*New Test. Stud.* (2020), 66, pp. 392–405. © The Author(s), 2020. Published by Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S0028688520000065

# The Divine Necessity of the Resurrection: A Re-Assessment of the Use of Psalm 16 in Acts 2*

MONIQUE CUANY
*Haute Ecole de Théologie, Route de Fenil 40, 1806 St-Légier, Switzerland.*
*Email: monique.cuany@het-pro.ch*

**This article argues that the current predominant interpretation of the use of Psalm 16 in the speech in Acts 2, namely the 'proof' from prophecy explanation, as well as the few other models which have been advanced, are unconvincing on narratival grounds. Instead, it suggests that the Psalm is primarily quoted as a rationale to explain why Jesus rose from the dead and death could not detain him – namely because of his righteousness. The article concludes by submitting that this reading sheds important new light on the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus as a divine necessity in the early kerygma in Acts.**

**Keywords:** resurrection, kerygma, speeches in Acts, divine necessity, Old Testament quotations

## Introduction

According to several scholars, the resurrection lies at the centre of the message of the speeches in Acts.[1] As Luke repeatedly emphasises and seeks to demonstrate, this unprecedented (and admittedly hard to believe: Acts 28.6) event happened according to the Scriptures (e.g. Acts 2.24–8; 3.22; 10.33–5) – so much so that H. J. Cadbury once commented: 'No New Testament writer more often refers to the resurrection as predicted in Scripture or cites more texts in its support than does Luke.'[2] The use of Psalm 16 in the first public discourse

* I am grateful to the members of the Hawarden Seminar 2019 and to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this article.

1 So F. Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950–2005)* (Waco, TX: Baylor, 2006²) 135: 'The resurrection is the heart of the Lukan message'; D. Marguerat comments that Bovon's affirmation is by no means an exaggeration and that Luke is the only NT author to make the resurrection 'le thème fondamental de son discours'. D. Marguerat, 'Luc-Actes: la résurrection à l'œuvre dans l'histoire', *Résurrection: l'après-mort dans le monde ancien et le Nouveau Testament* (ed. O. Mainville and D. Marguerat; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001) 195–214, at 195; cf. J. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 31; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 256: 'It is the essence of the primitive kerygma.'



2 H. J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (London: SPCK, 1958) 279.

delivered to outsiders in the narrative of Acts (Acts 2) is a case in point. Although the speech aims at clarifying the phenomenon of the tongues at Pentecost, a substantial part of the discourse (2.22–36) focuses on the resurrection of Jesus and includes several Old Testament quotations. The great majority of exegetes understand Ps 16.8–11 in vv. 25–8 to function as a form of 'proof' from prophecy in the argument, aiming at demonstrating or at least providing support either for the resurrection or for the messiahship of Jesus through the Jewish Scriptures.[3] Alternatively, it has been suggested that it is more appropriate to speak of a 'proclamation' of the resurrection or the messiahship of Jesus from prophecy.[4] In both cases, however, the Psalm is seen as undergirding the speech's affirmation of Jesus' resurrection and/or his messiahship by showing that the resurrection fulfils an Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messiah.[5]

The present article argues that this usual interpretation of the function of the Psalm in the speech is unsatisfying in light of its narrative context, and fails to give a coherent account of its argument. The article begins by examining the common exegesis of this passage and highlights more precisely the problems created by current interpretations. Its second part then re-examines the way in which the Psalm is used in the speech and makes a new proposal as to its function. It will be argued that the new reading advocated in this article has important consequences for the interpretation of the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus in the early Christian kerygma according to Acts and sheds new light on its understanding as a divine necessity.

## 1. Problems with Current Interpretations

The Christological section of the Pentecost speech begins in Acts 2.22. Following a brief summary of Jesus' ministry and an account of his death, v. 24 then announces that God raised Jesus from the dead. It is at this point that Ps

3 See, for example, E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971) 187; A. Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, vol. I: *Kapitel 1–12* (Würzburg: Gütersloh und Echter, 1985) 92; H. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 20; C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. I (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1994) 133; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 257; J. Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEKNT 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998) 146; D. 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. R. P. Thompson and T. E. Phillips; Macon: Mercer, 1998) 215–32, at 221–2; R. Pervo, *Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) 74–5; C. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2016) 103.

4 D. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (LNTS; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997) 180–1.

