχνη τῶν ποδῶν μου*).

(11) And he said unto me, Daniel, thou art a miserable man: understand the *commands* (*προστάγμασι*) that I speak unto thee, and *stand* (*στῆθι*) upon thy place (but *τῆ στάσει*, Theodotion), for now I am *sent as an apostle* (*ἀπεστέλην*) unto thee.

(12) From the first day thou didst . . . humble thyself before the Lord thy God, thy word was heard, and I entered at (?) thy word (*εἰσῆλθον τῷ ῥήματι σου*).

(14) I came to *show* thee (*ὑποδείξαι σοι*) what shall befall.

(15) And the general of the *king* of the Persians. . . .

(16) And, behold, as it were the likeness of a man's hand touched me on the lips, and I opened my mouth and spake, and said to him that stood before me, *Lord*.

(19) And as he spake with me, I became *strong* (*ἰσχυσα*) and said, Let my Lord speak; for he *strengthened* me (*ἐνίσχυσεν με*).

upon thy feet (*ἀνάστηθι καὶ στῆθι ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου*).

ix. And Saul was *raised* (*ἤγερθη*) from the earth.

xxii. Arise (*ἀναστás*) and go unto Damascus, and there it shall be spoken unto thee of all things that it hath been *commanded* (*τέτακται*) thee to do.

xxvi. Unto whom I *send* thee as an *apostle* (*ἀποστέλλω*).

ix. The Lord hath *sent me* as an *apostle* (*ἀπέσταλκέν με*).

ix. How many things he must suffer on behalf of my name.

ix. That thou mayest be filled with the Holy Ghost.

ix. I will *show* him (*ὑποδείξω*) how great things . . .

ix. To bear my name before both Gentiles and *kings* (*βασιλέων*),

ix. And he said, Who art thou, *Lord*? (*τίς εἶ, κύριε*);—so xxii. and xxvi.

ix. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it were scales,¹ and he recovered sight . . . , and having taken food he became *strong* (*ἐνισχύθη*).

In each successive stage of the narrative in Daniel we can observe how closely St. Luke has followed his original. The physical condition of the prophet, the general character of the light, the effect on those who saw, the subsequent discourse, the recovery, all present us with the closest features of comparison. Two observations will readily occur to the reader: (1) that the physical effect of the vision in

¹ For the explanation of this see *St. Luke the Prophet*, pp. 301 f.

Daniel is one of temporary *dumbness* (see Isa. vi. 5, Dan. x. 16),—and few will doubt that the Daniel narrative has its origin in the great vision of Isaiah,—whereas in Acts the contrasted effect was temporary *blindness*; (2) that the vision of Daniel (Dan. x. 5, 6, 12, 19) is chiefly the origin of that in the Apocalypse (Rev. i.)—a fact that has often been pointed out.

There is one remarkable point on which further study is much to be desired, arising out of Daniel x. 8, “I was left *alone*,” and it will be appreciated by those who are interested in the admirable theory of the late Friedrich Blass, whose loss to the cause of scholarship and New Testament theology is indeed to be deplored, and whose edition of the Acts in Greek with a Latin commentary is one of the most important editions of a book of the New Testament in modern times. Blass has maintained, with complete cogency as I think, that the Acts as we have it is the second draft (*a*), and that he has recovered the first draft (*β*), in many portions of it at least, from the Bezan MS. and other sources. Now it is not conceivable that any copyist in copying Acts xxii. 14 should have had his mind preoccupied with Daniel x. 8 or any other passage apart from the Lucan narrative or narratives, where the word *μόνος* (*alone*) was written. There is not much reason to suppose that a copyist desired to emphasize the fact that Saul *alone* heard a voice saying in Hebrew, “Saul, Saul,” etc. There is no transcriptional or doctrinal or other reason apparent why *μόνος* should have crept into the text. Therefore it is not improbable that *μόνος* was always in the first draft of Acts. Now it has not been observed by Blass, though the idea of the two drafts *β* and *a* will always be associated with his name, that the first draft *β* shows many traces of being more in the prophetic manner than *a*, that, in other words, *β* has been curtailed into *a* by the omission of remarks which would interest thoughtful readers of Christian prophecy more than others

of a later time. And upon reflection we may suppose that after the great and crowning fulfilment of prophecy in the catastrophe of 70 A.D. the following years, in the course of which the "Acts" was composed, would bring with them a waning interest in prophecy generally, together with an increased interest in the organization and order of the Church.¹ If it is true, as the present writer is persuaded, that β is more prophetic than α , then the presence in Acts xxvi. 14 β of $\mu\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$, which is derived from Daniel x. 8, but has no particular necessity in Acts, exactly illustrates the mind of St. Luke as I conceive it to be. He originally wrote $\mu\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ in ; but later, in the revision of β which resulted in α , he deleted the rhetorical and redundant $\mu\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ together with the accompanying $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\acute{o}\nu\ \phi\acute{o}\beta\omicron\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\omega}$, and thus it happens that no trace of the underlying Daniel narrative in this line has been preserved to us in the extant authorities for the text of Acts except in the cursive 137 at Milan, the Philoxenian Syriac, and especially the Stockholm Giant Latin version, which frequently takes us back to readings of the fourth century in the Acts, and is therefore in many passages as good an authority as any existing MS. whatever.²

The very old question of the seeming contradictions of the three narratives is not one that seems to me to need a further solution. We can be satisfied with the accounts in the three chapters of Acts as historical. The question that is raised about Saul's companions hearing or not hearing the voice is determined by the mere laws of grammar. To hear part of a voice is naturally expressed by the genitive case, that is to hear it indistinctly. To hear a voice is expressed by the accusative, and this is to hear it directly or distinctly. The companions did not hear it distinctly in Acts xxii. 9, and they heard it indistinctly in Acts ix. 7.

