The Meaning of Acts 14

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Kal συναλιζόμενος παρῆγγειλεν αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ Ἰεροσολύμων μὴ χωρίζοντο. The meaning of these words has long been a matter of uncertainty. Συναλίζω, collect or assemble, is common in classical and Hellenistic Greek, and many interpreters have naturally understood the word in this sense here. Thus Luther, taking συναλιζόμενος as a middle participle, translated it als er sie versammelt hatte. But the middle voice, though on a priori grounds defensible as indicating the interest felt by the subject in the action, does not occur in actual use. The A.V. and the R.V. in the text regard the participle as passive and render it being assembled together with them, i.e. meeting with them. On the other hand, the Vulgate translates συναλιζόμενος by conversescens. This interpretation antedates the time of Jerome in the West, and may extend back into the second century;¹ and in the East it was known certainly as early as the third century.² It is also found in Epiphanius, Chrysostom, and some other Greek interpreters,³ as well as in the margin of

¹ Codex d reads simul convivens. Dr. Rendel Harris suspects that the basis of the Old Latin translation found in this Ms. existed in the early part of the second century (cf. Texts and Studies, II. I. p. 225). But on the whole d is ‘European’ and in general represents a Latin text of the third or fourth century. Codex e² reads conversescens. But this corrector belongs perhaps to the end of the sixth century and has probably introduced the word from the Vulgate.

² Cf. Tischendorf, ad loc.

³ Cf. Epiphanius (Migne, Patr. Graec. xlii. 277; xlii. 88); Chrysostom (Migne, op. cit. li. 104 bis, 107; ix. 19, 22); Theodoret (Migne, op. cit. lxxxiii. 160); Oecumenius (Migne, op. cit. cxviii. 48); Theophylact (Migne, op. cit. cxxv. 508).
both the A.V. and the R.V. The rendering *while he ate with them*—for so the present participle with this meaning must be understood⁴—presents an impressive picture, which comports well with the notices concerning the breaking of bread and the eating of a piece of broiled fish in Lk. 24 30, 41-43 and with the declaration of Peter in Ac. 10 41. These passages would naturally commend the interpretation *eating with* in Ac. 1 4 to a Greek writer if he was acquainted with *συναλλαζομαι* in that sense.

There is no doubt that the meaning *eat with* was attached to *συναλλαζομαι*, and it seems highly probable that there were two verbs quite distinct in etymology and meaning—*συναλλαζω*, collect or assemble (from ἀλης, crowded), and *συναλλαζομαι*, eat with (from ἄλς, salt).⁶ In prose writings the two verbs would be easily confused in the passive.

*Συναλλαζομαι*, eat with, was known to others than the ecclesiastical writers above mentioned. It occurs once without doubt in the pseudo-Clementine Homilies.⁶ The Grundschrift of the Homilies and Recognitions was written in the third century,⁷ and hence this example of the word cannot antedate that period.

There is probably another instance of *συναλλαζομαι*, eat with, in an astrological poem of composite authorship which is wrongly ascribed to Manetho.⁸ So far as the sense is concerned, *συναλλαζομενον* might be either from *συναλλαζω*, collect, or from *συναλλαζομαι*, eat with. But unless the writer disregarded the quantity of the α, the participle must be from the latter verb.⁹ The verse in question occurs in a part of

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⁴ Cf. Weiss, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, p. 29.
⁶ Cf. [Clem.], *Hom. 18. 4*: οὕτω συναλλαζομεθα. Cf. also *Recog. 7. 29*: *cum eis cibum sumimus*, which is parallel to the above passage in the Homilies.
⁸ Cf. [Manetho], *Apostlesmatica*, 5. 839: θεμα λυγρη γυμετη συναλλαζομενον κακοθες (of a bad wife).
the poem which is considerably later than the time of Julian (A.D. 361-363).10

