ACTS

JAROSLAV PELIKAN

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To my liturgical family at Saint Vladimir's

And they continued stedfastly
in the apostles' doctrine
and fellowship,
and in breaking of bread,
and in prayers.
—Acts 2:42 AV

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SERIES PREFACE

Near the beginning of his treatise against Gnostic interpretations of the Bible, *Against the Heresies*, Irenaeus observes that Scripture is like a great mosaic depicting a handsome king. It is as if we were owners of a villa in Gaul who had ordered a mosaic from Rome. It arrives, and the beautifully colored tiles need to be taken out of their packaging and put into proper order according to the plan of the artist. The difficulty, of course, is that Scripture provides us with the individual pieces, but the order and sequence of various elements are not obvious. The Bible does not come with instructions that would allow interpreters to simply place verses, episodes, images, and parables in order as a worker might follow a schematic drawing in assembling the pieces to depict the handsome king. The mosaic must be puzzled out. This is precisely the work of scriptural interpretation.

Origen has his own image to express the difficulty of working out the proper approach to reading the Bible. When preparing to offer a commentary on the Psalms he tells of a tradition handed down to him by his Hebrew teacher:

> The Hebrew said that the whole divinely inspired Scripture may be likened, because of its obscurity, to many locked rooms in our house. By each room is placed a key, but not the one that corresponds to it, so that the keys are scattered about beside the rooms, none of them matching the room by which it is placed. It is a difficult task to find the keys and match them to the rooms that they can open. We therefore know the Scriptures that are obscure only by taking the points of departure for understanding them from another place because they have their interpretive principle scattered among them.[1]

As is the case for Irenaeus, scriptural interpretation is not purely local. The key in Genesis may best fit the door of Isaiah, which in turn opens up the

1. Fragment from the preface to *Commentary on Psalms 1–25*, preserved in the *Philokalia* (trans. Joseph W. Trigg; London: Routledge, 1998), 70–71.

meaning of Matthew. The mosaic must be put together with an eye toward the overall plan.

Irenaeus, Origen, and the great cloud of premodern biblical interpreters assumed that puzzling out the mosaic of Scripture must be a communal project. The Bible is vast, heterogeneous, full of confusing passages and obscure words, and difficult to understand. Only a fool would imagine that he or she could work out solutions alone. The way forward must rely upon a tradition of reading that Irenaeus reports has been passed on as the rule or canon of truth that functions as a confession of faith. "Anyone," he says, "who keeps unchangeable in himself the rule of truth received through baptism will recognize the names and sayings and parables of the scriptures."[2] Modern scholars debate the content of the rule on which Irenaeus relies and commends, not the least because the terms and formulations Irenaeus himself uses shift and slide. Nonetheless, Irenaeus assumes that there is a body of apostolic doctrine sustained by a tradition of teaching in the church. This doctrine provides the clarifying principles that guide exegetical judgment toward a coherent overall reading of Scripture as a unified witness. Doctrine, then, is the schematic drawing that will allow the reader to organize the vast heterogeneity of the words, images, and stories of the Bible into a readable, coherent whole. It is the rule that guides us toward the proper matching of keys to doors.

If self-consciousness about the role of history in shaping human consciousness makes modern historical-critical study critical, then what makes modern study of the Bible modern is the consensus that classical Christian doctrine distorts interpretive understanding. Benjamin Jowett, the influential nineteenth-century English classical scholar, is representative. In his programmatic essay "On the Interpretation of Scripture," he exhorts the biblical reader to disengage from doctrine and break its hold over the interpretive imagination. "The simple words of that book," writes Jowett of the modern reader, "he tries to preserve absolutely pure from the refinements or distinctions of later times." The modern interpreter wishes to "clear away the remains of dogmas, systems, controversies, which are encrusted upon" the words of Scripture. The disciplines of close philological analysis "would enable us to separate the elements of doctrine and tradition with which the meaning of Scripture is encumbered in our own day."[3] The lens of understanding must be wiped clear of the hazy and distorting film of doctrine.

Postmodernity, in turn, has encouraged us to criticize the critics. Jowett imagined that when he wiped away doctrine he would encounter the biblical text in its purity and uncover what he called "the original spirit and intention of the authors."[4] We are not now so sanguine, and the postmodern mind thinks interpretive frameworks inevitable. Nonetheless, we tend to remain modern

2. *Against the Heretics* 9.4.

3. Benjamin Jowett, "On the Interpretation of Scripture," in *Essays and Reviews* (London: Parker, 1860), 338–39.

4. Ibid., 340.

in at least one sense. We read Athanasius and think him stage-managing the diversity of Scripture to support his positions against the Arians. We read Bernard of Clairvaux and assume that his monastic ideals structure his reading of the Song of Songs. In the wake of the Reformation, we can see how the doctrinal divisions of the time shaped biblical interpretation. Luther famously described the Epistle of James as a "strawy letter," for, as he said, "it has nothing of the nature of the Gospel about it."[5] In these and many other instances, often written in the heat of ecclesiastical controversy or out of the passion of ascetic commitment, we tend to think Jowett correct: doctrine is a distorting film on the lens of understanding.

