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A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php

Robert Sloan

'Signs and Wonders': A Rhetorical Clue to the Pentecost Discourse

Dr Sloan teaches at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and is the author of an important study of Luke 4: The Favourable Year of the Lord. Some of the newer approaches to biblical study sometimes seem to offer no more than the older ones; here Dr Sloan probes what rhetorical criticism can do for us.

Introduction

It is a commonplace of studies in Luke and Acts¹ to maintain that the Petrine speech of 2:14b-40 is of great significance for discussions related to the purpose of Acts. It is also often said (rightly I think) that the Pentecost episode and speech deserve favorable comparison with the Rejection of Jesus in Nazareth pericope of Luke 4:16-30 in terms of programmatic significance. There is, I think, something bordering on consensus here among Lukan scholars. It is not, however, inconsistent with such commonplaces also to remark the normative significance of the two similar statements found in Luke 24:47-49 and Acts 1:8.² Since both of these latter passages recount Jesus' prophecy (a prophecy which was itself the renewal and/or extension of John the Baptist's prophecy) that the disciples would shortly be clothed with divine power and, beginning from Jerusalem, be witnesses to all mankind of the crucified and risen Christ, they are obviously narratively linked, as prophecy and fulfillment, to the Pentecost story. Therefore, given the programmatic positioning of the Petrine speech as the opening discourse in Acts, and given its

¹ I agree with Mikeal Parsons that the now traditional hyphen in 'Luke-Acts' reflects a whole range of historical, literary, and theological conclusions/assumptions which ought to be severely questioned. See the forthcoming book by Mikeal Parsons and Richard Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of 'Luke-Acts'*, St. Paul: Augsburg/Fortress.

² I. Howard Marshall, 'The Significance of Pentecost', *SJTh* 30, 1977, 347-69.

obvious narrative link to both the closing commissioning scene of the Gospel of Luke (no doubt as an intentional literary repetition) and the opening scene of commissioning in Acts, it does seem appropriate to argue that the purpose of the Pentecost episode bears a close relationship to the purpose of the work as a whole.

The Petrine sermon's drive toward repentance, the confession of Jesus as Lord, baptism in his name, forgiveness, and the receipt of the promised Spirit for all who will believe in him (Acts 2:37-40) is broadly consistent with the general missiological purpose and flow of Acts. The ethnic and geographical progress of the gospel from Jew to half-Jew to Gentile, Luke's intentionally crafted references to the 'increase of the word of God',³ the centrality of all the speeches (and their kerygmatic focus) for Acts, the relationship of persecution to proclamation,⁴ the focus of Luke upon the missionary activities of Paul, and the (perhaps significantly) abrupt closing of Acts wherein Paul is in the pre-eminent city of the world preaching the gospel unhindered, are all illustrations of the general missiological tenor of Acts. It is within this framework that the Pentecost narrative and Petrine speech set the tone for the entire book as a piece of narrative instruction relative to Christian witness and proclamation in the world.

If it is granted that the purpose of the Pentecost sermon is reflected in 2:37-42, where the audience is exhorted to call upon 'the name of Jesus Christ' and thus 'be saved from this perverse generation', I would like for the remainder of this study to be an examination of Lukan theological method. That is, assuming the missiological purpose and confessional goal of the sermon, how does Peter, according to Luke, get there?

Lukan Theological Method

Discussion of the sermon is so dominated by questions of sources, the sermon's relationship to midrash and synagogue homily, its

³ Jerome Kodell, 'The Word of God Grew': The Ecclesial Tendency of Λόγος in Acts 6, 7: 12, 24; 19, 20', *Biblica* 55, 1974, 505-519.

⁴ See, e.g., Acts 8:5-40, where the preaching of Philip is clearly connected in the overall narrative to the persecution and scattering of 8:1,4. Likewise the preaching abroad of 11:19 is related to the stoning of Stephen. Note too that the rejection of the gospel of 14:1-2 leads to the perseverance in proclamation of 14:3, an episode which is of a piece with the repeated, historicized pattern of Acts whereby Jewish rejection/opposition leads to Gentile opportunity. See esp. 13:44-52; 18:1-6; 28:23-28.

pesherartige technique of exposition, and related questions of text form and *testimonia* that the actual flow and argument of the sermon is sometimes either overlooked or obscured. The following is offered as a description of the flow⁵ and/or rhetorical logic of the sermon. It must be noted from the outset, however, that whatever the literary history/sources of the speech, the Lukan rendition of the sermon cannot be divorced from the narrative setting (2:1–14a) in which it is placed. Thus, the description of both the outpouring of the Spirit and the miraculous gift of 'other tongues' serves for Luke, among other things, to evoke, as plot tension, the amazement and perplexity (2:12) of those in the crowd (some of whom were tempted to mock and say, 'They are full of sweet wine') and therefore in turn to introduce Peter's sermonic response.

