

Acts 2.36 and the Continuity of Lukan Christology

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Acts 2.36 has caused problems for biblical interpreters both ancient and modern. This article examines the various readings and different hermeneutical strategies in the history of interpretation in order to situate the verse within its requisite interpretive context, Luke–Acts. Subsequently, an interpretation of Acts 2.36 is offered in which the verse is seen to express, rather than contradict, Lukan christology.

If, as Luke probably intended, one reads Luke’s Gospel before moving on to Acts, then Peter’s statement in Acts 2.36 may come as something of a surprise. At the end of a rather lengthy speech to the ‘men of Judaea and all who live in Jerusalem’ (2.14), Peter says, ἀσφαλῶς οὖν γινωσκέτω πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ὅτι καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε. The rather startling part of the sentence, of course, is the statement that ‘God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified’.

The initial surprise at Peter’s statement comes with good reason, for it certainly seems clear enough from the very beginning of the story in the Gospel that Jesus is *already* Lord and Christ. Indeed, even while still in Mary’s womb, Jesus is referred to as ὁ κύριος in Elizabeth’s address to Mary: καὶ πόθεν μοι τοῦτο ἵνα ἔλθῃ ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου πρὸς ἐμέ (1.43).¹ Moreover, the angels announce to the shepherds that Jesus – still only an infant in the story-line – is already κύριος and χριστός: ‘today is born to you in the city of David a Savior, who is χριστός κύριος’ (2.11). *Prima facie*, then, Peter’s statement in Acts 2.36 seems to exist in serious tension with the christological claims of Luke’s Gospel.

¹ For a recent challenge to the notion that Mary becomes pregnant immediately or soon after Gabriel’s visit – held by the vast majority of modern exegetes (e.g., Dibelius, Fitzmyer, Johnson, Nolland, Schürmann, Schneider et al.) – see the thought provoking article of Michael Wolter, ‘“Wann wurde Maria schwanger?” Eine vernachlässigte Frage und ihre Bedeutung für das Verständnis der lukanischen Vorgeschichte (Lk 1–2)’, *Von Jesus zum Christus: Christologische Studien* (FS Paul Hoffmann; ed. R. Hoppe and U. Busse; BZNW 93; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998) 405–22.

The purpose of the present article is to address this apparent tension in Lukan christological expression and, on the basis of our discussion, to offer an interpretation of the verse that situates it within the context of Luke–Acts, its proper framework for meaning. Taking account of the larger narrative and hermeneutical context of the verse allows both its particular force and Lukan christological coherence to remain. In order to make our way to the interpretive proposal, it is necessary, first, to chart the salient points in the history of interpretation and, second, to discuss the hermeneutical matters involved in coming to a correct understanding of the verse in its overall Lukan context. Thus, this article will proceed in three sections: (1) History of Interpretation; (2) Interpretive Context: The Framework for Meaning; and (3) A Reading.

1. History of Interpretation

Modern scholars were not the first to notice the christological potential of Acts 2.36. Tertullian, for example, drew upon Acts 2.36 in his polemic against Praxeas to argue that Christ was not the same person as the Father: ‘Jesus will be the same as the Christ . . . who was anointed by the Father. . . . Thus Peter says: “Let all the house of Israel know that God has made him both Lord and Christ”, that is, *anointed*’.² Later in the patristic period, moreover, the verse became a point of serious contention in the interpretive controversies between heterodox and orthodox theologians. Perhaps it was Paul of Samosata in the mid-third century who first seized upon the verse to bolster his position, though that is not certain.³ What is certain is that by the time of the Arian controversy, heterodox hermeneuts had appropriated Acts 2.36, along with Proverbs 8.22 and other similar texts (e.g.,

² *Adversus Praxeam* XXVIII.3–4 (CCSL 2.1201; all translations are my own unless otherwise specified). Irenaeus also cites almost in full Peter’s speech in Acts 2, but the citation occurs within a context of several other extended citations and evidences no awareness of an interpretive battle over 2.36 in particular (*Adversus Haereses* III.12.2 [SC 3.209]).

³ In an argument over the interpretation of this passage, Athanasius writes: ‘If therefore they suppose that the Savior was not Lord and King before he became human and endured the cross, but only then began to be Lord, let them know that they bring the statements of Paul of Samosata out into the open again’ (*Contra Arianos* II.15.13 [PG 26.173A]; here the *ἀλλὰ τότε* is to be taken with reference to the entire life of Christ rather than restricted to his execution upon the cross; it pertains, that is, to *γένηται ἄνθρωπος καὶ σταυρὸν ὑπομείνη* and not just to *σταυρὸν ὑπομείνη*: *ἐι μὲν οὖν νομίζουσιν ὅτι καὶ πρὶν γένηται ἄνθρωπος καὶ σταυρὸν ὑπομείνη οὐκ ἦν κύριος καὶ βασιλεὺς ὁ σωτὴρ ἀλλὰ τότε ἀρχὴν ἔσχε τοῦ εἶναι κύριος γνώτωσαν ὅτι τὰ τοῦ Σαμοσατέως ἐκ φανεροῦ πάλιν φθέγγοντα ῥήματα*). This passage need not do more than indicate Athanasius’ view of the general position of Paul of Samosata (and here we must compare, for example, Eusebius *HE* VII.30 and Epiphanius *Panarion* LXV), but because Athanasius’ remarks occur in the context of his discussion of Acts 2.36, they may at least suggest that Paul used this passage.

Col 1.15),⁴ as evidence for their belief that Christ/the Son was a creature created by the Father. No obviously direct line can be drawn from Athanasius' *Orationes contra Arianos IV* through Epiphanius' *Panarion* and Ambrose's *De Fide* to Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium*, but the general similarity in the debate we find in these orthodox authors is unmistakable.⁵

The center of the exegetical argument over Acts 2.36 was the word 'made' (ἐποίησεν). Insofar as we can reconstruct their interpretation, it seems that heterodox theologians from Arius to Eunomius took ἐποίησεν to refer to God the Father's creation of the Son. In one of the few surviving heretical works, for example, Eunomius put it clearly:

We assert that the God of all things . . . begot and created before all things [ποίησαντα πρὸ πάντων] as Only-begotten God our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things were made. . . . [T]his Only-begotten God is not to be compared either with the one who begot him or with the Holy Spirit who was made through him, for he is less than the one in being a 'thing made' [ὡς ποίημα], and greater than the other in being a maker. And indeed, a trustworthy witness of the fact that he was made [πεποιησθαι] is Peter . . . for Peter said, 'Let all the house of Israel know . . . that God has made [ἐποίησε] him both Lord and Christ'.⁶

The testimony of the church fathers supports this understanding as the general heterodox construal of the passage. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, writes that 'those who force the word the opposite way say that by ἐποίησεν the Apostle makes known the pre-temporal generation of the Son'.⁷ So, too, Ambrose speaks of this construal as the Arians' 'customary citation of [Acts 2.36]'. If one reads more carefully, argues Ambrose, 'it does not follow that the Son was made by God'.⁸

In contrast to modern interpretation (see below), then, the primary divide in heterodox readings was not between Jesus' status in his earthly ministry and that of his resurrection/exaltation glory, but rather between his status as created versus uncreated being. Thus ἐποίησεν was related not to the actual life, death, and resurrection of Jesus but to God's action before the foundation of the world.