However, is what we commonly think actually the case? Are readers naturally perceptive? Do we have an unblemished, reliable aptitude for the divine? Have we no need for disciplines of vision? Do our attention and judgment need to be trained, especially as we seek to read Scripture as the living word of God? According to Augustine, we all struggle to journey toward God, who is our rest and peace. Yet our vision is darkened and the fetters of worldly habit corrupt our judgment. We need training and instruction in order to cleanse our minds so that we might find our way toward God.[6] To this end, "the whole temporal dispensation was made by divine Providence for our salvation."[7] The covenant with Israel, the coming of Christ, the gathering of the nations into the church—all these things are gathered up into the rule of faith, and they guide the vision and form of the soul toward the end of fellowship with God. In Augustine's view, the reading of Scripture both contributes to and benefits from this divine pedagogy. With countless variations in both exegetical conclusions and theological frameworks, the same pedagogy of a doctrinally ruled reading of Scripture characterizes the broad sweep of the Christian tradition from Gregory the Great through Bernard and Bonaventure, continuing across Reformation differences in both John Calvin and Cornelius Lapide, Patrick Henry and Bishop Bossuet, and on to more recent figures such as Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Is doctrine, then, not a moldering scrim of antique prejudice obscuring the Bible, but instead a clarifying agent, an enduring tradition of theological judgments that amplifies the living voice of Scripture? And what of the scholarly dispassion advocated by Jowett? Is a noncommitted reading, an interpretation unprejudiced, the way toward objectivity, or does it simply invite the languid intellectual apathy that stands aside to make room for the false truism and easy answers of the age?

This series of biblical commentaries was born out of the conviction that dogma clarifies rather than obscures. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible advances upon the assumption that the Nicene tradition, in all its diversity

5. *Luther's Works*, vol. 35 (ed. E. Theodore Bachmann; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 362.
6. *On Christian Doctrine* 1.10.
7. *On Christian Doctrine* 1.35.

and controversy, provides the proper basis for the interpretation of the Bible as Christian Scripture. God the Father Almighty, who sends his only begotten Son to die for us and for our salvation and who raises the crucified Son in the power of the Holy Spirit so that the baptized may be joined in one body—faith in *this* God with *this* vocation of love for the world is the lens through to view the heterogeneity and particularity of the biblical texts. Doctrine, then, is not a moldering scrim of antique prejudice obscuring the meaning of the Bible. It is a crucial aspect of the divine pedagogy, a clarifying agent for our minds fogged by self-deceptions, a challenge to our languid intellectual apathy that will too often rest in false truisms and the easy spiritual nostrums of the present age rather than search more deeply and widely for the dispersed keys to the many doors of Scripture.

For this reason, the commentators in this series have not been chosen because of their historical or philological expertise. In the main, they are not biblical scholars in the conventional, modern sense of the term. Instead, the commentators were chosen because of their knowledge of and expertise in using the Christian doctrinal tradition. They are qualified by virtue of the doctrinal formation of their mental habits, for it is the conceit of this series of biblical commentaries that theological training in the Nicene tradition prepares one for biblical interpretation, and thus it is to theologians and not biblical scholars that we have turned. "War is too important," it has been said, "to leave to the generals."

We do hope, however, that readers do not draw the wrong impression. The Nicene tradition does not provide a set formula for the solution of exegetical problems. The great tradition of Christian doctrine was not transcribed, bound in folio, and issued in an official, critical edition. We have the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, used for centuries in many traditions of Christian worship. We have ancient baptismal affirmations of faith. The Chalcedonian definition and the creeds and canons of other church councils have their places in official church documents. Yet the rule of faith cannot be limited to a specific set of words, sentences, and creeds. It is instead a pervasive habit of thought, the animating culture of the church in its intellectual aspect. As Augustine observed, commenting on Jer. 31:33, "The creed is learned by listening; it is written, not on stone tablets nor on any material, but on the heart."[8] This is why Irenaeus is able to appeal to the rule of faith more than a century before the first ecumenical council, and this is why we need not itemize the contents of the Nicene tradition in order to appeal to its potency and role in the work of interpretation.

Because doctrine is intrinsically fluid on the margins and most powerful as a habit of mind rather than a list of propositions, this commentary series cannot settle difficult questions of method and content at the outset. The editors of the series impose no particular method of doctrinal interpretation.

8. *Sermon* 212.2.