The sermon itself (2:14b–40) may be analyzed as follows: (1) Opening address and appeal for attention: 14b. (2) An answer to the mocking accusation of drunkenness: 15. (3) A *pesher*-type introduction to the central/-bridge⁶ text for the sermon; 16. (4) Citation from Scripture: 17–21. (5) A renewed address and appeal for attention: 22a. (6) Christological kerygma, focused upon the miracle ministry of Jesus and his death and resurrection: 22b–24. (7) Scripture (Ps. 16:8–11) and exposition thereof given in support of the resurrection kerygma: 25–32. (8) The raised/exalted Jesus as the giver of the Spirit: 33. (9) Final proof from Scripture for his exaltation and consequent Lordship/Messiahship:

⁵ I have been helped by the succinct analysis of the speech by Eduard Schweizer, 'Concerning the Speeches in Acts', in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Leander Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 208–216, though I think that Schweizer in his analysis has not properly integrated the relationship of the proofs from Scripture to the christological kerygma, a relationship which I think is integral to understanding the flow and argument of the speech as presented.

⁶ See J.W. Bowker, 'Speeches in Acts: A Study in Proem and Yelammedenu Form', *NTS* 14, 1967, 96–111 and E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 188–97. Though I do not think that the sermon reflects precisely the proem type of synagogue midrash/homily, I do think that, as Bowker, 99–101, has suggested with some caution, there are perhaps some traces of this kind of midrash to be found here. (See, however, the salutary warnings raised by Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 10–14, regarding the detection and hermeneutical significance of midrashic parallels and/or forms in New Testament materials.) The typical proem homily began, according to Bowker, with a freely chosen introductory ('proem') text, the purpose of which was to serve as a bridge text to reflect a connection between the *seder* and *haftarah* texts used in the given readings for the day. The proem was to evidence some kind of verbal connection with

34–36. (10) Call for repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ (the now exalted Lord): 38–40.

The problem with such analyses is that the theological interrelationship and/or homiletical connectivity of the various items in the analysis does not always readily appear. Put another way, the Scripture citations and expositions often so overwhelm the reader with source and textual problems and exegetical detail that the overall theological flow of the sermon is lost. Indeed, the Scripture citations, which dominate so much of the material in the sermon, do not, it seems to me, dictate the flow and/or rhetorical logic of the argument. If anything, it is the reverse.

The Salvation-historical Pattern of the Traditional Kerygma

I would argue—so as to try to describe this instance of Lukan theological method—that Luke gets to his confessional and/or missiological goal, first of all, *by arguing in the salvation-historical pattern of the traditional kerygma*, using, of course, scriptural support and argumentation to authorize the various kerygmatic points and/or homiletical shifts. Whatever else may be said about the way(s) in which Joel 2:28–32 is used—and we shall attend to that below—it is clear that the exposition which begins in 2:22 is governed by a traditional kerygmatic pattern constituted by the life (especially the miracles), death, and resurrection/exaltation of Jesus. The subsequent citation and use of Ps. 16:8–11 in 2:25–32 is *in support of* the resurrection kerygma affirmed in 2:24. In the same way, the citation and use of Ps. 110:1 in 2:34–36 is in support of Peter's/Luke's expository affirmation of the resurrection/exaltation of Jesus in 2:32–33.

To be sure, outlining this kind of rhetorical flow is exceedingly

the *haftarah* text. The sermon itself was typically to be an exposition of the proem text, which exposition often began with the expression 'its interpretation is'. The exposition would then often proceed via the use of a chain of texts (*haruzim*) in which the given reading from the Prophets (the *haftarah*) was either directly cited or alluded to. The sermon would close with either a reference to the day's reading from the Law (the *seder*) or another text closely related to the *seder* text. It is notoriously difficult, however, for us to establish the *seder* and *haftarah* texts behind the Petrine sermon—and thus whether it in fact is a typical proem synagogue homily or not—because in the very nature of the case, the *seder* and *haftarah* texts were normally to be more implied than cited. In any case, though the *seder* text for the day is a highly speculative matter, it does seem to me entirely possible that 2 Sa. 7:12ff. is the *haftarah*. What is clearer to me, however, is that the opening text from Joel 2:28–32 (3:1–5 LXX) does function in a way that is analogous to the proem/bridge text of the proem type of homily.

