

The Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles

F.F. Bruce

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The object of this paper is to make a rapid survey of the chief Christian speeches reported in the Acts of the Apostles, with some observations on a few of the more interesting details which appear in the course of our survey. These speeches fall into four main groups, which we may call evangelistic, deliberative, apologetic, and hortatory. The first group must further be subdivided according to the nature of the audience, for the method of presenting the Good News to pagans was naturally different from the method of presenting it to those who had some acquaintance with the OT revelation, whether they were Jews or “God-fearers,” i.e., Gentiles who, without becoming Jewish proselytes in the proper sense of the word, had abandoned pagan worship and become “adherents” of the synagogue.¹

To this latter kind of evangelistic oratory belong the speeches of Peter to Jewish audiences in chapters ii, iii, iv, and v, his address in the “God-fearing” household of Cornelius in ch. x, and the sermon preached by Paul to an audience, of Jews and “God-fearers” in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch in ch. xiii. To the other class of evangelistic speeches belong the addresses at Lystra in xiv, 15 ff., and at Athens in xvii, 22 ff.

To the deliberative group we may assign Peter’s speech to his fellow-disciples in i, 16 ff., preceding the election of Matthias to fill Judas Iscariot’s vacant place, and the speeches at the Council of Jerusalem in ch. xv. The apologetic speeches include Stephen’s defence before the Sanhedrin in ch. vii, Peter’s defence of his entering and eating in the house of Cornelius (xi, 4 ff.), and Paul’s successive defences before the Jerusalem populace (xxii, 1 ff.), the Sanhedrin (xxiii, 1 ff.), Felix (xxiv, 10 ff.), Festus (xxv, 8 ff.), Herod Agrippa II (xxvi, 1 ff.) and the Jews of Rome (xxviii, 17 ff.). Paul’s address to the elders of the Ephesian church in xx, 18 ff. belongs mainly to the hortatory class.

The degree in which these speeches, as recorded by Luke,² convey what was actually said on the various occasions, has been warmly disputed. The different impressions that they make on different readers may be illustrated from two recent works. The late Dr. F. J. Foakes Jackson, in his commentary on Acts in the Moffatt series, says:

“Whatever these speeches may be, it cannot be disputed that they are wonderfully varied as to their character, and as a rule admirably suited to the occasion on which they were delivered. Luke seems to have been able to give us an extraordinarily accurate picture of

¹ Greek φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν (Acts x, 2, 22 ; xiii, 16, 26), φοβόμενοι τὸν θεόν (xvi, 14; xviii, 7; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* xiv, 7, 2) or simply σεβόμενοι (xiii, 50; xvii, 4, 17). In some older books these people are incorrectly described as “proselytes of the gate.”

² I assume here the Lukan authorship of Acts; for reasons which have convinced the majority of British scholars who have examined the subject. But the survey of the speeches in this paper is for the most part independent of this question of authorship.

the undeveloped theology of the earliest Christians, and to enable us to determine the character of the most primitive presentation of the gospel.

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However produced, the speeches in Acts are masterpieces, and deserve the most careful attention” (p. xvi).³

Professor Martin Dibelius of Heidelberg thinks otherwise:—

“These speeches, without doubt, are as they stand inventions of the author. For they are too short to have been actually given in this form; they are too similar to one another to have come from different persons; and in their content they occasionally reproduce a later standpoint (e.g. what Peter and James say about the Law in chap. xv)” (*A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, p. 262).

Part of the purpose of this paper is to adduce evidence which may help us to decide which of these estimates is nearer the truth.

When a student of the classics reads Luke’s twofold work, he realizes that in several ways Luke has inherited the tradition of Greek historical writing, handed down from the time of Herodotus and Thucydides in the fifth century B.C. One feature of that tradition was the composition of appropriate speeches for appropriate occasions. Thucydides himself, at the outset of his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, makes it clear how he proposes to tackle this business:

“With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one’s memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said” (i, 22, 1).⁴

These last words are important, and there is little doubt that Thucydides conscientiously kept his promise to the best of his power, “adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said.” For example, the most famous speech in his History, the funeral oration delivered by Pericles over those who fell in the first year of the Peloponnesian War (ii, 35 ff.), is probably for all practical purposes the speech actually made by Pericles on such an occasion, and Thucydides himself may well have heard him speak thus. If we could be sure that all who inherited the Thucydidean tradition adhered, like him, to the general sense of what was really said, then we might without more ado conclude that in the speeches in Acts we have the general sense of what Peter and Paul and others said. But later historical writers were inclined

³ See also his remarks on the individual speeches in the course of his commentary. Still more forthright is Sir W. M. Ramsay’s view, that “a dispassionate consideration of the speeches in *Acts* must convince every reader that they are not composed by the author, but taken verbatim from other authorities” (*St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 27).

⁴ R. Crawler’s translation. The Greek is: καὶ ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ εἶπον ἕκαστοι ἢ μέλλοντες πολεμήσειν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη ὄντες, χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτῆν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι ἦν ἐμοὶ τε ὦν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοθεν ποθεν ἐμοὶ ἀπαγγέλλουσιν· ὡς δ’ ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ’ εἰπεῖν ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γυώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται.

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to imitate the freedom of Thucydides without his historical conscience. They composed speeches freely and put them into the mouths of their characters, not with any consideration of historical probability, but as dramatic or rhetorical exercises in which they tried to show off their highest skill in careful literary composition. "Some think," says Dionysius of Halicarnassus, "that it is in these that the summit of a writer's genius lies."⁵ To these writers history was an art, not a science. Polybius, a historian himself, protests against historians who write history as if they were composing dramas; a historian's function, he insists, is

"not, like a tragic poet, to imagine the probable utterances of his characters or reckon up all the consequences probably incidental to the occurrences with which he deals, but simply to record what really happened and what really was said, however commonplace. For the object of tragedy is not the same as that of history, but quite the opposite. The tragic poet should thrill and charm his audience for the moment by the verisimilitude of the words he puts into his characters' mouths, but it is the task of the historian to instruct and convince for all time serious students by the truth of the facts and the speeches he narrates: since in the one case, it is the probable that takes precedence, even if it be untrue, the purpose being to create illusion in spectators; in the other it is the truth, the purpose being to confer benefit on learners."⁶

In the first century A.D. a notable example of the tendency to compose such rhetorical speeches is provided by Josephus. Foakes Jackson mentions the tastelessness with which he puts an elaborate speech into the mouth of Abraham when he is on the point of sacrificing Isaac.⁷ Many other examples might be quoted from his works. The moving words in which Judah, after the cup has been found in Benjamin's sack, offers himself as a slave to Joseph in place of his youngest brother (Gen. xlv, 18 ff.), were called by Sir Walter Scott "the most complete pattern of genuine natural eloquence extant in any language." But Josephus must recast them to please the refined taste of his fastidious readers, and the result is several hundred words of dreary rhetoric, highly polished and unbearably insipid, whose frigidity is matched only by that of the answering speech which he puts into Joseph's mouth (*Ant.* ii, 6, 8 f.).

That, was, however, the fashion of the time, and against this background we must look at the speeches in Acts. At once we are struck by a difference, for these speeches can by no means be called the summit

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of Luke's literary perfection. For an author who could write such idiomatic Greek as the Prologue to the Third Gospel, the Greek of some of the speeches in Acts is surprisingly awkward.

⁵ *De Thucydide* 34, ἐν αἷς (sc. δημηγορίαις) οἴονται τινες τὴν ἄκραν τοῦ συγγραφέως εἶναι δύναμιν.

⁶ *Hist.* ii, 56, 10-12, δεῖ τοιγαροῦν οὐκ ἐκπλήττειν τὸν συγγραφέα τερατευόμενον διὰ τῆς ἱστορίας τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας οὐδὲ τοὺς ἐνδεχομένους λόγους ζητεῖν καὶ τὰ παρεπόμενα τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις ἐξαριθμεῖσθαι, καθάπερ οἱ τραγωδιογράφοι, τῶν δὲ πραχθέντων καὶ ῥηθέντων κατ' ἀλήθειαν αὐτῶν μνημονεύειν πάμπαν, κἂν πάνυ μέτρια τυγχάνωσιν ὄντα. τὸ γὰρ τέλος ἱστορίας καὶ τραγωδίας οὐ ταῦτόν. ἀλλὰ τὸναντιόν. ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ δεῖ διὰ τῶν πιθανωτάτων λόγων ἐκπλήξαι καὶ ψυχαγωγῆσαι κατὰ τὸ παρὸν τοὺς ἀκούοντας, ἐνθάδε δὲ διὰ τῶν ἀληθινῶν ἔργων καὶ λόγων εἰς τὸν πάντα χρόνον διδάξαι καὶ πείσαι τοὺς φιλομαθοῦντας, ἐπειδὴ περ ἐν ἐκείνοις μὲν ἡγεῖται τὸ τιθανόν, κἂν ἦ ψεῦδος, διὰ τὴν ἀπάτην τῶν θεωμένων, ἐν δὲ τούτοις τάληθες διὰ τὴν ὠφέλειαν τῶν φιλομαθοῦντων.

