

THE TEXT AND INTERPRETATION OF ACTS i 1-2

THE opinion has been gaining ground that the text of the Greek MSS in the first few verses of Acts is corrupt, and that a nearer approach may be made to the original Greek by conjectural reconstruction from ancient versions, especially the Old Latin. Professor A. C. Clark—to mention first the latest editor of the text of Acts—prints a conjectural Greek text which differs considerably from the text of all the Greek MSS, and which is, in fact, a retranslation from the Old Latin. The late Professor Ropes, whose general position with regard to the textual criticism of Acts is directly opposite to that of Professor Clark, has yet in this case argued at length for the view that the original is to be found embedded in the Old Latin Version. Professor Burkitt appears to accept Ropes's position.¹ On the other hand, in the last two volumes of *The Beginnings of Christianity*, recently published, Professor Lake, with Professor Cadbury, definitely abandons Ropes's reconstruction, and advocates a return to the text of the Greek MSS, though with one important reservation.

In this paper I shall examine the evidence afresh, and, while accepting a large part of the argument recently put forward by Lake in criticism of Ropes, I shall urge that the remaining reservation which Lake maintains should be withdrawn, and that we should stand by the text of the manuscripts entire.

With the single exception of *Codex Bezae*, all the extant ancient Greek MSS agree in the text which they give of the first two verses of Acts. Westcott and Hort accept this text—which is also the *textus receptus*—without question. It is as follows:—

Τὸν μὲν πρῶτον λόγον ἐποιησάμην περὶ πάντων, ὃ Θεόφιλε, ὃν ἤρξατο Ἰησοῦς ποιέν τε καὶ διδάσκειν ἄχρι ἣς ἡμέρας ἐντειλάμενος τοῖς ἀποστόλοις διὰ πνεύματος ἀγίου οὐς ἔξελέξατο ἀνελήμφθη.

The only doubtful point is whether the article should be prefixed to 'Ιησοῦς with the majority of the manuscripts or omitted with B (supported by D).

Codex Bezae differs in two respects: (1) after ἔξελέξατο are added the words καὶ ἐκέλευσε κηρύσσειν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον; (2) ἀνελήμφθη follows ἄχρι ἣς ἡμέρας instead of closing the sentence. The same text as that of *Codex Bezae* is attested by Thomas of Harkel for the Greek MS which he collated at the Enaton Monastery, except that in this manuscript διὰ πνεύματος ἀγίου probably followed ἔξελέξατο. The additional sentence

¹ *Encyclopaedia Brit.* 14th ed. vol. iii p. 521.

καὶ ἐκέλευσε κηρύσσειν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον is very similar in its general character to many other 'Western' expansions of the text, and, here as elsewhere, the interpolator has seriously disturbed the balance of the sentence. It is not clear how the text of D should be translated. Should we co-ordinate καὶ ἐκέλευσε with ἀνελήμφθη? In that case the sequence is very awkward. Perhaps then καὶ ἐκέλευσε is better taken as co-ordinate with ἔξελέξατο, in which case it might look back to the original charge to the Twelve recorded in the Gospel. But more probably the interpolator reflects vaguely that the Apostles were not only 'chosen' but also 'commissioned to preach the Gospel', and thinks that a further clause will round off the sentence. If the original 'Western' editor was operating upon the text as we read it in all other Greek manuscripts, it was an almost inevitable consequence of his addition that he should transpose ἀνελήμφθη to follow ἄχρι ἡς ἡμέρας. Even with the B text the isolated position of ἀνελήμφθη after ἔξελέξατο is not good and, if the sentence is further weighted with the 'Western' addition, ἀνελήμφθη is necessarily thrown back.

Corssen¹ justly points out that the D text is doubly unsatisfactory: (1) the additional sentence is materially wrong when ἡς ἡμέρας ἀνελήμφθη has been already given as the conclusion of the Gospel, and (2) it is formally wrong after ἐντελάμενος. He thinks that this is one of the cases in which the D text represents the 'Western' text contaminated by the text of the great Uncials and that the original 'Western' text is to be recovered from the Old Latin. Corsen's view, which in essentials has been adopted by Ropes, will be considered in connexion with the Old Latin. In the meantime I should like to enter a *caveat* against setting too high standards for the original 'Western' text. If the 'Western' recension is itself a corruption, inconsistencies which were tolerable to the scribe of D may have been tolerable to the first offender. As I have already pointed out, the D text in these verses may be easily explained as a direct corruption of the text given in the other Greek MSS.