We cannot say in advance how doctrine helps the Christian reader assemble the mosaic of Scripture. We have no clear answer to the question of whether exegesis guided by doctrine is antithetical to or compatible with the now-old modern methods of historical-critical inquiry. Truth—historical, mathematical, or doctrinal—knows no contradiction. But method is a discipline of vision and judgment, and we cannot know in advance what aspects of historical-critical inquiry are functions of modernism that shape the soul to be at odds with Christian discipline. Still further, the editors do not hold the commentators to any particular hermeneutical theory that specifies how to define the plain sense of Scripture—or the role this plain sense should play in interpretation. Here the commentary series is tentative and exploratory.

Can we proceed in any other way? European and North American intellectual culture has been de-Christianized. The effect has not been a cessation of Christian activity. Theological work continues. Sermons are preached. Biblical scholars turn out monographs. Church leaders have meetings. But each dimension of a formerly unified Christian practice now tends to function independently. It is as if a weakened army had been fragmented, and various corps had retreated to isolated fortresses in order to survive. Theology has lost its competence in exegesis. Scripture scholars function with minimal theological training. Each decade finds new theories of preaching to cover the nakedness of seminary training that provides theology without exegesis and exegesis without theology.

Not the least of the causes of the fragmentation of Christian intellectual practice has been the divisions of the church. Since the Reformation, the role of the rule of faith in interpretation has been obscured by polemics and counterpolemics about *sola scriptura* and the necessity of a magisterial teaching authority. The Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible series is deliberately ecumenical in scope, because the editors are convinced that early church fathers were correct: church doctrine does not compete with Scripture in a limited economy of epistemic authority. We wish to encourage unashamedly dogmatic interpretation of Scripture, confident that the concrete consequences of such a reading will cast far more light on the great divisive questions of the Reformation than either reengaging in old theological polemics or chasing the fantasy of a pure exegesis that will somehow adjudicate between competing theological positions. You shall know the truth of doctrine by its interpretive fruits, and therefore in hopes of contributing to the unity of the church, we have deliberately chosen a wide range of theologians whose commitment to doctrine will allow readers to see real interpretive consequences rather than the shadow boxing of theological concepts.

Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible has no dog in the current translation fights, and we endorse a textual ecumenism that parallels our diversity of ecclesial backgrounds. We do not impose the thankfully modest inclusive-language agenda of the New Revised Standard Version, nor do we insist upon the glories of the Authorized Version, nor do we require our commentators to

create a new translation. In our communal worship, in our private devotions, in our theological scholarship, we use a range of scriptural translations. Precisely as Scripture—a living, functioning text in the present life of faith—the Bible is not semantically fixed. Only a modernist, literalist hermeneutic could imagine that this modest fluidity is a liability. Philological precision and stability is a consequence of, not a basis for, exegesis. Judgments about the meaning of a text fix its literal sense, not the other way around. As a result, readers should expect an eclectic use of biblical translations, both across the different volumes of the series and within individual commentaries.

We cannot speak for contemporary biblical scholars, but as theologians we know that we have long been trained to defend our fortresses of theological concepts and formulations. And we have forgotten the skills of interpretation. Like stroke victims, we must rehabilitate our exegetical imaginations, and there are likely to be different strategies of recovery. Readers should expect this reconstructive—not reactionary—series to provide them with experiments in postcritical doctrinal interpretation, not commentaries written according to the settled principles of a well-functioning tradition. Some commentators will follow classical typological and allegorical readings from the premodern tradition; others will draw on contemporary historical study. Some will comment verse by verse; others will highlight passages, even single words that trigger theological analysis of Scripture. No reading strategies are proscribed, no interpretive methods foresworn. The central premise in this commentary series is that doctrine provides structure and cogency to scriptural interpretation. We trust in this premise with the hope that the Nicene tradition can guide us, however imperfectly, diversely, and haltingly, toward a reading of Scripture in which the right keys open the right doors.

R. R. Reno

PREFACE

In 1905, exactly a hundred years ago, Adolf von Harnack urged upon his pupil and colleague, Karl Holl, his "fundamental conviction that those church historians whose concentration is, as ours is, on *early* church history must always be ready, when the situation requires it, to take on the exposition of a book of the New Testament."[1] He lived up to that rule himself when he published his book on Acts in 1908, which soon thereafter was translated into English.[2] I have always believed in that rule, too. But I have never been able to live up to it myself until now, when I am also doing so with a commentary on Acts, as part of this series of theological commentaries on the Bible. Examining the first account of the first generations does seem a fitting way to follow up on over a half century of studying the history of the church and the development of its doctrine from those first generations and into all subsequent periods.

In many ways I am at heart a philologist, and, coming from a polyglot home, I have since childhood taken special delight in the permutations of grammar and etymology, especially then also in Greek and Latin. But whenever I have been asked whether I am a classicist, I have usually replied that I am interested in Greek and Latin only after they became world languages, for by training and scholarly experience I am a historian of Christian doctrine. As a rule, I have not so much investigated what the Bible *meant* as what it *has been taken to mean*. But the invitation, in my eightieth year, to join other scholars outside the biblical field in this theological commentary project was irresistible.

