
A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies (old series)* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php

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

NOTES ON ST LUKE'S PREFACE,

suggested by reading the second volume of Foakes-Jackson and Lake's *Beginnings of Christianity*.

I

THE view that Theophilus was a Christian in the making, and that in Luke i 4 κατηχήθης referred to formal instruction, or at any rate to favourable representations of the Faith, has no doubt had great influence on the general interpretation both of Gospel and Acts. The theory put forward in this volume, and more elaborately defended by Dr Cadbury in an article in the *Expositor*, June 1921, that Theophilus was a Roman official and the information he had received hostile, would, if accepted, have still greater influence. It would lead us to look everywhere for traces of an apologia not only in the Acts, where many have found them quite apart from this theory, but in the Gospel above. It is because I have not seen since the publication of the volume and article any careful discussion of this interpretation of κατηχήθης that I have ventured to add one more item to the vast body of criticism which has grown up round the word.

The argument is, of course, primarily founded on the hostile use of κατηχεῖσθαι in Acts xxi 21 and 24, and, before I go further, I would point out a fact which is ignored by Dr Cadbury, but discounts, I think, slightly, the probability of the theory. Luke does not use κατήχησις as an equivalent for κατηγορία.[1] He uses it in these two passages, which are virtually a single context, of a popular outcry, much like the classical use of the very similar word καταβοή. The moment we get to an accusation addressed to the Roman authority, κατηγορία or ἔγκλημα is substituted.

To digress for a moment to the general use of κατηχεῖν, κατήχησις,[2]

[1] I use the nouns because of the awkwardness involved in the different constructions of the two verbs.

[2] Dr Cadbury's note on κατηχήθης p. 508 is misleading, as he takes no notice of κατήχησις which is found much earlier and cannot be separated. Dr Burton's note on Gal. vi 6 is much better and leaves little to be desired. But I should like to note that his (and others) interpretation of κατήχησις τῶν ἰδιωτέων in Hippocrates 28 Foes. (perhaps the earliest place where the word occurs, for there is said to be some reason for thinking that this treatise (παραγγελίαι) is an early if not genuine Hippocratean document) seems to me doubtful. It is taken to be the physician's advice or instruction to his patient. But an earlier passage (26) seems to me to suggest that it may mean what the common talk of outsiders tells the physician. The passage is exceedingly obscure.

I have a strong suspicion that the original meaning of the word drawn from the intensive κατά and the forcible ἠχεῖν is never quite lost, and that this prevailing notion is *insistence*. The insistence may lie in reiteration by a single person, or in the concurrence in a statement by a number of people, or again in a single emphatic statement by a single person. From the first we get the scholastic idea of instruction[1] which certainly appears in four passages of the N. T. From the second we have such passages as those quoted above from Acts, and the remarkable Stoic usage attributed both to Cleanthes[2] and Chrysippus,[3] where ἡ κατήχησις τῶν συνόντων is coupled with αἱ πιθανότητες τῶν ἔξωθεν πραγματειῶν or φαντασιῶν as one of the forces which pervert character.[4] Here it seems to mean the ideas which are inculcated into a young man by what he hears from those around him. I have examined all the passages quoted in Stephanus and Wettstein,[5] and find none where this idea of insistence is not possible, though in some it may not be necessary. I should add that it is natural enough that when it is used of statements in common circulation, the context should often suggest the idea of vague or even erroneous information, an idea which some have thought to be inherent in the word itself. The Ancients were quite familiar with the idea that Fame with her innumerable tongues was a lying jade.

I have said that this non-equivalence of κατήχησις and κατηγορία only slightly discounts the theory, for we might still suppose Luke to mean that the Roman official had heard some unfavourable reports. I go on to what is the main argument alleged, just indicated by the Editors on

[1] Rutherford *Chapter in the history of annotation* p. 31 rather positively says that the scholastic sense is the original one. The teacher makes the class 'ring out' in chorus the answers to his questions. If so the generalization would be like that of our own 'lesson', and the still more remarkable 'scan(d)'. In a recent note in the *Classical Review* (Aug.-Sept. 1922), I have suggested that the word *declamatio* for the oratorical exercise, which was the central feature in the Latin rhetorical schools—an odd word because it bears no relation to its Greek equivalent μελετή—may have been originally a translation of κατήχησις, the term which described the lesson as a whole coming to be used for its most prominent element.

