

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

has courage too. He does not hesitate to contradict other agnostics. Of one of Leslie Stephen's proud theories, he says bluntly, 'I do not think the argument will "hold water."' In truth, he is something of a terror to his friends. For he will insist upon being religious and on the necessity of religion for every man, which is just the unpardonable sin in the eyes of the professional rationalist.

When Dr. W. Tudor Jones lectured to our Soldiers, Sailors, and Munition Workers in 1918

and 1919 he discovered that, as a rule, they did not know that they had minds. He found it necessary to prove to them that they had, and then show them how to use these minds of theirs. The demonstration of the fact that they really had minds interested them greatly, and fitted them somewhat for the difficult discipline of the use of them. Into *The Training of Mind and Will* (Williams & Norgate; 2s. 6d. net) Dr. Jones has boiled down many long lectures. And now we too may find out that we have minds and may wish to make some use of them.

An Aramaic Source for Acts i.-xv.

BY THE REVEREND CHARLES ANDERSON SCOTT, D.D., PROFESSOR OF THE NEW TESTAMENT,
WESTMINSTER COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

THERE is no book of the New Testament whose reputation in the judgment of scholars has changed so much in the last thirty years as that of the Acts of the Apostles. One looks back to one's student days, when Zeller's *Commentary* was the last word in criticism, and remembers how through the ruthless application of Baur's theory it left the Acts under a cloud of suspicion which deprived it of practically all historical authority and even usefulness. The remarkable change which has taken place in the interval may be measured by the treatment of the subject in Professor Kirsopp Lake's article in the *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*. There one notices the quiet ignoring of not a few critical positions which used to be taken as almost axiomatic, the careful weighing of probabilities in favour of historical accuracy, where the author used to be dismissed as an unblushing glozer of a painful situation, and in general a tone of respect for the document, which used to be conspicuously lacking in the work of advanced scholars. We owe much in this respect to a foreign scholar who has since become our enemy, more even to the learning, the indefatigable labour, and the candour of Sir William Ramsay, whose slow conversion to belief in Luke as the author, and as an honest and trustworthy authority, has made more impression than the defences advanced by those who never knew a doubt.

The history of criticism as applied to the Acts has entered on a new phase since the publication

in 1916 of Professor Torrey's special study on the composition and date of Acts.¹ Professor Torrey is well known through his previous contributions to Semitic scholarship, and especially to the problems of Ezra and Nehemiah. He broke ground in this field of New Testament criticism with an essay on 'The Translations made from the Original Aramaic Gospels,' which he contributed to a volume presented to Professor C. H. Toy.² The thesis of this essay was that, especially in the earlier chapters of his Gospel, Luke employed Aramaic originals, and shows himself 'an accomplished translator.' In the present work he carries the same thesis a stage further, and seeks to show that in Ac 1-15³⁵ we are to recognize the translation of a document originally written in Aramaic, found and translated by Luke between 62 and 64 A.D., and to be interpreted in some of its most difficult passages through the recognition of mistakes or too literal renderings in the translation.³

¹ *The Composition and Date of Acts*, by Charles Cutler Torrey, Professor of Semitic Languages in Yale University: No. 1 of 'Harvard Theological Studies.' Oxford University Press, 1916, 72 pp.

² *Studies in the History of Religion, Presented to Crawford Howell Toy*. New York: Macmillan & Co., 1912.

³ The theory is not referred to by Prof. Kirsopp Lake, and by inference he may be said to reject it: 'It is more probable here [c. 3] than anywhere else in Acts that we are dealing with traces of a written Greek document underlying Acts in the same way as Mark and Q underlie the Lucan Gospel' (*D.A.C.* i. 23).

The idea that there is an Aramaic source or sources at the back of the early chapters of Acts was suggested by Nestle (1896), commended as probable by Harnack (1908), and is referred to as possible by Dr. Moffatt in his *Introduction*. It is now taken up by Professor Torrey, and worked out with much care and fulness of illustration, and also with much clearness and felicity of style.

It may be well to state at once the point which is really at issue. It is commonly recognized that the first part of Acts is marked by a number of locutions which are Semitic in character. In the second half the Semitisms are by comparison few and unimportant. The question is, Are these Semitic features to be explained as due to Luke's familiarity with the Greek text of the Septuagint, itself marked by such survivals from the original Hebrew text, or do they provide evidence that he was translating from an Aramaic document, translating from a language in which he was not perfectly at home, and translating with a slavish preciseness which sometimes caused him to make mistakes? 'The truth is,' says Dr. Torrey, contending for the latter view, 'that the language of all these fifteen chapters is translation-Greek through and through, generally preserving even the order of words. In the remainder of the book, chapters 16-28, the case is altogether different. Here there is no evidence of an underlying Semitic language. The few apparent Semitisms are chargeable to the Koiné, though their presence may be due in part to the influence of the translation-Greek which Luke had so extensively read and written' (p. 7). In confirmation of this distinction Dr. Torrey adduces the 'really startling' contrast between the two halves of the book in respect of the formal citations from the Old Testament. In the earlier half we find (according to Nestle's text) eighty-three such citations: in the second half only four, one of which may be a report of what Paul himself said (p. 57).

