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0521552125 - The Paradox of Salvation: Luke's Theology of the Cross

Peter Doble

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PART I

Luke's theology of the cross: preliminary matters

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LUKE AND THE CROSS: SETTING THE SCENE

It is frequently alleged that Luke has no *theologia crucis*, or, at best, a weakened one.¹ Examination of three distinctive, interrelated elements at the heart of the Lukan passion narrative strongly suggests that this is a mistaken assessment and that Luke does have a clear, coherent understanding of Jesus' death within God's salvation plan, and not merely as a prelude to resurrection. This examination takes seriously the pervasive Lukan insistence on 'fulfilment' and finds a key interpretative element in Wisdom's δίκαιος-model; the case for this is developed throughout part II and extended in chapter 7. Although this examination originally worked with the two-document hypothesis and explored Luke's redaction of Mark,² because its argument stands without recourse to that hypothesis the work has been rewritten to examine Luke–Acts in its own right. One element in the original presentation has, however, been retained: the argument assumes throughout that Luke's purposes are directed to building up a mixed Christian community and not to developing a political apologetic.

A. Luke is alleged to have no *theologia crucis*

What, precisely, is the nature of this widespread complaint against

¹ Kümmel (1975, p. 134, n. 18), lists those who share this view. See George (1978, pp. 185–212): '... On est donc fort étonné de constater que l'oeuvre de Luc, qui parle si souvent de la mort de Jésus, fasse si peu de place à son efficacité salutaire, et ne dise rien de sa valeur expiatoire. Ce fait a été remarqué depuis longtemps et on l'a interprété diversement.' George appends a list (1978, p. 185, n. 3) of 'recent' writers, including Lohse, *Martyrer und Gottesknecht*, Göttingen, 1955, ²1963, pp. 187–91; Flender, *Heil und Geschichte*, Munich, 1965, pp. 140–2; Conzelmann, *Zur Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, Gutersloh, 1967, pp. 51–3; Zehnle (1969), 'The Salvific Character of Jesus' Death in Lukan Soteriology', pp. 420–44; Marshall (1970), *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, pp. 170–5; *et al.*

² Doble, P., 'Dikaios at Luke 23:47 as a Lukan Christological Term', a thesis sustained in the University of Leeds, 1992.

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Luke? It is alleged that in Luke–Acts Jesus' death is 'played down'. Kiddle (1935, p. 273) was sure that Luke systematically diminished the tragic, momentous colouring of the passion as it is recorded in Matthew and Mark. According to Kiddle, for Luke, Jesus' death is 'more political' and 'less religious' (1935, p. 272). This judgment is linked with his assessment of Luke's apologetic purpose in writing, but it epitomises a widespread sense that Luke's passion narrative is 'not theological'. The death is *there*, it *happened*, but this death *does* nothing. Cadbury, for example, maintained that the story of Jesus' death was 'told' rather than 'explained' (1958, p. 280), but this is also substantially true of the passion narratives in the other synoptics. Conzelmann (1960, p. 201) noted that Luke's Gospel had no 'passion mysticism'.

A strange necessity

On the other hand, many writers recognise that according to Luke this death was *necessary*. Creed's very brief comment on Luke's theology noted at least that much: 'there is indeed no *theologia crucis* beyond the affirmation that the Christ must suffer, since so the prophetic scriptures had foretold' (1930, p. lxxii). The frequent occurrence of $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in Luke–Acts and its firm references to the necessity of the messiah's suffering according to the scriptures (Luke 24.25–7, 44–7) therefore requires comment.

One way of responding to a situation in which the evangelist appears both to emphasise the necessity of the messiah's suffering and to play down Jesus' death is to take very seriously one verse in the Emmaus story (Luke 24.26) and to claim that this death was a necessary prelude to the Lord's entering into his glory (so, e.g. Evans, 1990). The accent is thus shifted from the cross to one aspect or more of Jesus' vindication. Cadbury, for example, could write of this death as 'only a prelude' (1958, p. 280) and Kiddle was lyrical about his solution:³

Much of the joy and confidence which mark [Luke's] gospel is actually due to his optimism concerning the future, an optimism which makes him gloss over the pangs and sorrows of the past. He wrote in the spirit of Easter and Whitsun, rather than that of Good Friday. He regarded the

³ Although he ignored the weight of evidence gathered below in 'A Lukan emphasis'.