[2] Diog. Laert. vii 89.

[3] *Galen de plac.* Hipp. v 5.

[4] Evidently this is the use which we find in Cic. *ad Att.* xv 12 when discussing the probable attitude of the young Octavius after Caesar's death, he puts on the unfavourable side 'quid aetati credendum sit, quid nomini, quid haereditati, quid κατηχήσει?' The passage is noteworthy, as the appearance of the word in a Latin letter indicates a familiar use. It has been translated there 'education', but something more general is needed.

[5] All the examples quoted by commentators come, I think, from one or other of these two sources. To them we may add one from the papyri mentioned by Moulton and Milligan s.v. where κατήχησεν is used of the client 'instructing' the advocate.

p. 179, and elaborated by Dr Cadbury in his article in the *Expositor*. It rests on the association of *ἀσφάλειαν* with *κατηχήθης* in the Gospel as compared with that of *ἀσφαλές* with a word of accusation in the Acts. Here are the four passages concerned:

Luke i 4 *ἵνα ἐπιγνῷς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν.*

Acts xxi 33–34 *ἐπυνθάνετο τίς εἴη καὶ τί ἐστιν πεποιηκώς. ἄλλοι δὲ ἄλλο τι ἐπεφώνουν ἐν τῷ ὄχλῳ· μὴ δυναμένου δ' αὐτοῦ γνῶναι τὸ ἀσφαλὲς διὰ τὸν θόρυβον ἐκέλευσεν κτλ.*

xxii 30 *τῇ δὲ ἐπαύριον βουλόμενος γνῶναι τὸ ἀσφαλὲς τὸ τί κατηγορεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔλυσεν αὐτόν.*

xxv 26 *περὶ οὗ ἀσφαλές τι γράψαι τῷ κυρίῳ οὐκ ἔχω· διὸ προήγαγον αὐτὸν ἐφ' ὑμῶν . . . ὅπως . . . σχῶ τί γράψω· ἄλογον γάρ μοι δοκεῖ πέμποντα δέσμιον μὴ καὶ τὰς κατ' αὐτοῦ αἰτίας σημᾶναι.*

From these three passages in Acts, Dr Cadbury concludes that 'everywhere in Luke's writings *ἀσφαλές* is used of definite information sought in connexion with an accusation', and the inference is that the same idea is involved in the Gospel passage. He seems to me to have neglected a vital point. In all the three Acts passages *τὸ ἀσφαλές* is not the answer to the question 'what is the truth about the accusation?', but to the question 'what is the accusation?'. Possibly there may be some hesitation about this at first sight in the case of the first passage, but only at first sight. If we see a man hustled by a mob, and ask what he has done, we do not expect *τὸ ἀσφαλές* with regard to the justice of the charge, we expect it as to what they *say* he has done. In the second case it is obvious, and hardly less so in the third. Festus did not wish to send a judgement on the facts on which the emperor could give sentence, but an intelligible case for him to investigate.

If we applied this association to Luke i 4, what results should we get? We should have to suppose that Theophilus in his official capacity has received some vague reports about the *flagitia cohaerentia nomini* such perhaps as *odium generis humani*. He wants definite information as to what is really alleged and Luke will give it him. What would it be? I suppose if the book was dated in the Neronic period, Theophilus might expect statements as to how and where they had fired the city. If in a later period, accounts of the 'overturning of lamps,

promiscuous intercourses and feasts on human flesh'. I need not carry this further. It seems to me obvious, that if we take *τὴν ἀσφάλειαν* to mean definite information as to the vaguely reported *λόγοι*, it follows that as we know the former to be favourable, the latter are favourable also. If it is replied that it does not mean 'definite information' so much as 'the real truth about the *λόγοι*' (i. e. that they are false), this is conceivably possible, but at any rate it gets no confirmation from the alleged association.