The variant readings of the Old Latin texts in these verses present a complicated problem which it is not necessary to discuss here in detail. It appears to be agreed that the fundamental explanation of these variants within the Latin Versions is to be found in the influence of the B N type of text upon an early Old Latin text which is represented for us in these verses by direct lengthy quotations in Augustine *c. Felicem*, and *c. Epist. Fundamenti*. We may confine ourselves to this 'African' Old Latin.

Since this Old Latin Version contains a further variant peculiar to itself in v. 4 which appears to be connected with the variants in the first

¹ *Der cyprianische Text der Acta Apostolorum* (1892) pp. 18 f.

two verses, it will be convenient to have the text of all the first five verses before us¹ :—

¹ Primum quidem sermonem feci de omnibus, o Theophile, quae coepit Jesus facere et docere ² in die quo apostolos elegit per spiritum sanctum et praecepit praedicare evangelium, ³ quibus praebuit se vivum post passionem in multis argumentis dierum visus eis dies quadraginta et docens de regno dei, ⁴ et quomodo conversatus est cum illis, et praecepit eis ne discederent ab Hierosolymis, sed sustinerent pollicitationem Patris quam audistis, inquit, ex ore meo; ⁵ quoniam Johannes quidem baptizavit aqua, vos autem spiritu sancto incipietis baptizari, quem et accepturi estis non post multos istos dies usque ad pentecosten.

It will be seen that the Old Latin Version gives the additional clause καὶ ἐκέλευσε κηρύσσειν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, and that it shews other differences as well, most of which are peculiar to itself: (1) in v. 2 instead of a translation of ἀχρι ἡς ἡμέρας, it reads ‘in die quo’, ‘on the day on which’; (2) in the same verse it omits ἐντειλάμενος, ἀνελήμφθη, and the relative pronoun οὗς; (3) in v. 4 it prefixes the word ‘quomodo’ to the translation of συναλιζόμενος μετ’ αὐτῶν παρῆγγειλε.

These peculiarities go together, and the general result is that in the African Old Latin the whole of vv. 1–5 purport to give a direct statement of the content of the Gospel. Instead of mentioning a *terminus ad quem* for the scope of the πρώτος λόγος, this version makes the author say that his first book related what Jesus began to do and teach *on* the day when he chose and charged the Apostles, to whom, after his death, he revealed himself, &c.; and *how* he consorted with them and bade them not to depart from Jerusalem, &c.

Ropes follows Corssen in regarding this Old Latin rather than D as the true representative of the original ‘Western’ text, and, contrary to his usual preference of the text of the great Uncials, he thinks that this text stands nearer to the original than B. He does not accept as original the Western addition (common to D and lat. vt.) καὶ ἐκέλευσε κηρύσσειν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, supposing this to be a ‘Western’ substitute for the original ἐντειλάμενος, and he is more than doubtful about the ‘quomodo’ but he conjectures an original ἐν ἡμέρᾳ γ̄ for ἀχρι ἡς ἡμέρας and proposes to omit οὗς and ἀνελήμφθη. It is right to emphasize that this is a conjectural combination of readings attested as a whole by no extant manuscript or version.

For one of these Latin peculiarities, the omission of ἀνελήμφθη, Ropes claims the support of the Old Syriac. Unfortunately we have no text

¹ I give the text as quoted in Augustine c. *Felicem* i. 4 and follow Ropes’ *Beginnings* vol. iii pp. 3 f. I do not give the insignificant variations found in c. *Ep. Fundamenti* 9 and *de Cons. evv.* iv 8.

and no direct quotation of the Old Syriac for these verses and we are dependent upon somewhat doubtful inference from the recently recovered commentary of Ephrem on Acts. I do not think it can be certainly inferred from the text of Ephrem (Latin trans. Ropes p. 384) that he did not read such a text as we have in *Codex Bezae*. It is true that Ephrem says that the end of the Gospel was the charge to the Apostles, but he also says that this charge was given in Galilee, and that the beginning of the Gospel was the preaching of John. This shews that he is not confining himself to what is said in Acts, but interpreting it by the actual contents of Luke and other Gospels. The words 'jussit apostolos in Galilaea annuntiare evangelium' certainly look like a reminiscence of the Western addition in Acts i 2, but it does not appear certain that Ephrem had no equivalent for ἀνελήμφθη after ἔχρι ής ἡμέρας. Even if Ropes's negative inference with regard to ἀνελήμφθη were more certain than I think it is, it would still remain true that syr. vt. does not support the Old Latin text as a whole, for Ephrem makes it probable that syr. vt. gave an equivalent for ἔχρι ής ἡμέρας, and certain that it did so for οὐσ.