Even more than usual, therefore, I owe special thanks for the scholarly guidance of colleagues who concentrate on this material, and in particular to Luke Timothy Johnson not only for his own superb commentary of 1992, but for his criticisms and suggestions, which have improved my manuscript at many places. R. R. Reno invited me to undertake the project and encouraged me at

1. Zahn-Harnack 1951, 279 (emphasis original).
2. Harnack 1909.

every stage, and Michael Root gave the entire work a careful and very helpful reading. Rebecca Cooper and her colleagues at Brazos Press coped with the difficult editorial and technical problems of the manuscript. Above all, David Aiken, my copyeditor, has, with care and sensitivity, saved me from several howlers, whether trivial or embarrassing. At least as much as it does otherwise (and probably even more), the customary disclaimer applies, that I myself am responsible for whatever mistakes still remain.

The dedication is a welcome opportunity to acknowledge a still deeper debt, which is at once scholarly and yet personal.

ABBREVIATIONS

Bible Versions

AV	Authorized (King James) Version
LXX	Septuagint (see Rahlfs 1979)
NEB	New English Bible
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TPR	*textus a patribus receptus* (see Boismard 2000)
Vulgate	Vulgate (see *Nova vulgata* 1986)

Bible Books

Acts	Acts
Add. Esth.	Additions to Esther
Amos	Amos
Bar.	Baruch
Bel	Bel and the Dragon
1 Chr.	1 Chronicles
2 Chr.	2 Chronicles
Col.	Colossians
1 Cor.	1 Corinthians
2 Cor.	2 Corinthians
Dan.	Daniel
Deut.	Deuteronomy
Eccl.	Ecclesiastes
Eph.	Ephesians
1 Esd.	1 Esdras
2 Esd.	2 Esdras
Esth.	Esther
Exod.	Exodus
Ezek.	Ezekiel
Ezra	Ezra
Gal.	Galatians
Gen.	Genesis
Hab.	Habakkuk
Hag.	Haggai
Heb.	Hebrews
Hos.	Hosea
Isa.	Isaiah
Jas.	James
Jdt.	Judith
Jer.	Jeremiah
Job	Job
Joel	Joel
John	John
1 John	1 John
2 John	2 John
3 John	3 John
Jonah	Jonah
Josh.	Joshua
Jude	Jude
Judg.	Judges
1 Kgs.	1 Kings
2 Kgs.	2 Kings
Lam.	Lamentations

Let. Jer.	Letter of Jeremiah	Prov.	Proverbs
Lev.	Leviticus	Ps.	Psalms
Luke	Luke	Ps. 151	Psalm 151
1 Macc.	1 Maccabees	Rev.	Revelation
2 Macc.	2 Maccabees	Rom.	Romans
3 Macc.	3 Maccabees	Ruth	Ruth
4 Macc.	4 Maccabees	1 Sam.	1 Samuel
Mal.	Malachi	2 Sam.	2 Samuel
Mark	Mark	Sg. Three	Song of the Three Children
Matt.	Matthew	Sir.	Sirach
Mic.	Micah	Song	Song of Songs
Nah.	Nahum	Sus.	Susanna
Neh.	Nehemiah	1 Thess.	1 Thessalonians
Num.	Numbers	2 Thess.	2 Thessalonians
Obad.	Obadiah	1 Tim.	1 Timothy
1 Pet.	1 Peter	2 Tim.	2 Timothy
2 Pet.	2 Peter	Titus	Titus
Phil.	Philippians	Tob.	Tobit
Phlm.	Philemon	Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon
Pr. Azar.	Prayer of Azariah	Zech.	Zechariah
Pr. Man.	Prayer of Manasseh	Zeph.	Zephaniah

Bibliographic

ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. David Noel Freedman et al.; 6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers (ed. Johannes Quasten et al.; 58 vols. to date; Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1946–)
ANF	*The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (10 vols.; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957)
BAGD	Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (2nd ed. rev. by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, based on previous English edition by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979)
BDAG	Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed. rev. by Frederick W. Danker, based on previous English editions by William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
BDF	Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (ed./trans. Robert W. Funk; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961)
CCF	*Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss; 3 vols.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003)
Chr. Trad.	Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (5 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971–89)
DTC	*Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (ed. Alfred Vacant, Émile Mangenot, and Émile Amann; 15 vols.; Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1903–50), with *Tables générales* (ed. B. Lott and A. Michel; 3 vols.; Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1951–72)