⁷ Foakes Jackson, *Josephus and the Jews*, pp. 234 f. ; Josephus, *Ant.* i, 13, 3.

We must not consider the speeches in Acts in isolation from those in the former part of Luke's history. The speeches in the Third Gospel can be compared with their parallels in the other two Synoptists, who did not inherit the traditions of Greek historical writing. On the basis of such a comparison, the general conclusion of Synoptic students is that Luke has preserved his Sayings source or sources with great faithfulness. He is much readier, it appears, to modify the language of his sources in narratives than in Sayings, his principal alterations in these latter affecting the style and order, but not the contents.⁸ Then F. C. Burkitt, in a study of "Luke's use of Mark" in Jackson and Lake's *Beginnings of Christianity*, ii, pp. 106 ff., pays particular attention to the version of the Eschatological Discourse in Luke xxi in relation to the earlier form in Mark xiii, and shows that while the style, language and phraseology of Luke xxi are recognizably Lukan, and while certain expressions in the earlier report are interpreted instead of being verbally reproduced in the later one, yet it is in all essentials the same speech; in spite of the differences, "what concerns us here is not that Luke has changed so much, but that he has invented so little" (p. 115). If Luke comes off so well in reports of speeches where his fidelity to his sources can be tested, we should not without good reason suppose that he was less faithful where his sources are no longer available for comparison.

I. EVANGELISTIC SPEECHES

(a) To Jews and "God-fearers"

Luke's sources for the earlier parts of Acts are no longer extant, but it is probable that some of them were documentary, and that some, whether oral or written, were originally composed in Aramaic. We need not go so far as Professor C. C. Torrey and consider that the first half of Acts, from i, 1b, to xv, 35, was simply translated by Luke from a single Aramaic document⁹; but the evidence is strong for an Aramaic source, probably documentary, behind the greater part of chapters i-v, ix, 31-xi, 18, and possibly also parts of chapters xii and xv.¹⁰ Now these sections are important for our purpose, as they include the various reports of Peter's public preaching or *kerygma* (ii, 14 ff.; iii, 12 ff.; iv, 8 ff.; v, 29 ff.; x, 34 ff.). Whether Peter actually spoke in Aramaic on each of these occasions is immaterial; the point is that so far as the linguistic evidence goes, the accounts seem originally to have been preserved in an Aramaic document. Actually, the Aramaisms are most marked in the report of his sermon in the house of Cornelius, where

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we might have expected him to speak Greek (though he may, for all we know, have spoken by interpretation). In any case, the presence of Aramaisms in these reports of Peter's speeches suggests strongly that Luke did not compose them,¹¹ but reproduced his source with considerable literalness. What, for example, are we to make of the true Greek text of x, 36 ff., which is literally to be translated:—

⁸ Cf., e.g., W. Bussmann, *Synoptische Studien*, ii (1929), pp. 106 ff.

⁹ C. C. Torrey, *The Composition and Date of Acts* (Cambridge, Mass., 1916).

¹⁰ See J. de Zwaan's chapter on "The Use of the Greek Language in Acts" in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. ii, pp. 30 ff., especially pp. 44 ff.

¹¹ We must not talk generally of Semitisms in a NT writer, as if these constituted a uniform problem. We must distinguish between Hebraisms and Aramaisms. The former can easily be put down to the influence of the Semitizing LXX Greek, but Aramaisms cannot be accounted for in this way.

“The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—you know the thing that took place throughout the whole of Judaea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John proclaimed—Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with Holy Spirit and Power...”?

It is not Luke’s best Greek, but it can be turned word for word into grammatical and intelligible Aramaic.¹² Similar examples are to be seen in the other speeches of Peter; there is, for example, a difficult Greek sentence in iii, 16: καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ τοῦτον, ὃν θεωρεῖτε καὶ οἴδατε, ἐστερέωσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ (“and through faith in His name, His name has strengthened this man, whom you see and know”), where a slight change in the pointing of the posited Aramaic substratum gives the sense: “And through faith in His name, He has made whole this man whom you see and know.”¹³

This linguistic evidence must be taken along with the evidence of the subject-matter of these early speeches. Their content has been subjected to keen examination in recent years, in particular by Professor C. H. Dodd, in *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (1936) and

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elsewhere. He emphasizes the primitive character of their theology, which reflects a stage in the development of the *kerygma* much earlier than the date he assigns to Acts. I should put the composition of Acts much earlier than he does, in the early sixties rather than towards the end of the first century. But this does not affect the main point of his argument:—

“The Acts is a work of the late first century. It might be held that its formulation of the *kerygma* belongs to that period. But a comparison with the *data* of the Pauline epistles makes it certain that at least the substance of this *kerygma*, with its historical core, is as early as the time of Paul, and that it represents the gospel which he declared to be common to him and the original apostles, the tradition which he received and handed on. When we further observe that most of the forms of the *kerygma* in Acts show in their language a strong Aramaic colouring, we may recognize the high probability that in these passages we are in fairly direct touch with the primitive tradition of the Jesus of history” (*History and the Gospel*, p. 73).

We need not go over in detail the results of Professor Dodd’s study of these early reports of the *kerygma*. They show the same general structure, containing in varying proportion a

¹² τὸν λόγον ὃν ἀπέστειλεν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ εὐαγγελιζόμενος εἰρήνην διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (οὗτός ἐστιν πάντων κύριος), ὑμεῖς οἴδατε τὸ γενόμενον ῥῆμα καθ’ ὅλης τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας μετὰ τὸ βάπτισμα ὃ ἐκήρυξεν Ἰωάννης, Ἰησοῦν τὸν ἀπὸ Ναζαρέθ, ὡς ἔχρισεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεὸς πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ δυνάμει... In addition to the difficulties of syntax in the Greek which reappear in the English translation, there is the unrelated nominative of the participle ἀρξάμενος, used adverbially along with ἀπὸ in imitation of Aramaic *meshaye min* (cf. i, 22). Attempts to make the Greek read more smoothly are to be found in some of the earliest MSS. The Aramaic behind the Greek may have been something like this (chiefly after Torrey):

הוא בכל יהוד משדא בתד טבולא מלת די. שלח לבני ישראל מבשר שלם ביר ישוע משיחא הוא מרא די יזחנן ישוצ נצדיא די משחה אלהא בחוהא די זבחילא. כלא ידעין פתנמא דו

“As for the word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all), you know what took place throughout the whole of Judaea, starting from Galilee after the baptism which John proclaimed, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with Holy Spirit and Power...”

¹³ Aram. ובהמנותא די שמחה תקף שמחה להדין די חזין אנתיו וידעין אנתון. The difference turns upon the pointing of תקף שמחה which might be תקף שמה (*taggeph shemeh*) “His name has strengthened,” or תקף שמה (*taqqiph samek*) “He has made him strong,” which latter Torrey suggests as the true reading (*op. cit.*, pp. 14 ff.).

reference to OT promises fulfilled by God in the sending of Jesus; a summary of His public ministry from the baptism of John up to His crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation, the preachers emphasizing their personal testimony to the truth of the narrative; an affirmation of His expected return; a declaration of His Messiahship as proved by the correspondence of the actual events to OT prophecy; some reference to the sending of the Spirit, and a call to repentance coupled with the assurance of forgiveness. The Christology is undeveloped and pre-Pauline; some of the expressions used would, if penned in the fourth century, have made Athanasius and his friends shake their heads doubtfully. But this simply means that these reports occupy an early stage in “the progress of doctrine in the New Testament,” to quote the title of T. D. Bernard’s Bampton Lectures for 1864.

