THE ORIGIN OF ACTS[1]

EDGAR J. GOODSPEED
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

WITH the present meeting the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis brings to an end the fortieth year of its existence. It was organized on January 2, 1880, in Professor Schaff's study, 42 Bible House. It is a happy coincidence that on this anniversary the Society is again enjoying the hospitality of Union Seminary, as it has so often done in the intervening years. In this period the Society has brought together, at first twice a year and later annually, groups of leading American biblical scholars, and thus promoted personal acquaintance, the interchange of ideas, and the development of scholarship and research in a unique and important way. The establishment of the *Journal of Biblical Literature* in 1882 marked an important step in the Society's history and in the development of biblical studies in America. It has served as an archive for learned papers for which no other medium existed in America, and has undoubtedly greatly extended the usefulness of the Society. The Society took a third great step when in 1900 it joined with the Archaeological Institute of America in establishing the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. The great gift of $50,000 announced two years ago has ensured the School a permanent home, and the future that lies before it in the new day now opening for oriental investigation of every sort, kindles the imagination. Can we not find more institutions to join in its support, and multiply its fellowships so that a large body of

[1] Presidential Address at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature at Union Theological Seminary, December 29, 1919.

our aspiring biblical scholars may gain the incalculable stimulus that residence in Palestine and study there under the guidance of experts can give?

Ten years hence the history of this Society will be sketched in a longer and richer retrospect, but I have not felt at liberty to pass over this anniversary without this brief review, and surely to biblical students most of all, the Society's survival of a period of forty years cannot fail to be hopefully suggestive. And it is quite certainly true that with the changed and as we hope more settled and enlightened conditions in the Near East the possibilities of archaeological and manuscript discoveries are greater than they have ever been.

But the greatest tasks before American biblical scholarship are not archaeological but interpretative. We are the custodians of the greatest of spiritual values. Fascinating as is the technique of the subject, it would be fatal to be absorbed by it. The Bible's final worth to the world we live in is religious and moral. Some of us have lived long enough with the critical study of the scriptures to be convinced that only with its fullest aid can the message of the Bible be released and offered to men and women of to-day. I need not dwell upon a task so well set forth by Professor Montgomery in his opening address a year ago. But the past year has made even clearer the need of a generation shot through with idealism and yet threatened with the narrowest materialism, for the spiritual message of Jesus and the prophets.

The noteworthy studies recently made by American scholars in the so-called Acts of the Apostles have raised important questions and reminded us all of the pivotal place of Acts in the history of New Testament literature. The Society's committee on program has accordingly chosen the Acts as the subject of this year's symposium and has invited me to introduce the discussion.

It has generally been recognized that in the production of any book of the New Testament as of other literature, two things were necessary, an author and a situation. To these ought to be added a third which may fairly be distinguished from them,

namely a public. Sometimes of course the existence of a public is implicit in the existence of the situation, but not always. In any case it will be salutary to keep in view this often neglected factor.

In the first place the historical significance of these documents becomes vastly greater when this factor is considered. It was much that there was in the first century a Christian teacher capable of writing the letter to the Romans. But it is not less noteworthy that there was a Christian public at Rome and in other congregations capable of reacting to such a work. Indeed the more one studies Romans the more one comes to feel that the existence of such a public was perhaps even more remarkable than the existence of such a writer. This would be no more than saying that the church was more significant than its leaders. Certainly it is a massive fact for the historian that there was in the first Christian generation a Christian public capable of reading, understanding, prizing and preserving such a letter as Romans. And to the modern student not the least value of Paul's letters is the disclosure they make of the Christian communities to which they were addressed.

In the second place, this consideration may safeguard us from conjecturally postulating precarious hypothetical documents, for which no probable public can be discerned. To every conjectural document we may apply these tests: Is the author whom it implies a reasonably probable historical figure? Is the situation or occasion which it implies historically probable? And can we reasonably postulate for it a public considerable enough to have taken it up and given it at least a brief life?

The books and documents of the New Testament are in general the parts of primitive Christian literature which found and kept a public. Scores of letters were doubtless written by the same hands, perhaps not inferior in quality to some of these, which have perished, for want of a competent and appreciative public. For the fact is, literature, Christian or other, is a social product in this sense at least, that a work must respond to some taste or need of the readers it reaches or it will fall still-born. The true writer presents not merely his own views but in large part at least views and ideas congenial and even common to his readers. Otherwise he will not reach them at all.