LCL	Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press)
LTK	*Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (ed. Josef Höfer and Karl Rahner; 2nd ed.; 10 vols. and index; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1957–67)
NA^{27}	*Novum Testamentum Graece* (ed. Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland, et al.; 27th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1999)
NPNF^{1}	*A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, first series (14 vols.; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956)
NPNF^{2}	*A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series (14 vols.; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956)
OCD	*Oxford Classical Dictionary* (ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth; 3rd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)
ODCC	*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone; 3rd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
OED	*The Oxford English Dictionary* (ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner; 20 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1989)
PG	Patrologia graeca (ed. Jacques Paul Migne; 162 vols.; Paris: Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1857–66)
PGL	*A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (ed. Geoffrey W. H. Lampe; Oxford: Clarendon, 1961)
PL	Patrologia latina (ed. Jacques Paul Migne; 221 vols.; Paris: Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1844–64)
RE	*Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (ed. Johann Jakob Herzog and Albert Hauck; 3rd ed.; 21 vols. and index; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896–1909)
SVS	Popular Patristic Series: translations of the church fathers in an unnumbered series edited by John Behr and published by Saint Vladimir's Theological Seminary Press (Crestwood, N.Y.)

INTRODUCTION

From Apostolic Church to Church Catholic

"Moses . . . was a powerful speaker and a man of action" (7:22 NEB) is the characterization of the Jewish lawgiver Moses by the Christian deacon and protomartyr Stephen here in the Acts of the Apostles (a title that is apparently not original), echoing Philo and Josephus (→7:22),[1] as part of his capsule history of the people of Israel since the days of "our father Abraham" (7:2). It also echoes Homer's characterization of Achilles as "both a speaker of words and a doer of deed" (μύθων τε ῥητῆρ . . . πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων).[2] It could be applied to the entire narrative of the book of Acts itself.

Acts is a book of frenetic action amid a constantly shifting scene: conspiracy and intrigue and ambush, hostile confrontations and fierce conflicts sometimes to the death, rioting lynch mobs and personal violence (→28:31), "journeyings often" (2 Cor. 11:26 AV) and incessant travel on an Odysseus-like scale all over the Mediterranean world (→27:24), complete with shipwreck and venomous serpents, "chains and imprisonment" (Heb. 11:36), followed in at least two instances by a successful jailbreak, though only with the aid of celestial mechanics (5:17–20; 12:6–11; 16:26–28), famine and earthquake, crime and punishment (as well as a great deal of punishment, sometimes even capital punishment, without any real crime ever having been committed).

Gerhard A. Krodel quotes the eloquent description of the book by Edgar Johnson Goodspeed:

> Where, within eighty pages, will be found such a varied series of exciting events—trials, riots, persecutions, escapes, martyrdoms, voyages, shipwrecks, rescues—set in that amazing panorama of the ancient world—Jerusalem, Antioch, Philippi,

1. An arrow (→) indicates a cross-reference to a *locus communis*; see pp. 29–30 below.
2. Homer, *Iliad* 9.443 (LCL 170:415).

> Corinth, Athens, Ephesus, Rome? And with such scenery and settings—temples, courts, prisons, deserts, ships, barracks, theaters? Has any opera such variety? A bewildering range of scenes and actions (and of speeches) passes before the eye of the historian. And in all of them he sees the providential hand that has made and guided this great movement for the salvation of mankind.[3]

The author of this endorsement, E. J. Goodspeed, had studied the Acts of the Apostles carefully, not simply to interpret it but to translate it for *The New Testament: An American Translation*, which came out in 1923. This is, in many ways, the ultimate test for any interpreter, because the translator is not permitted to omit a phrase or a verse; a commentator, on the other hand, including the present one, is often obliged by the economies of space to do just that, as is explained later in this introduction.

Acts has more touches of humor (→12:13–16) than all other books of the New Testament combined. The dizzying catalog of place-names entitled "The Peregrinations [περίοδοι] of the Apostle Paul," which was compiled by Archbishop Theophylact of Bulgaria a thousand years ago as part of his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles,[4] explains why, also today, the book of Acts cannot be understood without constant recourse to a Bible dictionary and a historical atlas. A special problem with using any atlas to study the book of Acts is the need for an identification of the cities and territories of Asia Minor also according to their modern Turkish place-names, by which, for example, "Iconium" (Ἰκόνιον) of 13:51 and elsewhere became "Konya."[5] Taken simply as a tale of adventure, it is by far the most action-packed book in the New Testament, and chapter 27 would deserve an honored place in any anthology of sailing literature, invoking as it does mariners' jargon, some of which goes back at least as far as the Homeric epics (→27:24).