But while the theology of these speeches is primitive, they are none the less essentially theological. It has been pointed out that no matter how we classify the material in the Gospels, each separate cross-section presents us with a theological portrayal of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God,¹⁴ just as much as the Pauline epistles do. And the same conclusion emerges from the summaries of the original *kerygma* in these early chapters of Acts. Here, too, Jesus is the appointed Saviour, put to death in accordance with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, raised by His power and exalted as Lord and Messiah. Just as little as any other part of the NT do these chapters lend any colour to the old-fashioned conception of a “liberal” Jesus.

The speeches in the first five chapters at least contemplate as a practical possibility the complete national repentance of Israel and

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national acceptance of Jesus as Messiah. In ii, 36, the proclamation is made to “all the house of Israel”;¹⁵ in iii, 19 ff., it is suggested that this national turning may be followed quickly by the return of Christ and the “times of refreshing” which OT prophets associated with Messiah’s reign. This situation is very primitive; it began to pass away with the opposition of the priests (iv, 1 ff.), and still more after the rise of Stephen (vi, 8 ff.); by the time when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (A.D. 50) it no longer existed (cf. 1 Th. ii. 14 ff.).

These early speeches have also a bearing on Gospel criticism. In particular, mention should be made of Professor Dodd’s article, “The Framework of the Gospel Narrative,” in *The Expository Times*, xliii, pp. 396 ff. (June, 1932), in which he shows how just such an Outline of the Gospel story as can be reconstructed from these reports in Acts and one or two other places in the NT (e.g. 1 Cor. xi, 23 ff.; xv, 3 ff.) can also be traced in Mark, where it is split up by the insertion of the pericopae of which that Gospel mainly consists. The fact that the early reports of the *kerygma* in Acts are put in the mouth of Peter is significant when coupled with the internal and early external evidence for Peter’s authority behind the Second Gospel. Here, too, we have an indication that the old “oral transmission” solution of the Synoptic Problem, advocated by Westcott and Arthur Wright, was not so far from the truth after all, being in

¹⁴ Cf. E. Hoskyns and N. Davey, *The Riddle of the New Testament* (1931), pp. 162 ff.; C. H. Dodd, *History and the Gospel* (1933), pp. 92 ff.

¹⁵ πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραήλ, cf. the formula כל בית ישראל in the Jewish *Qaddish*. This is one of several expressions belonging to the oldest Jewish liturgical literature found in these early speeches. Cf. F. H. Chase, *The Credibility of the Acts*, pp. 122 ff. But the degree to which a wholesale national repentance is envisaged in these early speeches should not be exaggerated; the emphasis is mainly on the remnant saved from that “crooked generation” (ii, 40).

essence not so very different from the documentary theory which superseded it, in particular from the “Markan hypothesis.” The Triple Tradition of the Synoptists does indeed represent the original oral preaching, for Mark’s Gospel is, by and large, that preaching committed to writing and translated into Greek.

In the speech in Acts x, delivered to a “God-fearing” audience, some acquaintance with the main outline of the story of Jesus is presumed, but more details are given than in the earlier Jerusalem reports. If we are to take it that this greater detail in Luke’s summary reflects a correspondingly greater detail in Peter’s actual address, the explanation would no doubt be, as Professor Dodd suggests, “that the speech before Cornelius represents the form of *kerygma* used by the primitive Church in its earliest approaches to a wider preaching” (*The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 56).

The sermon preached by Paul in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (xiii, 16 ff.) is not essentially different from the earlier speeches in its presentation of the evangelic events. The scope and contents of the Gospel story as told here coincide with what we find in the Petrine *kerygma*, thus confirming Paul’s insistence elsewhere that, in spite of his independence of the original apostles, he preached the same Gospel “Whether then it be I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed” (1 Cor. xv, 11).

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The OT quotations in this speech are expanded into a review of God’s dealings with Israel, after a fashion established from OT days onwards. Paul’s historical retrospect is carried from the Exodus down to David, and there he shows how the promises made to David were fulfilled in Jesus as the Messiah, the son of David.

A late writer, composing freely, might have introduced more definitely Pauline theology into his speech. As it is, the one theological advance which it makes on the earlier speeches is the addition of justification to the remission of sins: “Through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins; and by him every one who believes is justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (xiii, 38 f.).¹⁶

Grammatically, of course, this statement about justification is ambiguous. It may mean: Believers in Christ are justified from all things; no such justification (if indeed any real justification at all) is provided by Moses’ law. This is the way in which the words have usually been taken; Tyndale, for example, has a marginal note here: “Fayth iustifieth and not the lawe.” And the question will very reasonably be settled for most readers by the not irrelevant consideration that this is the way in which justification is presented in Paul’s epistles. However, it is *grammatically* possible to take the words as meaning: Moses’ law can justify from some things (perhaps from most things); but as regards those things from which it cannot justify, faith in Christ will justify from them. In spite of the fact that this interpretation

¹⁶ To quote Dodd again: “There is nothing specifically Pauline in it except the term ‘justification.’ On the other hand, the general scheme, and the emphasis, correspond with what we have found in the epistles, and there is little or nothing in it which could not be documented out of the epistles, except the historic details in the introductory passage (xiii, 16-22) and the specific allusions to episodes in the Gospel story...”

“In any case, if we recall the close general similarity of the *kerygma* as derived from the Pauline epistles to the *kerygma* as derived from Acts, as well as Paul’s emphatic assertion of the identity of his gospel with the general Christian tradition, we shall not find it altogether incredible that the speech at Pisidian Antioch may represent in a general way one form of Paul’s preaching, that form, perhaps, which he adopted in synagogues when he had the opportunity of speaking there” (*The Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 59 f., 62).

is diametrically opposed to Paul's teaching, some writers accept it here, with the natural corollary that this is not a true Pauline speech. Thus B. W. Bacon writes:—

“The speech placed in Paul's mouth at Pisidian Antioch cannot be more than the historian's attempt to tell what Paul might have said: for as a whole it simply rehearses the speech of Peter at Pentecost, with a few variations, some of which remind us of the speech of Stephen. At all events, it is quite un-Pauline, and contains not one trait of his characteristic gospel, least of all in xiii, 39 ... The language of xiii, 39, is claimed as Pauline because of the single word ‘justify.’ The doctrine is exactly that which Paul fundamentally repudiates, and which in Gal. ii, 15-21, he demonstrates against Peter to be untenable, namely, that a man may rest upon the works of the law for his general justifica-

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tion, and rely on the death of Christ to make up the deficiencies” (*The Story of St. Paul*, p. 103 and footnote).

We have seen good reason to regard these objections as lacking in substance. As for the argument that this speech is too Petrine to be Pauline, it is interesting to find this argument turned on its head by Percy Gardner, who declares that Peter's speech at Pentecost “so nearly resembles the speeches given to Paul that we can scarcely be mistaken in regarding it as a free composition” (*Cambridge Biblical Essays*, p. 397); whereas the matter of the Antioch speech “is eminently Pauline; and the manner, apart from the mere choice of words, is also Pauline... We may then fairly consider the speech at Antioch as an abridgement of the kind of address used by Paul towards his own countrymen” (*ibid.*, p. 398). Dr. H. J. Cadbury argues for the Lukan authorship of Petrine and Pauline speeches alike on the ground of their common style and common interdependent exegesis of OT quotations (*Beginnings of Christianity*, v, pp. 407 ff.). These two phenomena are obvious, but the former can be chiefly explained on form-critical grounds (as reflecting a largely stereotyped *kerygma*), the latter can be accounted for by the primitive Christian use of a recognized collection of *Testimonies*, Messianic proof-texts from the OT.

We must not leave these addresses to Jewish and near-Jewish audiences without referring to the part which OT quotations play in them. We notice certain favourite quotations, some of which, such as Ps. cx, 1; cxviii, 22, appear in the discourses of our Lord Himself.¹⁷ Among the many contributions made by Rendel Harris to NT studies, one of the most valuable is his demonstration of the existence and employment in the earliest days of the Church of a collection of such texts, with the strong probability that some at least of the OT quotations in the NT were drawn from this collection. In his examination of the use of such *Testimonies* in Acts, he remarks:—

“It will be observed that these instances which we have been studying are taken from speeches, of Paul and the other Apostles, and that there is nothing of the kind in Luke's ordinary narration. He, at all events, does not turn aside to tell us that ‘Then was fulfilled that which was spoken of by the prophet.’ If Luke does not use the method of *Testimonies* on his own account, he is quite clear that it was the Apostolic method. It was either what they actually said or what they ought to have said. But if we concede that the *Testimony Book* was behind Luke, the historian of the Acts, it seems absurd to deny that it was behind the speakers with whom he had intercourse and whom he professed to report. The natural

¹⁷ Cf. Peter and Paul's similar exegesis of Ps. xvi, 10 in Acts ii, 27 ff.; xiii, 35 ff.; the Messianic interpretation of the Prophet of Deut. xviii, 15 ff., by Peter and Stephen (iii, 22 f.; vii, 37), etc.

consequence is that we have a report of speeches which cannot be very far from their actual utterance “ (*Testimonies*, ii, p. 80).