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latter as necessary, *but only as the short path to the unending glory which lay beyond* – a glory which illuminated even the way to the cross. (1935, p. 273, *italics added*)

According to many writers it is the ascension or the resurrection which focuses Luke's theology, so his is essentially a *theologia gloriae*. Cadbury saw the focus in resurrection (1958, p. 280); Keck (1967, p. 475) followed Talbert's arguments (1966) while Franklin (1975, p. 67, cf. p. 99 n. 36) found Luke's focus in the complex of resurrection and ascension: the cross served to make possible Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

Many complaints urged against Luke's treatment of Jesus' cross focus on his apparent policy of *exclusion*: he is said to have excluded Mark 10.45 (Cadbury, Conzelmann and Evans note this);⁴ he excluded all covenantal reference in his account of the Last Supper (so, for example, Franklin; the textual question here is difficult, but if the shorter text is read, Franklin's point stands).⁵ Franklin was also clear that Mark 10.45 was replaced in Luke's account of the Last Supper by the substituted 'I am among you as one who serves', thereby strengthening a case for a Servant soteriology in Luke.⁶ It is

⁴ Cadbury (1958, p. 280; cf. his treatment of *παῖς*, 1933, pp. 364ff.); Conzelmann (1960, pp. 201, 228); Evans (1990, p. 75). Jones (1984, p. 152) briefly discussed both Mark 10.45 and the shorter Lukan text of the word over the cup: he noted the absence from Luke of any hint that Jesus' death had atoning or redemptive significance.

⁵ The longer text seems now to be preferred. Fitzmyer's careful treatment of the textual issues leads to the longer text (1985, pp. 1386–95); N-A 26 prints the longer text; UBS3 also prints the longer text but evaluates it only (and surprisingly) as a [C] reading. Marshall comments: 'The external evidence for the longer text is overwhelming. The weakness in this argument lies in accounting for the origin of the shorter text . . . but this may be due simply to some scribal idiosyncrasy. On balance the longer text is to be preferred' (1978, p. 800). Evans (1990, pp. 786–8) notes that both Jeremias (*The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*) and RSV changed allegiance from the shorter text to the longer; he also describes Marshall's appeal to 'scribal idiosyncrasy' as 'somewhat desperate' (1990, p. 788), citing, but not supporting, a *disciplina arcani* as one reason for omission. It seems that on balance Evans prefers the shorter text.

If the longer text is now to be preferred, then Luke's τὸ ὑπὲρ ὁμῶν διδόμενον has a *vicarial* dimension (but appears not to be related to a Servant model). Fitzmyer's discussion (1985, pp. 1515–18) of Jesus' death as salvific is a corrective to much of what is said of Luke's want of a *theologia crucis*. Perhaps it is possible to see the Wisdom δίκαιος-model in a way which allows the death of the δίκαιος to initiate God's plan of salvation; for the implications of this discussion see chapter 8.

⁶ See Doble (1992, Detached Note 1), for an argument *contra* Franklin – that Luke transformed Mark 10.45 into Luke 19.10. While Goulder (1989, pp. 675–9) is hesitant about Drury's account of the origins of this story, his own treatment of the

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interesting to note how much store writers set by Luke's alleged policy of excluding references to ransom or redemption; it is particularly *this* that earns him so much disfavour among theologians. Kiddle noted that, for Luke, Jesus' death was not even vitally connected with redemption (1935, p. 277).

Luke's exclusion of these two key texts is closely linked with his firm divorce between a concern for and interest in forgiveness on the one hand and his narrative of Jesus' death on the other. Both Conzelmann (cited below) and Cadbury (1958, p. 282) particularly note this fact:

The most important finding in this connection for our purposes is that there is no trace of any Passion mysticism, nor is any direct soteriological significance drawn from Jesus' suffering or death. There is no suggestion of a connection with the forgiveness of sins . . . The fact that the death itself is not interpreted as a saving event of course determines the account given of it.