4 For a list of 'Theologically Significant Passages of Scripture Used by Non-Nicenes', see the Appendix with the same title in Richard Paul Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford: Oxford University, 2000) 383–95.

5 Cf., e.g., John Chrysostom *Homiliae 1–34 in Epistolum ad Hebraeos* III.1 (PG 63.28), who also links Acts 2.36 together with Prov 8.22 in his argument against the Arians.

6 *Liber Apologeticus* XXVI. I cite here the critical text and translation of Richard Paul Vaggione, *Eunomius: The Extant Works* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 68–71.

7 *Contra Eunomium* V.2 (PG 45.684D).

8 *De Fide* I.15.95 (PL 16.573C). See also Athanasius *Contra Arianos* II.15.11 (PG 26.168C–170C); cf. Epiphanius *Panarion* LXIX.42.1–6 (PG 42.266–269).

God *made*, that is, created the Lord and Christ; he did not exist coeternally with the Father.

The orthodox response in general was of course to deny the heretical reading of ἐποίησεν: 'we say that it is impious to take ἐποίησεν to refer to the divinity of the only-begotten'.⁹ This denial was accomplished, first, by drawing attention to the rest of Peter's remark: τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε. When the Arians said, 'Here we find "made" in scripture', they did not see that

by 'this Jesus' the wording – for the wording is self-explanatory – means the Lord's human nature [τὴν ἐνανθρώπησιν κυρίου]. The meaning is clear from 'this Jesus *whom you crucified*'. This is plainly the flesh which they crucified, for they crucified flesh [σάρκα γὰρ ἐσταύρωσαν].¹⁰

On the basis of the conclusion of Acts 2.36, Athanasius, Epiphanius, Ambrose, and Gregory of Nyssa all argued that because it was absurd to speak of divinity being crucified, Peter was obviously not speaking here about the divinity of Christ but about his 'flesh' or 'humanity'.

Within this larger focus upon the humanity of Christ, the verb 'made' was related to the two poles of the life of Jesus, the incarnation and the resurrection/exaltation. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, espoused both points of view simultaneously. He notes, on the one hand, that 'the blessed Peter was indicating briefly and in passing the mystery according to the flesh [the incarnation]',¹¹ and, on the other, that

the apostle says that the humanity was exalted; it was exalted because it became Lord and Christ. And this happened after the passion. It is not, therefore, the pre-temporal existence of the Lord which the apostle proves

⁹ Gregory of Nyssa *Contra Eunomium* V.2 (PG 45.684D).

¹⁰ Epiphanius *Panarion* LXIX.42.2 (I cite the recent translation of Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* [2 vols.; NHS 35; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987, 1994]; cf. PG 42.268A). Cf. Athanasius *Contra Arianos* II.15.12 (PG 26.171A): 'For even Peter, after saying, 'He has made him Lord and Christ', immediately added, 'this Jesus whom you crucified'. It is manifest to everyone – so let it be even to these [Arians], if they keep to the context [ἀκολουθία] – that he has been made according to his humanity and not according to the essence of the Logos. For what was crucified other than the body?' Cf. also, e.g., Ambrose *De Fide* I.15.95: 'Let the ignorant [heretics] read the entirety [of the sentence], and let them understand it. For thus it is clearly written, 'God made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ'. It was not the divinity that was crucified, but the flesh. This was possible in any event because the flesh is that which is able to be crucified' (PL 16.573C); Amphilochius of Iconium *Fragmenta* I.4–5: 'It was not the divinity [ἡ θεότης] that died, but the humanity [ἀνθρωπος]' (CCSG 3.227); John Chrysostom *Hom. in Heb.* III.1: Acts 2.36 does not refer to 'the divine Word, but to that which is according to the flesh' (PG 63.28: εἴρηται . . . περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ἀλλὰ τοῦ κατὰ σάρκα); Eustathius of Antioch *Fragmenta* LXXII.6–10: 'He made the suffering Jesus Lord, and not the Wisdom or Word . . . but rather the one who was raised up on the cross with outstretched hands [τὰς χεῖρας]' (CCSG 51.144).

¹¹ *Contra Eunomium* V.5 (PG 45.708D).

by ἐποίησεν but the transformation of the humble to the exalted that was effected by ‘the right hand of God’.¹²

If in this latter passage Gregory somewhat prefigured modern discussion of Luke’s exaltation christology,¹³ it was far from his intention.¹⁴ His larger point, rather, was that since the Son was Lord and Christ from all eternity according to his divine nature, Acts 2.36 can apply only to the human nature.

Second, Athanasius in particular offered a different reading of ἐποίησεν in which he coordinated Peter’s earlier statement in Acts 2.22 – ‘Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested [ἀποδεδειγμένον] to you by God . . .’ – with the conclusion of the speech in 2.36. On this basis, Athanasius took the word ἐποίησεν as a virtual equivalent for ἀποδείκνυμι and, hence, read ἐποίησεν in context to mean that God ‘made him Lord not in general but “toward” us, and “in our midst”, which is the same as saying, “[God] manifested him”’. In this way, argued Athanasius, ‘the expression that [Peter] uses at the end, “made” [ἐποίησε], is explained by what he said in the beginning with the word “manifested” [ἀπέδειξεν]’.¹⁵

Where the heretical exegetes read Acts 2.36 in relation to the doctrinal issue of the Son’s eternal or non-eternal generation from the Father, they were rebuffed by the orthodox interpreters’ attention to the primary context of the statement – Peter did seem to speak here of the crucifixion of the human Jesus. Yet, by directing the force of ἐποίησεν toward the human nature of Christ and by including the incarnation within the purview of ἐποίησεν, the orthodox, too, indicated their willingness to situate and interpret the verse within a larger doctrinal framework. Given the fact that the orthodox framework was eventually to win out in the history of theology, it is not very surprising that Acts 2.36 does not appear to be a major point of interpretive debate until the modern period.¹⁶

12 *Contra Eunomium* V.3 (PG 45.697A–B).

13 See the frequent repetition of ὑψόω and its cognates in *Contra Eunomium* V.3 (PG 45.697A–D). Cf., of course, Acts 2.33 (τῆ δεξιᾷ οὖν τοῦ θεοῦ ὑψοθείς . . .).

14 Gregory’s statement should not be pressed too much into the service of modern interpretation: Gregory would clearly deny that the Son was made Lord in his divine nature ‘after his passion’, that is, at the resurrection (indeed, his polemic throughout the relevant sections of *Contra Eunomium* V functions in just this way).

15 *Contra Arianos* II.15.12 (PG 26.172B). Athanasius’ citation of Acts 2.22 varies only slightly from the text in NA27 (omitting codex Bezae here): whereas in NA27 ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ follows ἀποδεδειγμένον, in the Athanasian text ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ precedes ἀποδεδειγμένον.

16 It is of course interesting, however, that Luther makes reference to Acts 2.36 in relation to Rom 1.3–4 (‘Lectures on Romans [*Scholia*], *LW* 25.147). In this way he prefigures modern reconstructions of early christology. Yet Luther does not evidence an awareness of the potential theological problems raised by these verses, though christologically speaking he does seem to read them in terms of a resurrection/exaltation schema (Jesus was not recognized as the Son of God until the coming of the Spirit after his resurrection/exaltation).