5 Cf. D. Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, vol. I (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2007) 91.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688520000065 Published online by Cambridge University Press

16.8–11 (15.8–11 LXX) is quoted, introduced as an explanation for the preceding assertion through the conjunction γάρ in v. 25:

> [24] ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέστησεν λύσας τὰς ὠδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου, καθότι οὐκ ἦν δυνατὸν κρατεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ. [25] Δαυὶδ **γὰρ** λέγει εἰς αὐτόν·
> προορώμην τὸν κύριον ἐνώπιόν μου διὰ παντός,
> ὅτι ἐκ δεξιῶν μού ἐστιν ἵνα μὴ σαλευθῶ.
> [26] διὰ τοῦτο ηὐφράνθη ἡ καρδία μου
> καὶ ἠγαλλιάσατο ἡ γλῶσσά μου,
> ἔτι δὲ καὶ ἡ σάρξ μου κατασκηνώσει ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίδι,
> [27] ὅτι οὐκ ἐγκαταλείψεις τὴν ψυχήν μου εἰς ᾅδην
> οὐδὲ δώσεις τὸν ὅσιόν σου ἰδεῖν διαφθοράν.
> [28] ἐγνώρισάς μοι ὁδοὺς ζωῆς,
> πληρώσεις με εὐφροσύνης μετὰ τοῦ προσώπου σου.

As mentioned earlier, by and large, exegetes consider the quotation from Psalm 16 to be indicating that the resurrection of Jesus fulfils the prophecy made by Psalm 16.[6]

Thus, for most interpreters, Psalm 16 functions as a scriptural 'proof' or *Schriftbeweis* in the argument of the speech. What is usually meant by this is that in vv. 25–31 the speech introduces a passage from Scripture and its interpretation in order to show that Jesus' resurrection fulfils the Scriptures, thereby demonstrating that he is the Messiah foretold in it. Going back to the relationship between v. 24 and Psalm 16, then, the reason for Jesus' resurrection is simply that God had foretold so: he had planned and announced through the mouth of David that the Messiah would rise from the dead. As E. Haenchen puts it:

> Thereby Luke proved – and it was for his age a strict proof –that death could not hold Jesus in its power: his resurrection had been guaranteed by God from the beginning. To use a modern expression, it is no 'chance fact of history' but a necessity founded in the will of God. The demonstration of this is reinforced in verse 32 by the testimony of the eyewitnesses to the effect that what had to come to pass did come to pass.[7]

By reinterpreting Psalm 16 as referring to the resurrection of the Messiah, then, the speech seeks to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah because God had foretold that the Messiah would rise from the dead.

To be more specific, exegetes have understood the proof to support either the resurrection of Jesus or his messiahship, or more commonly both. For many

6 One exception is K. D. Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts: Telling the History of God's People Intertextually* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005). See the discussion of his proposal in n. 15.

7 Haenchen, *Acts*, 187. Cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.144; Marguerat, *Actes*, 1.91; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 256; Moessner, '*Two* Lords "at the Right Hand"?', 221.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688520000065 Published online by Cambridge University Press

interpreters, the Psalm seeks to prove or at least provide some support for Jesus' resurrection.[8] The specific line showing this is in v. 27: 'For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption' (ὅτι οὐκ ἐγκαταλείψεις τὴν ψυχήν μου εἰς ᾅδην οὐδὲ δώσεις τὸν ὅσιόν σου ἰδεῖν διαφθοράν), which, according to v. 31, refers to the resurrection. Of course, the Psalm does not actually prove the *fact* that Jesus rose from the dead, but it shows that the Scriptures had foretold that the Messiah would rise from the dead, and thereby *provides support* for the apostolic claim of the resurrection of Jesus.

But some exegetes insist that the Psalm is used as a proof not of the resurrection of Jesus but of his messiahship. They emphasise that the Psalm could not be used to prove or support Jesus' resurrection in the speech, since the meaning of the Psalm is reinterpreted in vv. 29–31 as referring to a resurrection, obviously in light of the event of the resurrection of Jesus itself. For example, J. Dupont writes:

> It is often asserted that Peter desires to prove that Jesus has really risen from the dead, but that is obviously inaccurate, for Peter presupposes the resurrection as a datum of faith. What Peter wishes to establish is rather the fact that Jesus, having really risen from the dead, is truly the Messiah of which the psalm speaks. The real conclusion of the argumentation is to be found in the solemn affirmation: 'By raising Jesus from the dead, God has made him the Christ' (v. 36). Peter's point is the messianic character of Jesus. The resurrection is a sign which points to Jesus' messiahship. And the resurrection owes its value as a sign precisely to the oracle of the psalm which announced that the Christ would rise.[9]

According to Dupont, then, the Psalm cannot serve to support the resurrection – which is proclaimed and assumed to have happened in vv. 29–31 – but it is used to argue that the one who rose from the dead must be the Messiah announced by Scripture.