(b) To Pagans

The preaching of the Gospel to pagans naturally required a different technique from preaching it to Jews and “God-fearers.” As Luke gives

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us a sample of Paul’s synagogue preaching in xiii, 16 ff., so in xvii, 22 ff., he gives us a sample of his addresses to pagans. Paul’s Areopagitica may be taken along with the brief report of the protest made by Barnabas and himself when the men of Lystra began to offer them divine honours:—

“Men, what is this you are doing? We also are men of like passions with you, who bring the good news that you should turn from these vain things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and all things in them. In past generations He allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, giving you rains and fruitful seasons from heaven, filling your hearts with food and gladness” (xiv, 15-17).

In both places an appeal to the natural revelation of God the Creator takes the place of the appeal to OT revelation in addresses to Jews. Some writers find here an insuperable contradiction to the teaching of Rom. i¹⁸; I confess I find none. Naturally the condemnation of the pagan world in Rom. i is expressed with a severity which would have been out of place in an address designed to win the favourable attention of a pagan audience; but the same point is emphasized, that if men had only paid heed to the works of God in creation, they might even in them have found tokens of “His eternal power and Godhead” (Rom. i, 20). A difference of emphasis may indeed be noted; in Acts xiv and xvii the point is that until the full revelation of God came to the Gentiles, He overlooked their errors which arose from ignorance of His Will, while in Rom. i God’s giving them up to their own devices is the penalty for their rejecting even the little light that was available to them.

While B. W. Bacon would not allow the sermon at Pisidian Antioch to be Pauline, he found no difficulty in accepting the Areopagitica as Pauline in a general sense. He saw in it strong reminders of passages in the epistles, comparing Acts xvii, 30, with Rom. iii, 25, and the whole speech with the summary of the Gospel in 1 Th. i, 9 f. He connects the “waiting for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, our Deliverer from the wrath to come” of 1 Th. i, 10, with the announcement in Acts xvii, 31 of, the appointed day “in which God will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He ordained, of which He has given a proof to all by raising Him from the dead” (cf. also Rom. ii, 5, 16, for this appointed day).¹⁹ Thus Bacon finds that the speech at Athens, “in distinction from that attributed to Paul in Acts xiii, 16-41, is really of Pauline type” (*The Story of St. Paul*, p. 164);

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¹⁸ Cf. P. Gardner in *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, pp. 399 ff.; such considerations lead him to the conclusion that “the speech at Athens is the least authentic of the Pauline discourses in Acts” (p. 401).

¹⁹ Cf. also ἀπὸ τούτων τῶν ματαίων ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ θεὸν ζῶντα (xiv. 15) with ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ (1 Th. i, 9). The passage 1 Th. i, 9 f., is important as Paul’s own allusion to his way of presenting the Gospel to a pagan community.

but even so, he hesitates to commit himself whole-heartedly to a belief in its genuineness, because—

“the address as a whole contains rather the commonplaces of Jewish propaganda against heathenism, than anything distinctive of Paul. It should be read side by side with the typical missionary address quoted by Clement of Alexandria from the so-called *Preaching of Peter*; for in substance the same ‘preaching’ appears in various forms in Tatian, Athenagoras, the *Epistle to Diognetus*, and the *Apology of Aristides*. It is even recognizable in a pre-Christian form in the Wisdom of Solomon and the *Epistle of Aristeas*.”²⁰

Bacon wrote that in 1904, but since those days we have learned not to be surprised at this recurrence of a stock or stereotyped “form” of religious preaching or teaching. We have been taught to think in terms of Form Criticism; and Eduard Norden has shown us that the “form” in which the Pauline *Areopagitica* is cast is not merely, as Bacon’ said, “a stock *predicatio* of early Jewish monotheistic propaganda, so modified in Christian use as to make Judaism itself take second place in the comparison” (*op. cit.*, p. 167), but a “form” which can be paralleled from Gentile sources as well as from Judaeo-Christian ones. This does not alarm us; what really matters is not the “form” or mould, but what is poured into it; but it was all to the good if people heard the truth presented in a “form” to which they were accustomed.

Form Criticism, then, throws light on the speeches to pagans just as it does on speeches to Jews. The classical work in which Paul’s *Areopagitica* is examined from this point of view is Norden’s *Agnostos Theos* (1913), in which he shows how widespread and regular was the stereotyped “form” in which missionary addresses of any kind were cast in those days:—

“We may say that about the time of the birth of Christ anyone, who lifted up his voice for the purpose of religious propaganda, considered himself bound by the old, solemn ‘forms,’ no matter what kind of truth about God and His worship he recommended” (*Agnostos Theos*, p. 133).²¹

Analysing Paul’s Athenian speech from this point of view, Norden regarded it as out of the question that Paul himself could actually have spoken like this. It is therefore interesting to be told by the historian Ed. Meyer that after frequent talks between himself and Norden on this and related questions, Norden came to admit the possibility that Luke does reproduce the contents of Paul’s actual speech.²² Meyer’s own

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opinion is vigorously expressed thus: “How this scene can ever have been explained as an invention is one of those things which I have never been able to understand.”²³ Dr. H. J. Cadbury remarks that “the classicists are among the most inclined to plead for the historicity

²⁰ Cf. Sanday and Headlam’s note on the use of the Book of Wisdom in Rom. i in their commentary on Rom. (*ICC*), pp. 51 f. Some of the second century writings mentioned by Bacon may have been influenced by Acts.

²¹ “Man darf sagen, dass wer um Christi Geburt seine Stimme erhob zum Zwecke religiöser Propaganda, sich durch die alten feierlichen Formen gebunden erachtete, ganz gleichgültig, welche Art der Wahrheit von Gott und von dessen Verehrung er empfahl.”

²² “Ich darf wohl bemerken, dass er mir jetzt, nach häufigen Gesprächen über diese and verwandte Fragen, die Möglichkeit zugibt, dass Lukas wirklich den Inhalt der Rede des Paulus richtig wiedergegeben habe “ (Meyer, *Ursprung and Anfänge des Christentums* iii [1923], p. 92 n.).

²³ “Wie man diese Scene für erfunden hat erklären können, gehört zu den Dingen, die mir immer unverstänlich geblieben sind” (ib., p. 105).

of the scene of Paul at Athens.”²⁴ He mentions Curtius and Blass in addition to Meyer; and we could add to these names. I feel very content to be in their company. In the understanding of this speech above everything else in Acts, the “classicists” are likely to be right.²⁵

The speech was delivered probably in the Stoa Basileios in the Athenian Agora, before the Court of the Areopagus, who apparently had authority at this time to examine and license public lecturers.²⁶ It is full of interesting details; we can look at only one or two.

Theodore of Mopsuestia²⁷ (A.D. 350-428) referred for the background of the speech to a story which we find in Diogenes Laertius’s *Lives of Philosophers* (i, 110). According to Diogenes, the Athenians once during a pestilence sent for Epimenides the Cretan, who advised them to release black and white sheep from the Areopagus, and on the spots where these sheep rested to offer them in sacrifice “to the appropriate deity” (τῷ προσήκοντι θεῷ). As a result, “anonymous altars” (βωμοὶ ἀνόνημοι) were still to be seen throughout Attica in Diogenes’s day (early third century A.D.). This fits the information given by Pausanias²⁸ and Philostratus²⁹ that altars to unknown gods were common at Athens, and throws light on Paul’s reference to the altar with the dedication ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ.

Now, in the course of his speech, Paul quotes “certain of our own poets” for the nature of the true God. These quotations partly serve the purpose served by OT quotations in addresses to Jews. The quotation from Paul’s fellow-Cilician Aratus (*Phainomena*, 5), τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμὲν (ver. 28), has always been recognized; only recently, however, have scholars recovered the source of the opening words of that verse, ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμὲν (“for in Him we live and move and have our being”), in a poem of Epimenides the Cretan. The

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Nestorian father Isho‘dad, bishop of Hadatha (c. A.D. 850), in his commentary on Acts, says on xvii, 28:—

“Paul takes both of these from certain, heathen poets. Now about this, *In Him we live*, etc.; because the Cretans said as truth about Zeus, that he was a lord, he was lacerated by a wild boar and buried, and behold! his grave is known amongst us; so therefore Minos, son of Zeus, made a laudatory speech on behalf of his father, and he said in it:

They carved a tomb for thee, O holy and high
The Cretans—liars, evil beasts, and slow bellies!
But thou art not dead; forever thou art living and risen,
For in thee we live and move and are.