difficult because of the interrelated patterns of kerygma and confirmation. That is, the confirmation of the kerygma may not only take the form of explicit textual citations and the exposition thereof, but the given exposition may in turn also be dependent upon textual allusion and itself likewise subject to further scriptural confirmation. For example, the citation and use of Ps. 110:1 in 2:34–36 also serves to confirm the *exposition* in 2:29–32 of the scriptural proof-text (Ps. 16:8–11 in 2:25–28) of the resurrection kerygma (2:24). Furthermore, this exposition, because it assumes the dynastic promises to David of 2 Sa. 7:12ff., applies the resurrection proof-text of Ps. 16:8–11 to a *descendant* and thereby adds to the notion of resurrection that of enthronement/exaltation. Thus, the *resurrection* kerygma of 2:24 spirals, via the various proof-texts and expositions thereof, toward an *exaltation* kerygma (2:30, 33–36), the confirmation of which—by both the fact of Spiritual outpouring and the further use of ancient Scripture (Ps. 110:1)—in turn reinforces the original resurrection kerygma and its interpreted textual supports.

Again, however, such complexity of detail should not be allowed to overwhelm the clearer aspects of the overall exposition. Whatever may be the (by scholarly analysis) observable details of Lukan exegetical method, Scripture citation, text form, and the use of traditional sources, the general flow of the argument from 2:22–36 is clear: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested by God with miracles and wonders and signs, was crucified at the hands of godless men and has now been raised and exalted to the right hand of God. To remark the foundational character of this structure is not to argue that other matters mentioned, especially, for example, the fact that the exalted Lord has poured forth the Spirit (2:33), are insignificant. Far from it. It is to argue, however, that the structure of the sermon is dictated by a traditional christological kerygma which included the life, death, and resurrection/exaltation of Jesus. Put another, and perhaps better, way, so as to avoid the impression that the elements of the christological kerygma are simply isolated strands of confession separated from history, it may be said, noting too the obviously biographical sequencing of the christological material, that the sermon follows the pattern of a salvation-historical narrative. In this connection, note well in 2:11 the generalized summary of the content of the miraculous speech which preceded Peter's sermon as 'the mighty deeds of God'. Such terminology is reminiscent of Old Testament salvation-historical narrative. Thus, while it is certainly correct to highlight the christocentric substance of the sermon, it must be noted that this christocentric substance is

communicated, as may be expected with salvation-historical narrative, with a *theocentric* syntax. God is throughout the central subject who performs these mighty acts with and through Christ. It is God who 'through him' performed the miracles and wonders and signs (2:22); it is God who raised him up again⁷ (2:24, 32, 33) and made him both Lord and Christ (2:36). It is this kind of 'theocentric syntax' which is characteristic of salvation-historical narrative and suggests the underlying structure which governs the flow of the sermon. In this same connection, it may be noted that the addition of 'God says' (*legei ho theos*) in 2:17 is not simply for the purpose of underlining the divine origin of the text,⁸ but to focus upon the divine *activity* which in this particular salvation-historical process has culminated with the person of Jesus. That is, these are truly 'the mighty deeds of God'.

A Narrative Framework

Secondly, I would argue that Luke accomplishes his overall missiological purposes *by the use of a narrative framework* for the relating of the salvation-historical kerygma/narrative. The point may be overly obvious, but it ought to be made nonetheless, that Luke communicates the underlying christological kerygma/narrative with the use of a larger narrative framework. That is to say, the sermon itself is placed within the framework of story/historical events. The sermon cannot be isolated from its represented setting and still accomplish Luke's desired purposes. The mockery of some in the crowd is the precipitating occasion for the Petrine opening, which is a denial of drunkenness (2:14, 15). The repeated appeals to the crowd for attention serve as markers of a sort for the flow of the sermon, providing beginnings, rhetorical shifts, and conclusions (2:14, 22, 29, 36). The crowd's questions regarding the meaning of these miraculous tongues and 'the mighty deeds of God' describe thereby both

⁷ The use of either *egeiro* or *anhistemi* with God as the stated subject and Christ as the object is not all that common in the New Testament. Normally, words of resurrection are stated in the passive voice and are rendered 'he is risen' or some such. Of course, God is the unspoken agent in the passive voice as well, but it is interesting to note that the explicitly theocentric syntax expressed by the active voice shows up in the New Testament with a higher frequency in the speeches in Acts (see 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:19; 5:30; 10:40; 13:39, 33, 34, 37; 17:31). Interestingly enough, the pattern also shows up significantly in Romans—see 4:24, 25; 8:11 (twice); 10:9; cf. also 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:21.