As this disagreement between exegetes shows, there is indeed a tension in regarding Psalm 16 as a 'proof', either of Jesus' resurrection or of his messiahship, because Psalm 16 must be radically reinterpreted to be able to function in this way: first, it has to be reinterpreted as referring literally to somebody who would not see corruption – to an immediate resurrection from the dead; and then, it also has to be interpreted anew as referring not to David but to his seed. As suggested by vv. 29–31, however, this is a new interpretation for the narrative audience of the speech. Indeed, those verses intimate that the Psalm was usually interpreted as referring to David. As several exegetes point out, the

8 So Haenchen, *Acts*, 182; Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte*, I.92–3; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 146; Marguerat, *Actes* I.91; Moessner, '*Two* Lords "at the Right Hand"?', 228.

9 J. Dupont, 'Messianic Interpretation of the Psalms in the Acts of the Apostles', *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Paulist, 1979) 103–28, at 109; Cf. Bock, *Proclamation*, 180–1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688520000065 Published online by Cambridge University Press

interpretation of Psalm 16 advocated in the narrative by Peter in vv. 29–31 was probably largely reached in light of Jesus' resurrection itself.[10] The event of the resurrection thus played a crucial role in 'uncovering' the 'Christian' exegesis of Psalm 16. Without a prior belief in Jesus' resurrection, however, this new interpretation of Psalm 16 would have had little convincing power.

In fact, a close reading of the scholarly literature shows that when exegetes use the terminology of 'proof', they usually do not mean a proof provided by the clear and 'expected' fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy which would have been self-evident and immediately palatable for a Jewish audience. Rather, they mean that Peter (Luke) is providing scriptural support – *post eventum* – for the resurrection of Jesus, by showing that the death and resurrection of the Messiah was actually foretold in Scripture (even if this had not been clear before the resurrection happened) and that the apostolic claim that Jesus rose from the dead and is the Messiah therefore has a scriptural basis. The proof thus functions more like a validation of the Christian claims through Scripture, by showing that the Christian message is not only coherent with, but actually announced in, the Jewish Scriptures, and that what happened was God's will. Thus A. Weiser writes:

> We are not used to such scriptural 'proofs' and they would not satisfy us. But for the early Church, it was of fundamental importance to be able to demonstrate that what had happened to Jesus was in harmony with the Old Testament, because it was the Sacred Scriptures of the Jews. Events which it was claimed happened according to the plan of God had to be derived from the Old Testament.[11]

The 'proof' provided by the Old Testament text thus takes the form of demonstrating – admittedly through a totally new interpretation of this text in light of the resurrection – a fit between Scripture and event. In Luke's narrative, the point Peter has in common with the Jews he is talking to, then, is Scripture, but not its exegesis.

Because Luke's exegesis of Psalm 16 is largely based on the Christian belief in Jesus' resurrection and presupposes it, D. Bock rejects the terminology of 'proof' to describe this usage of Scripture and prefers to speak of a 'proclamation' or 'declaration' of fulfilment of prophecy. For him, Peter is using the prophecies of the

10 Bock, *Proclamation*, 180; Litwak, *Echoes*, 177; cf. Moessner, '*Two* Lords "at the Right Hand"?', 221: 'This citation is viewed as some obscure text which Christians allegedly mined in order to find proof for the resurrection.'

11 Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte* I.92–3: 'Solche "Schriftbeweise" sind unserem Denken freilich ungewohnt und würden uns nicht befriedigen; aber für die frühe Kirche war es von fundamentaler Wichtigkeit, das, was sich mit Jesus zugetragen hatte, in Einklang mit dem AT zu bringen, da es das Glaubensbuch der Juden war. Ereignisse, von denen man den Anspruch erhob, dass sie nach dem Plane Gottes geschehen seien, mussten sich aus dem AT ableiten lassen' (English translation mine); the quotation is endorsed by Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 257.

Scriptures to proclaim the messiahship of Jesus.[12] By calling it a 'proclamation' from prophecy rather than a 'proof' from prophecy, Bock emphasises that the nuance of Peter's rhetoric corresponds more to 'proclamation' than to 'apologetic' because Peter assumes the resurrection and makes claims based upon it, rather than arguing for it from an exegesis which he shares with his audience.[13]

Like other exegetes, however, Bock understands Luke to be using Psalm 16 to show that Jesus' resurrection fulfils a messianic prophecy.[14] Whether they call it 'proof' or 'proclamation' from prophecy, then, the current consensus of scholarship is that Peter uses Psalm 16 to show that Jesus' resurrection represents the fulfilment of a prophecy about the Messiah, and thereby to demonstrate, validate, legitimate or corroborate the Christian claim that Jesus is the Messiah with the help of Jewish Scripture.[15]