²⁴ *The Beginnings of Christianity*, v, p. 406 n.

²⁵ The latest monograph on this speech is Dr. Dibelius’s *Paulus auf dem Areopag* (Heidelberg, 1939). Dibelius concludes that the speech, “eine hellenistische Rede von der wahren Gotteserkenntnis,” was composed by Luke as suitable for the occasion; the speaker could not have been the Paul whom we know from his Epistles, but rather the forerunner of the Apologists. We have seen reason to contest this conclusion; Paul had a much more versatile mind than he is sometimes given credit for.

²⁶ Cf. W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, pp. 245 ff.

²⁷ He is quoted as “the Interpreter” to this effect by the Syriac father Isho‘dad in his commentary on Acts. Theodore does not mention Epimenides by name; he says the Athenians were advised by a Daemon.

²⁸ *Description of Greece*, i, 1, 4, βωμοὶ δὲ θεῶν τε ὀνομαζομένων ἀγνώστων.

²⁹ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, vi, 3, 5, καὶ ταῦτα Ἀθήνησιν, οὗ καὶ ἀγνώστων δαιμόνων βωμοὶ ἴδρυνται.

So therefore the blessed Paul took this sentence from Minos.³⁰

We at once recognize the second line of the quatrain as the quotation which is attributed to a prophet of the Cretans themselves³¹ in Tit. i, 12, and which Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* i, 14, 59, 1 f.) tells us comes from a work of Epimenides. Isho‘dad does not mention Epimenides, but as Diogenes (i, 112) mentions among the works of Epimenides a long poem on Minos and Rhadamanthys, this was no doubt the work in which Minos pronounced his panegyric over Zeus (cf. J. R. Harris in *Expositor*, vii, ii [1906], pp. 305 ff.).

Chrysostom on Tit. i, 12, refers to the similar words in Callimachus’s *Hymn to Zeus*, 7 f.,

Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψευσταί· καὶ γὰρ τάγον, ᾧ ἄνα, σεῖο
Κρήτες ἐτεκτῆναντο· σὺ δ’οὐ θάνες· ἐσσι γὰρ αἰεὶ

Callimachus was probably influenced by the language of Epimenides.

The fact that part of the Epimenidean quatrain appears in Paul’s Athenian speech and another part in Tit. i, 12, provides a link between these two compositions, the Pauline authorship of both of which has been

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doubted. The inference which may reasonably be drawn from this fact has been suggested by J. H. Moulton in the following words:—

“Of course Luke is usually credited with Paul’s *Areopagitica*, and it may be difficult to prove completely that he wrote his report from full notes, given him not long after by his master. But when we find the Lukan Paul quoting Epimenides (Acts xvii, 28a) and the Paul of the Pastorals citing the very same context (Tit. i, 12), with the Aratus-Cleanthes quotation (ib., 28b) to match the Menander (1 Cor. xv, 33), we may at least remark that the speech is very subtly concocted. Paul was, moreover, much more likely than Luke to know the tenets of Stoics and Epicureans so as to make such delicately suited allusions to them. Luke’s knowledge of Greek literature does not seem to have gone far beyond the medical writers who so profoundly influenced his diction” (Moulton and Howard’s *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ii, p. 8).

³⁰ Here, too, Isho‘dad is probably quoting from Theodore. Text and translation in *Horae Seiniticae* x (Cambridge, 1913), ed. and tr. M. D. Gibson. The quatrain is extant only in Syriac:

קברא ננרו לך אז חסיא ורביא
קרטיא דגלא חיוהא בישתא וברסתא בטילתא
אנת גיר לא מאת אנת לעלם חי אנת זקאם
בך גיר חיינן זמתתועינן זאיתין .

There are two well-known reconstructions of the original. One is by Rendel Harris in *The Expositor*, vii, iii (1907), p. 336:

τύμβον ἐτεκτῆναντό σεθεν, κύδιστε, μέγιστε
Κρήτες, ἀεὶ ψευσταί, κακὰ θηρία, γαστέρες ἀργαί,
ἀλλὰ σὺ γ’ οὐ θνήσκεις, ἔστηκας γὰρ ζῶος αἰεὶ,
ἐν γὰρ σοὶ ζῶμεν καὶ κινύμεθ’ ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσμέν.

The other is by A. B. Cook in *Zeus*, i (1914), p. 664:

σοὶ μὲν ἐτεκτῆναντο τάφον, πανυπέριστε δαίμον,
Κρήτες, ἀεὶ ψευσταί, κακὰ θηρία, γαστέρες ἀργαί,
ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὐ σὺ θάνες, ζῶεις δὲ καὶ ἴστασαι αἰεὶ
ἐν σοὶ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινεόμεσθα καὶ εἴμεν.

³¹ εἶπέν τις ἐξ αὐτῶν ἴδιος αὐτῶν προφήτης. Plato calls Epimenides ἀνήρ θεῖος (*Laws*, i, 642d); Plutarch calls him θεφιλής καὶ σοφὸς περὶ τὰ θεῖα τὴν ἐνθουσιαστικὴν καὶ τελεστικὴν σοφίαν (*Solon*, 12).

An example of these “delicately suited allusions” to Stoic and Epicurean tenets is seen in xvii, 25, in which are combined references to the Epicurean doctrine that God needs nothing from men and to the Stoic belief that He is the source of all life. Paul had probably made the acquaintance of Stoicism in Tarsus, where the Stoic Athenodorus (74 B.C.-A.D. 7) had a great influence.

Especially suited to the Athenians, with their proud boast of autochthonous origin from the Attic soil, was the insistence that God had created *all* nations “out of one man” (ἐξ ἑνός). Nor are we surprised at the incredulity with which they received his talk of a resurrection of the dead, when we remember how Aeschylus, the greatest of their tragic poets, represented the god Apollo as saying, on the occasion when that very Court of the Areopagus was instituted by the City’s patron goddess Athene (*Eumenides*, 647 f.):—

ἄνδρος δ’ ἐπειδὴν αἶμ’ ἀνασπάσῃ κόνις
ἅπαξ θανόντος, οὐτις ἐστ’ ἀνάστασις

(“But when the earth drinks up a man’s blood once he has (lied, there is no resurrection”).

II. DELIBERATIVE SPEECHES

The deliberative speeches in Acts are short, and can have only a brief notice. In the speech of Peter in i, 16 ff., we should notice that verses 18 and 19 as Westcott and Hort rightly indicate by their punctuation, are a parenthesis by the author, not, part of what Peter said. This is sufficiently clear from the words τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ αὐτῶν in verse 19. The question therefore of the relation of this narrative of the death of Judas to those given by Matthew or Papias does not come within the scope of this lecture. This version, as Ramsay says (*St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 369), was probably told to Luke on the occasion when he came to Jerusalem with Paul.

The quotations from Pss. lxxix, 25 (LXX, lxviii, 26), and cix, (LXX, cviii, 8), in verse 20 are, on the other hand, integral parts of Peter’s

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speech. In so far as the character of Judas corresponded to the descriptions in these two passages, they were applied to him. As things said of David were interpreted in a Messianic sense, so David’s enemies could be interpreted as foreshadowing the enemies of the Christ. These two passages may have been included in this sense in an early collection of *Testimonies*.