From these general considerations Dr. Torrey proceeds to examine the text of the first half of Acts, adducing in the first place 'some specially striking examples of mistranslation,' six in all (2⁴⁷, 3¹⁶, 4²⁴, 8¹⁰, 11²⁷⁻³⁰, 15⁷). He rightly points out that all of these represent real *cruces interpretum*, and in several of the cases his solution based on re-translation into Aramaic is both welcome and plausible. One or two examples may be given. In 2⁴⁷, where the very difficult ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό appears

in the critical editions (in place of τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ substituted by perplexed copyists), Dr. Torrey concludes that the phrase is Luke's rendering of an Aramaic equivalent for σφόδρα, and taking the prefixed *lamed* to signify an indirect instead of a direct object, gets as the original form: 'The Lord added greatly day by day to the saved.' And, further, he finds an explanation of Luke's mistranslation here in the fact that 'the use of the word *lahda* to mean "greatly" is a peculiarity of the Judæan dialect, not likely to be familiar to a native of Antioch. It is to be presumed, however, that Luke knew Greek at least as well as he knew Aramaic; and however slavish his habit of translation, it is not likely that he would write what would be meaningless for his Greek readers. It seems to me that the right translation of ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό here' (whatever it may be in earlier passages) is 'thereunto'; and the meaning either 'to the same place' (in harmony with the sustained emphasis on the gatheredness of the new community) or more probably 'to the same society' (Weizsäcker: ihrer Vereinigung). In the latter case we might have a reflexion of the period when the new community had not yet taken to itself the name of *ecclesia*, and the writer was at a loss for a word to describe it.

In 3¹⁶ Dr. Torrey's method provides a welcome and satisfactory emendation of a text which perplexes both by its form and by its apparent meaning. 'And by faith in his name hath his name made this man strong . . . yea, the faith which is through him hath given him this perfect soundness before you all.' Apart from the 'intolerably awkward and confused' character of the Greek, there seems to be a double and inconsistent explanation of the cure; it is ascribed on the one hand to 'the faith which is through Jesus,' and on the other to a certain quasi-magical power in the name of Jesus. On retranslation, however, a sentence is disclosed in which very slight alterations in the pointing give a much more satisfactory form to the statement: 'And by faith in his name he hath made strong this man.' Similarly on 11²⁷ the suggestion is welcome and probable that the word οἰκουμένη, which has given rise to much learned discussion, stands for the Aramaic word which means equally 'earth' and 'land'; and that the author of this document, writing in Jerusalem, followed the time-honoured usage in calling Judea simply 'the land.' Obviously, however, this theory of translation from the Aramaic must await the judgment of competent

scholars of that language, of whom we have but few. Those who are interested will be well advised to look out for an early number of the *Journal of Theological Studies*.

These crucial cases are followed by a large number of minor examples drawn from cc. 1-15³⁵, at which point the writer finds the conclusion of the Aramaic source. From the way in which v.³⁶ dovetails into v.³⁵ he infers that in what follows (where the character of the language changes completely) Luke composed his narrative as a continuation of the original document; and confirms his opinion by a very interesting explanation of the discrepancy between 15³³ and 15^{36.40} as to the movements of Silas. 'Luke did not believe that Silas returned to Jerusalem as narrated in 15³³, but rather that he remained at Antioch until the time that he set out with Paul on the missionary journey. It would have been easy to omit v.³³, or to add a harmonizing statement, as some less scrupulous editor of the text has actually done in v.³⁴, which is now omitted from all critical editions. But Luke, as usual, gave his source the word, and would not falsify it' (p. 41, cf. p. 68).

The remoter consequences of this theory, if it could be established, are obvious, and of obvious importance. Torrey 'conjectures that the document came into Luke's hands either when Paul was in prison in Cæsarea, during which time Luke was very likely in Palestine, or—even more probably—after his arrival in Rome in the year 62.' He finds himself confronted, of course, by the same objections which have been felt by many who for different reasons have been inclined to set an early date for Acts. In particular, the Third Gospel must then have been written before 62, and Mark, at least one form of it, even earlier than that. But it has long been widely held as almost axiomatic that Luke's version of the apocalyptic discourse points indubitably to a date subsequent to the Fall of Jerusalem, and further that there is evidence of Luke's dependence upon Josephus, which must bring the date of the Gospel down to *circa* A.D. 92.