In the first excursus of *Beginnings* vol. v Lake expresses his dissent from his colleague's reconstruction of the text of these verses and supports it with these weighty arguments: ἐξελέξατο can refer only to Luke vi 13 f. and the Gospel cannot be said either to have begun or to have ended at that point. Therefore οὐσ is to be retained. Further, since in the preface to a second book the important point to make is the conclusion which had been reached in the first, ἔχρι is also to be retained. That these conclusions are right seems to be finally proved by another consideration to which the authors of *Beginnings* do not refer. In the note on Acts i 2 in the commentary Cadbury and Lake observe that if οὐσ and ἀνελήμφθη be omitted, ἐντελάμενος ἐξελέξατο must be translated 'chose and commanded'. Certainly this seems necessary to make sense. Equally certainly the Greek cannot carry that meaning. The aorist participle followed by a principal verb usually expresses action antecedent to the action of the main verb. It may also express coincident action, e.g. σπεύσας κατέβη 'he came down in a hurry'; ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν 'he answered and said'. A true aorist cannot express action subsequent to that of the main verb. I have not forgotten the abnormal cases to which Mr Chambers and Dr Howard have called attention¹ in which an aorist participle is occasionally used in late Greek as an alternative to a future participle to express purpose. Probably we should regard these, as Mayser regards the similar interchange of aorist and future infin.,² as originating in a confusion of forms, rather than

¹ J.T.S. xxiv (1922-1923) pp. 183 ff., 403 ff.

² Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit ii 1 p. 219.

in the sphere of syntax. Anyhow they present no analogy to what is here proposed, for in Acts i 2 the meaning is not final. ἐντειλάμενος ἔξελέσατο must mean 'having commanded them, he chose them'. And that is not sense.

Prof. A. C. Clark escapes this difficulty since, unlike Ropes, he adopts the Old Latin text entire—except the 'quomodo' in v. 4. That is to say he drops ἐντειλάμενος and treats καὶ ἐκέλευσεν κηρύσσειν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον as original. This leaves a good Greek sentence and it is in keeping with Prof. Clark's theory that the Western text with its additions represents the original, but it is not likely to commend itself unless the reader is already disposed to look favourably on Prof. Clark's theory as a whole. Canon Streeter, who goes far in accepting Clark's preference for the 'Western' (or Z) text in Acts, has yet expressed the opinion that certain classes of longer readings in Clark's Z text should be regarded as interpolations. If once this concession is allowed, we sacrifice the initial presumption on which Clark's text is based, viz. that the longer 'Western' (or Z) text is, as a whole, original. We must consider in each case whether the longer Z reading is best accounted for by supposing interpolation by the Z scribe, or omission by the T scribe. I think there would be wide agreement that in this case it is, on the face of it, more probable that a scribe inserted than that a scribe omitted καὶ ἐκέλευσεν κηρύσσειν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον.

If, with Ropes and the majority of critics, we reject καὶ ἐκέλευσε κτλ. as a typical 'Western' interpolation, and retain ἐντειλάμενος, we must have a verb in the indicative expressing some subsequent action or state. ἀνελήμφθη meets the case exactly. Lake, however, thinks that Ropes is right in rejecting ἀνελήμφθη, and accepts Ropes's view that the omission of ἀνελήμφθη in the Old Latin of Acts is to be connected with the omission (by N D lat. vt., syr. sin.) of καὶ ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν in Luke xxiv 51. He meets the grammatical difficulty by making a long parenthesis from διὰ πνεύματος ἀγίου to συναλιζόμενος, removing the heavy stop before καὶ συναλιζόμενος, and construing παρῆγγειλεν (v. 4) as the principal verb in the clause governed by ἄχρι ἣς ἡμέρας. Prof. Lake admits that 'this makes a very bad sentence' (vol. v, p. 2). Three objections may be pointed out: (1) the long parenthesis, though grammatically possible, is stylistically intolerable; (2) ἐντειλάμενος . . . παρῆγγειλεν is badly redundant; (3) whereas on the usual punctuation συναλιζόμενος runs happily with παρῆγγειλεν, it makes a weak third to ὅπτανόμενος αὐτοῖς and λέγων τὰ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ.¹ Lake

¹ In Additional Note 1 (vol. v p. 2) Lake refers to Euseb. *Supplementa Quaestiones ad Marinum xi*, where in a paraphrase of Acts i 3 ff. Eusebius links together ὅπτανόμενος αὐτοῖς and συναλιζόμενος, and suggests that Eusebius may have construed Acts i 2-4 as he proposes, and therefore, by inference, may have omitted ἀνελήμφθη.

would, I imagine, agree that if ἀνελήμφθη can be defended on other grounds its retention eases the stylistic problem.