⁸ Darrell Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 158.

establish the narrative setting for the sermon and also reflect upon the original missiological program of power and witness prophesied by Jesus in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8. Indeed, the narrative situation is reflected in this connection even within the sermon, as the crowd's initial question is not only answered in part by the eschatologically interpreted ('this is that') text of Joel 2:28–32, with its opening statement regarding the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days, but also rejoined in 2:33 with the reference to the exalted Christ as the one who 'has poured forth this which you both see and hear'. Thus, the narrative setting and framework of the sermon are not artificially stated and forgotten, but form a constitutive part of the sermon's development as Peter both answers the crowd's objections and interruptions (2:37) and consequently appeals for repentance, baptism, and faith (2:40). Luke's use of historical narrative as a means of theologizing is thus not only a part of larger questions of genre and theology in connection with the entire work, but is significant here in small for understanding the framework and progress of the speech.

The Use of Scripture

Thirdly, I would argue that Luke's missiological purposes are reached in *his use of Scripture*. Of course, every text cited or alluded to in the sermon bears analysis, but our concern here is with the initial text, the quotation from Joel 2:28–32 (3:1–5 LXX). As stated earlier, it serves as a kind of proem and is justly regarded as determinative for the entire sermon.⁹ Focusing upon the general structure of the Joel text as cited in the Acts text, it may be noted that the citation is given an eschatologically loaded introduction: altered from the Septuagintal reading, the phrase 'It shall be in the last days' places the content of what follows within an eschatological/apocalyptic horizon.¹⁰ What follows

⁹ Benjamin J. Hubbard, 'The Role of Commissioning Accounts in Acts', in *Perspectives in Luke-Acts*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (Danville, VA: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978), 187–98. Hubbard, 195, thinks that the quotation from Joel is programmatic for much of what follows in Acts. My own estimation is less ambitious. I would suggest, however, that the citation is at least determinative for the Petrine speech.

¹⁰ Franz Mussner, "In den letzten Tagen" (Apg. 2, 17a)', *BZ* 5, 1961, 263–65. Mussner argues that even with the Joel reading (*meta tauta* instead of *eschatais hemerai*), what follows is given eschatological significance. *Contra* Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 14th ed., trans. R. McL. Wilson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 179, who believes that *meta tauta* is original because it is more consistent with the Lukan view that there is no imminent end in prospect; and Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 2d ed., trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel

then divides rather neatly into three general categories. First of all, in 2:17-18 there is the promise of the universal outpouring of the Spirit. Luke seems to interpret the promised Spirit referred to in the text as having its fulfillment in the prophetic activities occurring in the early church, an interpretation evidenced by the (summary-like) addition to the text in 18c of 'and they shall prophesy'. Verses 19-20 constitute a second major section in the cited text and point to the appearance of 'wonders and signs' prior to the coming of 'the great and glorious Day of the Lord'. The reference to 'signs' has been added to the Joel text along with the correlation of 'above' with 'wonders' and 'below' with 'signs'. The significance of the addition of the term 'signs' to the text will be further elaborated below, but for the moment it may be noted that references to 'signs and wonders' (in that order) are commonplace in Acts as references to the miracles which attended the apostolic presence and preaching. *Terata* ('wonders') is never found in the New Testament without *semeia* ('signs'), though normally the order is not 'wonders and signs' as here (2:19,22) and in 2:43.¹¹ Third, 2:21 promises, in light of the catastrophic portents (the 'wonders and signs') which will herald the appearance of Yahweh, salvation to 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord'.

Text and Sermon. As a proem text, then, we expect Joel 2:28-32, as cited in 2:17-21, to relate to (at least) the exposition which follows in 2:22-36, 38-40, and such is, obviously, the case. Indeed, the coming of the Spirit described in 2:1-4 and referred to in 2:5-13 as the point of conflict in the narrative plot which precipitated Peter's sermon also relates, as part of Luke's larger narrative framework, to the Joel text's prophesied outpouring of the Spirit. With regard to the exposition proper (2:22-36, 38-40), clearly both the explicit reference in 2:33 to the exalted Jesus as the one who 'has poured forth this which you both see and hear' and the promise in 2:38 that all who repent and are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ 'will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' in fulfillment of what 2:39 refers to as 'the promise [which] is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, likewise directly reflect the same opening section of the Joel text (2:17-18 = Joel 2:28-29) where one finds prophesied such a universal

(Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 19, who maintains that the *en tais eschatais hemerai* 'has become a stereotyped expression (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1) and no longer expresses an expectation of an immediate end'.