There is, however, a fundamental and too often overlooked problem with this understanding of the argument of the speech: it implies that the discourse is appealing to convictions which were not a priori shared by the audience depicted in Luke's narrative, namely by non-Christian Jews. Indeed, on this reading, Peter is arguing that Jesus is the Messiah on the basis of a totally new Christian exegesis of a Psalm usually otherwise interpreted. As has been mentioned, however, this new exegesis of Psalm 16 only has convincing power if the resurrection of Jesus is presupposed to have happened. Yet the resurrection of Jesus is part of the extraordinary proclamation of the speech and – as other parts of the narrative of Acts show – represents a challenging affirmation to accept for a Jewish audience (Acts 26.8). One could add that, historically, as far as we know, there was no specific expectation that the Messiah would rise from the dead in Second Temple Judaism.[16] Some exegetes, therefore, point out that Peter's argument would have lacked convincing power for a Jewish audience. Thus, Pervo comments:

12 Bock, *Proclamation*, 186, 274.

13 Bock, *Proclamation*, 274: 'The stress of Luke's use of the OT for christology is not primarily in terms of a defensive apologetic. Rather Luke's use of the OT for christology involves the direct proclamation of Jesus. Jesus is the Christ promised in the Scriptures. It is more correct to call Luke's use of the OT for christology, "proclamation from prophecy and pattern".'

14 Bock, *Proclamation*, 180: 'A clearer presentation of a direct prophecy fulfilled could not exist.'

15 One exception is Litwak (*Echoes*), who rejects the 'promise-fulfilment' or 'prophecy-fulfilment' model of interpretation of this Psalm and prefers to speak of a 'revisionary reading of the Scriptures of Israel' based on the Jesus-event, or of Jesus 'actualizing' the Scriptures (179). But even for Litwak, Psalm 16 is used 'to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah' (178). He thus also understands the Scriptures to play the role of supporting or proving the messiahship of Jesus (since Jesus actualises them through his resurrection), even if it was not a prophecy. Furthermore, Litwak also acknowledges that Peter gives the Psalm a predictive sense: 'Yes, Peter gives the psalm a predictive sense, but his use of it is primarily a revisionary reading of the Scriptures of Israel, using the hermeneutical key of Jesus' experience' (179).

16 B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM, 1961) 41; Litwak, *Echoes*, 176.

> These proofs are signs for believers rather than unbelievers. They argue from fulfilment to prophecy. Although the ostensible audience is world Jewry, represented by the cosmopolitan crowd, only Christian readers would find the arguments persuasive.[17]

There is indeed little reason to believe that a Jewish audience such as the one depicted by Luke in Acts 2 would have found this Christian exegesis of Psalm 16 convincing. Yet according to the Lukan narrative, the listeners were 'cut to the heart' by Peter's words (ἀκούσαντες δὲ κατενύγησαν τὴν καρδίαν, 2.37) and 3,000 people became Christians after listening to the speech that day (2.41). Furthermore, as some exegetes have noted, the tone of the speech does not suggest that Peter engages in 'sectarian' exegesis here. Rather, it shows a strong confidence that its interpretation of the Psalm is convincing.[18]

The usual understanding of the function of Psalm 16 thus creates a tension for the narrative realism of the pericope Luke has depicted. It could of course be argued that Luke is writing for a Christian audience – namely for his readers – who have already accepted the fact of the resurrection.[19] But, as several scholars have noted, there are signs in Luke's narrative that he took care to compose speeches fitting their context, and that he strove for narrative realism.[20] The second part of this article therefore suggests another understanding of the way in which Psalm 16 functions in the argument of the speech, a way which makes better sense in the context suggested by Luke's narrative.

## 2. A New Proposal

Two often neglected factors are of primary importance to understand the function of the quotation from Psalm 16 in the argument of the speech. The

17 Pervo, *Acts*, 75. See also Dupont's comment on the use of Psalm 2 in Acts 13: 'For a Jewish audience which did not already believe in the transcendent lordship of the risen Christ, Paul's argumentation at Antioch would not be at all convincing' ('Messianic Interpretation', 117). For Pervo, this exegesis shows that Peter's speech cannot reflect the primitive Christian message: 'The exegesis presumes the resurrection of the flesh and is therefore not a residue of the primitive Christian message' (*Acts*, 83). For a similar conclusion, cf. D. Juel, 'Social Dimension of Exegesis: The Use of Psalm 16 in Acts 2', *CBQ* 43 (1981) 543–56, at 555.