Behind the literary and textual problems of these verses there lies a certain inconsequence of thought which, unless we accept Loisy's theory that the original *Ad Theophilum* has been subjected to drastic alteration, or Clark's theory that Luke and Acts were written by different men, must be traced back to the writer himself. Here, as so often in the Lucan writings, a smooth surface covers real incongruity. The author of Acts begins with part of a Preface, composed in the accepted manner, which resumes the contents of the preceding volume. This leads us to expect that he will take up the thread where he has dropped it. But instead of this, what he does is to give us a new version of the last scene between Jesus and the disciples. I am in full agreement with the view expressed by Lake in his admirable note on the Ascension¹ that, although the sentence καὶ ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν (Luke xxiv 51) should probably not be accepted as original, it gives a true indication of the evangelist's meaning. He intends us to understand that Jesus has now finally departed. Acts i repeats the essential content of the charge in Luke xxiv, and the whole narrative of the Ascension in Acts must be regarded as a new version of the scene which closes the Gospel. This overlapping of Gospel and Acts inevitably dislocates a preface which presupposes continuity of narrative. Luke covers up the seam by introducing a relative clause after ἀνελήμφθη, which enables him to return to the last appearance. Ropes's defence of the Old Latin text on the ground that it avoids a premature reference to the ἀνάλημψις before the narrative of the last appearance² is based upon a true perception of the difficulty, but he does not recognize that the difficulty is inherent in Gospel and Acts, apart from the particular word ἀνελήμφθη. The omission of ἀνελήμφθη still leaves the relation of Luke xxiv and Acts i an unsolved problem. Since the slenderly supported omission of ἀνελήμφθη creates a number of other difficulties to which no satisfactory answer is forthcoming, the word should be retained with all the Greek MSS.

ἀνελήμφθη is a natural word for the author to use of the end of the Gospel. In Luke ix 51 he had already used the corresponding noun to indicate the conclusion to which his narrative was to lead: 'It came

I think that this suggestion (tentatively put forward) carries very little weight, and does not warrant the term 'The Eusebian Text' used in the Commentary on Acts ii 1 (vol. iv p. 3). As Lake warns us in the Additional Note, Eusebius is paraphrasing not quoting. We may observe that in the Greek of Acts ὅπτανθεν and σωτα[ν]λιξμενος are not consecutive, and I do not consider that we can build anything on their collocation in Eusebius's paraphrase.

¹ *op. cit.* v p. 21.

² *op. cit.* iii p. 260.

to pass when the days of his ἀνάλημψις were fulfilled.' This is in harmony with the description of the scope of the Gospel in Acts i 2 : 'until the day, when, after charging his apostles . . . he was taken up.'

In conclusion we may observe that the overlapping of Luke and Acts with the resulting incongruity probably affords the true explanation of the chief Old Latin variants in Acts i 1-4. The translator was undoubtedly working upon a 'Western' Greek MS. But it is not necessary to assume that he derived all his peculiarities from his original. He was quite capable of introducing improvements of his own. 'The rendering into Latin', says Ropes of the 'African' Old Latin fragments of Acts in the Fleury palimpsest, 'is often very free, although the Greek text followed can usually be discerned.'¹ 'The impression which [the Fleury palimpsest] makes', echoes Professor Clark, 'is that of a free translation with a tendency to explanation or periphrasis.'² A later passage in this same chapter of Acts affords a good example of the translator's interest in harmonization: in order to reconcile the account of Judas's death in Acts with that in Matthew, he inserts into his translation at v. 18 the words 'collum sibi alligavit'³—at any rate, it is plausible to conjecture that the insertion, which is not known in Greek texts, was his own doing. A similar harmonizing tendency may well have influenced him here. In any case, the 'African' Old Latin is a very insecure base from which to work back to the authentic Greek, and it is hazardous to follow it in the teeth of a consensus of the Greek MSS.

J. M. CREED.

MANICHAICA

IN a recent number of the JOURNAL (xxxiv 266) I gave a short account of the very important find of Manichaean documents in Egypt. It will be many years before that find is fully deciphered and expounded. Meanwhile several important works on Mani and his religion have appeared, which demand notice here. The English reader will find a full discussion of what has been hitherto known in Professor Williams Jackson's *Researches in Manichaeism*.⁴ But the most part of what has been written is in German monographs and papers. A knowledge of German is happily possessed by many Englishmen, but for a proper appreciation of these monographs much more is required. Dr Schmidt's great find was of course in Coptic. But the paper, or rather monograph, called *Manichäische Dogmatik aus Chinesischen und Iranischen Texten*, by

¹ *Beginnings* vol. iii p. cvii.

² *Acts of the Apostles* p. 248.

³ Cf. *Beginnings* v p. 26.

⁴ *Researches in Manichaeism* by A. V. Williams Jackson, Columbia University Press, New York, 1932.