With these general considerations in mind let us approach the problem of Acts, and briefly recall the recent studies relating to it.

In 1916 Professor Torrey propounded his theory that I Acts, that is Acts 1 1—15 35, is translated throughout by the writer of II Acts from an Aramaic document of 49—50 A. D. and that our Acts was written before the death of Paul. Professor Wilson has vigorously sustained him, in two papers in the *Harvard Theological Review*. His theory has been criticized by Professor Foakes-Jackson in the same review, by Professor Bacon in the *American Journal of Theology*, and by Professor Burkitt in the *Journal of Theological Studies*. Professor Torrey has rejoined in the *American Journal of Theology*. Meantime Dr. Cadbury has dealt in a notable way with the "Style and Literary Method of Luke", incidentally putting the supposedly medical color of Luke's language in a new light.

Professor Torrey's learned contribution on the Aramaic Source of Acts cannot of course be dealt with in half an hour; still less can it be neglected. I can only hope to suggest some of the impressions it has made upon me.

Professor Torrey has certainly given us fresh and convincing evidence of the Aramaic influences that operated upon Luke in the composition of what he has taught us to call I Acts, that is 1 1—15 35. He has plainly proved that behind many passages of Acts lie Aramaic forms of expression, which sometimes are of much value in helping us to determine the ideas of the historian's informants and perhaps even the facts themselves. I would only urge that, as Dr. Burkitt has pointed out, Professor Torrey has in some instances yielded prematurely to the doubts and suspicions that the Greek awakens, and hidden himself in the covert of his Semitic pavilion before it was really necessary to do so. And this conditions the validity of his deductions from the evidence he has amassed. He believes it sufficient to establish the theory that I Acts is as a whole a translation made from an Aramaic document which was written in Palestine late in A. D. 49 or early in 50, and discovered by Luke probably in Rome after he arrived there in A. D. 62. Luke who had already about A. D. 60

written his gospel, translated the work into Greek and became the continuator of it, writing II Acts, that is, 15 36 — 28 31, about 64 A. D.

I have examined all the instances of alleged mistranslation upon which this theory chiefly hinges, and with Professor Burkitt, I cannot think that Professor Torrey "has produced a compelling demonstration", or that "his hypothesis of an Aramaic basis makes these passages any easier." Some that Professor Torrey objects to do not seem to me so very difficult, though every ancient text contains difficulties.

I am unable in the first place to feel the sharp transition at 15 36 that this theory implies. Or to speak more broadly, some narratives in I Acts, e. g. 3 19–39, seem to me quite as Greek in diction as some in II Acts. For example the letter of the Jerusalem apostles and presbyters to the gentile brethren in Syria and Cilicia, Acts 15 23–29, is in epistolary forms the most perfectly Greek letter in the New Testament. It begins "The apostles . . . . to the brethren . . . greeting" (*χαίρειν*), and it ends "Good bye" (*ἔρρωσθε*). Hundreds of papyrus letters exhibit these forms, but of thirty or thirty five letters in the New Testament only this one. In a literal translation from the Aramaic, this is strange. It is interesting that the next most Greek example of a letter in the New Testament is in II Acts (23 26–32), which, like James, has the opening salutation *χαίρειν*. Both these letters are decidedly Greek in style, but the one in I Acts is the more so.

Nor are the supposedly untranslatable passages in Acts confined to I Acts. One of the very worst is in II. Of 24 18 Moffatt says, "It is hardly possible to make sense of the following Greek text and none of the various readings or of the emendations that have been proposed is entirely satisfactory." But if the Greek feeling of some parts of I Acts is as good as anything in II Acts, and if some sentences in II Acts are as hopelessly untranslatable as anything in I Acts, the sharp line of division detected by the Aramaic School at 15 35 is badly blurred.