¹¹ The two other occurrences having the order 'wonders and signs' are found in 6:8 and 7:36. The other references to 'signs and wonders' (in that order) are 4:30, 5:12, 14:3, and 15:12.

outpouring of the Spirit that 'all . . . shall prophesy'. In the same way, it is not difficult to detect that the reference in the exposition in 2:38–40 to 'the name of Jesus Christ' as the name upon which Peter's hearers must call in order to 'be saved from this perverse generation' tallies both verbally and *ad sensum* with the promise of 2:21 (=Joel 2:32a, b) that 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved'. What is not, however, immediately obvious is—to ask the question from the point of view of the Joel text—what function 2:19–20 (=Joel 2:30–31) plays in the sermon and where, if at all, the sermon attempts to expound that portion of the Joel text. Or, to state the matter from the point of view of the sermon/exposition, where does the very heart of the sermon, i.e., the salvation-historical narration of the mighty acts of God vis-à-vis the life, death, and resurrection/exaltation of Jesus find justification in the proem text? Put simply, do text and sermon match?

Some have suggested that the references to various cosmic wonders in the Joel text—i.e., Joel 2:30–31=Acts 2:19–20—were retained simply as a way of extending the citation on to Joel 2:32a,b.¹² But surely this explanation for the inclusion of Joel 2:0–31 is unacceptable in view of all we know about the selective/partial citation of the Old Testament so often characteristic of New Testament writers and preachers. Indeed, some scholars have argued that the only function of the Joel text is to serve as an immediate answer with regard to the question of tongues and the outpouring of the Spirit, but the very existence of 2:21 with its obvious relationship to 2:38–40 in the exposition makes that explanation most unsatisfactory. Furthermore, as stated above, what we have now come to know about the possible connection of this type of sermon in Acts with the proem synagogue homily makes it unlikely that the Joel text has such a limited function: that is, it is more likely that it serves as a kind of introduction to and/or bridge for the various bits of exposition, tradition, and texts used throughout the sermon. Furthermore, unless Luke had before him a textual tradition which included the textual variations of 2:19–20 referred to above (which relate 'above' to 'wonders' and 'beneath' to 'signs', coupled with, indeed, the addition of the very term 'signs' itself), we must assume that the textual variations themselves, and especially the larger portions of

¹² Haenchen, 86; I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 161. Cf. also Richard N. Longenecker, *The Acts of the Apostles, 275–76, The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), vol. 9.

text in which those changes were incorporated, have some significance for the exposition. Such significance is all the more noteworthy if, as is in fact the case, the terminology of those textual variations—note especially the use of the term 'signs'/ *semeia*—figures in the exposition which follows.¹³ To summarize: if Joel 2:28–32 is the central/proem text of the sermon, and if the christological kerygma of life, death, and resurrection/exaltation does dominate the flow of the sermon, then we should expect the central text, supported, of course, in *haruzim* fashion by other texts (Ps. 16:18–11; 2 Sa. 7:12 ff., Ps. 110:1), to bear some relationship to the central exposition. This connection between text and exposition (sermon) may occur either by means of a verbal tally between text and exposition proper, or by some other, probably verbal link between the proem text and the other, subordinate texts cited within the flow of the exposition. But however the connection occurs, we may expect some relationship, however subtle, between the text cited and the sermon given. An important task, therefore, seen from either the point of view of Joel 2:30–31 (=Acts 2:19–20) or from the perspective of the exposition itself, is to attempt, if at all possible, to come to grips with the significance of 2:19–20 for the sermon and/or overall narrative.

As suggested above, the verses in question prophesy the appearance of heavenly and earthly 'wonders and signs' prior to the appearance of the great and glorious day of the Lord. Once again, the term 'signs'/*semeia* has been added to the text, and that, we assume, for some significant reason. What then can be the meaning of this reference to 'wonders and signs'? Several possibilities have been put forward in the history of interpretation. (1) Eschatological portents: this is perhaps the most common suggestion, as attested in both technical literature and critical as well as popular commentaries. Certainly, Revelation 6:10 and Luke 21:23 reflect the viability of this interpretation in terms of the history of early Christian traditions, though this particular view does not seem to have much support in the Acts 2 exposition itself. (2) A reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit: this view finds support in the fact that the gift of tongues as referred to in 2:1–4 was not only 'from heaven', but was accompanied by dramatic effects of wind and fire. Indeed, we may note that the gift of tongues and/or the subsequent miracle of languages was presented by Luke on the order of a wonder that produced 'amazement and

¹³ See Richard F. Zehnle, *Peter's Pentecost Discourse* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 34.