(Conzelmann, 1960, p. 201)

Cadbury noted that Luke–Acts is imbued with a Lukan emphasis on forgiveness and that nowhere is this emphasis linked with Jesus' death. Keck (1967, p. 475) wrote of Luke's *avoiding* any explicit soteriological reading of Jesus' death and found the evidence in his two exclusions.

If, according to Luke, salvation is not to be found in the cross *per se* where may it be found? It is said to be found through Jesus' ministry or his present reign as Lord rather than through his death. This, for example, is Franklin's position: he insists that Jesus' cross is not the *means* of salvation – the activity of the risen Lord *is* (1975, p. 66). Tannehill argues in the same direction (1972, p. 74f.) making clear that salvation, forgiveness, was also to be found in the encounter between God and man in Jesus' ministry.

A Lukan emphasis

But a reading of the Gospel shows how odd these 'accusations' really are, for Luke emphasises Jesus' approaching passion more

passage depends on Luke's having extracted minute detail from Mark and Matthew before building it patiently into a piece of creative writing. Experience with the text suggests that Marshall rightly notes (Goulder, 1989 p. 675) that Luke does not create Jesus' sayings.

than either of the other synoptists; so why should an evangelist with no *theologia crucis* make so much of the passion? And why should his emphasis on the passion be so closely related to his great construct of Jesus' journey to meet his passion in Jerusalem?

If one reflects on the journey as it is announced in the transfiguration narrative (Luke 9.31), then the pressure of the evidence becomes clearer. It is of the essence of this Lukan scene that the transfigured Jesus is *standing together with Moses and Elijah*, the three of them talking about the ἔξοδος which he was about to complete in Jerusalem. At Luke 9.51, following this metamorphosis, Luke reports that Jesus 'set his face towards Jerusalem' and what awaited him there. What Luke might have intended here by ἔξοδος is explored in a later section,⁷ but at present it is enough to note that it signals a theological map which the reader is invited to follow.

Within his journey narrative Luke takes up the three great passion predictions relating to the Son of man (9.21–2; 9.43b–5; 18.31–4), with distinctive Lukan elements which differentiate them from synoptic parallels. One of these, the second, omits any hint of a resurrection; both second and third draw attention to the hiddenness of these ῥήματα from the disciples, a theme more fully explored in the Emmaus narrative and beyond; the third spells out for a reader – thus drawing attention to – Ἴδου ἀναβαίνομεν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ, with all its overtones from 9.31 and 51 before continuing: καὶ τελεσθήσεται πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα διὰ τῶν προφητῶν τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. This use of τελέω in relation to Jesus' passion and death, a verb taken up at 12.50, 22.37 and Acts 13.29, will be examined below. Luke's composition thus includes not only what he probably found in sources still available, but an *emphasis* on the passion and its scriptural bases.

There are also unparalleled 'Lukan' sayings. At Luke 12.50 there is a curious and important little saying about a 'baptism' which most commentators understand as Jesus' suffering; again, there is a sense of its being brought to completion (... τελεσθῆ). Similarly, at Luke 13.33 there is reference to Jesus' prophetic martyrdom in Jerusalem; the verbs δεῖ and πορεύεσθαι root this saying in a distinct Lukan attitude to the coming passion. At Luke 17.25 stands a reference to the initial or supreme (πρώτον δέ) necessity of the Son of man's sufferings (δεῖ αὐτὸν πολλὰ παθεῖν) before the 'Day of the Son of man', again, with no hint of resurrection or

⁷ Chapter 7G below.

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vindication. It is Jesus' suffering and death rather than vindication which are in view here.