In weighing the arguments of Professor Torrey one is hampered by the difficulty of finding any Hebrew or Aramaic documents of any sort definitely referable to the first century with which to

compare the supposed Hebrew or Aramaic manners of speech in the gospels and Acts. The fact is there is next to nothing in the way of contemporary written Semitic materials by which to test the Hebrew or Aramaic documents postulated by Professor Torrey. To a student of Greek, rich in first century philological materials of all sorts, literary, documentary, and epigraphic, this would seem to put these novel theories at a serious disadvantage at the outset. A few fragmentary apocalypses may with some probability be assigned to the first half of the first century, but even these are mostly known to us through their Greek remains. Looking broadly at early Christian history it would seem that it was the impact of the Christian movement upon Greek life that resulted in the literary precipitate we find in early Christian literature. That Christianity had found literary expression in Aramaic or Hebrew is by no means a matter of course. We should have first to show that Aramaic or Hebrew populations of the time had a bent for literary expression. But it is precisely here that evidence is strikingly meager. Over against the steadily rising tide of Greek literary expression of Christianity, Palestinian Judaism and Christianity are all but mute.

But even if a few scattered apocalypses can with some confidence be referred to the first century, this will not suffice. A further question must be raised with reference to the Palestinian Aramaic-reading population. Had it the habit or instinct for contemporary historical composition?

Two or three centuries later, indeed, the Jews came to commit to writing masses of material long current among them in oral form. But these do not establish a habit of written historical composition in the first Christian century. Quite the contrary. They show that the Aramaic way at that early time was not to write but to remember. If a Jew wanted to write, he wrote in Greek—Philo, Paul, Josephus. Did they also write in Aramaic? It is not absolutely impossible, but if they did so, what they wrote perished unregarded through the fault of their Aramaic public. This is very much the same as saying that there was no substantial Aramaic-reading public for them to address. Just as Paul had to enter the Greek world before he found a public

to write to, so had Philo, and so had Josephus. Against the vera causa of these three great Jewish writers of Greek literature, I at least am able to muster on the most liberal interpretation of first century Palestinian Aramaic a scant five or ten pages of extant material. Is this an adequate guarantee of an Aramaic-reading public worth writing for? We may not lightly assume that because there were Aramaic-speaking people living in Judea in the first century and possessed of a meager literature, there must have been an appreciable reading public there. The genius of the Greek world was for books, old and new. It was a reading and writing world. That the Aramaic people of the first century were of the same sort cannot be taken for granted but calls for massive evidence.

Moreover as has often been observed the primitive expectation of the speedy return of Jesus in Messianic splendor to usher in the new Messianic age was a definite deterrent to considered literary composition in Christian circles. It was not even worth while to marry, or to be manumitted, or to change one's condition in any respect. The time was short. The Lord was at the doors. This was unquestionably the atmosphere of the first age, that is till A. D. 70 at any rate. Such an atmosphere would not deter men from writing an occasional letter of course, and the literature of this period is prevailingly letters. We should hardly expect it to produce actual books, in the sense of reasoned literary compositions designed to meet a given situation and to circulate among a considerable definite public. Face to face with the Last Judgment, primitive Christians were in no mood to write history. For whom were they to write it?

The Fall of Jerusalem in a sense encouraged these apocalyptic hopes and yet at the same time began to put a period to them. Its first effect must have been to quicken and stimulate immediate apocalyptic expectation. Surely now the Messiah would appear! But as time went on and it became clear that even that great catastrophe had not ushered in the End, apocalyptic expectation must have fallen lower than it had ever been since the death of Jesus. In such a situation, with the first glimmering sense that the church might be facing a long future, thoughtful men might naturally think of writing accounts of the

great movement in the midst of which they were living. One such man was the author of Acts.

It must be further observed that the existing documents of primitive Christianity give little encouragement to the theory of primitive Christian historical writings, Aramaic or Greek. Paul in I Cor. gives clear evidence of using an oral compend of Jesus' deeds, sayings, and passion in his missionary work; and Luke in his famous preface reflects the same practice. Occasional sayings of Jesus cited in Acts, I Thessalonians and I Clement reflect the same custom; at all events they are not found in our gospels and yet evidently stood in some gospel-form then current and familiar. On the other hand there is little evidence from the first century of the use and influence of our written gospels, except for the use of Mark by Matthew and Luke. The meaning of these facts seems to be that the oral compend served the first century Greek Christians at all events, as a gospel; that the idea of putting it into writing did not present itself for some time, and that even when written gospels did appear, the old familiar oral form long overshadowed them, somewhat as the old Authorized Version still overshadows the Revised Versions. The facts of the first century do not favor the idea of an early craving for written gospels, but rather indicate a general satisfaction with the oral compend attested by Paul and Luke.