In Ps. 140:4 (Heb. 141:4) an anonymous translator, whose work has been preserved in Origen’s Hexapla, has used the word συναλλάζω.11 The Hebrew at this place is רָכִּי, eat, and Symmachus’s version has συμφάγωμι; but the LXX reads συνδιαίσω from συνδιαίσω, join oneself with. The versions of Aquila and Theodotion are wanting in this place. Some, in accordance with the LXX, have taken συναλλάζω from συναλλαζω, collect.12 But the anonymous translator, who probably lived in the second century of the Christian era, seems to have been following the Hebrew text as we have it.13 Hence συναλλάζω must be from συναλλαζω, eat with.14

I have not been able to find any instance of συναλλαζω, eat with, in the papyri, and it seems to be unknown in modern Greek.15 In short, there is no evidence for the existence of συναλλαζω, eat with, before the second century after Christ,16 and even thereafter it is extremely rare.

We should not adopt this unusual meaning for συναλλάζωμενος in Ac. 1:4, especially since there is no proof that it was known before the second century of our era, unless we are forced to do so by weighty considerations. Luke uses the unambiguous συνεδριάω three times in the Gospel and the Acts,17 and there seems to be no reason why he should not

11 Cf. Migne, op. cit. xvi. 1237.
12 So Stephanus, op. cit. s.v.; and Woolsey in op. cit. xxxix. p. 608 f.
13 Heb. רָכִּי לְולָה סֵלֶת
LXX. καὶ ό μὴ συνδιαίσω μετά τόν ἑλεκτὼν αὐτῶν.
Anon. μὴ συναλλάζῃ ἐν ταῖς τερατωσίας αὐτῶν.
Sym. μηδὲ συμφάγομι τὰ ἰδία αὐτῶν.
14 So the Latin translation in Migne, and Meyer (cf. his Kommentar über das N.T. on Ac. 1:4). Dr. Woolsey thought this interpretation improbable because of the unlikelihood of there being an aorist passive form from this verb (cf. Woolsey in op. cit. xxxix. p. 609). But συνεδριάω, ate with, occurs in Epiphanius (cf. Migne, op. cit. xlii. 88).
15 The so-called Etymologicum Magnum recognizes the two meanings collect and eat with under the word συναλλάζωμεν.
16 So Woolsey in op. cit. xxxix. p. 612.
17 Lk. 15:2; Ac. 10:41; 11:2.
have used the same word here if he had wished to express the idea of *eating with*. However, several modern commentators of the highest rank have felt obliged to take *συναλαζωμένος* here in the sense of *eating with*.\(^{18}\) Weiss gives succinctly the two reasons which are thought to require the adoption of this meaning: (1) on account of the present tense of the participle, and (2) because of its reference to a single person.\(^{19}\) I shall discuss the second of these reasons first.

There is one certain case in which *συναλιζω, collect*, is used in the passive of a single person. It is found in a fragment ascribed to Petosiris, a semi-mythical Egyptian priest and astrologer, which has been preserved by the philosopher Proclus. The trustworthiness of Petosiris in certain theurgic matters is based on his association with gods and angels.\(^{20}\) Hence there can be no objection to taking *συναλιζόμενος* in Ac. 1:4 from *συναλιζω, collect*, on the ground that it refers to a single person.\(^{21}\)

The present tense of the participle presents a more serious difficulty. The aorist *παρήγγειλεν* is understood of a single act in past time, and the present participle is at once seen to be incongruous.\(^{22}\) For with this interpretation of *παρήγγειλεν* it can only mean *as he met with them*; whereas the sense *when he had met with them*, which would be quite intelligible here, requires the aorist participle *συναλισθήκεν*.\(^{23}\) Dr. Woolsey

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\(^{18}\) So Meyer, Overbeck, Blass, Wendt, Holtzmann, and Weiss; but not de Wette.

\(^{19}\) Cf. Weiss, *op. cit.* p. 20.


\(^{21}\) If Stephanus and Woolsey are right in referring *συναλισθήκει* in the anonymous translation of Ps. 140:1 to *συναλισθήκει* we have another instance of this verb used of a single person. The present writer, however, believes that *συναλισθήκει* in this place is from *συναλίσθηκε*.