Luke thus narrates the journey to Jerusalem as Jesus' journey to a destiny to which he adverts frequently on the way. Yet after the journeying has brought Jesus and his disciples to Jerusalem, the evangelist continues his interest in the purpose for their being in the city. It is surely no accident that in the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Luke 20.9–19) there is significant difference between what is found in Luke and what Matthew and Mark narrate: both the latter tell the reader that servants were also killed (Matt. 21.33–44; Mark 12.1–12); Luke has the son alone killed, leaving the servants traumatised and dishonoured yet with their lives intact (Matt. 21.35; cf. Mark 12.4ff.; *contra* Luke 20.10, 11, 12). While this is different from the picture he paints at Acts 7.51–53 it none the less focuses a reader's mind on the coming passion. Similarly, at Luke 22.37, in a citation of Isaiah 53.12, is another example of the strange necessity (δεῖ τελεσθῆναι) driving Jesus' life. It would, however, be a mistake to find in this verse reason to import the whole of the 'Ebed Yahweh' model;⁸ what is stressed is that because Jesus' sufferings will be among the 'lawless', his will be a humiliating, shameful death (see chapter 7C).

How can such a composition as Luke–Acts be said to lack a *theologia crucis* while so emphasising the necessity of this death? Help is to hand in asking the question in another way.

A more focused question

As Kümmel rightly notes (1975, p. 141f.), the nub of these complaints against Luke is that he has not affirmed an unambiguously 'Pauline' doctrine of atonement. Even where he appears to have alluded to it, he either has Pauline teaching in a weakened form or it is probably not Pauline at all. Writing of Acts 20.22, Cadbury commented:⁹

Superficially, this sounds Pauline enough, and no doubt Paul's work lies behind such a mode of expression, and yet one hesitates to assume that Paul's rather unique theology is shared understandingly by his biographer. Possibly the

⁸ *Contra* Larkin (1977) *et al.*

⁹ Houlden (1984, pp. 63f.), also reflected on Luke as theologian and came to no very encouraging conclusions.

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latter had no special penchant for such things; certainly he has no occasion in this work to elaborate such matters.

(1958, p. 281)

Whether Luke was or was not a natural theologian is beside the point here. Kümmel argues that Luke's work should be assessed not by Paul's but by the central message of the New Testament, and this has to do with the canon, with taking history seriously, with the theological norm established by the agreement of Jesus,¹⁰ Paul and John (1975, p. 141f.); by these criteria Luke's attempt to write for his own time coheres with the central proclamation of the New Testament. Kümmel urged that the question be posed in a new and different way: does Luke understand the history of Jesus as final event (1975, p. 142)? Fitzmyer came to the same general conclusion but framed his question rather differently. To find the right answer it is wise to ask the right question: in their own ways, both Fitzmyer and Kümmel affirm that there is diversity in the New Testament witness to Jesus, and each has chosen to provoke new ways of thinking about Luke's particular contribution.¹¹ This present study explores one small segment of Luke's passion narrative to clarify three distinctive elements through which this evangelist presented Jesus' death as in one sense 'final event', a fulfilment of the plan of God set out in scripture.¹²

B. Three distinctive elements in Luke's passion narrative

This evangelist's composition of Luke 23.44–7 relates to its parallels in Mark and Matthew. It has, however, three elements which deserve careful exploration: first, the Lukan Jesus' final word from the cross (23.46) is explored in chapter 6; second, the centurion ἐδόξαζεν τὸν θεόν (examined in chapter 2) before, third, he

¹⁰ Kümmel's extraordinary mixing of categories here (*Jesus*, Paul and John) is probably indefensible, but his statement has the merit of reaffirming that Paul's is not the only NT witness to a theological position.

¹¹ Barrett's discussion (1979) of the term *theologia crucis* offers a helpful perspective on Luke's understanding of discipleship. The present argument follows a different path from his: Luke's is a *theologia crucis* in the sense that God's fulfilling his plan for salvation entailed the humiliation and martyrdom of the δίκαιος as an element in his 'career'. Only in so far as this death fulfilled scripture's paradigm was it an essential element in God's salvific work. This approach is explored in part III below where the relation of Luke's *theologia crucis* to discipleship is taken up.

¹² Squires (1993) explored Lukan usage in relation to the plan of God. It is, perhaps, a weakness in his case that he paid less attention than it deserves to the influence of LXX on Luke's thought.