This is not the only place in the NT where the existence of a set of Testimonies dealing with the fate of Judas is implied. “We are familiar with Matthew’s proof of it, by a combined Testimony from Zechariah and Jeremiah,” says Rendel Harris (*op. cit.*, p. 82). This seems to be the reason for the perplexing way in which a quotation from Zech. xi, 12 f., is introduced in Mt. xxvii, 9, by the words, “Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet”; in the *Testimony Book* the Zechariah passage was probably juxtaposed or conflated—with Jer. xviii, 2 ff., or xxxii, 9. We must also remember our Lord’s application to Judas of Ps. xli, 9 (Jn. xiii, 18), and the words of His prayer for His disciples in Jn. xvii, 12: “None of them is lost but the son of perdition, *that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*”

The speeches at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts xv require a monograph to themselves. A more extended treatment of the Council will appear elsewhere³²; here it must suffice to say that the speeches are in keeping with what we know of the respective speakers. Peter throws his weight on the liberal side, as we might expect from the account given of his settled convictions and normal practice in Gal. ii; “the figure of a Judaizing St. Peter is a figment of the Tübingen critics with no basis in history” (Kirsopp Lake, *Earlier Epistles of Paul*, p. 116). His description of the Law as “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (xv, 10) is exactly the description which we might expect from the Galilaean ‘*am ha-areš*’ of the first century A.D. Paul would rather have said that he had borne the yoke with infinite painstaking from his youth up, and found that after all it could give him neither rest of conscience nor justification before God.³³

James’s speech is quite different from Peter’s. James was not anti-Pauline; according to Paul’s own-testimony in Gal. ii, 9,³⁴ James as well as Peter gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship in recognition of their mission to evangelize the Gentiles. But James had to shepherd a difficult flock of Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, several

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thousand strong and all zealous for the Law (Acts, xxi, 20), who viewed Paul and all his works with the gravest suspicion. It was natural, therefore, that James should be constantly anxious to effect a compromise, as we see not only at the Council but also later, when Paul paid his last visit to Jerusalem (xxi, 18 ff.). So here, he mediates between the liberals and the Pharisaic disciples, admitting the truth of Peter’s doctrinal position, that salvation was *sola gratia, sola fide*, but suggesting a practical *modus vivendi* to enable Jewish and Gentile believers to enjoy full social intercourse without causing offence to weaker consciences among the former. There was no reason why Paul should not accept such a *modus vivendi* once the main principle was safeguarded; he himself insisted untiringly on sexual purity, and on the duty of the stronger in faith to respect the tender consciences of the weaker, particularly in food questions. I see no good reason for supposing that Paul first received official information of the Apostolic Decree at his last visit to Jerusalem (xxi, 25). This interpretation involves Luke in a gross self-contradiction, and is in no way demanded by the context in ch. xxi. There James and the elders wish him to show that there is no truth in the reports that he urges Jewish Christians to disregard the Law, or disregards it himself; as for Gentile Christians, they add, we settled that question, of course, at the Apostolic Council.

It has been objected to the genuineness of James’s speech that his quotation from Amos ix, 11 f., is from the LXX, and depends for its relevance on that version, as it would lose its force in the Massoretic form. It is probably not a conclusive answer to say that the OT quotations in the Epistle of James are from the LXX; but we need not be surprised if James, a Galilaean, could speak Greek and quote the LXX, and it is likely that the proceedings at the Council of

³² In a commentary on Acts, in which many other questions aired in this paper are examined in greater detail.

³³ The relation of the Law to practical life in NT times is a disputed question. The Rabbinical writings generally reflect conditions later than those of the first century A.D., and there is some evidence that early in the second century the burden was eased by R. Aqiba. For the first century we have no better evidence than the NT. With Peter’s estimate agrees Jas. ii, 10, “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all.”

³⁴ I agree with those who identify the Jerusalem visit of Gal. ii not with that of Acts xv but with that of Acts xi, 30.

Jerusalem would be in Greek in view of the presence of delegates from Antioch. There is, besides, something to be said for Torrey's argument that the LXX of Amos ix, 11 f., certainly represents a variant *Hebrew* text, which may have had some circulation before the standardization of the Massoretic text of the prophets, and much more for his argument that "even our Massoretic Hebrew would have served the present purpose admirably, since it predicted that 'the tabernacle of David,' i.e. the church of the Messiah, would 'gain possession of all the nations which are called by the name [of the God of Israel].'"³⁵

At the end of James's quotation (xv, 18), the conflation of Amos ix, 12, with Isa. xlv, 21, suggests a further use of *Testimonies*, as also does the introduction of the quotation with μετὰ ταῦτα ἀναστρέφω instead of the τῆ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ of Amos ix, 11, LXX.

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III. APOLOGETIC SPEECHES

Our review of the apologetic speeches in Acts must start with some remarks on "Stephen's Apology" in ch. vii. It is doubtful, however, if it is strictly an Apology or Defence. It is rather an exposition of the teaching which had caused such irritation in the synagogue where he propagated it. This teaching marked a great advance on the more conservative Jerusalem Christianity of Acts i-v, and foreshadowed in some ways the teaching of Paul and of the writer to the Hebrews. It marks, says Ed. Meyer, "the decisive break of the new teaching with traditional Judaism."³⁶ Its main arguments are: God is not locally restricted and does not inhabit material buildings, and therefore His people are not tied to any one spot; the Jewish nation has always been rebellious; as previous generations opposed the prophets from Moses onwards, so that, generation had killed "the Righteous One" (vii, 52). We can hardly think that the speech was seriously intended to conciliate his accusers and judges; in that respect, at least, the Apology of Stephen resembles that of Socrates.

The form of the speech is for the most part in an established Jewish tradition. Israel Abrahams noted this in *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, ii (1924), p. 18:—

"The protestation of faith is, in -the Old Testament, often associated with a recital of the divine intervention in the life of Israel. 'God in history' was the underlying basis of Rabbinic optimism. The declaration at the bringing of the first-fruits (Dent. xxvi, 5-20) is paralleled by Psalms lxxviii and cvii... Stephen's address in Acts vii is thus in the true form. It is in the sequel. that he differs from Hebrew models."³⁷

Stephen's speech occurs in a section of Acts which does not betray much Aramaic influence (vi, 1-ix, 31), a section which is frequently assigned, together with Much of the peculiarly Lukan material in the Third Gospel, to Luke's Caesarean source. If Luke's authority for the speech was Philip, as Ramsay, for example, thought (*St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 27), there is the greater reason for regarding the speech as a trustworthy report, seeing that Philip was, like

³⁵ *Composition and Date of Acts*, pp. 38 f. LXX presupposes יִרְשׁוּ ("will seek") for Massoretic יִרְשׁוּ ("will possess"), and אָדָם ("man") for אֶדְוֹם ("Edom"), and neglects the *nota accusativi* אֶת before שְׁאֵרֵית ("remnant"). In Amos ix, 11 f., the Peshitta and Targum of Jonathan support the Massoretic.

³⁶ *Ursprung and Anfänge des Christentums* iii, p. 159, "Inhaltlich bezeichnet die Rede den entschiedenen Bruch der neuen Lehre mit dem traditionellen Judentum."

³⁷ To the passages noted by Abrahams might be added Psalms cv, cvi, cxxxv, cxxxvi, Neh. ix, Judith v, as well as the speech of Paul in Acts xiii, 16 ff.

Stephen, one of the Seven. But why should Luke not have been indebted to Paul for his account of the trial and death of Stephen?

Several of the ideas which appear in the speech are found elsewhere in Hellenistic Jewish literature; the reference to Moses as “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and mighty in word and deed” can be illustrated from Philo and Josephus,³⁸ and also the angelic mediation of the Law,³⁹ and the Call of Abraham before he lived in Haran.⁴⁰

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The historical part of the speech is in the main a cento of passages from the LXX. Here too there may have been some use of Testimonies; but in general the way in which the LXX is quoted, the telescoping of separate passages⁴¹ (like the telescoping of separate events⁴²), and the use at times of the LXX vocabulary without actual quotation of the passage in question,⁴³ all suggest an extempore speech rather than a set literary composition.

Stephen’s historical survey reviews the history of the nation from the Call of Abraham to Solomon’s Temple. There is a suggestion that the portable Tent of Testimony in the wilderness was a more suitable shrine for a pilgrim people than was the more elaborate Temple immovably fixed at Jerusalem. It is significant that in the Epistle to the Hebrews the Tent, and not the Temple, is used as a parable of the worship of Christians, who, like the patriarchs, are “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. xi, 13). As for the Temple, says Stephen, in any case “the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands” (vii, 48).

The sudden invective of vii, 51 (“Hardnecked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears...”) strikes some readers as abrupt and gratuitous, but we are probably to understand that his remarks about the Temple occasioned an angry outburst at this point. He was attacking some of their most cherished beliefs about the Holy Place, and if these were the arguments he had used in the synagogue, we can understand why the charges of vi, 13 f., were brought against him: “This man keeps on speaking against this Holy Place and the Law; for we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth is going to destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses handed down to us.” Real or imagined belittling of the Temple would not only offend religious susceptibilities, but infuriate the city populace and the priestly party with their vested interests in the building and its cultus. We should compare the very similar charges brought against Jesus (Mt. xxvi, 61; Mk. xiv, 58) and against Paul (Acts xxi, 28).