It would be strange to find any contemporary Aramaic historical composition from the middle of the first century. It would be doubly strange to find such a work produced in a Christian group, which was living from day to day in lively expectation of the end. Yet within this curious double vacuum the supporters of I Acts have conjured up a whole Christian Semitic literature. There is the Hebrew original of our Luke chapters 1 and 2, dealing with the births and early years of John and of Jesus. There is the Aramaic Gospel of Mark. There is the Aramaic original of Luke 24. There is the Aramaic Gospel of Matthew. There is I Acts.

If this new literature is to be taken seriously and definitely built upon in Synoptic and other study, certain questions must be asked and answered. They are the familiar inquiries of introduction. Who wrote I Acts? This does not mean, What

was his name? That would matter little. The question is, What were his ideas and his horizons, and what was his circle? Again, what historical situation called forth the book, and where and when did this situation arise? This should be easily gathered from the book itself, as from most of the documents of the New Testament. A third question remains: For what public was the book produced? The answering of these questions will integrate the document in history and put us in a position to deal with it practically. Every newly discovered document has to stand the test of these inquiries. Indeed this is far the more important aspect of Professor Torrey's discoveries. If these documents did indeed exist they throw the whole primitive history of Christianity into a new perspective because of the several situations and the several publics they imply. Not what they report but what they reflect is of first importance.

Now if I Acts be a Palestinian Aramaic document of the middle of the first century it at once reveals an author. He has traced the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Antioch and Cyprus and Galatia, with especial interest in its groping its way gradually out of Jewish groups, first among proselytes and devout persons, then into Samaritan communities, then into Greek. Although writing in the midst of the primitive movement he has reversed the course of events and read back the Christian missionary program into the very beginnings of the church. He is interested in the rise of the Greek mission even before it has become a considerable and successful movement. Not only is he interested, but he has become the historian of the infant project. It is like writing the biography of a not very promising child before it has grown up. But the difficulty of understanding the attitude of the author of the work is less than that of understanding the occasion of his work and still less than that of visualizing the public for which he produced it.

The greatest thing about a book is not its execution but its conception. The greatest thing about Acts is its idea. The thought of sketching the rise of the Greek Mission was an inspiration. In a time when that mission was a splendid and flourishing reality, such an inspiration is conceivable. In a time when it was still a feeble and dubious experiment viewed askance by

most of the brotherhood, some of them zealous enough to follow up its founders and seek to undo their work, I find it quite incomprehensible. In the eighties such an inspiration is natural. In the forties it is an anachronism. But the difficulty of believing in I Acts is greatest when we seek an appropriate public for it. To the Greek churches of the west in the last quarter of the first century such a book as Acts would have been of the greatest interest and inspiration. It was the story of their own beginnings, and integrated them honorably in the heroic period of the new religion. It was like the Greek mind to want such a work, and like the Greek mind to conceive it, and like the Greek mind again to welcome and preserve it. These were the very churches that produced in this very generation the Revelation of John, and the Gospel of Luke, and in the next the Pauline corpus, the Gospel of John, and the Fourfold Gospel collection, and that called forth the letters of Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp. Can this extraordinary thirst for Christian literature be matched anywhere else at that or any earlier period? For such a public Acts had to be written. In such an atmosphere it is perfectly natural and appropriate. There were men in plenty to read it and to prize it, and there would be a man to write it. That that Greek Christian reading public about the Aegean at the turn of the century could produce its own writers most of the New Testament is evidence.

Turn back now to the middle of the century and to the Aramaic brethren of Judea. What need had a Jewish Messianic sect for a Christian literature? It already had a valued Messianic literature in the Hebrew Old Testament. What evidence have we of any thirst on their part for new books? What writers did they produce? What written collections did they assemble and circulate? Above all what interest would attach for them to the story of the precarious introduction of the gospel among humble little circles in obscure settlements of the interior of Asia Minor,—all that I Acts contains,—and at the expense of the very things that they themselves prized most, their Jewish separatism and privilege? Such a story would mean little enough to us, without the brilliant sequel. It does not arrive. It would mean far less to them, beside being vastly less congenial.