The interpretation of Acts 2.36 in modern exegesis differed substantially from that of the ancient argument. The latter concentrated primarily on the implications of the statement for Christian doctrine whereas the former has tended to focus upon the status of Acts 2.36 as evidence for pre-Lukan kerygma, and this usually in connection with the apparent inconsistency the verse produces within Luke's own christology. Yet, to a striking degree, modern debate has resembled the ancient one in its concern with the word ἐποίησεν.¹⁷

William Wrede was not the first to return to the potential significance of ἐποίησεν in Acts 2.36, but his remarks were characteristically perceptive and helped to shape more than one generation of scholarly opinion. Wrede drew upon Acts 2.36 in an effort to support his thesis that Mark's 'Messianic Secret' was a literary motif which reflected the historical fact that Jesus was not considered to be Messiah during his lifetime:

In his sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2.36 Peter says that God has *made* the Jesus whom the Jews crucified *both Lord and Christ*. In this it is implied that this has been done through his being raised from the dead. This saying quite by itself would prove that there was in primitive Christianity a view in accordance with which Jesus was not the messiah in his earthly life.¹⁸

Wrede himself did not explicate the problems that unfold naturally for Lukan christology if one interprets Acts 2.36 in this way. Yet, his reading of ἐποίησεν was clear enough – Jesus became Lord and Christ only at or after his resurrection.

Rudolf Bultmann read Acts 2.36 in like manner. Coordinating the verse with Rom 1.4, Bultmann followed Wrede's lead and asserted that 'Jesus' messiahship was dated from the resurrection'.¹⁹ And though his larger concerns were quite different, Oscar Cullmann also interpreted Acts 2.36 in light of Rom 1.4 and the Christ-hymn in Phil 2.5–11, thus arguing for a reconstruction of the early Christian recognition that 'God not only resurrected [Jesus] but gave him lordship, "made" him to be the *Kyrios* (Rom 1.4; Acts 2.36)'.²⁰ In the reading of Wrede, Bultmann et al., Jesus was made or 'adopted' as χριστός (and κύριος) not during his lifetime

¹⁷ See, e.g., the emphasis on 'made' in Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A. M. Hall; rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 181, 207; or the commentaries of Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte (1–12)* (EKK V/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen, 1986) 124, 128, and Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte I. Teil* (Freiburg: Herder, 1980) 276–7.

¹⁸ William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (trans. J. C. G. Grieg; Cambridge/London: James Clarke & Co., 1971) 216 (emphasis original). For a concise consideration of Wrede's thesis in light of recent research, see Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 525–7.

¹⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951, 1955) 1.27.

²⁰ Cullmann, *Christology*, 207. The German edition of Cullmann's *Christologie* (1957) was known to Wilckens.

but on account of his resurrection. Thus could Ulrich Wilckens speak of this passage in 1961 as a *locus classicus* ‘für eine alte, primitive, “adoptianische” Christologie’.²¹

In addition to offering a different reading, to which we shall return at the end of the article,²² Wilckens himself criticized the predominant interpretation on a significant point that helped to shape subsequent scholarly discussion. Rather than as a pre-Lukan piece of kerygma, Wilckens argued that Acts 2.36 derived from Luke himself (‘dieser Satz als ganzer [stammt] von Lukas’²³). For the period of scholarly activity after Wilckens, the title of Martin Rese’s *NTS* article captured well the general perception of the principal interpretive alternatives: ‘Die Aussagen über Jesu Tod und Auferstehung in der Apostelgeschichte – ältestes Kerygma oder lukanische Theologumena?’²⁴

21 Ulrich Wilckens, *Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte: Form- und Traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchungen* (WMANT 5; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1961) 170. The use of the term ‘adoptionist’ to describe early christological positions has long been problematic. In contrast, e.g., to μοναρχία, μόναρχος κτλ., the term ‘adoptionist’ in its christological sense does not occur in the ancient sources. With reference to early christology (cf. the ecclesial disputes at the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries c.e.), this description was introduced into modern discussion by Adolf von Harnack in his *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (in the fourth edition of this work, Harnack himself acknowledged that the term “adoptianische” irreführend sein kann’ but went on to say ‘ich weiss indess keine bessere’; *Dogmengeschichte* [3 vols. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1909] 3.214 n. 3). Harnack argued that the only surviving document to express clearly an adoptionist christology was the *Shepherd of Hermas* (*Dogmengeschichte*, 1.212 n. 2), but this interpretation of the *Shepherd* is not without serious problems. Generally, the positions that would fall under Harnack’s category were what Eusebius and others described simply as the belief that Christ was a ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος and was therefore not divine in and of himself (see, e.g., *HE* V.28 with reference to Artemon and Paul of Samosata). Given the role of Acts 2.36 in the Arian disputes over the nature of Christ’s divinity, it is not improbable that this verse would have been used in earlier debates, but there is an absence of evidence and, hence, no ground upon which to base a firm decision.

22 We may note now that Wilckens rejected ‘adoptionist’ as a correct description of the christology expressed in Acts 2.36, preferring, as did Conzelmann, ‘subordination’. In his commentary on Acts, Conzelmann largely followed Wilckens, though of course Conzelmann’s own articulation of ‘subordination’ was clear already in *Die Mitte der Zeit* (see Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987] 21). For criticism of the employment of these terms in relation to Acts, see Jacques Dupont, ‘Les discours missionnaires des Actes des Apôtres d’après un ouvrage récent’, *Revue Biblique* 69/1 (1962) 37–60 (esp. 53, 55–6).

23 Wilckens, *Missionsreden*, 174.

24 Martin Rese, ‘Die Aussagen über Jesu Tod und Auferstehung in der Apostelgeschichte – ältestes Kerygma oder lukanische Theologumena?’, *NTS* 30/3 (1984) 335–53. Rese notes: ‘In den fünfziger Jahren gab es im Blick auf die Aussagen über Jesu Tod und Auferstehung in der Apostelgeschichte einen erstaunlich weit verbreiteten Konsens: Diese Aussagen galten als Bestandteil des alten urchristlichen Kerygmas’ (335). Rese also has a concise discussion of the ‘forschungsgeschichtliche Hintergrund’ to the consensus of the 1950s.

On one side, scholars continued to hold that Acts 2.36 evidences Luke's dependence upon earlier tradition. C. K. Barrett put starkly this position in the mid-1990s: Acts 2.36 is 'clear proof that Luke is at this point using a source; he would not have chosen to express himself in this way'.²⁵ Not every scholar in this line of interpretation would want to claim certainty for the detection of a 'source',²⁶ but there would nevertheless be general agreement on the presence of identifiable pre-Lukan tradition in Acts 2.36.²⁷

On the other side, scholars have determined that the author of Acts himself wrote 2.36.²⁸ Such a position does not necessarily entail the denial of any influence upon Luke by earlier tradition, but it does cast the interpretive issue in terms of Lukan formulation.²⁹ Particularly important in this line of argument has been the attention given to the nature of speech composition in the ancient world.³⁰ On the

25 C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994, 1998) 1.151. Cf., e.g., Eduard Schweizer, 'Jesus Christus I', *TRE* 16.671–726: 'Nach Lukas ist, anders als in den Vorlagen, schon der Irdische "Herr", wird aber nach Act 2,36 erst durch die Auferstehung dazu' (702).