great perplexity' (2:12). In further support of this view, we may note that the coming of the Spirit as described in Acts 2 is certainly intended to answer, by way of fulfillment, the prophecy of Jesus in 1:8 (see also Lk. 24:49). (3) The apostolic wonders and signs, as in 2:43: given the strategic placement of the phrase 'wonders and signs' in 2:43 and the significance of the phrase throughout the Book of Acts,¹⁴ this view has much to favor it, as it makes sense of the textual reference to 'wonders and signs', especially in that order, in 2:43 as well as the more traditionally expressed references to 'signs and wonders' in most of the other given references in Acts. (4) The ministry of Jesus: though not often suggested,¹⁵ this option too has much to commend it, especially in light of the clear verbal tally that prevails between text and exposition. That is, the most obvious explanation of the addition of 'signs' to 2:19 is found in 2:22, where there is a reference to the life of Jesus as that which was attested by God with 'miracles and wonders and signs'. The very fact that the traditional order for this early Christian cliché is 'signs and wonders', whereas the order 'wonders and signs' is maintained in 2:22, seems to suggest a natural/intended correspondence of 2:22 with the expression of 2:19.¹⁶

Furthermore, the very fact that 'wonders'/*terata* never occurs in the New Testament without 'signs'/*semeia*, though it (*terata*) can occur by itself in the Septuagint, gives a perfect justification for the addition of 'signs' to the Septuagint text of Joel 3:4: i.e., the text of Joel 3:4 is being interpreted, with the use of traditional Christian jargon, as a reference to the miracle ministry of Jesus. The common objection (in both technical and popular literature)

¹⁴ Leo O'Reilly, *Word and Sign in the Acts of the Apostles* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1987).

¹⁵ But see M. Rese, *Alttestamentliche Motive in der Christologie des Lukas* (Gerd Mohn: Gutersloher Verlagshaus, 1969), n. 28; 53. Richard J. Dillon, 'The Prophecy of Christ and His Witnesses According to the Discourses of Acts', *NTS* 32, 1986, 544–56, relates the reference to 'wonders and signs' to both the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the apostles (546). Gerhard Krodel, *Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 21–22, argues that the reference to 'signs and wonders' has a threefold reference to (a) the wind and the tongues of fire of 2:2–3; (b) the apocalyptic portents of Lk. 21:10–11, 25; and (c) the signs which God performed through Jesus, though Krodel, 'The Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church: Interpretation of Acts 2:1–42', *Dialog* 23, 1984, 97–103, subsequently repudiated his multivalent view in favor of 'wonders and signs' as a reference to 'those extraordinary occurrences which . . . immediately precede the End' (100).

¹⁶ G.N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching* (Cambridge: University Press, 1974), 81–82.

to this interpretation relates to the fact that many find it difficult to correlate the reference to 19c to 'blood and fire and vapor of smoke' to the ministry of Jesus.¹⁷ But this rather overly literalistic stricture upon Luke's literary capacity for interpreting the Joel text ignores the use and function of apocalyptic language in both Old and New Testaments.¹⁸ It is the case, of course, that the word 'signs' in the Joel text is nuanced by Peter/Luke to refer to that which occurs 'on the earth beneath' and that the 'wonders' are said to occur in the text 'in the sky above', whereas in 2:22, all three terms—'miracles'/'*dynamesei* and 'wonders'/'*teras* and 'signs'/'*semeiois*—are said to have been performed by God through him (Jesus) and thus are presumably a collective reference to his miracle ministry. But why should Luke's ability to reference the ministry of Jesus, indeed, especially the miracle ministry of Jesus, be limited in its metaphorical/theological description to things 'below', as if only the represented historical locale/place of those phenomena should matter? Such a stricture is historically artificial, especially if we acknowledge, as the theocentric syntax of the sermon suggests, the divine origin and dynamic of the life of Jesus for Luke, to say nothing of the literary heritage to which Luke was heir in terms of Old Testament apocalyptic and its ability to describe earthly events in terms of heavenly wonders. Moreover, it is not inappropriate to observe that the culmination of Jesus' earthly ministry, i.e., his death, was in fact, according to Gospel traditions (Mt. 27:45; Mk. 15:33; Lk. 23:44), attended by wondrous phenomena which were no doubt

¹⁷ Also a difficulty for the reviser of the Western text, who simply omitted the phrase! See F.J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, eds., *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I: The Acts of the Apostles*, Vol. IV, *English Translation and Commentary* by Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 22, n. 19 (page references are to reprint edition).