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affirmed Jesus as ὄντως . . . δίκαιος (23.47); Luke's use of δίκαιος is explored in chapters 3 to 5. The thrust of this study is that these three elements belong together in one systematic and coherent Lukan narrating of the passion as an integral part of God's fulfilling his salvation plan in and through the agency of Jesus. Each of the chapters in part II constitutes an examination of one of these elements. Part III then extends the findings of part II into the larger Lukan passion narrative and into an approach to Luke's *theologia crucis*.

The distinctiveness and importance of these three elements has often been noted, but good reason for revisiting them may be found in C. J. Hemer's words (1977, p. 46): 'There is often . . . a particular need to reopen and reformulate questions which have been prematurely closed. We need not so much novel answers as fresh leads to discrimination among those already canvassed or even discarded.' The particular need to reopen and reformulate questions about these three Lukan elements initially emerged from an examination of Luke's use of δίκαιος, results from which are incorporated in part II. Once that question had been reopened, its relation with the other elements became clearer, and, although each element has previously undergone careful separate scrutiny, their dynamic interrelation in Luke's thought appears not to have been explored.

C. Luke and the fulfilment of scripture

The force of these three interrelated elements and their place in Luke's understanding of God's plan of salvation should be given full weight in any assessment of Luke's *theologia crucis*. The reason for this is obvious from even a superficial reading of Luke–Acts: according to Luke, the risen Lord explained to his disciples how what had befallen him was essentially related to the scriptures – *Torah*, Prophets and Psalms (Luke 24.25–7, 44–6) – and that his shameful death was part of God's plan. While there is still dispute about the force of τῶν πεπληροφορημένων in Luke 1.1, a good case can be made for urging that because Luke saw the events he was narrating as in some sense God's fulfilling his saving purposes, this particular verb, whatever else it does, relates to such fulfilment. There is also a systematic appeal to scripture throughout the body of Luke–Acts, in the Nazareth sermon (Luke 4.16–30) and in Paul's address at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13), in the Petrine speeches of

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Acts 2–4 and in Stephen's long survey of Israel's relations with God (Acts 6.8–8.2), throughout the infancy hymns (Luke 1 and 2) and in the closing of the two volumes (Acts 28.23–31). Luke's apparent facility in interpreting the scriptures may perhaps be seen most clearly in his programmatic use of *δοξάζειν τὸν Θεόν*, a usage explored in chapter 2 below.

The thrust of this present work is that Luke found in scripture one particularly helpful model of God's saving activity. According to Wisdom, a scriptural book that Luke found illuminating,¹³ it had been through a faithful Israel or through loyal and saintly individual people (*δίκαιοι*) that God had consistently saved his people. Historically, faithfulness to God had met opposition, enmity and persecution from other, less committed Israelites, and Wisdom offers in chapters 2–5 a paradigm of the *δίκαιος* in his conflict with cruel and cynical opponents, culminating in his open vindication by God. While this *δίκαιος*-model is initially presented in its singular form (e.g. Wis. 2.10–20; 4.16–5.8), there are passages where reference is clearly generalised as a plural (e.g. Wis. 3.1–9). So here one finds the kind of counterpoint between the one and the many which inhibits an interpreter from speaking of *δίκαιος* as a title, an oscillation also characteristic of Daniel's use of 'Son of man' and Deutero-Isaiah's use of 'Servant'. Consequently, throughout this study, *δίκαιος* in Luke–Acts is referred to more neutrally as a 'term' or 'descriptor'. A cumulative argument for Luke's use of Wisdom appears in chapter 7.

D. The question of Luke's sources

While an earlier form of this monograph worked with one possible solution to the synoptic problem, this present version makes its case on the basis of Luke–Acts itself. There are, however, one or two points at which remnants of the earlier form reappear. The reason for this change in approach is simply that the case for a Lukan *theologia crucis* based on Wisdom's model of the *δίκαιος* can be made independently of Luke's redactional activity. To tie a sound argument to a hotly debated hypothesis weakens the argument in

¹³ This statement *assumes* that Luke's LXX included Wisdom. That the Muratorian canon appears to include Wisdom among the New Testament books points to its value to Christians as much as to the fact that it was not listed as 'scripture'. Chapter 7 below explores some 'echoes' of Wisdom in Luke–Acts.