18 See especially the discussion in Juel, 'Social Dimension of Exegesis', 555.

19 This is the way Pervo (*Acts*, 74) explains the strange argument of the speech.

20 On the speech in Acts 2, cf. L. T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 5; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992) 53: 'The speeches sound authentic because of his artistry: he does practice *prosōpopoiia*, and makes each discourse appropriate to the speaker and the occasion.' On the appropriateness of the speeches to their context in Acts generally, cf. R. C. Tannehill, 'The Functions of Peter's Mission Speeches in the Narrative of Acts', *NTS* 37 (1991) 400–14; D. Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 17–19.

first concerns the relation between the quotation and the verse preceding it – namely the exact place of Ps 15.10–11 LXX in the argumentation. And the second pertains to the meaning of those verses in their original context, both in the Hebrew and in the Septuagint.

Turning first to the place of the quotation in the speech, as mentioned above, the conjunction γάρ in v. 25 shows that the Psalm is introduced as an explanation for the resurrection of Jesus described in v. 24. The exact function of the Psalm thus depends upon the assertion made in v. 24 which it seeks to clarify:

> ... but God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.
> ... ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέστησεν λύσας τὰς ὠδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου, καθότι οὐκ ἦν δυνατὸν κρατεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ. (Acts 2.24)

What is of particular interest in this affirmation is that while God is described as the agent raising Jesus up, the speech also explains the event by saying that death was not able to hold him. In other words, although the resurrection of Jesus is presented as an act of God, v. 24 also suggests that the event happened and God acted *because* of some kind of necessity or rationale: it was impossible that death detained him. The expression οὐκ ἦν δυνατόν suggests that the 'rules' or 'logic' which govern the power of death did not work on Jesus. The proposal of this article is that it is this rationale which is then *explained* (cf. γάρ) by the quotation from Psalm 16 in vv. 25–8. In other words, the quotation from the Psalm is meant to explain both why God raised Jesus from the dead, and the reason why death had no power over him.

The next factor to examine is the meaning of the verses quoted from Psalm 16 in the context of the whole Psalm. The speech quotes Ps 16.8–11b (15.8–11b LXX) in Acts 2.25–8. The key lines which are used as a reference to the resurrection in Acts are in vv. 10–11. Acts reproduces the Septuagint word for word. The Greek of the Septuagint, however, departs from the Hebrew at significant points:

> [10] ὅτι οὐκ ἐγκαταλείψεις τὴν ψυχήν μου εἰς ᾅδην, οὐδὲ **δώσεις** τὸν ὅσιόν σου ἰδεῖν **διαφθοράν**.
> [11] ἐγνώρισάς μοι ὁδοὺς ζωῆς· πληρώσεις με εὐφροσύνης μετὰ τοῦ προσώπου σου.
> (Ps 15.10–11 LXX = Acts 2.27–8)

> [10]כי לא־תעזב נפשי לשאול לא־תתן חסידך לראות שחת׃
> [11]תודיעני ארח חיים שבע שמחות את־פניך

> [10] For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the pit.
> [11] You make me know the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688520000065 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In the Hebrew, the Psalm does not refer to the resurrection but rather expresses the psalmist's confidence that God will protect him from untimely death.[21] The crucial – and often overlooked – point to consider is the *reason* for the psalmist's confidence that he will be preserved from death. Indeed, his assurance comes from the fact that God does not abandon his 'pious one' or 'faithful one' (חסידך). חסיד is an ethical description used to refer to those who are faithful to God and practise the law of the covenant. Several times in the Old Testament, 'the pious one' is contrasted with 'the wicked' (e.g. 1 Sam 2.9; Ps 37.28;), or is promised deliverance from the wicked (e.g. Ps 97.10).[22] The חסידים are those who walk in the path of justice (cf. parallelism in Prov 2.8). The confidence of the psalmist therefore comes from the covenantal principle that God promises life to those faithful to his law. This covenantal framework is omnipresent in the rest of the Psalm. Thus, in vv. 3–4 (15.3–4 LXX), the psalmist distinguishes the situation of the 'holy ones in the land' (קדושים אשר־בארץ; τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς ἐν τῇ γῇ) from the fate of those who run after other gods and multiply their sorrows (16.4).[23] The terminology of 'land' (v. 4), 'portion' (v. 5: מנת־חלק; ἡ μερὶς τῆς κληρονομίας), 'lot' (v. 5: גורל; κληρονομίαν) and 'inheritance' (v. 6: נחלה; κληρονομία) all evoke God's covenant with Israel, and his promise of inheritance and life in the land for the faithful.