But leaving it at that would even be worse than calling *The Tempest* or *Moby Dick* a sea story and saying no more about it. "Man of action" in Stephen's one-sentence portrait of Moses is coupled with "powerful speaker"—although, according to the book of Exodus of which he is traditionally regarded as the writer, Moses himself tried to evade the Lord's summons by describing himself as "slow of speech and of tongue" (Exod. 4:10), which he negated repeatedly, above all in the long and rhetorically powerful (→24:1–2) series of discourses that are put into his mouth to form the book of Deuteronomy. Thus Moses was not only a man of action but a man of words and a man of ideas. He was depicted by Josephus and Philo, and then by Saint Gregory of Nyssa in his *Life of Moses*, as a practitioner of what the Greeks called "the active life" as a statesman and field general, but no less as an adept of what the Greeks called "the contemplative life."[6] He was said to have been "instructed in all

3. Quoted in Krodel 1986, 13.
4. Theophylact, Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles preface (PG 125:488–89).
5. W. Ward Gasque in *ABD* 3:357–58.
6. O. Schmucki in *LTK* 10:815–17.

the wisdom of the Egyptians" and in all secular learning (→7:22), and God was revealed to him by the voice from the burning bush—in a metaphysical formula that was seen at one and the same time to bring together and yet to challenge the entire history of Greek ontological speculation—as "The one who is" (ὁ ὤν) (Exod. 3:14 LXX). So also the book of Acts belongs to the normative canon of Christian Scripture not only as a database of information about "the mission and expansion of Christianity,"[7] which it supremely and indispensably is, but as an authoritative statement of the church's rule of faith (→8:37) and as a confession of its doctrine. That makes it, as Saint Augustine reminded his readers,

> the only book that has been reckoned worthy of acceptance in the Church as a history of the Acts of the Apostles; while all these other writers who attempted, although deficient in the trustworthiness which was the first requisite, to compose an account of the doings and sayings of the apostles, have met with rejection. And, further, Mark and Luke certainly wrote at a time when it was quite possible to put them to the test not only by the Church of Christ, but also by the apostles themselves who were still alive in the flesh.[8]

Along with the geography and prosopography of the narratives, therefore, the reader needs to be attentive to the theology of the book of Acts[9]—which is the primary concentration of the present commentary.

Commentary has been, moreover, the primary means of theological reflection in both the Jewish and the Christian tradition. Far more than the philosophical speculation (→17:18) or even the doctrinal controversy and polemics (→15:2) that have together tended to dominate modern textbooks and courses in historical theology, the question and the counterquestion formulated in the book of Acts—"Do you understand what you are reading?" and "How can I understand, unless someone instructs me?" (8:30–31 TPR)—have been the garden in which theologies have grown. The case for this primacy of commentary is formulated persuasively by Leon Wieseltier:

> One of the many mistakes that post-modernism has visited upon American life is the idea that commentary is in some way a benighted activity, a secondary or tertiary activity rather than a primary one. Anyone who knows the history of commentary knows that it was for many centuries, and in some ways still is—at least in the books that will really matter—one of the great intellectual opportunities for originality, indeed radicalism, of thought. Certainly the great works of Jewish philosophy are almost all of them works of scriptural commentary, from Philo through the medieval tradition, most notably through Maimonides and his *The Guide of the Perplexed* (which is the greatest single book ever written by a Jew), through Hermann Cohen. The majesty, the depth, the diversity

7. Harnack 1961, 80.
8. Augustine, *Harmony of the Gospels* 4.8.9 (*NPNF*[1] 6:231).
9. Jervell 1996; J. Bellamy in *DTC* 1:349–52; L. Venard in *DTC* 9:984–1000.

> of this tradition strongly suggests that it is almost incumbent upon a serious philosophical mind to engage in the work of commentary.[10]

As these words are eminently true of the book of Genesis and the Jewish tradition of commentary on it, about which they were written, so they apply also to the book of Acts and to the Christian tradition of commentary on it.

Such a concentration of the theology of Acts entails, for this commentator at any rate, continuing reference to the tradition of the church as it has been prayed and sung in its liturgy, confessed in its creeds and confessions of faith, defended by its seven ecumenical councils, and articulated by its "cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1): not what Acts or its putative sources[11] may have "originally meant," but what it has been taken to mean by the church as part of the total canon of Scripture and as an inseparable and normative constituent element of the tradition. That enterprise is rendered more difficult by the position that the book of Acts occupies (or rather, the position that it does *not* occupy) in the official and liturgical life of the church. Even in the postils expounding the assigned pericopes for the church year,[12] Acts does not figure prominently, with only the following portions designated as epistle lessons in the calendar of the Western church for Sundays and chief holidays:

1:1–11	Feast of the Ascension
2:1–13	Feast of Pentecost
6:8–14 and 7:54–59	Feast of Saint Stephen
9:1–22	Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul
10:34–43	Easter Monday
13:26–39	Easter Tuesday

Hence this commentary will repeatedly have to draw on the use of Acts in the broader corpus of patristic literature and thought, Eastern as well as Western. (Whenever possible, patristic and other citations will refer to existing translations in English, on the assumption that such references will enable any interested reader to find the passage also in an edition of the original, whereas a reference to the original would not be as easily and universally helpful in the other direction.)