It may, however, be worth while, assuming that the *λόγοι* are favourable, to enquire whether *τὴν ἀσφάλειαν περί* can mean 'definite information about'. Though it is not very important, there will still be some difference from the accepted interpretation. According to that interpretation, Theophilus has had full information of the story, but the Gospel will convince him of its truth. According to the other his information has been vague and imperfect, the Gospel will make it definite and complete. It may perhaps be thought that this last is more reasonable. The Gospel, it may be said, gives no further reason for believing the Christian story, but it gives a complete or apparently complete version of the story. Something like this is said by Prof. A. R. Ropes in an article quoted by Dr Cadbury with approval, though it does not appear to endorse his view that the *κατήχησις* was unfavourable. The argument does not seem to me convincing. Though the Gospel is no doubt addressed to the general reader, this particular sentence is addressed to Theophilus. Luke observes (1) that the story comes from *αὐτόπται*, (2) that he has given it the degree of care (whatever it may be) indicated by *παρηκολουθηκότι*, &c., but behind these there is (3) the unspoken assumption that Theophilus knows enough of Luke to be sure that given these first two factors, the story may be believed. 'I heard it from the people who actually saw it and I examined their statements most carefully' may not be good evidence for the law-court, but it is cogent enough from a friend.

I should regard the choice between the two renderings as evenly balanced, if I could resolve one doubt which tells in favour of the traditional view. Dr Cadbury and his colleagues assume without question that *ἡ ἀσφάλεια* is the same as *τὸ ἀσφαλές*, that the abstract can be used for the concrete. Now it is true that the neuter adjective can regularly be used for the abstract noun, but I do not know that the converse can be assumed. No doubt it is true with regard to some and, probably, many words. Thus *ἡ ἀλήθεια* can be used for the thing which is true, as well as for the truthfulness or reality of the thing. Is *ἀσφάλεια* one of these words? I think our writers may have been led to overlook this question by the fact that 'certainty' is in English one of the abstract words which can be used concretely. We can say

'this fact is a certainty'. We cannot say 'this course is a safety' or 'a security', though we can use the last word concretely in technical legal senses. If we examine the examples of ἀσφάλεια in Stephanus, we shall find, I think, that out of about a hundred perhaps five may be described as concrete or semi-concrete. We have (1) ἐν ταῖς ἀσφαλείαις balanced against ἐν τοῖς κινδύνοις by Isocrates. (2) and (3) Polybius uses ἀσφάλεια twice for a fortification or military shelter. (4) Hesychius gives it as a synonym for κλεῖθρα 'locks'. (5) Epictetus uses it for a written guarantee, and this is also found in the papyri v. Moulton and Milligan, s.v. In the last four cases the extension is from the condition of safety or certainty to that which affords such safety, not to that which possesses it. There does not seem to me then to be any direct authority or much analogy for supposing that γνῶναι τὴν ἀσφάλειαν περὶ λόγου can mean 'to know what are the real facts' or 'to get definite information about a story'. On the other hand, unless the logical objection noted above has real weight, there seems to be absolutely no objection to the usual rendering, which takes γνῶναι τὴν ἀσφάλειαν λόγου to mean 'to know the certainty or trustworthiness of a story'.

II

I pass now to a point of wider interest, a point indeed, as it seems to me, of great importance. It is contained in the notes on αὐτόπται and the surrounding words, pp. 498 ff. The suggestion put forward may, I think, be summarized as follows. Since the Hellenistic historians are governed by 'rhetorical ideas', and as the claim to αὐτοψία was a 'rhetorical commonplace' with them, we may attach a 'rhetorical' significance to the word in Luke's preface. Further as παρακολουθεῖν does sometimes imply an intimate connexion with the events 'we must leave the possibility open that the writer is claiming for himself actual presence and participation in the events described'. Putting these two together we have suggested to us that Luke is making a 'rhetorical' claim to αὐτοψία.[1] To find what is meant by 'rhetorical' we have to turn to the essay on the 'Greek tradition of writing history' by the Editors and Dr Cadbury, pp. 7–15. Here the thesis is elaborated that the Greek tradition of history is dominated by 'rhetorical' considerations, and though the term is still vaguely and loosely used, it is clear that it conveys to the writers mainly that idea of insincerity which we now usually associate with the word. That remarks of a similar tendency have been made by many distinguished