Another indicator of this covenantal legal framework is the Hebrew expression ארח חיים in v. 11. In the Hebrew text, the expression does not refer to the

21 J. Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter* (WUNT II/76; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995) 49. Despite the claims of earlier exegetes, the Hebrew text does not betray belief in an afterlife or the resurrection here: 'Eine besondere Beachtung bedarf 10, ein Verse, der früher als die Hoffnung eines jenseitigen, seligen Lebens verstanden worden (so noch Delitzch, Kessler), aber nur ein grossartiger, triumphierender Ausdruck der Gewissheit ist, vor jähem, vorzeitigem Tode bewart zu bleiben, und auch nicht als eine erste Ahnung überzeitlichen, ewigen Lebens in Gott … gefasst werden darf. Das geschichtliche Verständnis solcher Stellen wird durch das Gegenstück in den Dankliedern … über allen Zweifel sichergestellt …' (H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986[6]) 51, quoted in Schaper, *Eschatology*, 49 n. 190). Cf. Marguerat, *Actes*, I.91; Barrett, *Acts* I.144.

22 1 Sam 2.9: 'He will guard the feet of his faithful ones (חסידיו), but the wicked (ורשעים) shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail'; Ps 37.28: 'For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his faithful ones (חסידיו; ὁσίους αὐτοῦ). The righteous shall be kept safe forever, but the children of the wicked (רשעים; ἀσεβῶν) shall be cut off.'

23 Some scholars interpret קדושים to be a reference to false gods, whom the psalmist rejects. But as N. deClaissé-Walford, R. A. Jacobson and B. LaN. Tanner (*The Book of Psalms* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) 179) note: '*q*$^{e}$*dôšîm* seems to carry the positive connation of those in good favor with the Lord, even where it applies to heavenly beings. And the phrase *all my delight is in them* is difficult to reconcile with the notion of heavenly beings who rebel against God's will. It is most likely that the *holy ones* and *mighty ones* refer to the company of faithful Yahweh-worshippers with whom the psalmist is in community. Thus, in v. 3 the psalmist names those people with whom a relationship is affirmed, while in v. 4 the psalmist names those people with whom affinity is rejected.'

resurrection but rather to the life well-pleasing to God which leads to life. Indeed, the expression ארח חיים is almost certainly a reference to the life lived according to God's law, which lays out the way to life in Judaism.[24] This understanding fits well with the covenantal context of inheritance evoked by the Psalm: life in the land, or inheritance of the land, is conditional upon obedience to the law (see e.g. Deut 30.15–20). In the book of Proverbs, the 'paths of life' describes the ways in which the wise live and is contrasted with the 'way to Sheol' (Prov 15.24).[25] ארח is a common word to refer to the quality of one's ethical living and is frequently used this way in the Psalms (e.g. Ps 17.4; 25.4, 10; 44.19; 119.9, 15, 101, 104, 128). The Hebrew תודיעני in v. 11 is thus best translated as a present (cf. the aorist in the LXX), and refers to God's continued guidance in the path of life through his law (cf. reference to God's 'counsel' and 'instruction' in v. 7).

To conclude then, the basis of the psalmist's confidence lies in God's continued presence with him (Ps 16.8) because of his – namely the psalmist's – covenantal faithfulness and righteousness. As Ps 16.8–11 suggests, God protects the righteous one ('holy one', 'faithful one' or 'pious one') from (untimely) death, 'because' or 'as' he walks in the path of life given by God. As Haenchen comments: 'The pious author of the sixteenth psalm is sure that God will not let him die before his time: early death is a punishment for the godless.'[26]

Moving to the Septuagint translation of the Psalm, a number of changes have been introduced into the Greek text. Most importantly for the argument of this article, several alterations suggest that vv. 9–11 were interpreted eschatologically and that the Psalm might have been understood as referring to the future resurrection of the righteous already in the Septuagint. Three major transformations in the translation illustrate this eschatologising of the Psalm. First, the Hebrew לבטח, 'in security', has been replaced with ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίδι, 'in hope'.[27] Second, תתן, 'he gives', is translated by the future δώσεις, and finally, לראות שחת, 'to see the pit', is rendered by ἰδεῖν διαφθοράν, 'to see corruption'. For many interpreters those changes testify to a belief in the resurrection. Thus, in his study on *Eschatology in the Psalms*, Schaper argues that 'these changes indicate the

24 Cf. Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 147: '"Die Wege des Leben", אדח חיים, ist für den Juden ein Leben nach den Vorschriften des Gesetzes, ein Leben in Übereinstimmung mit dem Bund.' Cf. Haenchen, *Acts*, 182; Marguerat, *Actes* I.91.

25 Prov 15.24: 'The path of life leads upward for the wise, that he may avoid Sheol below.' Cf. Prov 5.6.

26 Haenchen, *Acts*, 181. Cf. Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 146: 'Der Fromme weiss, dass er der Todesgefahr entgehen wird, weil Gott sein Leben beschützt.'