That there should have been a Palestinian Christian Aramaic-reading public about A. D. 50 interested to read how the gospel was already feeling its way past them into the Greek world seems very near the height of improbability. Certainly it would require most cogent proof to establish the rise of such a document in such a circle at such a time.

Professor Torrey has well said in his essay on "Original Aramaic Gospels", p. 274, in speaking of Hebraisms: "It is only when the idiom is one link in a long chain that it becomes convincing; then indeed it may have an absolutely compelling force. The argument is cumulative; we are concerned with the continuous impression made by a great mass of material, rather than with a number of striking instances,—though these are to be had in abundance when they are sought for." Now in his discussion of I Acts, Professor Torrey has exhibited a number of striking instances. But these of course really prove nothing since by the conditions of the situation practically all the speakers and ultimate sources of the historian's information spoke Semitic. This has generally been understood. But to establish I Acts as an Aramaic document these striking instances do not suffice. For that, we desiderate precisely that "continuous impression made by a great mass of material" of which Professor Torrey has spoken. And as one reads I Acts paragraph by paragraph, steadily savoring its literary quality, it is just that continuous impression that it fails to give. One finds himself now in the familiar Semitic atmosphere, now in a realm slightly Semitic, now in the purest and most unadulterated Koinê of Epictetus and the papyri. If Luke is all the time faithfully translating from an Aramaic source this is inexplicable.

Moreover the whole feeling of the narrative changes again and again. You can feel that the historian has finished with what his immediate source, whether oral or written, has given him and is filling in the narrative from such information as he can get, until he can take up another account and follow it through. The middle part of ch. 9 is a good example of this (verses 19–30). My own impression of the material of I Acts is that so far from suggesting derivation from a single source through a single translator, it is strikingly varied in both matter

and manner. Now it is more Semitic, now less so, now very Greek. Now it is full and repetitious, now concise and summary. Now it is richly legendary, now coolly matter of fact. Now it is full of Septuagint reminiscence, now it is wholly free from it for pages at a time. All this speaks for a variety of probably oral sources, most of them of course ultimately Semitic, and I should suppose probably Aramaic, but probably all of them unwritten.

The Semites have been great story tellers, not I think great historians. There are the stories of Genesis and Samuel and Kings and the Arabian Nights, of Jonah, Daniel, Tobit, and Ahikar. Jesus himself was a teller of stories, as not a few parables attest. To that illustrious line belong, I believe, the stories of I Acts. No Greek could have produced them. But who but a Greek could have made such amazing use of them? To conceive the rise of a movement and trace it patiently, and on the whole fairly objectively, through a long series of apparently detached incidents till at the end what one has been driving at all along at length stands clear,—the insight and restraint and historical scent of this proceeding seem to me only Greek. To credit it to an Aramaic Jew is to confound the specific geniuses of the two races.

That Luke should sometimes retain a half Semitic diction is not in the least strange when we recall that for years he must have read the Septuagint and heard it read in church. Professor Burkitt finds some of the alleged Aramaisms in Acts better Septuagint than Aramaic, and the late Professor Moulton in the new part of his Grammar, concludes, p. 21, that Luke knew no Aramaic. "Had he been his own translator, we should have expected to find the same evenness in the distribution of Aramaisms as we find in those general features of grammar and style which so overwhelmingly vindicate the unity of the two books Ad Theophilum."

The ingenious argument of Professor Torrey as to the impossibility of composing in what he describes as translation Greek goes rather too far. The imitation of biblical diction is one of the commonest of literary phenomena. Most old-fashioned prayers were of that description. Many English hymns exhibit the same

quality. Much alleged undergraduate humor takes that form. The chief modern example is the Book of Mormon, which none of us I suppose acknowledges as a translation at all. The biblical style of John Bunyan cited by Moulton (Grammar, II, p. 8), is a happier illustration. And generally speaking it is the people who are least acquainted with Semitic languages who are most fascinated with composing in this half Semitic English.