26 For an older example, see F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, 'Christology', *The Beginnings of Christianity. Part I: The Acts of the Apostles. Volume 1. Prolegomena: The Jewish, Gentile and Christian Backgrounds* (ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake; London: MacMillan & Co., 1920) 345–418, who consider it 'far more probable' that Acts 2.36 was drawn from a source than that the verse reflects the thought of the 'editor' of Acts (367, esp. n. 2).

27 Cf., e.g., James D. G. Dunn's statement in *The Acts of the Apostles* (Epworth Commentaries; Peterborough: Epworth, 1996) 28: 'The christology itself seems primitive at a number of points . . . the resurrection/ascension as evidence that "God has made him both Lord and Messiah" (2.36). Given the more developed christology at the period of Luke's writing, it is unlikely that he was wishing to promote these emphases. It is more likely that he drew them from traditions or memories which his inquiry (or common knowledge) had brought to light'. See, too, Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (New York: Word, 1969) 106–7; and Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 187.

28 See, e.g., Richard F. Zehnle, *Peter's Pentecost Discourse: Tradition and Lukan Reinterpretation in Peter's Speeches of Acts 2 and 3* (SBLMS 15; Nashville: Abingdon, 1971) 67–8.

29 See, e.g., Rese, 'Jesu Tod unter Auferstehung', 347: 'Das Ergebnis der Untersuchung der Aussagen zu Jesu Tod und Auferstehung in der Apostelgeschichte läßt sich in einem Satz formulieren: Diese Aussagen sind nicht Zeugnisse für das älteste Kerygma, sondern lukanische Theologumena, auch wenn Lukas sie unter Verwendung von Traditionen verschiedenster Art gebildet und nicht einfach aus der Luft gegriffen hat'.

30 It is worth recalling at this juncture Cadbury's remarks of nearly 75 years ago: 'Critics of the secular school would scrutinize [Luke's] speeches particularly. They were the most prized parts of the classical historians and the most carefully composed parts in contemporary historiography. . . . Like Thucydides and the other best composers of speeches he attempted to present what the speakers were likely to have said' (Henry Joel Cadbury, 'The Speeches in Acts', *The Beginnings of Christianity. Part I: The Acts of the Apostles. Volume V. Additional Notes to the Commentary* [ed. Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury; London: Macmillan & Company, 1933] 402–27 [425 and 426–7 respectively]). Cf. Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Pagan and

basis of the well-known statements about speech composition in Thucydides and Lucian,³¹ Christopher Tuckett, for example, suggested recently that ‘the speech in Acts 2 placed on Peter’s lips may not tell us so much about Luke’s own views, but more about what Luke thought were the kinds of things Peter said, or should have said, in the context in which the speech is now placed within the story’.³²

Despite the differences between these two opinions regarding pre-Lukan tradition, there is a remarkable convergence at the point of the actual interpretation of Acts 2.36 itself. That is to say, Barrett and Tuckett may represent different answers to the *traditionsgeschichtliche* question, but they seem to be united in their opinion that Acts 2.36 promulgates a christology that is recognizably different from Luke’s own view. This convergence, we may suspect, is due to a similar reading of ἐποίησεν, in which the word is taken to say that Jesus is ‘now Lord and Messiah’ and has been made so ‘by virtue of his resurrection’.³³

It is fascinating that, for all their differences in reasoning, in theological assumptions, and in *Sitze im Leben*, both the ancient and modern discussions share the hermeneutical practice of removing Acts 2.36 from its larger Lukan context in order to read it within the purview of some other interpretive framework. This is not to say that the church fathers were wrong to look to this verse for help with doctrinal controversy or that modern scholars should stay away from historical ‘reconstruction’. It is, rather, simply to point to the possibility that Acts 2.36 might have a meaning within the overall context to which it is indigenous – namely, that of Luke–Acts – that fits well with the christological logic of the wider Lukan narrative.

To draw attention to such a ‘contextual possibility’ is not to claim methodological innovation. Indeed, with considerable success, contemporary

Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century AD’, *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (ed. A. Momigliano; Oxford: Clarendon, 1963) 79–99, who famously (and hyperbolically) argued that prior to the historiographical method of Eusebius most ancient histories were ‘rhetorical work[s] with a maximum of invented speeches and a minimum of authentic documents’ (89).

³¹ Thuc. *Hist.* I.22; Lucian *Hist.* 58.

³² Christopher M. Tuckett, ‘The Christology of Luke–Acts’, *The Unity of Luke–Acts* (ed. Joseph Verheyden; Leuven: Leuven University, 1999) 133–64 (141). Strictly speaking, of course, Tuckett’s view is not new. Recall, for example, Eckhard Plümacher, *Lukas als hellenistischer Schriftsteller: Studien zur Apostelgeschichte* (SUNT 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972) 72–9, who argued that in a way similar to the mimetic method found in Graeco-Roman historiography Luke engages in ‘Archaisierung’ – the stylistic device whereby archaic terms or expressions are employed to create the semblance of antiquity (Plümacher refers to Acts 2.36 on 72 n. 8). For a review and criticism of Plümacher’s overall thesis, see Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994) 135–43.

³³ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998) 260–1.

advocates of more literary approaches to Luke–Acts have urged scholars to recognize the inseparability of individual theological statements from their textual surroundings. As Beverly Gaventa put it in her brief treatment of the theology of Acts, ‘Lukan theology is intricately and irreversibly bound up with the story he tells and cannot be separated from it’.³⁴

Despite this methodological pressure toward the narrative context in general,³⁵ when it comes to the interpretation of Acts 2.36 in particular, literary analyses of Luke–Acts have differed little from the prevalent trends in modern research. For all its profound theoretical differences from traditional historical scholarship, that is, in practice literary work on Acts 2.36 has remained within the ambit of the predominant modern interpretative construct. Robert Tannehill, for example, whose work helped to pioneer the literary study of Luke–Acts, assumes that Jesus is κύριος ‘because he is seated at God’s right hand’³⁶ – i.e., Jesus becomes κύριος by virtue of the resurrection. Thus Tannehill’s understanding of Acts 2.36 itself is formally similar to that of Wrede, Bultmann et al.

Yet, the literary interpreter’s concern to read contextually presses for the integration of Acts 2.36 with the larger christological perspective developed through the narrative. In so doing, the methodology and underlying philosophical insight of recent literary efforts provide a distinctive hermeneutical advantage for the interpretive problem posed by Acts 2.36 for Lukan christology. To see the precise conceptual structure of such an advantage, however, we need first to explicate clearly the dominant interpretive contexts in which the verse has been read.

34 Beverly Roberts Gaventa, ‘Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading’, *Int* 42 (1988) 146–57 (150). See, also, e.g., Gaventa’s recent commentary, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2003) esp. 59; and the remarks of Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SacPag 3; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991) 4: ‘To regard Luke–Acts as a story means, at the least, that we do not read it as a systematic treatise. Rather, we must seek Luke’s meaning through the movement of the story’ (emphasis removed).

35 See, e.g., the insightful commentary of F. Scott Spencer, *Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), or the treatment of William S. Kurz, *Reading Luke–Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993). Cf. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SacPag 5; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992) 1: ‘What is most impressive . . . is not the story’s historical verisimilitude, but the way Luke used it to give literary shape to a theological vision’; and, from a slightly different perspective, Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (rev. ed.; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005) xxv–xxvi.