27 The expression 'in security' in Hebrew pertains to divine protection in this world. Cf. A. Schmitt, 'Ps 16, 8–11 als Zeugnis der Auferstehung', *BZ* 17 (1973) 229–48, at 235: 'Der hebr. Text in V. 9b "auch mein Leib" wird in Sicherheit wohnen' bezieht sich klar und eindeutig auf ein gesichertes Leben in dieser Welt, das durch den Schutz Jahwes gewährleistet ist. Die Wendung *škn lābaeṭaḥ* findet sich häufig im AT als Verheissung bzw. Folge göttlichen Segens.'

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688520000065 Published online by Cambridge University Press

introduction of the notion of physical resurrection (again only of the righteous) into the sacred text'.[28] In the Septuagint, therefore, the 'holy one' seems to anticipate not protection from untimely death, but eternal life.[29] Such changes certainly facilitate an interpretation of the Psalm as referring to the resurrection.[30] In the Greek, then, ὁδοὶ ζωῆς in v. 11 does not refer to the way which brings life in the sense of protection from untimely death, but is probably reinterpreted as the way which leads to eternal life.[31]

In light of the changes which occur in the Septuagint version of Psalm 16 and the widespread belief in the resurrection of the righteous in first-century Judaism, it is likely that Psalm 16 was already interpreted as referring to the resurrection in the first century by those who held to such a belief. Alternatively, those who rejected a belief in the resurrection probably interpreted the Psalm as referring to protection from untimely death. In either case, however, the rationale or the principle outlined by the Psalm is the same: God preserves the life of the righteous one, the one who is faithful to his covenant.

The thesis of this article is that it is this rationale which is appealed to, to explain Jesus' resurrection in the speech in Acts 2. Going back to the argument, Ps 16.10–11 is introduced as an explanation for the affirmation of Jesus' resurrection through the conjunction γάρ in v. 25. Usually exegetes have concluded that the quotation from Scripture simply serves to validate or support the claim of the resurrection by saying something like 'God raised him from the dead because he had said so in the Scriptures'. In other words, the reason for the resurrection of the Messiah lies solely in the will or the plan of God. The proposal here, however, is that at this point of the argument, the quotation from Psalm 16 is used to point to the *rationale* of God's action. In other words, it is because God preserves the life of the righteous that he raised Jesus from the dead, and it is because Jesus was righteous that death could not retain him. Psalm 16, then, is not quoted to *prove* or *proclaim* that Jesus rose from the dead, but to *explain* why he did and why death could not keep him: death has no power over the pious one, for he walks in the path of life and God preserves him by leading him to life.

28 Schaper, *Eschatology*, 49. Schaper suggests that this is one of the first, if not the first, instance of the hope of the resurrection and might possibly be earlier than Dan 12.1–3. For him, 'it is the forerunner of the rabbinic belief in resurrection and seems to have originated in (proto-) Pharisaic circles' (50). Cf. Schmitt, 'Ps 16, 8–11', 237.

29 So Schmitt, 'Ps 16, 8–11', 237: 'Dem Frommen wird in Aussicht gestellt, dass ihn Vernichtung im Tod nicht treffen wird. Ihm droht nicht die διαφθορά, die über alles Gewordene verhängt ist, sondern ihm kommt, um das Ganze positiv auszudrücken, das ἄφθαρτον, die ἀφθαρσία zu. In Relation zu V. 9b ist sogar damit zu rechnen, dass in V. 10b der Glaube an die Auferstehung anklingt. Selbst für den Leib bleibt die Hoffnung, dass Verwesung und Zerfall sich nicht in ihrer letzten Konsequenz bemächtigen werden.'

30 Marguerat, *Actes* I.91.

31 So Schmitt, 'Ps 16, 8–11', 237.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688520000065 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Unlike other proposals, this interpretation has two important exegetical advantages. First, unlike the proof from prophecy or proclamation from prophecy models of interpretation, it means that the argument of the speech progresses on much more shared common ground with the audience of the speech in Luke's narrative. It is a commonplace in Judaism that righteousness and faithfulness grant life, and that God will vindicate the righteous. Luke himself endorses this belief in his narrative (cf. Luke 20.35). When using Psalm 16, therefore, Luke's Peter is not – at this point – basing his argument upon a new exegesis which presupposes the resurrection. Rather, he is using a well-accepted notion, based upon a passage from Scripture, namely the widespread belief that God protects the life of the faithful and that he will eventually rise the righteous. Although the application of the Psalm to Jesus' resurrection would undoubtedly have been surprising if not shocking – the resurrection of the righteous was expected to be an eschatological event affecting a group of people and not just one individual – exegetically speaking, this reading proposes much more common ground with non-Christian Jews than other interpretations of this passage.