Particularly valuable, therefore, are the four commentaries on the book of Acts, two Eastern and two Western, that definitely date from the first half of the history of the church. Apparently these are the only four about which it is possible to speak with considerable certainty, because the commentary on Acts by "Heraclitus in the reign of Commodus and Severus" reported by Jerome,[13] to cite one instance, has been lost, and the provenance of the

10. Leon Wieseltier in Kass et al. 2004, 7–8.

11. Dupont 1964 provides a critical examination of the historical-critical literature on this question.

12. Walter Caspari in *RE* 15:131–59.

13. Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men* 46 (*NPNF*^{2} 3:372).

commentary erroneously attributed in the Patrologia graeca to the tenth-century bishop "Oecumenius" of Trikka seems impossible to identify with any precision.[14] Four commentaries is certainly a very small number, especially in comparison with all the patristic commentaries on one or another of the Gospels or on the Pauline Epistles.[15] By far the most important of these four, which is described by Johannes Quasten as "the only complete commentary on Acts that has survived from the first ten centuries,"[16] is the exposition by Saint John Chrysostom; this commentary consists of the fifty-five homilies delivered by him as archbishop of Constantinople in 400, and it occupies an entire volume of Patrologia graeca.[17] The next two commentators wrote in Latin: Cassiodorus[18] and the Venerable Bede, with both an *Exposition* and *Retractations*.[19] Coming just after the end of the first millennium was the commentary by Archbishop Theophylact of Bulgaria, who was heavily dependent on Chrysostom, as he himself gratefully acknowledges throughout.[20] In fact, all three of these latter expositions incorporate quotations from various earlier interpreters, which nowadays is usually thought to demonstrate their "lack of independence" or of creativity and originality, and therefore to count against their value,[21] but which actually adds to their value for our purposes here.

Unavoidably, therefore, the exegesis being offered in the present commentary must be acknowledged to be, in one sense, highly anachronistic, above all, for example, for not invoking an argument from silence to conclude that there could not already have been, even in oral form, a "rule of faith" with which the later baptismal, catechetical, and conciliar creeds of the early centuries of the church stand in recognizable continuity, as they themselves consistently claimed to be doing (→8:37; 20:7). Already in the formulation that is probably the earliest of all explicit postbiblical references to the Acts of the Apostles, the words of Saint Irenaeus from the second century, who is also the author who "provides the most ancient explicit attribution of the Third Gospel to Saint Luke,"[22] the book of Acts was linked directly and inseparably with the authority of the rule of faith: "It may be, indeed," wrote Irenaeus, "that it was with this view that God set forth very many Gospel truths, through Luke's instrumentality, which all should esteem it necessary to use, in order that all persons, *following his subsequent testimony, which treats upon the acts and the doctrine of the apostles, and holding the unadulterated rule of truth*, may be

14. PG 118:43–119; Beck 1959, 418.
15. K. H. Schelkle in *LTK* 3:1278–80 (with bibliography).
16. Quasten et al. 1951–86, 3:440.
17. PG 60; *NPNF*[1] 11:1–328.
18. PL 70:1381–1406.
19. PL 92:937–1032.
20. PG 125:483–1132.
21. Manitius 1911–31, 1:50 (Cassiodorus), 87 (Bede); Beck 1959, 650 (Theophylact).
22. L. Venard in *DTC* 9:971.

saved."[23] Coming from the ancient Christian writer who documented more fully than any of his contemporaries or near-contemporaries the emergence of bishop, creed, and canon as the multiple and yet single criterion (→2:42) for the tradition of the apostolic continuity,[24] Irenaeus's formulation located the study and exposition of the book of Acts in that historical and theological context.

At a time when it may sometimes seem as though any hypothesis about the New Testament, no matter how extravagant it might be, is able to claim its Warholian fifteen minutes of fame, this commentary, then, is based on what may turn out to be the most radical presupposition of all: that the church really did get it right in its liturgies, creeds, and councils—yes, and even in its dogmas. Therefore, as the title of this introduction indicates, this commentary presupposes that in the transition from "apostolic church" to "church catholic" the church somehow continued to be "apostolic," as well as both "one" and "holy" and therefore that this Nicene-Chalcedonian faith may legitimately provide an a posteriori organizing principle for the exegetical task, perhaps above all and in a special way for the Acts of the Apostles.