36 Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation, vol. 2: The Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986, 1990) 352 (emphasis added). Cf., the otherwise perceptive article of David P. Moessner, ‘Two Lords “at the Right Hand”? The Psalms and an Intertextual Reading of Peter’s Pentecost Speech (Acts 2.14–36)’, *Literary Studies in Luke–Acts: Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson* (ed. Richard P. Thompson and Thomas E. Phillips; Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1998) 215–32, in which Acts 2.36 is read as the ‘establishing’ of Jesus as Lord (esp. 218, 231); and Johnson, *Acts*, 52, 55.

2. Interpretive Context: The Framework for Meaning

For the patristic period, it best befits analysis to think of the interpretive context in terms of the reading of ἐποίησεν in conjunction with ‘time’. In heterodox interpretation, ἐποίησεν was read not in relation to the historical life of Jesus but in relation to pre-temporal reality. Acts 2.36 was taken, therefore, to apply to the creation of the Son by the Father. In this line of interpretation, the Lukan context was rendered virtually irrelevant for the understanding of Acts 2.36. In orthodox interpretation, ἐποίησεν was read primarily in relation to the incarnation, though, as we saw above with Gregory of Nyssa, it could also be seen in relation to the resurrection. Acts 2.36 was taken, therefore, to apply only to the human nature of Christ – either at the point of its coming into being (‘made’) or its resurrection/exaltation after death – and the ‘making’ of the divine nature of Christ by the Father was denied. Ἐποίησεν was, in the orthodox line of interpretation, at least returned to its context within the larger sentence in which it occurs, for it was related explicitly to the end of Jesus’ life upon the cross. Yet, to the extent that the final clause of Acts 2.36 was used as a fillip for reflection not upon the resurrection but upon the incarnation, the interpretation of Acts 2.36 was only indirectly related to the Lukan context.

It goes too far to say that Acts 2.36 in the patristic period was simply a ‘proof-text’ for pre-determined theological positions. Many of the more interesting recent studies on patristic exegesis show the fundamental inadequacy of such a methodological caricature.³⁷ Acts 2.36 undoubtedly contributed to the formulation of dogmatic positions, even as it was used to support them. Yet, we may nevertheless rather safely characterize the interpretive context of patristic reading as that of a ‘dogmatic debate’ rather than of the Lukan writings (i.e., Luke–Acts). In this context an interpretation of Acts 2.36 within the overall Lukan narrative was unable to be given by either party, for the ingredients necessary to an interpretation determined by the Lukan context were left out and others – those of the dispute over the creation of the Son – were added in instead.³⁸

In marked contrast to ancient interpretation, in the modern period it has seemed self-evident to NT exegetes that Acts 2.36 does not pertain to pre-temporal theological matters. Instead, ἐποίησεν has been read explicitly in relation to the demise of the earthly life of Jesus and his subsequent resurrection by God. In this way, modern interpreters – here in similarity to the orthodox church fathers –

37 The work of Frances M. Young is representative here, perhaps especially *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (New York: Cambridge University, 1997). For a sampling of her work, see the recent article, ‘The “Mind” of Scripture: Theological Readings of the Bible in the Fathers’, *IJST* 7/2 (2005) 126–41.

38 An exception to this generalization is the interpretation of Athanasius cited on pp. 40–41 above, to which I return at the end of the article.

have adhered closely to the final clause of Acts 2.36 in effort to secure their reading of ἐποίησεν. Moreover, many modern interpreters attempt to work with Acts or Luke–Acts as a particular textual unit and are therefore able to use the Lukan context in certain ways for interpretation. Yet, to the extent that ἐποίησεν is read as effecting a change in Jesus’ status, the actual meaning of ‘made’ in modern interpretation is determined not by the larger Lukan context but by an interpretive context provided by historical reconstruction.³⁹ This situation bears further comment.

It is certainly the case that interpreters who posit contradiction between Acts 2.36 and Lukan christology presuppose a larger Lukan christology – garnered of course from Luke’s Gospel and other portions of Acts – against which Acts 2.36 is read. When Ernst Haenchen, to take an important example, argues that ‘[t]he expressions [κύριος and χριστός], taken from older tradition, with which the speech is brought to a provisional end, use formulae that are at odds with Lucan Christology’,⁴⁰ he must have in mind a greater Lukan christology against which Acts 2.36 stands.⁴¹ In this sense, the larger Lukan context plays a role in the interpretive process of modern scholarship in the effort to sort out the perplexing nature of Acts 2.36.

But when the question is asked as to the context in which the interpretation of Acts 2.36 itself is given, the answer is not Luke–Acts but rather a historical reconstruction in which Acts 2.36 is seen to express a primitive christology – whether the primitiveness be Luke’s accurate preservation of an early kerygmatic formula or his own attempt at verisimilitude in the words of his character Peter. In this line of interpretation, as far as the meaning of Acts 2.36 is concerned, it matters little whether one favors a source theory (Barrett; cf. Dunn) or a speech-compositional one (Tuckett; cf. Rese). Both theories assume that what the verse means is that Jesus became Lord and Messiah by virtue of his resurrection, and both theories see this particular meaning as in conflict with Luke’s overall christology. Thus, in this manner of reading, the meaning of Acts 2.36 turns out to be entirely consonant with the meaning it supposedly had in pre-Lukan christology (source and/or

39 Of many possible examples, one may here think of the particularly clear section ‘The Earliest Christian Writings’ in James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) esp. 36 (cf. 181).

40 Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 187.

41 See also, e.g., Jürgen Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (NTD 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981) 60: ‘Die Aussage, daß Gott Jesus “zum Herrn und Gesalbten (= Christus) gemacht hat”, dürfte alter hellenistisch-judenchristlicher Tradition entstammen. Lukas hat sie schwerlich selbst geschaffen, da sie seinen eigenen christologischen Vorstellungen widerspricht’.

‘Peter’).⁴² One does not have to look far to find the reason for this agreement in meaning: Acts 2.36 is read within the interpretive context of a pre-Lukan reconstruction.

It goes too far to say that Acts 2.36 in the modern period is simply a ‘proof-text’ for historical hypotheses (cf. esp. Wrede above). The verse also helped to create them. Yet we may safely characterize the interpretive context for Acts 2.36 in the vast majority of modern scholarship as a historically reconstructed pre-Lukan christology rather than the Lukan writings. This mode of interpretation involves a subtle substitution in which the Lukan interpretive context for reading Acts 2.36 is replaced by an interpretive context created by historical reconstruction. In general, the Gospel of Luke and other parts of Acts may well be read contextually, but when it comes to Acts 2.36 in particular, another context is put in place, and this verse is read in relation to the newly substituted framework of meaning.⁴³ The possibility thus arises that the tension which modern interpreters perceive between Acts 2.36 and Lukan christology is due less to the necessary force of the words in Acts 2.36 than it is to the collision of different interpretive contexts.