Both these points are vigorously dealt with by Dr. Torrey. On the first, after an examination of Lk 21²⁰⁻²⁴, he claims that 'every particle of Luke's prediction not provided by Mark was furnished by familiar and oft-quoted Old Testament passages. It is therefore obviously not permissible to call Luke 21²⁰⁻²⁴ a *vaticinium ex eventu*, and it cannot be

cited as throwing light on the date of the Gospel.' On the second point the writer maintains that Luke's mistake about Theudas-Judas has not been derived from Josephus, where the correct account is given, but from some earlier document. 'Any history dealing with this period would have been pretty certain to mention Theudas and Judas at this point, and in this order, although the revolt under Judas really happened much earlier. From some history of the kind, in which the facts were not clearly stated, the author of Luke's Aramaic source obtained his wrong impression of the order of events.' This is, no doubt, a tenable explanation of the obvious reversal of the dates of Judas and Theudas, but Dr. Torrey appears to overlook the further difficulty that the revolt of Theudas must have taken place, according to Josephus, not earlier than A.D. 44, that is to say, some ten years later than the date of Gamaliel's speech. The 'literary device' whereby such speeches were written up by the narrator would need to be credited to the Aramaic author as it has been credited to Luke.

In the course of a discussion on the homogeneity of Acts, Dr. Torrey takes occasion to deal with the theories advanced by Norden in his *Agnostos Theos*, a work whose history provides a striking illustration of the somewhat hasty homage often paid to a famous scholar who enters another field than his own. The result is a piece of unusually trenchant and conclusive criticism, which should make future writers chary of appealing to Norden's authority in the matter. 'It is a pity that a work of such learning as the *Agnostos Theos* should be so marred by inaccurate statements and loose reasoning, especially when the problem in hand is such an important one.'

This very interesting contribution by Dr. Torrey to the problem of the Acts has hitherto met with much less attention in Britain than in America. There it has already given rise to widespread discussion. Among articles to be noted are those by Dr. B. W. Bacon in the *American Journal of Theology* (1918), by Dr. Foakes-Jackson in the *Harvard Theological Review* for 1917 (critical), and by Dr. W. J. Wilson in the same *Review* for October 1918. Wilson accepts Torrey's main con-

¹ Not otherwise Dr. Lake. 'It has usually been assumed that the date must be posterior to the Fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, but it is doubtful whether there are really any satisfactory proofs that this was the case' (*D.A.C.* i. 20).

clusions, and gives further illustrations of their application to the exegesis of the text. He also deals with the question of sources rather than a source for these chapters, in connexion with which Torrey's theory is likely to be criticized. He concludes that 'if the whole of Acts 1-15³⁶ has been taken over literally from a single Aramaic document, then all the arguments based on the arrangement, structure, and arrangement of material remain as they were before.'

In the *American Journal of Theology*, of January 1919, will be found a further article by Professor Torrey, in which he deals with these criticisms, and widens out his study of the Acts into an interesting examination of some of the presuppositions which have for many years past governed much treatment

of the subject. Here again he does good service in pricking a number of hypercritical bubbles. He makes great fun of the suggestion that because Luke was Paul's friend and companion in travel he must have shared his views. 'It would be quite possible, on the evidence of our sources, to argue that Luke had some distaste, not only for theology in general, but also for Paul's in particular.' For the verdict on his main contention as to the Aramaic origin of Acts 1-15 we must wait until the experts in that language have said their say; meanwhile, so cautious a scholar as B. W. Bacon gives his opinion that 'Torrey's earlier demonstration (the term is not too strong) is now supplemented by equally cogent proof that Acts 1-15³⁵ is a translation from the Aramaic.'

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

Birthdays of Good Men and Women.

'The way of the just is uprightness.'—Pr 26⁷.

NATIONS, like boys and girls, become united through admiring and loving the same people. Sometimes they only discover their mutual love when the loved one dies. We were friends with America before she came to help us in the Great War. We not only thought of her as a near relative, we had shaken hands over the grave of President Lincoln.

1. It is about this great man I want to speak to you. He was so great that it is difficult to say the things that will give you anything like a true estimate of him.

He was born in Harden County, Kentucky, on the 9th of February 1809. His home was a rough cabin made of logs and clay, with a bed, a few three-legged stools, a log table, a pot, a kettle, and a few tin cooking vessels, for furniture.

The mother was a remarkable woman. She was delicate, rather sad, and very sensitive, but a heroine in her own way. She was a God-fearing woman, and exercised a great influence over her boy Abe, as he was called. Unfortunately she died when he was only nine.

You can remember things that happened when you were that age, can't you? Abe never forgot his mother. Rough and ungainly he turned out

to be when he was a grown lad, but his heart was soft and tender. Long afterwards, when he had become President of the United States, he said, 'All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe to my sainted mother.'

Abe gathered a little library together in the log cabin. The books in it were *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Life of Washington*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and the *Bible*—a capital selection, surely. He learned to write by taking pieces of burnt sticks from the fire, and practising on the end of chopped logs. But he was very full of mischief. A neighbour for whom he did odd jobs said Abe was 'lazy, very lazy. He was always reading, scribbling, and such like.' And Abe himself knew that he was lazy. One can tell that from what he once wrote in a copy-book:

Abraham Lincoln, his hand and pen,
He will be good, but God knows when.

2. One day he heard a long word of which he did not know the meaning. It was the word 'demonstrate.' He went to a boy friend and asked him the meaning of it. The boy said he did not know, but he had seen it in a book called Euclid. Well, Abe succeeded in getting a copy of the book, and committed the whole of it to memory. You boys and girls may know nothing of Euclid, but those who had their schooldays