[1] If I understand the writer aright, it is also suggested that even if παρηκολουθηκότι is not taken in this way, and Luke is merely saying that the story came from αὐτόπται, we must still discount his veracity on the grounds of the 'rhetorical' associations of the word.

scholars I do not deny, but they appear to me to be largely founded on a confusion between the ancient and the modern meanings of the term. I have written on this subject at length elsewhere, and here a very few points must suffice.[1]

Greek and Latin rhetoric is simply a careful and elaborate formulation of the laws of effective speech based on a study of the earlier oratorical models. Of the rules and principles laid down by the rhetoricians the great majority are still accepted by those who aim at effectiveness whether on the platform, in the pulpit, or at the bar, or indeed in essays or lectures. The difference is that we follow the principles more or less unconsciously, or at least have not reduced them to a system. They, on the other hand, spoke by rule, and possibly for that very reason less effectively. But they knew why they spoke, and not only the speaker, but every intelligent hearer, could refer each effect to its cause.

Side by side with the rhetoric of the schools we have, of course, the rhetorical exhibitions of the Sophists, which had so enormous a vogue. This popular rhetoric, though based on the teaching of the schools, had to some extent to accommodate itself to a less precise taste. It dealt of course largely with fictitious situations, and when as so often it worked on historical themes it was natural that the speaker (though I do not remember any definite instances) should allow himself the liberty which historical novelists to-day, and dramatists at all times, have taken. It is possible, no doubt, that this imaginative aspect of rhetoric may have had an adverse influence on serious history. But it can hardly be assumed. We ourselves do not seem to think that the vastly increased output and circulation of fiction under which we live, has damaged our powers of historical criticism. On the other hand, the careful study of rhetorical theory in the schools probably had a considerable influence on historiography. But to understand what that influence was, it is necessary to study what the rhetoricians taught, not to jump at vague conclusions founded on the modern meaning of the term.

Rhetoric was primarily concerned with oratory, in which must be included the 'epideictic' form of discourse which corresponds most closely to our essay or lecture. But the orator had frequently to state a series of facts, and thus had a department *narratio* (διήγησις) which in form as the rhetoricians recognized was akin to history. It is here that we can best find a departure for the rhetorical conception of history. The main law of *narratio*, that it should be *brevis* (i. e. not periodic), *lucida*, *verisimilis* (i. e. consistent and convincing), belongs at any rate to a range of ideas very different to those tendencies which our writers

[1] In a paper called 'Some considerations as to the influence of rhetoric upon history', published in the *Proceedings of the Classical Association*, 1917.

suppose to have been fostered by rhetoric. In *dispositio* (οἰκονομία or τάξις) also rhetoric could contribute much to history, and Dionysius's *Critique of Thucydides* contains a valuable example of such an application. In *elocutio* (φράσις), outside the department of *narratio*, not so much was to be learnt, for history *narrat*, oratory for the most part *probat*,[1] and Cicero, Quintilian, and Pliny all dwell on the vital difference between the two in this respect. All these facts have been much obscured to others besides our writers, by a complete misconception of the position of Cicero, who moved on the one hand by his admiration for history as the 'testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis',[2] on the other, by his idealization of the orator as the 'vir bonus, peritus dicendi' declared that history was 'opus unum oratorium maxime'[3]; i. e. a great speaker or writer can have no nobler subject than history—a remark which is twisted by our authors into 'history is akin to oratory, and therefore its principles are the same'.

Adopting this view of rhetoric and voicing the opinions of certain German authors, the writers proceed to tell us that 'instead of accuracy the purpose of ancient historians tended to make the form the chief point of emphasis'. A general statement of this kind cannot be either proved or refuted. Even if we have sufficient evidence to shew that the general standard of accuracy amongst Hellenistic historians is low,[4] we have no right to conclude that it is because they cared for accuracy less than form. There are many passions and weaknesses far more fatal to historical accuracy than a taste for style. 'Novi semper scriptores', says Livy in what is next to Luke's the most famous of historical prefaces, 'aut in rebus certius aliquid allaturos se aut scribendi arte rudem vetustatem superaturos credunt'. The historian wishes to tell the truth, and he wishes to make the truth interesting. As the former is more difficult than the latter nothing is more common than the observation that truth has been sacrificed to charm. Thus Macaulay, in the preface to the *Lays*, says this of Hume, as others in their turn have said it of Macaulay. I seem to have seen something of the kind said of Froude, and even of Gibbon, when he gets away from de Tillemont. Our writers observe that Polybius brings this charge against Timaeus and Herodian against his predecessors. What of it? Surely it only proves that both Polybius and Herodian believed that they themselves