Professor Torrey quotes some very Hebraic phrases from the Lucan canticles and then remarks (*Original Aramaic Gospels*, p. 286), "This is not the Κοινή of Palestine. It is not "the dialect of the market place of Alexandria". It is not even "the colloquial Greek of men whose original language and ways of thinking were Semitic, and whose expression was influenced at every turn by the phraseology of the Old Testament". It is *translation Greek*, and nothing else. I do not believe that any ancient writer, Jewish or Christian, ever produced Greek of this variety by any natural literary process. It could not have been produced unconsciously, that is certain. Could anyone write unconsciously even the smoothest of the translation-English which I have just quoted?"

But may not just this be affirmed of many familiar English hymns, which have never been suspected of being translations from the Semitic? The familiar

Hallelujah, Thine the Glory! Hallelujah, Amen!
Hallelujah, Thine the Glory! Revive us again!

is highly Semitic. Half of it is straight Hebrew, from Ps. 106 48. The six words that remain are quoted from I Chron. 29 11 ("Thine is . . . the glory") and Ps. 85 6 (7) ("Wilt thou not revive us again?"). Every word of it is derivable from and recognizable from the Hebrew. The structural parallelism is unmistakable, cf. Pss. 148, 150. This is not the Koiné of the nineteenth century. It is not the dialect of the market place of New York or Chicago. It is not even the colloquial English of men whose original language and ways of thinking were Semitic and whose expression was influenced at every turn by the phraseology of the Old Testament. It is (if we accept the principle of Professor Torrey) *translation-English*, and nothing else, and we may congratulate ourselves upon having demonstrated that our old favorite 'Hallelujah, Thine the Glory' is a translation of an ancient Hebrew psalm now lost, but easily recoverable with the aid of the Hebrew Bible as follows:

הַלְלוּיָהּ לְךָ הַתִּפְאֶרֶת
הַלְלוּיָהּ אָמֵן׃
הַלְלוּיָהּ לְךָ הַתִּפְאֶרֶת
שׁוּבָה חַיֵּינוּ׃

Such are the remarkable results of Professor Torrey's literary principles when applied to hymns outside the Lucan Canticles. It is perhaps unnecessary to observe that men do not always write their hymns in the forms of colloquial speech, still less in the dialect of the market place. They write them in what may be called religious phraseology, which we have learned from the English Bible, and which the Greek Christians of the first century absorbed from the Septuagint.

On the other hand, the maintainance of a unified style and literary atmosphere throughout an extended work like Acts, dealing with widely different scenes and circles and based upon diverse sources of information, is very difficult; indeed it is one of the severest tests of literary skill. But probably all will agree that Luke is not greatly concerned for literary form. He is interested in presenting a certain historical movement and setting it in a certain light. The literary form in which he does this is of no such moment to him as it would have been to a seasoned Greek man of letters. It does not matter to him that on one page he is reproducing the half Semitic style in which he had heard a story told, and to which long acquaintance with the Septuagint had accustomed him; while on another he is following the easy Greek diction of another informant, and on a third is freely composing from facts he had himself observed.

To sum up; I can find for comparison no such body of written contemporary Palestinian Aramaic material as the I Acts theory implies. One is further disturbed by the general Aramaic indisposition to literary composition at the time in question, which is well nigh absolute, and is doubly striking in contrast with contemporary Greek volubility. A step further, we are dismayed to perceive how unfavorable all this is to the writing up of immediately contemporary events in historical form. The improbability is heightened by the character of the events described which are hardly such as we should expect a Judean disciple to rejoice in, least of all in Aramaic. Putting aside these misgivings, however, and assuming author, medium, and idea, what is the occasion of the composition of I Acts? Fronting with all the saints of his day the immediate return of the Messiah, what pressing situation leads its writer to literary composition? But the most difficult question of all remains. For what public was

it composed? What Palestinian circle of Aramaic readers reacted to this up-to-date pro-Gentile historical sketch, and scattered copies of it as far as Rome?