¹ See *St. Luke the Prophet*, p. 360 foll.

² Blass, *Acta App.*, p. 29.

They saw the light in xxii. 9, they saw no man in ix. 7. But yet if any one should ask why the historian should be so careless of seeming contradiction as to put into one account the statement on the positive side "heard," and then into a subsequent account the consistent statement on the negative side "did not hear," or if it should be asked why he should trouble to describe the effect upon the companions either way at all, then I think the answer is provided by the reference to Daniel x. He put these statements because, being true to fact, they corresponded with the ancient account of Scripture in the Book of Daniel. They mark its "fulfilment." They were among "the things which have been brought to their fulfilment among us" (*τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων*, Luke i. 1), and he is giving here a "description" (*διήγησις*) of them as he promised to do in the preface to his Gospel.¹ Not, indeed, that the "description" or "report" has the same precise meaning in this case that it bears in regard to the missionary journeys of the Apostles, after the conclusion of which the report was regularly required. But when we consider that this occasion was the call of the persecutor to be an Apostle and to be sent (Acts xxvi. 7) as Daniel was sent (Dan. x. 20), and that the original uses the term of apostleship (*ἀπεστάλην*, Dan. x. 11) precisely as Ananias speaks of his own apostleship to Saul (Acts ix. 17), we need not be surprised at the insertion of details that many historians would have passed over more carelessly than St. Luke, to whom as a prophet and as companion of St. Paul they were instinct with the deepest interest. And in fact we observe that the wavering expression in Acts, conveyed by the two different constructions of "hearing" with the genitive and with the accusative case, follows very closely upon the wavering effect of the original in Daniel, where we compare

¹ *St. Luke the Prophet*, pp. 35, 42 and index.

LXX Dan. x. 6, "the voice of his speech was as the voice of tumult," with 9, "*I heard not* (τῆν) *the voice of his speech*"; and again, Theodotion, Dan. x. 9, "*I heard the voice of his words and in hearing it* (ἐν τῷ ἀκοῦσαι με αὐτοῦ) *I was dumfounded.*"

That the vision of Daniel x. is represented as the vision of a trance and not of a dream, and was so understood by St. Luke, is beyond all doubt. It is not represented to be a dream, though in earlier chapters (vii. 2, viii. 2) dreams are narrated. In the ninth chapter (ix. 21), as the sequel to a period of fasting (ix. 3), Daniel falls into a trance "and, behold, the man Gabriel, being caused to fly swiftly, drew near unto me at the time of the evening oblation." In fact the Book of Daniel represents "Daniel" in progressive stages. First, he is a learned young scholar (i. 4, 17); then he is an interpreter of dreams as a dreamer himself (ii. 19, etc.); finally he is a prophet subject to the state of trance (x.-xii.). And one reason why the four concluding chapters of this book have so profoundly impressed the Christian prophets, and through them all later students of prophecy, may very well be that they contain the narrative of Revelations or Apocalypses given in accordance with the rules of prophecy established in the first days of the Christian Church.¹

If any one should be disposed to ask why the close connexion between Acts ix. and Daniel x., if it be not imaginary but true matter of fact, has never yet been set forth, as I do not think it has, he has only to realize the other very extraordinary fact that the Septuagint version of the Book of Daniel has never been easily accessible until the *Cambridge Old Testament in Greek* was published in 1894, edited by Dr. Swete. Till then, every Greek Bible contained Daniel in the Greek not of the LXX but of Theodotion, and

¹ See *The Christian Prophets*, 1900, index.

this was so much a matter of course that it was not considered necessary even to draw the reader's attention to this notable exception. The date of Theodotion's version is still uncertain, but it or a close predecessor of it seems to be decidedly pre-Christian. The writers of Hebrews and Apocalypse resorted to that version. But the remarkable fact is that St. Luke in Acts ix. has taken the LXX version and not Theodotion's as his basis. He has done the same with reference to Acts xxi.-xxiii. and Daniel xi.¹ Certainly the publication of the LXX version of Daniel for English readers has been a means of illumination. But a great and fascinating puzzle awaits solution. Who will find out the reason why in times very soon after the Christian era the LXX version of Daniel virtually disappeared from view? Is it possible that it was suppressed deliberately? If so, is it possible that it was suppressed by Jewish controversialists because it exhibited certain remarkable features of Christian "fulfilment" of prophecy, the admission of which it was thought by them undesirable to make? Is it possible that it was also suppressed by the dominant portion of the Church in opposition to the Montanists, who maintained an exaggerated opinion of the importance of prophecy in the Church at a time when its work was practically finished and its usefulness was extinct? The natural conclusion of St. Mark's Gospel is "lost." Tertullian's six books upon Ecstasy were "lost" and are still "lost." The sequel to Acts xxviii. is possibly lost. All these works would have thrown light upon pre-Christian prophecy and Christian prophecy in their mutual relations. There were reasons why both these groups of persons might wish to remove traces of the close connexion between the prophecy of the Old Testament and the prophecy of the New. Whether and how far those reasons operated practically is a perplexity of theology.

E. C. SELWYN.

¹ See *St. Luke the Prophet*, pp. 67-74.