[1] Quintilian x 1. 31. [2] *De Or.* ii 36. [3] *De Legg.* i 5.

[4] There are certainly many gibes in classical literature at the mendacity of historians including Herodotus: see a number collected by Mayor on Juv. x 174 ('quidquid Graecia mendax Audet in historia'). Is this body of disbelief to be taken at its face value, or should we rather say that such a sceptical spirit makes for careful historical criticism? Observe that the particular 'fiction' spoken of by Juvenal—the Athos canal—has been vindicated by archaeology.

'certius aliquid adferunt', and that this is more important than 'rudes arte superare'.

At any rate the historians did not learn this preference of *verba* to *res* in the rhetorical schools. There the superior importance of εὕρεσις, the provision of the material, to φράσις or its clothing in language, was a paramount doctrine. Quintilian devotes to the former twice as much space as to the latter. Nor, so far as I know, would historians learn any such principles from critical writers outside the rhetorical schools. It is extraordinary[1] that our authors should quote for their argument Lucian's words in his *How to write history* comparing the historians to artists like Phidias or Praxiteles, and thus leave the reader under the impression that Lucian is one of those who make 'form instead of accuracy the chief point of emphasis'. Who would have guessed from this that Lucian had written a little before?

'Charm is an improvement, if it follows naturally, as beauty is to an athelete . . ., but so long as history holds fast to its proper purpose (τὸ ἴδιον), the setting forth of the truth, it will trouble itself little about beauty' (§§ 12, 13).

And again—

'This alone is the purpose of history, and he who starts to write it must sacrifice to no god but truth, and his standard and guide must be to look not to those who hear him now, but to those who will study his writings in future times' (53).

Once more:

'Such let my historian be, fearless, free, impartial, the friend of frankness and truth . . . one who does not consider what this or that will think, but tells us what actually happened. . . . As we have laid down frankness and truth as his aims in the sphere of thought, so too in language his first great aim must be to state his facts clearly and plainly, with words that are neither abstruse nor vulgar, so that the multitude may understand and the educated commend' (54, 57).

But I must now pass on to the special application of this charge of rhetorical artificiality to Luke's preface. The claim to αὐτοψία we are told had become a 'rhetorical commonplace' amongst historians.

Now it is probably the case in all ages that historians who can claim personal knowledge of the events they describe are glad to bring this claim to the notice of their readers. Possibly this may be unusually common with Greek historians, and if it is I should be disposed to say that rhetorical training had something to do with it. That is to say, having been trained in the schools to base their practice on the old masters, they would naturally carry this on to history, and finding that

[1] Possibly the explanation may be that H. Peter (*Wahrheit und Kunst* p. 431) uses the passage in the same way.

the two great models, Herodotus and Thucydides, laid stress on their personal knowledge, would do the same where possible. But clearly Dr Cadbury and the Editors mean more than this. They have made the usual jump from the ancient to the modern meaning of rhetoric, with its vague trail of insincerity. It may, indeed, be granted, that where value is assigned to *αὐτοψία* or close personal acquaintance, there may be some temptation to invent or exaggerate such claims. Whether any or many of the Greek historians succumbed to this temptation, I will not presume to say, but I certainly want much better evidence than Dr Cadbury supplies, before I accept the suggestion that such invention was really widespread. We are told that the claims of Diodorus, Josephus, Aelian, and Philostratus to 'eyewitness-ship' are suspicious, and reference is given to Peter *Wahrheit und Kunst* p. 426. When I turn to Peter, I find a few words in justification of the charge against Diodorus. Diodorus (who did not of course claim to have been an eyewitness of events, nearly all of which happened before his birth, but to have travelled widely to acquaint himself with the topography) is alleged to have borrowed his statement from Polybius.[1] There are certainly some resemblances in the two parallel passages.[2] But the argument seems to me very inconclusive. If Diodorus did travel for this purpose, nothing is more natural than that his language should be reminiscent of his great predecessor in identical circumstances. In the case of the other three all that Peter says is 'Ich stehe auch der Berufung auf Augenzeugen bei Josephus, Älian, Philostratus[3] misstrauisch gegenüber', and no reasons or references are