There are two ways of viewing a document as there are of viewing a manuscript. One may look at the details of a handwriting or one may hold a page at arm's length and look at the general effect of the whole. If one looks at the general characteristics of Acts, as we have it, it seems at once to suggest a time when the Greek mission is triumphant and Greek Christians are sufficiently mature to feel an interest in the story of the movement in the high tide of which they are living. Harnack's appreciation of the aim and occasion of Acts as set forth in the introduction to his *Acts of the Apostles* seems to me altogether convincing, in spite of the fact that he is himself I suppose no longer convinced by it. Its purpose may fairly be described as historical, but of course it is history with a purpose. That purpose is to inform Greek Christians as to how the Gospel groped its way from Jerusalem out into the Greek world until it was established in the central cities of the empire; and further to confirm their faith by showing the providential and even supernatural guidance that had followed the movement all the way. It forms part of a larger work of which the Gospel of Luke is the first volume, and like that book it presents early in its course a frontispiece, 2 1ff. which foreshadows the story it is to tell. "The plan of his double work," says Professor Scott, "—for the Gospel and the Acts must be taken together—, is a truly magnificent one. He sets himself to show how the message destined for all mankind found its way to all, diffusing itself in ever widening circles over the whole world" (*Beginnings of the Church*, p. 23). To look at Luke as a work completed before Acts was thought of, it to lose sight of the incompleteness of Luke in the matter of the Holy Spirit, which is promised indeed in Luke but is not bestowed until early in Acts.

Of its public I have spoken above. Its date rests upon a series of considerations. The infancy, miracle, and resurrection attitudes are markedly later and more extreme than those of Matthew, and sometimes decidedly verge toward those of the

infancy gospels of the second century. The writer's idea of speaking with tongues is the late (linguistic) one of the Long Conclusion of Mark; not the early (ecstatic) one of the Pauline time. The writer is sufficiently removed from the primitive community to be able to read back into its time the missionary program. He writes at a time when the twelve apostles have come to be recognized as the authorities of the church, and when a post-Pauline polity is already at least measurably established. The sects are beginning to appear for they come in for the same vague invective that is employed in the Pastorals.

But the most significant feature of Acts in this connection is its reflection of the fate of Paul. As Professor Bacon admirably puts it, "As to Paul the reader is not really left in ignorance. His fate is made known, but made known with that chaste reticence which the Greek poets employ when they only report through others the tragedies enacted behind the scenes. In the great farewell discourse of Acts 20 17–38 the martyr takes his leave. In Acts 28 17–31 the tragedy is veiled behind the triumph of the cause" ("More Philological Criticism of Acts", *Amer. Jour. Theol.*, XXII, p. 15).

That our Acts was produced before the death of Paul is quite out of the question in view of the farewell journey of chapters 20 and 21. The universal tendency of the human mind to dwell upon foreboding, presentiment and apprehension after the fact, is daily illustrated, and has in the late war been exemplified on an unparalleled scale. Almost everybody we know who lost his life, is now said to have had and expressed a presentiment of his fate. Of course thousands of those who survived had them too; but their presentiments are forgotten. Paul uttered many discourses on his last journey to Jerusalem; one of them lasted all night long, and if fully reported would have filled the whole book of Acts. It is not reported at all. All that is reported from Paul's utterances and conversations on this journey has to do with his approaching death, for which he is seeking to prepare his friends. But if he is still alive when Acts is published all these gratuitous presentiments become mere weakness. Paul might indeed have said such things among a thousand others; but why should the historian have singled them out for record?

Of course because they have been fulfilled. But I should go further than this. The death of Paul as I read the Acts is not even recent. It is long past, and Paul has become a hallowed memory, so that his last will and testament to the Ephesian elders—was Acts then written under the shadow of Ephesus?—is freighted with the authority of one whose greatness has been vindicated by the passing years. His figure has grown to heroic proportions, while his fellow workers have dwindled to mere background. All this brings us to the late eighties or early nineties.

For the terminus ad quem I should look to the collision of the church with the empire over Emperor worship about the close of Domitian's reign, reflected in the Revelation of John, I Peter, Hebrews and I Clement, and in retrospect at least in the Pliny-Trajan correspondence. The atmosphere of Acts is not clouded, as these documents are, with contemporary persecution. It rather emphasizes the generally tolerant and even favorable attitude of the Roman authority. This would be most natural toward the close of that generation of comparative quiet which the churches enjoyed between the short, sharp attack of Nero in 64 and that of Domitian thirty years later.