3. A Reading

The foregoing sections have undertaken to illustrate the inseparable hermeneutical connection between the actual interpretations of Acts 2.36 and the interpretive contexts in which this verse has been read. The critical import pertains to the profoundly important, if now obvious, observation that the sense of the words in Acts 2.36 varies with its operative interpretive context. There is nothing inherent to the grammatical structure or individual words of Acts 2.36 (esp. ἐποίησεν) that of necessity determines specifically the meaning of the verse across the historical, exegetical spectrum. Examining the dominant trends in both ancient and modern interpretation, therefore, helps us to gain substantial hermeneutical purchase in that the juxtaposition of the vastly different interpretive contexts brings clearly into focus the importance of a framework for interpretation. The necessity of identifying the framework best suited to the interpretation of Acts 2.36 for Lukan christology is thereby made evident.

In relation to the topic under discussion, we may put the point formulaically: if we are interested in the meaning of Acts 2.36 for Lukan christology, the wider Luke–Acts narrative is the best framework for interpretation, the requisite

⁴² Cf. esp. Hahn, *Titles*, 107, who rejects alternative interpretations of Acts 2.36 ‘because the text fits in excellently with that phase in the development of tradition which we have been discussing’ (i.e., early christology).

⁴³ One suspects that this subtle substitution is precisely what has (unwittingly) happened when the interpretation of literarily oriented scholars (Tannehill, Moessner, Johnson et al.) matches that of the pre-Lukan reconstruction.

interpretive context. Of course, stated this way – especially in light of recent literary studies – the matter seems almost banal. And yet, the history of interpretation outlined here suggests that such a bald statement is badly needed. Until we permanently register the philosophical point that linguistic intelligibility is context dependent – context is meaning’s *conditio sine qua non* – we shall never get around to reading Acts 2.36 in connection to the wider narrative of which it is an integral part. *Mutatis mutandis*, the perennial relevance of James Barr’s incisive critique of Kittel’s *Wörterbuch* should not be forgotten when it comes to Acts 2.36: context matters for what we think the words mean.⁴⁴

Acts 2.36 may indeed contribute to dogmatic debate, and reconstructing historically an earlier context in which to understand the verse is certainly a legitimate undertaking.⁴⁵ (Whether or not such hypotheses are successful in this case is a separate question.⁴⁶) The point, however – to focus only upon modern interpretation – is that such a reconstruction provides another, *different* interpretive context from the *Lukan* one. To read Acts 2.36, therefore, as a pre-Lukan piece of kerygma (whether taken over by Luke or placed with historical verisimilitude in the mouth of Peter) and apply the reconstructed earlier meaning to Lukan christology is to confuse different levels of meaning-determining discourse – what we have called the interpretive context – such that a non-Lukan context is substituted for the Lukan one. Loosing Acts 2.36 from its narrative mooring in the attempt to determine specifically the meaning of the verse in relation to Lukan christology thus immediately involves a methodological confusion. This confusion prevents *ipso facto* an interpretation of the verse’s meaning within Luke–Acts: in the act of disengaging any statement (or passage) from the narrative, the possibility of dis-

44 ‘We may sum up these criticisms of *TWNT* by saying that the great weakness is a failure to get to grips with the semantic value of words in their contexts’ (*The Semantics of Biblical Language* [London: Oxford University, 1961] 231).

45 Cf. the remarks of Martin Rese, ‘Formeln und Lieder im Neuen Testament. Einige notwendige Anmerkungen’, *Verkündigung und Forschung* 15/2 (1970) 75–95: ‘Niemand wird bestreiten wollen, daß es im NT Formeln und Lieder gibt, die alter sind als ihr jetziger Kontext’ (75). However, in the closing critical questions, Rese notes that skepticism regarding the original wording and context of earlier pieces of tradition arises, at least in part, from the reality ‘daß neutestamentliche Formeln und Lieder immer nur in sekundären Quellen überliefert sind’ (94).

46 Cf., with a different focus, the comments of E. P. Sanders: ‘The topic “Jesus’ Galilee” indicates an effort to describe Jesus’ environment or context – what New Testament scholars often call his “background”. Since context is essential to understanding, this is part of the “quest for the historical Jesus”. If we have a saying or an event and do not know the context, our fertile minds will make one up. The context that our brain supplies may be quite inaccurate, and the result may be misleading, but we automatically try to fit new information into what we already know’ (‘Jesus’ Galilee’, *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Essays in Honour of Heikki Räsänen* [ed. Ismo Dunderberg, Christopher Tuckett, and Kari Syreeni; Leiden: Brill, 2002] 3–41 [3]).

covering that statement's meaning within the Lukan writings is actually forfeited, for the Lukan context itself is rendered inoperative as meaning-determining discourse. Even to begin an analysis of the meaning of Acts 2.36 for Luke's christology, therefore, we will have to be methodologically committed to the literary effort to work with the Lukan context, that is, Luke–Acts. Due to the constraints of this article, in what follows I shall focus upon Luke's use of κύριος and simply note now that what can be said for κύριος can also, with different nuance of course, be said for χριστός.⁴⁷

For our purposes it is unnecessary to list each noteworthy aspect of Luke's complex and richly varied use of κύριος. Instead, it shall suffice to attend to one central point, along with a few of its textual particulars, which bears directly upon the significance of Acts 2.36. This central point is that, for Luke, there was no moment at which Jesus was not κύριος.

As noted in the opening of the article, Jesus is already named κύριος while still in the womb (Luke 1.43). Indeed, it is at this exact moment – and thus as κύριος – that Jesus himself officially enters the narrative. The implication for Jesus' identity as developed through the narrative is that it simply cannot be thought apart from his identity as ὁ κύριος; in the Lukan story, Ἰησοῦς cannot be abstracted from κύριος. That is to say, if we take the sequence of the narrative seriously (cf. καθεξῆς in the προοίμιον), there was no Jesus who was not already and simultaneously κύριος. By speaking of one who was still in the womb as κύριος, Luke presses the christologically indispensable point that Jesus' very life and his identity as Lord are the same thing.

It is this unity in identity that is, narratively speaking, confirmed from heaven in the angels' declaration that the newly born baby is χριστὸς κύριος (2.11). And it is this unity of identity that underlies the authorial preference, unique among the canonical Gospels, expressed in Luke's repeated reference to Jesus as ὁ κύριος in the Gospel narrative: 'And seeing her, ὁ κύριος had compassion upon her' (7.13).⁴⁸

In fact, Luke is at pains throughout the entire Gospel to narrate Jesus' identity as ὁ κύριος upon the earth. Thus, for example, do numerous characters address Jesus as κύριε (5.8, 12; 7.6, etc). Many scholars dismiss the vocative's relevance for christology,⁴⁹ but in so doing they overlook Luke's use of a literary technique,

47 For a full elaboration of Luke's use of κύριος, see C. Kavin Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (BZNW 139; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2006). The other statement that could be considered here is of course Acts 5.31, in which we read that God exalted Jesus as ἀρχηγός and σωτήρ (τοῦτον ὁ θεὸς ἀρχηγὸν καὶ σωτήρα ὑψωσεν). Σωτήρ appears in the Gospel for Jesus (2.11), and ἀρχηγός in Acts 3.15.