Of the remaining apologetic speeches, the two most important are those of Paul in chapters xxii and xxvi. As both of these cover more or less the same ground, it will be convenient to examine them together. They both tell in the first person the story of Paul’s conversion, and as we have the same story in the third person in ch. ix, we have three accounts to compare with

³⁸ Philo, *vit. Moys.* i, 20 ff.; *Jos. Ant.* ii, 9, 6, ii, 10. See also Schürer’s *History of the Jewish People* (Eng. tr.), II, i, p. 343.

³⁹ Philo, *de somniis* i, 141 ff.; *Jos. Ant.* xv, 5, 3; also *Jubilees* i, 29; *Testament of Dan*, vi, 2; and in the NT, Gal. iii; 19; Heb. ii, 2.

⁴⁰ Philo, *de Abrahamo* 71; *Jos. Ant.* i, 7.

⁴¹ E.g. in vii, 6 f. the telescoping of Gen. xv, 13 f., and Ex. iii, 12.

⁴² E.g. the purchasing of burying grounds by the patriarchs and their burials in vii, 16.

⁴³ E.g. in vii, 21 ἀνείλατο is used of Pharaoh’s daughter’s adopting Moses; in Ex. ii, 5, in a passage which Stephen is following fairly closely, it is used of her taking up the basket.

each other. That Luke spares enough of his valuable space to tell this story three times is an indication of the importance he attaches to it.⁴⁴

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In ch. xxii Paul stands on the steps of the Fortress of Antonia and addresses a hostile and excited Jewish crowd who had just tried to lynch him for an imagined slight to the Temple; in ch. xxvi he appears before a cultured and distinguished audience, which included Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice, the Roman governor of Palestine, members of the Imperial services, and the chief citizens of Caesarea. The former speech was made in Aramaic, the latter in more than usually polished Greek. The use of the Aramaic vernacular on the former occasion was designed to conciliate the mob, and when they heard it, “they were the more silent,” just as if a bilingual Irish or Welsh audience, expecting a speech in English, suddenly became aware that they were being addressed in the native Celtic tongue.

While the outline of the story is the same in both speeches, there is a subtle difference of emphasis in the details. In the Jerusalem speech Paul emphasizes his upbringing in that very city, his training at the feet of the revered Rabban Gamaliel the Elder, his zeal for God such as his audience had shown that day, a zeal which he displayed in harrying the infant Church. He speaks as a Jew to Jews; when he speaks of going to Damascus with letters “for the brethren,” he means Jews, not Christians. In narrating his conversion, he dwells at length on the part played by Ananias, whom he describes as a pious Jew, “a devout man according to the Law.” It is needless to see a discrepancy between this account and that in Gal. i, 1, 12, where he insists that he did not receive his apostolate and his Gospel from or through man, but directly from Christ. The difference is one of viewpoint. In Gal. he is concerned to show that he is in no way indebted to the original apostles for his Gospel, and that no man gave him his apostolic commission; but a private believer like Ananias could not have commissioned him in any case; he simply communicated to Paul the instructions he had received from God to give him.

Paul goes on to tell how he returned from Damascus to Jerusalem, and in a vision in the Temple was commanded to leave Jerusalem. He pleaded that his training and his zeal for the Law which had been shown in his persecution of the Church made him a fit person to evangelize his fellow-Jews; but the command was repeated: “Depart, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.” The mention of this word reminded the mob of their initial grievance, and the assembly broke up in a riot, the vivid description of which suggests the account of an eye-witness. They had no objection to the *proselytization* of Gentiles; what they did object to was Paul’s offer to Gentiles of equal privileges with Jews, without requiring them to submit to the obligations of the Law.

The Greek of the speech before Agrippa in ch. xxvi contains several

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⁴⁴ Cf. the three citations of the Apostolic Decree (xv, 20, 29; xxi, 25) and the repetitions of the Cornelius story (x, 1 ff.). Within the Cornelius story itself parts of it are repeated by Cornelius’ servants (x, 22), by Peter (x, 28 f.), and by Cornelius (x, 30 ff.); Peter tells the whole story again on his return to Jerusalem (xi, 4 ff.), and refers to it at the Apostolic Council (xv, 7 ff.). The speech of Peter vindicating his action in the house of Cornelius (xi, 4 ff.) must be included among the apologetic speeches of Acts; as we compare Peter’s re-telling with the account in ch. x, we get some insight into Luke’s style, e.g. his ability to vary the expressions used while generally maintaining the same constructions.

classical and literary locutions. We have proverbial sayings,⁴⁵ “kicking against the ox-goad,” “not done in a corner”; we have a real superlative in sense as well as in form (xxvi, 5, ἀκριβεστάτην), a rare thing in Koine Greek; we have the classical ἴσασι in xxvi, 4, instead of the Koine οἶδασι. On this last form Blass remarks that Paul, on this distinguished occasion,

“took care (if we trust, as we ought to do, Luke’s account in Acts xxvi) not to employ vulgar inflections of the verbs, but to say ἴσασι πάντες Ἰουδαῖοι, not οἶδασι. In his epistles, he constantly has οἶδαμεν, -ατε,⁴⁶ -ασι; but his schoolmaster at Tarsus had warned him against such vulgarisms: ‘ἴσμεν, ἴστε, ἴσασι’, he must have said, ‘are the true forms which you must employ if you care to be considered a cultivated speaker or writer’ ” (*Philology of the Gospels*, p. 9).

Even so, there are some strange constructions in the speech. We may remove the difficulty of an accusative-and-participle construction depending on no principal verb in xxvi, 3 μάλιστα γνώστην ὄντα σε πάντων τῶν κατὰ Ἰουδαίους ἐθνῶν τε καὶ ζητημάτων) if with **Σ**^c, AC we read ἐπιστάμενος after ζητημάτων. But what are we to say of the construction in xxvi, 22f., οὐδὲν ἔκτος λέγων ὧν τε οἱ προφῆται ἐλάλησαν μελλόντων γίνεσθαι καὶ Μωϋσῆς, εἰ παθητὸς ὁ χριστός, εἰ πρῶτος ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν φῶς μέλλει καταγγέλλειν τῷ τε λαῷ καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (lit., “saying nothing but the things which the prophets and Moses said would happen, if the Christ must suffer, if he first from the resurrection of the dead is to proclaim light to the People and to the Gentiles”)? We may pass over the unusual attraction of μελλόντων, but the εἰ construction is so strange that Nestle and Moffatt transfer ver. 23 to the end of ver. 8, where it would follow grammatically enough on εἰ ὁ θεὸς νεκροὺς ἐγείρει, but the transference has no textual warrant, nor is it intrinsically probable. No, Luke is simply summarizing the arguments which Paul used in this speech by giving the headings under which these arguments from prophecy were grouped in a primitive *Testimony Book*: “Must the Messiah suffer?” “Must he rise from the dead?” “Must he proclaim light to the (Jewish) people and the Gentiles?”⁴⁷ The εἰ that is to say, is interrogative.

These arguments provided an intellectual treat for Agrippa, who was well versed in the Jewish faith, but they mystified the Roman Festus, who concluded that Paul’s obvious learning had led him beyond the bounds of common sense. Lake and Cadbury have an interesting note on this verse (xxvi, 24):—

“Paul has been talking to Agrippa as one Jew to another, and naturally the Roman Festus thought that anyone who had eschatological expectations must be mad; Paul appeared to him to be a γραμματεὺς whose head had been turned by too much study (cf. xxv, 19). Many educated persons hold the same view about eschatology to-day, but

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⁴⁵ “Such quotations fall in with Pauline usage elsewhere” (R. H. Charles in *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, p. 419).

⁴⁶ But cf. ἴστε in Eph. v, 5.