\(^{22}\) With *συναλισθήκει* we may compare the use of *συνάγω* in Jn. 18:2: *συνάγον Ἰησοῦν ἐκεί μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ*.

\(^{23}\) Thus Blass (*Acta Apostolorum*, p. 42) says, "praesens plane ferri nequit."

\(^{24}\) Hesychius, *s.v.*, explains *συναλισθήκει* by *συναλισθήκει*. This may give rise to a suspicion that *συναλισθήκει* in Ac. 1:4 was sometimes explained by the aorist (cf. Woolsey in *op. cit.* xxxix. p. 613 f.); but it is certainly no warrant for our taking the present as an aorist.
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say, "the verb in the passive with a deponent meaning can denote, if I mistake not, both the transitory act of being assembled or meeting with another, and the permanent condition of being in a meeting." In support of this opinion he cites a passage from the Iliad (Ω 801 f.):

αὐτὰ ἡμετα
εὖ συναγειρόμενο δαίννυ ἐρυμένα δαίτα
dώμασιν ἐν Πρῶμοι διοτρεμένος βασιλῆς

(the funeral feast of Hector). But the Homeric passage is quite different. It depicts a scene in which the crowd is seen gathering together and feasting. Dr. Woolsey’s interpretation of Ac. 14 gives to the present συναλλάξαμενος the force of the perfect. Συνηλισμένος would mean that he had met with them and was still in their company when the charge was given. The present participle, however, denotes an action, and not an abiding condition resulting from an action. Hence this solution of the difficulty must be abandoned. On account of the supposed impossibility of explaining the present tense if συναλλάξαμενος is connected with συναλλάξω, collect, a number of modern commentators have adopted the meaning eating with.

But it is possible to preserve the proper force of the present participle without giving to the word this unusual meaning. Vss. 3 and 4 are closely connected in thought, both recounting incidents of the forty days subsequent to the Lord’s resurrection. The aorists παρέστησεν and παρῆγγειλεν are complexive, and present a summary view of a whole course of past action. The course of action so summarized extended throughout the forty days, Jesus appearing and meeting with the disciples at intervals during that period. The complexive aorist differs from the imper-

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25 Cf. supra, p. 126.
26 Therefore the colon of Tischendorf and Weiss is preferable to the period of Westcott and Hort at the end of vs. 3.
27 For this use of the aorist, which is also called the constative or the concentrative, cf. Brugmann, Griechische Grammatik, p. 475 f.; Moulton, A Grammar of N.T. Greek, i. p. 109.
fect in that the latter represents an action as progressing through its successive stages, whereas the former regards the entire course of action as concentrated in a single point. In Ac. 1:4 the present participle συναλλαξόμενος, like ὄπτανόμενος and λέγων in the preceding verse, is iterative and refers to the several occasions on which Jesus bade his disciples to remain in Jerusalem. It is therefore coincident in time with the course of action summarized in παρῆγγελεν. Hence we may translate καὶ συναλλαξόμενος παρῆγγελεν αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ Ἰεροσολύμων μη χωρίζεσθαι thus: and meeting with them (from time to time) he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem.

If this interpretation is adopted, the meaning which is lexically more probable for συναλλαξόμενος may be retained and the use of the present participle with the aorist παρῆγγελεν can be satisfactorily explained.

28 The distinction between the complexive aorist and the imperfect can be clearly seen in Ac. 28:10: ἔκλεισεν δὲ διετάν δὴν ἐν ἰδίῳ μεθώματι, καὶ ἀπεδέχετο τάννας τοῦ εἰσπορευμένου πρὸς αὐτόν.

29 Cf. Thuc. ii. 47, 4: δει τι πρὸς ἵεροι λειτουργεῖν ἣ μακρεῖοι καὶ τοῖς τοιούτων ἥχησατο, τάρτα ἀνωφελῆ ἦν, τελευτώτες τε αὐτῷ ἀπέπεμψαν ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ μικρήμον (i.e. during the plague at Athens).