48 Cf. 7.19, 31 (dubious); 10.1, 39, 41; 11.39; 12.42; 13.15; 17.5, 6; 18.6; 19.8; 22.31, 61; 24.3.

49 This tendency is widespread enough that one can take an example almost at random. See, e.g., C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977) 35: 'First, the vocative . . . must be cleared out of the way. Many writers . . . make the mistake of

dramatic irony, in which characters can say more than they know. Luke not only writes with historical verisimilitude – a gentile may well instruct his messengers to address someone as κύριε (7.6) – but also skillfully encourages the auditor/reader to draw the christologically continuous line between the vocative and non-vocative uses of κύριος (cf., e.g., 12.41–42). Rather than either historical (low) or christological (high) in meaning, therefore, the Lukan vocative displays a both/and character. It is both christologically significant and historically credible. The κύριος is correctly addressed as κύριε, for that is indeed who he is, and yet those who address him as such say more, christologically speaking, than they could understand.⁵⁰ In brief, by introducing Jesus as ὁ κύριος, by writing repeatedly of him as ὁ κύριος, by juxtaposing vocative and non-vocative uses of κύριος (e.g., 10.38–42; 12.41–42; 14.21–23; 19.8; cf. Acts 9.10–11; 22.10; 26.15), by adjusting Mark’s text (e.g., 6.5) or rewriting it to include further references to Jesus as κύριος (e.g., Luke 18.41 in 18.35–43//Mark 10.46–52), and by composing unique material in which the word κύριος figures prominently (e.g., 10.1, 17, etc.), Luke creates a narrative christology in which Jesus’ identity as κύριος stands at the center.⁵¹

Yet, this identity was not without threat. In point of fact, in what is surely one of the more creative literary moves in the Gospels, Luke withholds the word κύριος from the mocking, trial, execution, and burial of Jesus. Prior to this point, κύριος has occurred at virtually every twist and turn in the narrative, but with Peter’s final denial in 22.61–62, Luke writes, ‘And ὁ κύριος turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word τοῦ κυρίου, how he had said to him, “Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times”. And he went out and wept bitterly’. And with Peter’s exit goes κύριος.

Thus it is just here, at the moment that Jesus is rejected by his last disciple⁵² and begins to be mocked and beaten, that the word disappears from the story. This silence is striking; it is in fact the silence of death, that which the human verdict upon the identity of Jesus brings upon the Lord.

Not until the other side of the resurrection does κύριος reappear (24.3, 34). Its reappearance in the narrative on the other side of Jesus’ death evidences, as

counting instances of the vocative when they are preparing statistics for the application of *kurios* as a title to Jesus. But *kurie* is so common as a respectful address . . . that it would be truthful, statistically, to reckon a schoolboy’s “O Sir” as evidence that the schoolmaster had been knighted’.

⁵⁰ The Lukan use of the vocative presents a problem for English translators, who must choose between ‘Lord’ and ‘sir’ (or suitable variations thereof), thereby obscuring the both/and dynamic of the Lukan narrative. The problem, however, obviously does not exist in Greek (or in German for that matter).

⁵¹ For a full discussion of these points and others related to them, see Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*.

⁵² Peter is also the first one to address Jesus as κύριε in the Gospel narrative (5.8).

Charles Talbert put it, ‘God’s reversal of the human *no* to Jesus’⁵³ and thus proclaims the ongoing life of the Lord: ‘ὁ κύριος is truly risen’ (24.34).

The opening of Acts continues the emphasis upon Jesus’ identity as κύριος, picking up – at least in this respect – exactly where the Gospel ended. Indeed, as the last words from any characters in the Gospel name Jesus as κύριος (24.34; the eleven), so the very first word addressed to the resurrected Jesus in Acts is κύριε (1.6; the apostles). Moreover, Acts 1.21 refers back to the Jesus of the Gospel as ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς and thereby establishes a well-crafted ‘chain-link’ with the first mention of the resurrected one in Luke (24.3).⁵⁴ And, moving closer to the immediate context of the verse in question, twice in his Pentecost speech Peter ‘proves’ that Jesus is the κύριος of whom scripture has spoken (2.25 [Ps 15.8, LXX]; 2.34 [Ps 109.1, LXX]). Following Peter’s speech, Luke continues to write frequently of Jesus as κύριος both in the story itself (ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς, e.g., in 8.16) and as a way in which Jesus is addressed (κύριε Ἰησοῦ, e.g., in 7.59 in Stephen’s prayer).⁵⁵ In Acts Jesus is κύριος in his heavenly life even as he was κύριος in his earthly life in the Gospel. To be sure, there is a difference in location (earth/heaven), but there is unity in identity. For Luke, the one who was in Mary’s womb, lived, died, and was raised is at every point along this continuum ὁ κύριος.

Luke thus comprehensively and deftly develops his κύριος christology across both volumes of his literary project. The two volumes together tell the one story of the Lord of all (κύριος πάντων, Acts 10.36). It is in light of this larger literary and christological context of Luke–Acts that we may now return to Acts 2.36.

It is true that Peter does not have to speak the author’s own christology. Especially if we consider the manner of speech composition in the ancient world, Peter could theoretically say something that differed from Luke’s point of view (cf., e.g., Tuckett above).⁵⁶ Given the immense care with which Luke has developed narratively the position that Jesus was Lord from his life’s inception, it seems unlikely, however, that he would introduce a basic christological contradiction in the mouth of a main character – in fact, initially the most important spokesman for the nascent Christian movement⁵⁷ – at the climax of the first speech in the

53 Charles H. Talbert, ‘The Place of the Resurrection in the Theology of Luke’, *Int* 46 (1992) 19–30 (21; emphasis original).

54 On ‘chain-link’ technique and the NT, esp. Luke–Acts, see Bruce W. Longenecker, ‘Lukan Aversion to Humps and Hollows: The Case of Acts 11.27–12.25’, *NTS* 50 (2004) 185–204. On the text-critical problem here, see Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*, 182–83 n. 86.

55 The precise number of times that Luke refers to Jesus as κύριος is difficult to determine because of the (well-known) ambiguity that attends many occurrences of κύριος in Acts. In round numbers, depending on text-critical decisions, ambiguity, and so on, it would be between forty-five and seventy times.

56 The point would hold for a source theory such as Barrett’s as well.

57 Indeed, Peter is the main character for the first half of Acts. Furthermore, as mentioned just above in n. 52, Peter is actually the first one to address Jesus as κύριε in the Gospel (5.8).

second volume.⁵⁸ In this reading, at a moment of great dramatic weight, Peter would proclaim a christology that Luke considered to be false – indeed, to the extent that he felt the need to undermine it systematically with his own christological project. The entirety of the Gospel would thus prepare the auditor/reader to hear Peter’s bold words in Acts as christologically inaccurate.⁵⁹ If ἐποίησεν in Acts 2.36 has to mean what it allegedly means in the interpretive context of a pre-Lukan reconstruction, then perhaps we would be driven to just such a conclusion. But its meaning need not be that which entails a christological contradiction. It could mean something else altogether, as patristic interpretation illustrates. In fact, if we place the verse within its proper interpretive context, Acts 2.36 does mean something else.