⁴⁷ Cf. J. Rendel Harris, *Testimonies*, ii, p. 77.

history is against them and Festus, and proves that whether eschatological hope be true or false it is no proof of insanity. Moreover it was as central in the Christianity of Paul as it had been in that of Jesus.”⁴⁸

Paul proceeded to assure Festus that Agrippa could vouch for the truth and sanity of his arguments, and turned to the king with a direct appeal for his corroborative testimony. If Agrippa believed the prophets, he must agree with Paul, who taught “nothing but what the prophets, and Moses said would happen.” Hence Paul’s appeal, “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do!” If the king said “No,” he would lose his valued reputation for orthodoxy among the Jews; if he said “Yes,” he might lose face before the Romans by being manoeuvred into public agreement with Paul. Academic interest is one thing; open confession of the truth of Christianity quite another. So he parries Paul’s uncomfortably direct appeal with the dismissing remark, “In short, you are trying to persuade me to act the Christian.”⁴⁹

The two defences in chapters xxii and xxvi, in their similarities and, differences, are so subtly adapted to their respective audiences that we must either assume a remarkably astute composer, or conclude that we have substantially faithful reports of what Paul really said on both occasions. Luke was probably not far away on either occasion. As for the differences between the accounts, and between both and ch. ix, they are best explained if they go back to the speeches of Paul himself; why should Luke go out of his way to introduce discrepancies if he himself invented the speeches for his history?

The defences before the Sanhedrin (xxiii, 1 ff.), Felix (xxiv, 10 ff.), and Festus (xxv, 8 ff.) are short but vividly reported. The continuous interruption during the first of these, and the surprising way in which it ends, by Paul’s dividing the Sanhedrin and bringing his fellow-Pharisees over to his defence, bear strong marks of genuineness; the latter stratagem, says Foakes Jackson, “is not the sort of incident which one would expect in the laudatory biography of a saint; it is to the credit of the author that he has recorded it” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 206). The speech before Felix is made the more interesting because it follows the speech for the prosecution, which Luke must have enjoyed reporting (xxiv, 2 ff.); Tertullus, the second-rate lawyer briefed by the Sanhedrin, begins his speech with a great flourish, full of rhetorical flattery, but the remainder of the speech does not fulfil the promise of the exordium, and it tails away in a very lame peroration. In Paul’s reply there is a

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noteworthy statement, more explicit than we find in his epistles, of the resurrection of the unjust as well as the just (xxiv, 15).

The last speeches in Acts, Paul’s addresses to the Roman Jews (xxviii, 17 ff.), have occasioned difficulty—and still more their reply to him, in which they admit no knowledge of

⁴⁸ *Beginnings of Christianity*, iv, p. 321. Cf. Ramsay’s account: “He appeared ... as a Roman of Jewish origin of high rank and great learning, engaged in a rather foolish controversy against the whole united power of his nation (which showed his high standing, as well as his want of good judgment). That is the spirit of Festus’s words, ‘Paul! Paul! you are a great philosopher, but you have no common sense.’” (*St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 313.)

⁴⁹ This is the meaning of the best authenticated text ἐν ὀλίγῳ με τείθεις χριστιανὸν ποιῆσαι, which there is no need to emend. A. Nairne in *JTS*. xxi (1920), pp. 171 f., aptly quotes for the same idiomatic use of ποιέω the LXX of 3 K. xxi, 7, where Jezebel asks Ahab, σὺ νῦν οὕτως ποιεῖς βασιλέα ἐπὶ Ἰσραήλ; “Is this the way that you now play the king over Israel?” Cf. Sophocles’s Lexicon, s.v. ποιέω.

him, and (apparently) only second-hand knowledge of Christians (xxviii, 21 f.). But Paul wished to let the Jerusalem Jews clown as lightly as possible, and the Roman Jews were probably anxious to have nothing to do with the prosecution of a Roman citizen who had secured a favourable hearing from Festus and Agrippa, and was now to be heard by the Emperor. Roman law was hard on unsuccessful prosecutors. They wished to commit themselves as little as possible on the subject of Paul or his Christianity. The prominence given to these interviews at the end of the book is in keeping with the pattern followed throughout; as the Paul of the epistles insists that the Gospel is offered “to the Jew first,” so the Paul of Acts in one town after another goes to the Jews first with the Gospel; and while Acts records the expansion of Christianity among the Gentiles, it also records *pari passu* its rejection by the majority of the Jews. These interviews therefore come to a fitting end by the solemn quotation of one of the oldest *testimonia aduersus Iudaeos*, Isa. vi, 9 f., first used in this way by our Lord Himself (cf. Mt. xiii, 14 f.; Mk. iv, 12; Lk. viii, 10; Jn. xii, 39 f.).

IV. HORTATORY SPEECH

Paul’s address at Miletus to the elders of the Ephesian church (Acts, xx, 18 ff.) is different in style and content from all the other speeches in Acts. It is the one example in Acts of a speech by Paul to Christians, and there can be little doubt that Luke heard it himself.⁵⁰ The differences between most of the Pauline speeches in Acts and the Pauline epistles do not constitute a real difficulty. They spring from the fact that while the epistles are all written to Christians who already knew the Gospel, all but one of the Pauline speeches in Acts are addressed to non-Christian audiences. Here, however, we have a Pauline speech that is addressed to Christians, and we are therefore not surprised to find that it is rich in parallels to the Pauline-epistles.⁵¹ Indeed, so numerous are these parallels that some might be tempted to regard it as a mere cento from the epistles, were it not that the author of Acts shows elsewhere no sign of acquaintance with these. Had he known them, he could hardly have failed to use them as first-rate sources. Without endorsing Gardner’s doubts of the authenticity of some of the other speeches in Acts, we can certainly endorse his view that this speech “has the best claim of all to be historic” (*op. cit.*, p. 401).

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While this speech is hortatory, it is also to some extent apologetic. There is an implication that Paul’s adversaries in Ephesus had been attacking him in his absence, and he defends his teaching and general behaviour by appealing to his hearers’ own personal knowledge of him. He perceives that the opposition to his teaching which has already manifested itself in the Ephesian church will increase, and that heretical teachers may be expected to arise, “grievous wolves... not sparing the flock.”⁵² Therefore it is incumbent on the elders to shepherd the

⁵⁰ Immediately afterwards he says “we tore ourselves away from them” (xxi, 1).

⁵¹ These need not be enumerated here; they are to be found in almost every sentence of the speech, and references to them are given in most commentaries on Acts. Cf. also Chase, *Credibility of Acts*, pp. 236 ff., and Gardner, in *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, p. 402.

⁵² The concern shown in 1 and 2 Timothy over the growth of heresy in the Ephesian church some years later proves how true was Paul’s prediction. The light which this speech and the Pastoral Epistles throw on each other deserves careful study. The significance of Paul’s statement in ver. 25 (cf. ver. 38) that they would see his face no more in relation to the apparent indication of a later visit to Ephesus. in 1 Tim. i, 3, etc., raises too many questions to be discussed here.

flock over which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers, the Church of God, which He bought with the blood of His Beloved.⁵³

We should also observe that this speech confirms the impression we get from some passages in the Pauline epistles, that Paul's years in Ephesus were attended by troubles of which Luke gives us no hint in his narrative in Acts xix.⁵⁴ Paul tells us how he spent his time in Ephesus, "serving the Lord with all humility and tears and trials which arose through the plots of the Jews" (xx, 19); but the only critical occasion related by Luke, the riot in the theatre of Ephesus, was not apparently instigated by the Jews.

We need not suppose that the speeches in Acts are verbatim reports in the sense that they record every word used by the speakers on the occasions in question. Paul, we know, was given to long sermons (cf. Acts xx, 2, 7, 9; xxviii, 23); but any one of the speeches attributed to him in Acts may be read through aloud in a few minutes. But I suggest that reason has been shown to conclude that the speeches reported by Luke are at least faithful epitomes, giving the gist of the arguments used. Even in summarizing the speeches. Luke would naturally introduce more or less of his own style; but in point of fact it frequently seems to be less, not more. Taken all in all, each speech suits the speaker, the audience, and the circumstances of delivery; and this, along with the other points we have considered, gives good ground, in my judgment, for believing these speeches to be, not inventions of the historian, but condensed accounts of speeches actually made, and therefore valuable and independent sources for the history and theology of the primitive Church.

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⁵³ For thus we may render τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου, lit. "the blood of His own"; ἰδίος being here similar to Heb. יָחִיד ("only one," and hence "beloved"). Cf. Moulton-Milligan, *s.v.* ἰδίος, for papyrus parallels to this usage.

⁵⁴ Cf. 1 Cor. xv, 32; xvi, 9; 2 Cor. i, 8 ff.; xi, 23, etc.; also G. S. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry* (1929), and T. W. Manson, "St. Paul in Ephesus" in *BJRL*. xxiii (1939), pp. 182 ff., xxiv, pp. 59 ff.; xxvi, pp. 101 ff., 327 ff.