Professor Foakes-Jackson is no doubt right in saying that it is impossible to say with any degree of positiveness that Luke, the companion of Paul, was the final redactor of Acts, and that Acts as we have it comes from a Pauline source. Yet it does seem to me decidedly probable that it comes from a Pauline source, for the Greek churches about the Aegean still considered themselves Pauline at the beginning of the second century, and the writer who drew the heroic figure of Paul in Acts had a notable appreciation of some aspects at least of Paul. I am not sure that Paul himself fully realized all the implications for Jewish believers of his doctrine of freedom from the law; it is just possible he himself would not measure up to our ideas of a thoroughgoing Paulinist. Our criticism is leaning over backward when it balks at the plain clue of the We-narratives, as though the authorship of Acts were a crime and the writer must constantly be suspected of throwing us off the scent. In short I can see no more probable solution for the intricate problem

of the authorship of Acts than the traditional one, that the writer was Luke the companion of Paul. The prefaces of Luke and Acts make it probable that these books were not anonymously put forth as Mark and Matthew seem to have been. Mark and Matthew were rather Semitically conceived, as community products, as it were; Luke and Acts are more individually introduced, in the Greek manner. We have therefore a right to expect more from tradition in the case of Luke-Acts than in the case of Matthew or Mark.

One is indeed confronted with one very real difficulty as one strives to define a view upon the origin of Acts. If the idea came to Luke only in the time of Domitian, when the Greek mission was in full career, how does he come to possess all this wealth of primitive materials, so full of antique color? The dificulty is a serious one. But two considerations somewhat relieve it. First, this wealth of material proves upon examination to be no very great matter after all. It is striking, rather than voluminous. A thoughtful man could have carried all of it and more in memory for a generation. This would be doubly easy if Luke had used it often in his preaching.

But this is not enough. The stylistic varieties within I Acts (which seem to me just as considerable as those within Acts as a whole) are too great to be thus explained. They suggest to me that while in Palestine the writer had heard told from time to time stories, of Aramaic origin of course, and had noted them down much as he heard them. Could he have done this without having as yet planned his two-volume work? Most assuredly he could. The author of Luke-Acts is the most considerable writer in the New Testament, and of them all he may most safely be credited with literary habits somewhat like our own. Does no one nowadays collect literary or historical materials without knowing all the uses he may within thirty years have occasion to put them to? Luke may have gathered much more than he used in Acts, or in Luke-Acts. He may well have gathered it, or at least jotted it down, simply for his own enjoyment and satisfaction. He may have seen its great religious usefulness, and used it year after year in preaching in the west; more than one of us I am sure has noted a thing down or copied it out of

some fugitive sheet, for its sheer interest, and later made telling use of it in ways he never dreamed of at the beginning. There is really nothing improbable in the noting down of these stories by a Greek visitor to Palestine (did not Greek prose begin in just this way with the Logographers?) without any immediate historical design in mind. To a non-Palestinian Christian coming at length into the land and the circle of which he had heard so much, the value of such primitive oral material would be manifest, as it would not to those who lived in the midst of it. In the Christian circles of Palestine everybody knew it; in the Christian circles of the West, nobody knew it. It would take a man from the outer world to see the worth of all this miscellany of wonder stories; just as it takes a man from the outside to feel the value of the ballads of the Kentucky mountaineers, or of the legends of the Ojibwas.

By these considerations I am encouraged to conclude that there is no improbability in Luke's having collected much literary material on his visits to Palestine, and long years afterward, when the Greek mission was in full swing, conceiving the idea of using some of it in the composition of Acts. This would be like the Diarist of the We-Sections. It would explain the patchwork character which I feel so strongly in I Acts. It would explain why one episode is very Aramaic in tone, and another very Greek: they come from different informants with different degrees of Greek culture; and why the historian has himself now and then to take the laboring oar and write a paragraph of summary and transition. The wonder stories of the early part of Acts I should therefore credit to various Aramaic-speaking circles of Palestine. The man who felt their extraordinary interest enough to note them down came from outside Palestine; and years after when the success of the Greek Mission had shown the full significance of its obscure beginnings, used some of them, together with his own memoranda and recollections, in producing what we know as the Book of Acts.