[1] Peter refers also to Wachsmuth *Einleitung in das Studium der alten Geschichte* p. 82. Wachsmuth supports the charge of 'Umschreibung' from Polybius by a statement that Diodorus shews not the slightest trace of topographical knowledge, an argument, which no doubt may have considerable force, but requires verification. The article in Pauly-Wissowa supports this generally, but makes an exception in favour of Egypt.

[2] The passages are Diod. i 4; Polybius iii 59. The references are not given by Peter, and one of them wrongly by Wachsmuth. The most definite resemblance is that both writers speak of meeting *κινδύνους καὶ κακοπαθείας*.

[3] I can make no sense of Dr Cadbury's words which clearly imply that Philostratus claimed *eyewitness-ship*. The few passages in the *Vitae Sophistarum* in which he gives personal reminiscences are quite beyond suspicion, I think. Peter, I imagine, referred to the old question whether the memoirs of Damis, on which Philostratus claimed to base his *Vita Apollonii* ever existed—a part really of the wider question whether he intended a religious romance or a real biography. Though the case is not properly analogous to those of Diodorus and Josephus, whom every one would admit to have been historians according to their lights, it may come in a sense under the head of 'Berufung auf Augenzeugen'. Has Dr Cadbury misunderstood the last word to mean 'eyewitness-ship' instead of 'eyewitnesses'? I ought to add that I should 'leave the possibility open' that Dr Cadbury has better evidence than this. But if so he should have indicated what it is.

given. Thus the suspicions of Dr Cadbury apparently resolve themselves into the unsupported suspicions of H. Peter.

But even if it should be shewn that these claims to *αὐτοψία*, or other special knowledge, are in many cases fallacious, I should be slow to speak of the practice in general as a 'rhetorical commonplace', or as it is elsewhere called 'a literary artifice'. Such terms can only be applied when there is a convention amongst writers, if not amongst readers, that the statement is not to be taken as serious or literally true, and such conventions are only retained when they serve some further purpose. Thus an elaborate claim to eyewitness-ship is often employed very effectively in fictitious narrative, as for instance in *Gulliver's Travels*. Such, again, is the convention by which speeches, which were never actually delivered, were regularly inserted in historical works. This convention had been more or less sanctioned by Thucydides, and it held its ground because it enabled the writer to represent in a form attractive to that age what he believed to be the thoughts and feelings of the actors in the various scenes. That Luke availed himself of this convention in the speeches in the Acts seems to me quite possible. But I fail to see what purpose a 'conventional' claim to eyewitness-ship in what purports to be sober history can serve. If it ceases to ensure credence, it has no *raison d'être*. If I am told that it had no purpose—that writer after writer inserted it because it was the fashion, as we begin letters by 'Dear'—then I think it is an unsupported libel on both the seriousness and the literary ability of the age.

The utmost, then, that we can say is that a training in rhetoric and a study and observation of historical practice may have contributed to move Luke to put in the forefront of his narrative a statement as to his sources of knowledge, and his claim must be judged on its merits. If that claim really is that he himself was an eyewitness of the events in the Gospel, it is manifestly false and bungled to boot. For he has managed to give the vast majority of his readers the impression that he does *not* assert eyewitness-ship. If the claim is, as we have generally understood, that he had been in touch with the *αὐτόπται* and had carefully observed what they said, then it must be judged by what we conclude otherwise as to his date, accuracy, and sincerity. And it is not a whit affected for better or worse by the fact that he lived in a 'rhetorical' age, an age, that is, in which the 'ars bene dicendi' was the staple of education, and was more highly valued by the general public than it has been in subsequent times.

F. H. Colson.