That leads us to the second advantage of this interpretation: it fits particularly well with the preceding verses (22–3). In those verses the speech recounts Jesus' attestation by God through signs and miracles and his crucifixion at the hands of lawless men. As the speech emphasises, the audience in Luke's narrative is aware – or at least should be aware – of God's endorsement of Jesus:

> Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται, ἀκούσατε τοὺς λόγους τούτους· Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον, ἄνδρα ἀποδεδειγμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς δυνάμεσι καὶ τέρασι καὶ σημείοις οἷς ἐποίησεν δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ὁ θεὸς ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν **καθὼς αὐτοὶ οἴδατε** … (Acts 2:22)

The argument made by the Psalm thus builds upon what the crowd already knows: a righteous man – as suggested by the fact that he was mightily attested by God – was put to death. But God raised him from the dead, for – as the Psalm reminds us – he preserves the life of the righteous. On this reading, the Psalm provides scriptural support for Jesus' resurrection even to people who did not witness it. There is indeed a certain plausibility that a person like Jesus would rise from the dead if he was put to death unjustly and was righteous, as was obvious to many, at least according to Luke's Gospel (Luke 23.13–16, 22, 48).

Rather than attempting to prove, proclaim or even explain the resurrection of Jesus by appealing to a new Christian exegesis of a Psalm usually otherwise interpreted, then, the speech is actually giving a forceful argument from a well-known covenantal principle which is appealed to in Psalm 16: Jesus rose from the dead, because the Scriptures promise that God preserves the life of the righteous. Without 'proving' the resurrection in any way, this type of explanation for Jesus' resurrection, made in the presence of a crowd aware that this man was powerfully

attested by God and unjustly crucified, is much more likely to have 'cut the people to the heart' and make them take the apostolic claim that Jesus rose from the dead seriously.

## 3. Conclusion: Reinterpreting the Divine Necessity of the Resurrection

Challenging the current consensus that Psalm 16 functions as a 'proof' or 'proclamation' from prophecy in the argument of the speech in Acts 2, the present article has suggested a new interpretation of the logic between v. 24 and v. 25. It should be emphasised, however, that the proposal advanced here does *not* deny that the Psalm is also interpreted as a messianic prophecy in the speech as the argument goes on. Indeed, Peter himself describes David as a prophet (v. 30), and the speech makes it clear that a promise pertaining to the Messiah expressed in Psalm 16 has been fulfilled through the resurrection of Jesus (vv. 29–31). But it is a prophecy which promises the fulfilment of a covenantal promise: God will grant life to the righteous. Covenantal promise and prophecy are not mutually exclusive.

According to the reading suggested in this article, then, the speech begins by explaining the resurrection of Jesus in v. 25 (cf. γάρ) through pointing to the rationale expressed in Psalm 16: God gives life to the pious one who keeps his law. Then, the speech goes on to demonstrate that in this specific Psalm, David was actually prophesying the resurrection of the Messiah (vv. 29–32).

This interpretation of the argument of the speech casts important new light on the meaning of the resurrection in Acts – at least as reflected in the first kerygmatic speech of the Lukan narrative. As mentioned earlier in this article, scholars have usually concluded that the speech explains the resurrection by divine necessity: Jesus rose from the dead because God, through his prophet, had foretold that the Messiah would rise from the dead. It thus *had* to happen because of divine will.[32] The reading advanced in this article, however, gives a new significance to the event. It suggests that the speech proclaims that Jesus rose from the dead because of his righteousness, and because God was faithful to his covenantal promise to preserve the life of – and grant resurrection life to – the righteous. This, of course, is not to deny that Jesus' resurrection happened according to the will of God or divine necessity. It does, however, ground this divine necessity in the covenantal promise that righteousness brings life and delivers from death, and, by extension, in God's faithfulness.

32 Haenchen, *Acts*, 187: 'it is no "chance fact of history" but *a necessity founded in the will of God*' (my emphasis); Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 256: 'God released Jesus from death's hold because that was part of the divine 'plan'; for this reason death could not hold him in its clutches.' Cf. Barrett, *Acts*, I.144; Marguerat, *Actes*, I.91; Moessner, '*Two* Lords "at the Right Hand"?', 221.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688520000065 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Whether this nuance in the first speech to outsiders in Acts is also present in the other kerygmatic discourses in Acts must, of course, await further research. But given the programmatic function of this speech at the very beginning of Acts, Luke has certainly given this proclamation of the rationale of Jesus' resurrection a strategic place in his narrative.[33]

33 On the scholarly consensus on the programmatic nature of Acts 2, cf. S. Butticaz, *L'identité de l'Eglise dans les Actes des apôtres* (BZNW 174; Göttingen: de Gruyter, 2011) 92.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688520000065 Published online by Cambridge University Press