

**THE DATE OF THE
ACTS AND THE
SYNOPTIC GOSPELS**

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The date of the Acts and the synoptic gospels by Adolf Harnack & J. R. Wilkinson

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ADOLF HARNACK & J. R. WILKINSON

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New Testament Studies

IV

**THE DATE OF THE ACTS
AND OF
THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS**

BY

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CHAPTER I

THE IDENTITY OF THE AUTHOR OF THE "WE"-SECTIONS
OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES WITH THE AUTHOR
OF THE WHOLE WORK

ONE of the strongest arguments in favour of this identity is the argument from *language* and *style*. In my two earlier works (*Luke the Physician* and *The Acts of the Apostles*) I have presented this argument in full detail, and it is to be hoped have proved conclusively that the hypothesis of a difference of authors is untenable. We are here concerned not only with a striking agreement in the use of words, but with an agreement in syntax and style which is just as striking, and above all with an identity of interest which extends into the minutest details of the narrative, such as the literary treatment of persons, lands, cities, peoples, houses, dates, etc., and which shows itself even in similar instances of carelessness and petty discrepancy. But a certain number of critics still regard the proof as unsatisfactory. Thus Paul Wilhelm Schmidt¹ declares that "linguistic

¹ *Festschrift zur Feier des 450-jähr. Bestehens der Univ. Basel* (De Wette-Overbeck's Werk zur Apostelgesch. und dessen jüngste Bestreitung), 1910, S. 44.

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homogeneity is not the same thing as linguistic identity ; between even St Luke's gospel of the Childhood, especially the Magnificat and Benedictus on the one hand, and the rest of the gospel of St Luke on the other hand, there exists, as Harnack has lately shown, a far-reaching linguistic harmony." But it is just identity, and not merely homogeneity, which is disclosed by our researches into St Luke's language and style ; and the gospel of the Childhood, including the two canticles, is shown to be no source which, like the supposed "diary of travel," has been incorporated into his work, but either a free elaboration of oral tradition or a free translation of an Aramaic record. From the study of the source Q in the gospel we can learn how a source that has been adopted by St Luke stands out from his own work. Of the 261 words which occur in the New Testament only in the gospel of St Luke, 3 at the most are to be found in the sections of the gospel derived from Q¹ ! Compare with this the vocabulary of the "we"-sections in its relation to that of the whole Acts of the Apostles ! Is not this in itself enough to convince any critic that the "we"-sections could not have been an independent source ? But how much easier it is to obtain credence for some questionable hypothesis than to gain acceptance for what admits of stringent logical demonstration ! So it has ever been, and so it will ever be ! It is the same with Clemen. Again the proof based upon language and style makes no impression. He writes²—all is

¹ *Sayings of Jesus*, Preface.

² "Professor Harnack on Acts" (*Hibbert Journal*, viii. 4, 1910, July, p. 787).

explained "partly from the fact that these details are historical and therefore could be mentioned by various writers, partly from the terminology common to the whole book of Acts." This is a way out of the difficulty that can be acquiesced in only by one who has not studied in detail the actual nature of the coincidences and is content to quiet his intellectual conscience with preconceived opinions.¹

Seeing that so much depends upon the argument in question, I have now determined to lay before my readers the whole material upon which it is based. In my treatise *Luke the Physician* (pp. 40-65) I verse by verse pointed out the linguistic coincidences in the passages Acts xvi. 10-17 and xxviii. 1-16, and then gave a summary description (pp. 67-84) of the vocabulary of the "we"-sections in comparison with the whole Acts of the Apostles. I shall now in the following pages print the whole text of the "we"-sections, underlining those words or constructions which occur again in the Acts and in the gospel of St Luke, while in the rest of the historical books of the New Testament they find either no parallel or one of a slight description.² From

¹ I am the more pleased to find that Moulton, the foremost authority on New Testament Greek, upholds the unity of authorship. He writes (*A Grammar of the New Testament*,² 1908, p. 14): "I was quite content to shield myself behind Blass; but Harnack has now stepped in with decisive effect. The following pages will supply not a few grammatical points to supplement Harnack's stylistic evidence in *Luke the Physician*." As a matter of fact, Moulton has himself noticed a whole series of delicate stylistic traits which confirm the unity of authorship.

² We add a few other peculiarities which the "we"-sections share with the whole book of the Acts, apart altogether from the gospels.

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considerations of space I may be allowed to omit a commentary on these passages, such as that which I have given upon ch. xvi. 10-17 and xxviii. 1-6. The principles in accordance with which the passages are selected remain exactly the same; and the careful reader, with the help of a concordance—the commentaries, with the exception of that of B. Weiss, will often fail him—will easily be able to ascertain in each particular case the reason why a particular word or construction is underlined. It is obvious that the distinction by underlining is not always of the same value, but it is impossible to represent in print different degrees of importance, especially when in many cases the valuation cannot be other than subjective.

xvi. 10-17.

¹⁰Ὡς δὲ τὸ ὄραμα εἶδεν, εὐθέως ἐξηγήσαμεν ἐξελθεῖν εἰς Μακεδονίαν, συμβιβάζοντες ὅτι προσκέκληται ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εὐαγγελίσασθαι αὐτούς. ¹¹ἀναχθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ Τρωάδος εὐθρόδρομήσαμεν εἰς Σαμαθράκην, τῇ δὲ ἐπιούσῃ εἰς Νέαν Πόλιν, ¹²κακειθεν εἰς Φιλίππους, ἣτις ἐστὶν πρώτη τῆς μερίδος τῆς Μακεδονίας πόλις, κολωνία. ἡμεν δὲ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ πόλει διατρίβοντες ἡμέρας τινάς. ¹³τῇ τε ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων ἐξήλθομεν ἔξω τῆς πύλης παρὰ ποταμόν, οὗ ἐνομίζομεν προσευχὴν εἶναι, καὶ καθίσαντες ἐλαλοῦμεν ταῖς συνελθούσαις γυναῖξιν. ¹⁴καὶ τις γυνὴ ὀνόματι Λυδία, πορφυρόπωλις πόλεως Θυατείρων, σεβομένη τὸν θεόν, ἤκουεν, ἣς ὁ κύριος διήνοιξεν τὴν καρδίαν προσέχειν τοῖς λαλουμένοις ὑπὸ Παύλου. ¹⁵ὡς δὲ ἐβαπτίσθη καὶ ὁ οἶκος αὐτῆς, παρεκάλεσεν λέγουσα· εἰ κεκρίκατέ με πιστὴν τῷ κυρίῳ εἶναι, εἰσελθόντες εἰς τὸν