¹⁸ See G.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), esp. 243–71. Though I would not adopt all of Caird's conclusions, surely he is right to point to the bifocal nature of much 'end of the world' or 'day of the Lord' language in biblical traditions. Isaiah's oracle against Babylon, foretelling her destruction, refers to it as 'the day of the Lord' (Is. 13:6, 9) when

The stars of heaven . . .
Will not flash forth their light;
The sun will be dark when it rises,
And the moon will not shed its light (Is. 13:10)

and thus is exemplary of the ability to see present events in the light of the eschatological future. Cf. also, e.g., Rev. 3:3, where the temporal judgments about which Sardis is warned are couched in the traditional language of early Christian apocalyptic eschatology.

literarily employed to suggest the eschatological/apocalyptic dimensions of the death of Jesus.¹⁹

If forced to select but one of the four options outlined above, this author would select (4), the ministry of Jesus, as the primary meaning of the 'wonders and signs' of the Joel text, primarily because 2:22 has an obvious verbal tally with 2:19. But I do not think we are limited, in this case, to one choice. I want to suggest the relevance of the entire complex of options stated above for understanding the phrase 'wonders and signs' as employed by Luke in Acts 2. My choice of all of the above options is not, I hope to make clear, simply an arbitrary eclecticism, nor is it an unrealistic opting for a multivalence of meaning in the light of multiple options.²⁰ Rather, it is linked to, and I would argue mandated by, the larger salvation-historical horizon implied in the narrative by the phrase 'the mighty deeds of God' (2:11).

Narrative and Sermon. The theocentric syntax of both the text (recall the addition of 'God says' to the Joel citation in 2:17) and the sermon is critical here. I would argue that the sermon is still answering the question stated in the narrative in 2:12—'What does this mean?'—where the question relates specifically to both the miracle of languages as a phenomenon as well as the *content* of the miraculous speech which is itself described as 'the mighty deeds of God' (2:11). It is this introductory, summarizing framework of 'the mighty deeds of God' that dictates what I have called the 'theocentric syntax' of the sermon, where God is repeatedly the subject who has powerfully acted with 'wonders and signs' and especially with the resurrection/exaltation of Jesus (2:22, 24, 32–33, 36, 39). Using the larger narrative framework as a clue to the significance of the sermon, I would argue that the christological exposition in the sermon, that is, the central references to the life, death, and resurrection/exaltation of Jesus, are in fact the 'mighty deeds of God' which he has performed 'through him'. Thus, it is ultimately not only the miracle ministry of Jesus (itself done by God 'through him'), but also God's raising

¹⁹ Cf. F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, NIC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 69; and Colin J. Humphreys and W.G. Waddington, 'Dating the Crucifixion', *Nature* 306 (1983): 743–6.

²⁰ One often reads these days of various levels of meaning in texts and words, a possibility which I obviously do not rule out theoretically, but take only with great caution and hopefully not at the expense of clarity and/or hard historical, exegetical choices. On the other hand, we should not rule out the possibility of an intentional multivalence of meaning, as does apparently Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., 'The Promise to David in Psalm 16 and Its Application in Acts 2:25–33 and 13:32–37', *JETS* 23, 1980, 219–29.

and exalting of him (2:24, 32, 36) which qualify as 'miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through him in your midst'. To be sure, the reference in 2:22 to 'miracles and wonders and signs' is a specific reference to the life/miracle ministry of Jesus, a fact perhaps implied by the phrase 'in your midst' but almost certainly reflected in the final phrase, 'just as you yourselves know'—given, that is, the fact of the resurrection as something about which, as the narrative develops, they clearly did *not* know (2:37). But the theocentric language does not stop there (in 2:22) in the exposition, implying thereby the continuing force of the original question (in 2:12) regarding the 'mighty deeds of God' (2:11) upon both the rhetorical logic of the sermon (i.e., a salvation-historical narrative) and the overall Lukan narrative. What the crowd did not know, indeed what 'pierced [them] to the heart' (2:37), was that God had *continued* to act (again reflected in the theoretical language of the entire sermon) through Jesus, especially in his predetermined plan to reserve their murdering of Jesus by raising him up and exalting him to his right hand, thus making him 'both Lord and Christ'. Indeed, the outpouring of the Spirit ('this which you both see and hear', 2:33) by Jesus not only rejoins the crowd's precipitating question in the narrative ('What does this mean?' 2:12), but also itself becomes a further divine attestation (the scripturally promised Spirit is 'received from the Father') of the Son, particularly of his enthronement (2:33–35).

In this same connection, it may be noted that the rhetorical dynamic of the sermon likewise connects the miracles of Jesus—as something they *do* know (2:22)—with the resurrection/exaltation of Jesus—as something of which they were ignorant (2:37), but now have *revealed* to them (2:22, 29, 36) by the divinely chosen eyewitnesses (2:32). That is, the narrative movement from perplexity (2:12) and/or ignorance (2:23, 37a) to a horrified realization (2:37) of their culpable participation in the killing of Messiah corresponds to the *revelatio* character and flow of the sermon as an apologetic identification of Jesus as the Christ. Thus, the divine attestation begun with the signs of Jesus' historical ministry culminates in the resurrection and enthronement of Jesus.