When thus situated, it becomes apparent that Acts 2.36 does not mean ‘it was only at his resurrection and ascension that God made Jesus Lord and Christ’,⁶⁰ that there was a change in Jesus’ status, that he became something he was not before. On the contrary, Acts 2.36 *confirms* the already-established identity of Jesus as κύριος in the face of his rejection and death.⁶¹ The verse is, in other words, a vivid abbreviation of the movement of the entire Gospel story in which the identity of Jesus who was κύριος from the womb was threatened by his rejection and crucifixion but reaffirmed by his resurrection. Such a reading does not diminish the force of ποιῆν but rather takes seriously ὁ θεός as its subject. In this way the emphasis is placed upon God’s continuous action in the life of Jesus despite human violence, rejection, and death.⁶² God’s salvific will is not broken either by human resistance or by Jesus’ death.⁶³ The Lord who was crucified has been raised. Acts 2.36 is thus consistent with the narrative christology of the Gospel.

58 Cf. Peter Balla, ‘Does Acts 2.36 Represent an Adoptionist Christology?’, *EuroJTh* 5/2 (1996) 137–42, esp. 140; and, Hahn’s remark: ‘2.36 is regarded as a summarizing formula concluding the whole speech’ (*Titles*, 106). Balla’s short article was unknown to me until this article was completed, but I am delighted to note the correspondence between our interpretations – even to the point of acknowledging the insight of Athanasius – all the more so because of our independence.

59 According to Luke, Jesus was κύριος from his conception, but according to Peter in Acts 2.36, Jesus was not κύριος until after his resurrection.

60 C. K. Barrett, ‘Submerged Christology in Acts’, *Anfänge der Christologie* (FS Ferdinand Hahn; ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and Henning Paulsen; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991) 237–44 (238).

61 Cf. Petr Pokorný, *Theologie der lukanischen Schriften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998) 93: ‘Nach lukanischer Auffassung ist die Auferstehung ein anschauliches Zeugnis Gottes für Jesus als den Herrn und Messias (Act 2,36), welches sein ganzes Leben rehabilitiert’; and 152: ‘Der gekreuzigte Jesus ist durch die Auferstehung als der Herr im Sinne von Ps 110,1 (Act 2,34) und als Messias bestätigt (Act 2,36 vgl. 10,36) . . .’.

62 Cf. Gaventa, *Acts*, 79, who writes of the ‘sharp juxtaposition of God’s action with that of humanity’.

63 Cf. the emphasis on the firmness of ‘God’s purpose’ in Spencer, *Acts*, 39.

The ‘making’ of which Acts 2.36 speaks does not refer, therefore, to an ontological transformation in the identity of Jesus or his status (from not κύριος to κύριος) but to an epistemological shift in the perception of the human community. Indeed, such is the point of the imperative γινώσκετω. Furthermore, ἀσφαλῶς (cf. Luke 1.4) occurs in the initial position, thus indicating its emphatic nature.⁶⁴ The resurrection and exaltation of Jesus should alter assuredly the knowledge of the ‘house of Israel’ regarding Jesus’ identity: ‘let the whole house of Israel *know assuredly* . . .’. But God’s action does not alter Jesus’ identity itself. The resurrection, as Athanasius seemed to see, ‘manifested’ God’s reversal of the human rejection of Jesus precisely through the identity of the messianic Lord. It is to this reversal – expressed here in terms of the continuity of Jesus’ identity – that the ἐποίησεν of Acts 2.36 points.⁶⁵

Wilckens of course made his way toward an interpretation that ran contrary to the prevailing consensus of the 1950s and asserted that Acts 2.36 applied to the entirety of the christological event. Jesus was Lord ‘*von Anfang an*’.⁶⁶ A minority of exegetes have followed Wilckens’ claim and appropriated his insight.⁶⁷ Quite recently, for example, Frank Matera saw that Acts 2.36 ‘should be read in light of the angel’s announcement to the shepherds that a savior has been born who is Messiah and Lord (Luke 2.11). Since the resurrection is the moment when God enthrones his Son, Israel should now know who Jesus *always* was’.⁶⁸ In the Lukan narrative, there was not a time when Jesus was not κύριος.

64 Thanks are due to Scott Spencer for drawing my attention to this point.

65 Despite Barr’s earlier warning, one may still desire evidence that ποιέω can mean something other than ‘make/do’. In fact, a consultation of the standard lexica reveals a remarkable range of meanings; moreover, ποιέω is one of the most commonly used verbs in Greek. Simple collection of linguistic data is thus rendered argumentatively irrelevant, as one is thrust back by this semantic breadth upon the particular context in question (here, to demonstrate that ἐποίησεν is consonant with the proposed interpretation; elsewhere, in Acts 1.1, e.g., to show that ‘wrote’ renders ἐποησάμην accurately, or that ‘chose’ comes closest to ἐποίησεν in Mark 3.14, etc.). However, we may note with profit a similar use of ἐποίησεν within the Lukan corpus itself (see Luke 1.51, where, in the context of God’s fulfillment of his promises, the word means something like ‘shown’ – so, rightly, the NRSV, KJV et al.) and also that Athanasius’ argument mentioned above on pp. 40–41 depends hermeneutically upon the linguistic judgment that ποιέω is virtually equivalent to ἀποδείκνυμι.

66 Wilckens, *Missionsreden*, 174: ‘Von Anfang an hat einerseits Gott in Erfüllung der Schrift diesen Jesus zum Herrn und Christus gemacht und ihn so in die zentrale Funktion der Heilsgeschichte eingesetzt, während andererseits dieser so von Gott ausgezeichnete Jesus von den Juden angefeindet und getötet worden ist’.

67 See, e.g., Conzelmann, *Acts*, 21; Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 1.276–7. Cf. Donald L. Jones, ‘The Title Kyrios in Luke–Acts’, *SBLSP* 74/2 (1974) 85–101 (93, 94–5, 96); and Eric Franklin, *Christ the Lord: A Study in the Purpose and Theology of Luke–Acts* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 52–4.

68 Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999) 268 n. 44 (emphasis original). Cf. his earlier remark, ‘Jesus did not become the Messiah and

While such interpretations are undoubtedly on the right track, in my judgment, they have in time amounted to little more than astute counter-assertions.⁶⁹ There has been need, in other words, to analyze the greater interpretive problematic and to offer argument for a reasoned rejection of the majority view in the modern period. Further, there has been the concomitant literary and theological need to situate Acts 2.36 within Luke's narrative christology and thus to say how exactly this particular verse fits well within the larger Lukan project. In this light, the foregoing article has endeavored (a) to draw out, through an analysis of the operative interpretive contexts in both ancient and modern interpretation, the hermeneutical necessity of the κύριος christology of Luke–Acts as the proper interpretive context for Acts 2.36, and (b) to interpret the meaning of this verse within this context. If this be done well, then it can be said that Acts 2.36 encapsulates the story of the κύριος χριστός told in the Gospel and continued in Acts. Acts 2.36, that is, does not contradict Lukan christology but expresses it.

Lord in function of his resurrection; he was already Messiah and Lord at his birth' (63). Cf. the concise discussion of H. Douglas Buckwalter, *The Character and Purpose of Luke's Christology* (SNTSMS 89; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996) 184–91, esp. 189: 'Acts presents a messianic unveiling of what was announced of Jesus in Luke's Gospel right from the start'.

⁶⁹ For example, the ground for Wilckens' opinion was essentially that of the Lukan authorship of the verse. However, given the nature of speech composition in the ancient world, one could hold simultaneously that Luke wrote Acts 2.36 and that it expresses a christology contrary to Luke's (cf. Tuckett).