Another literary detail which corresponds to this rhetorical/narrative dynamic, one which, furthermore, is clearly a distinctive stylistic feature of the sermon, a feature which itself answers to the repeated use of God as the subject of the text and also furthers the Petrine/Lukan apologetic whereby the life, death, and resurrection/exaltation of Jesus are seen as the epitome of 'the

mighty acts of God', is the repeated use of the demonstrative *touton* ('this') and/or the emphatically placed accusative relative pronoun as pointed references to Jesus as the revealer/fulfiller of the divine purposes.²¹ These stylistic/grammatical details likewise reflect the *revelatio* character of the sermon as a christological answer to the question regarding 'the mighty deeds of God'. In this way, the use of *touto* repeatedly calls to mind the 'this is that' (*touto estin*) *pesher*-type formula with which the sermon began. Thus, the entire sermon has a kind of *raz-pesher* (mystery-revelation) structure whereby the christological exposition (life-death-resurrection/exaltation) is the answer (*pesher*/revelation) to the scriptural and eschatological *raz* (mystery) provoked in the narrative by the existentially perplexing phenomenon of a miraculous speaking about 'the mighty acts of God' (2:11–12).

Again, by suggesting the relevance of all of the above options for understanding the phrase 'wonders and signs' as used by Luke in the Pentecost episode and sermon, we are not, out of indecision, opting for a kind of eclectic multivalence. To the contrary, the narrative context with its reference to 'the mighty deeds of God', the repeated use of what I have called theocentric syntax, and the inescapable verbal tallies of the Joel text as cited in 2:19 with *both* 2:22, where 'wonders and signs' is apparently a reference to the miracle ministry of Jesus, *and* 2:43, where 'wonders and signs' is a reference to the miraculous deeds of the apostles, fairly demand our perception of an intentionally broader referential value assigned by Luke to the phrase 'wonders and signs' than any one of the above options can, by itself, supply. If what we have suggested, then, is correct, no doubt the greatest 'sign' of divine attestation and vindication was the resurrection/exaltation of Jesus, the event which constituted both the bulk and the climax of the Petrine/Lukan exposition of 'the mighty deeds of God'.

Joel 2:30–31 (=Acts 2:19–20) is then a most significant text for the whole of the Pentecost episode—and certainly not an irrelevant bridge for Luke between Joel 2:28–29 and 2:32a,b. Judging from both the larger narrative framework and the smaller details of exegesis and textual variation, Joel 2:30–31 serves as a scriptural proof the Petrine/Lukan salvation-historical exposition of the mighty deeds of God as revealed in the life, death, and resurrection/exaltation of Jesus. Seen in this way, the larger citation of Joel 2:28–32 functions for Luke as a significant text for explicating scripturally the mighty acts of God done

²¹ 2:23, 24, 32, 36.

through Jesus Christ, including as well the outpouring of the Spirit and the related necessity of calling upon his name for salvation.

Conclusion

To return to our earlier question, Luke's theological method reflects a complex of authorities involving received christological traditions, historical events, Scripture, and literary techniques. It is clear, for example, that Luke argues in what could be called the salvation-historical pattern of the traditional kerygma. That is, using both a narrative framework for the introduction of the kerygma itself, and employing the historically depicted narratives which hold together and constitute the kerygmatic traditions themselves, Luke, at least here in this very significant if not programmatic passage, concentrates upon the life, death, and resurrection/exaltation of Jesus. In all of this, it is readily apparent that the ancient Scriptures played a very important role for Luke, especially as those Scriptures constituted an eschatological horizon within which the mighty deeds of God as fulfilled in Jesus could be both interpreted and presented. Thus, it would not do to place Scripture against christological tradition for Luke.²² At the same time, however, it is also more than apparent that Luke's obviously normative use of Scripture is influenced by the primary events of the life of Jesus. Indeed, for Luke the Scriptures may be cited with a kind of theological nuancing that highlights the interpretive patterns which he sees as fulfilled by the eschatological acts of God through Christ. All of which, it must not be forgotten, stands in the service of Luke's missiological purpose. It was no small concern for Luke that not only those in Peter's audience, but those in his own literary audience as well should be saved from their evil generation by calling upon the name of the risen Lord.

²² Cf. Joseph Tyson, 'The Gentile Mission and the Authority of Scripture in Acts', *NTS* 33, 1987, 619-31, for a different understanding, based on different texts in Luke and Acts, of Luke's view of Scripture.