This transition of the early church was dramatically analyzed in another (and, by comparison, far less momentous) revolutionary transition, which took place from the first edition to the second edition of Albrecht Ritschl's *Rise of the Old Catholic Church* (*Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche*). In its first edition in 1850, Ritschl's account accepted the brilliant Hegelian hypothesis of "the Tübingen school," especially of its coryphaeus and founder Ferdinand Christian Baur: that early Catholicism as we know it from Irenaeus and other second-century sources arose as a "synthesis" out of the "antithesis" of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, to the original "thesis" of Jewish Christianity represented by Peter; that this tension, which was so vividly described in the first two chapters of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, was largely suppressed and glossed over in the official version of "the apostolic council" as carried by the fifteenth chapter of the book of Acts (→15:28; →16:4b); and therefore that the canonical Acts of the Apostles, which presented itself as a contemporary or near-contemporary account (→27:1), could not have come from any period earlier than the middle of the second century, roughly the time of Irenaeus.[25] The radical implications of this hypothesis set the terms for much of the scholarly interpretation of Acts at the middle of the nineteenth century, above all at the Protestant theological faculties of German universities, which dominated the theological scholarship of the time. But in the second edition of his book, published in 1857, Ritschl backed off from the extremes of Baur's hypothesis to a more positive assessment of the historiography of the book of Acts.[26] In that revisionist understanding

23. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.15.1 (*ANF* 1:439) (emphasis added).
24. *Chr. Trad.* 1:108–20.
25. Hodgson 1966, 205–6.
26. Hefner 1966, 12–44.

both of Acts and of its author, he was followed by one of the most influential of all modern interpreters of Acts—and of the literature and doctrine of early Christianity in its entirety—Adolf von Harnack.[27]

It is, however, an ecumenical consensus, now at any rate,[28] that theology must be firmly grounded in philology, which implies for the Acts of the Apostles the obligation of a close and careful *explication de texte* on the basis of the Greek original. This theological commentary, accordingly, would have been impossible without the painstaking philological work of the New Testament scholars whose books on the Acts of the Apostles are listed in the bibliography and are being gratefully cited throughout (and have repeatedly been used even for passages where they are not explicitly cited). Among these late-twentieth-century commentaries, three have been especially helpful: those by Charles Kingsley Barrett (1994–98), Hans Conzelmann (1987), and Luke Timothy Johnson (1992).

Because this commentary is intended to be primarily theological rather than philological, the discussion of an individual theological issue or *locus communis*, which is printed in bold type, has been concentrated at one or another particular passage of the book of Acts where that issue and doctrine are prominent, with consideration of other passages in Acts related to this discussion; and the headings of these discussions often include quotations from or references to the tradition of creeds, councils, and liturgies, as well as to the biblical text. For example, there are numerous references to the angels scattered throughout most of Acts, all the way from 1:10 to 23:8, so that discussing the doctrine in full at each location would have been cumbersome and repetitive, while discussing the peculiar angelology of any single passage in isolation from the doctrine as a whole would have been fragmentary and disconnected. Bringing together in its heading a quotation from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (art. 1) and one from the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:14), the consideration of the doctrine of angels, therefore, is concentrated at 12:7: "'Both Seen and Unseen': The Angels as 'Ministering Spirits,'" with a cross-reference to this *locus communis* (identified by → and chapter + verse) at the other passages about angels. Obviously, such a discussion could in many instances have been attached to any of several passages in Acts, and its assignment to one location rather than another is admittedly somewhat arbitrary; but this arrangement made it possible to distribute the *loci communes* evenly across the entire book. To the possible disappointment of the reader looking up an individual passage, not every single verse received its own comment; if it had, the work would, as for example Barrett 1994–98 did, easily have grown into two stout volumes. But most of the theologically significant verses have

27. Harnack 1907; Harnack 1909.

28. Dei verbum: Decree of the Second Vatican Council on Divine Revelation (*CCF* 3:650–62).

received attention, on their own or as part of one or more *loci communes* (a full list of *loci communes* is given in the table of contents).

The most celebrated application of the classical and Renaissance concept of τόποι or *loci communes* to biblical exegesis was the work of the young Philip Melanchthon, whose book under that title, published in 1521, was prepared in connection with his lectures on the Epistle to the Romans and was intended to serve not as a systematic theology, much less as a replacement for the *Summa theologica* of Saint Thomas Aquinas, but as a handbook and guide for the study of the Scripture. But because of the structure of the theological and rhetorical argument in Romans,[29] these *loci communes* easily evolved into the logical sequence of topics for a book of dogmatics, beginning from the relation between reason and revelation and going on through the Trinity to the incarnation to the atonement to justification to church and sacraments to ethics (initially seen as an integral part of dogmatics) to eschatology; and *Loci theologici* became a standard title for sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century Protestant dogmaticians, both Lutheran and Reformed, and even for some Roman Catholic theologians.[30] The sequence of theological topics here in the Acts of the Apostles, which is a historical narrative rather than an argumentative brief, is far less systematic than it is in the Epistle to the Romans and may often seem downright higgledy-piggledy. But by the time these eighty-four *loci communes* (three per chapter) have all had their say, most of the content of Christian theology has come in for attention—though not in the order to which students of systematic theology may be accustomed or which logic may seem to require. In addition, there are several, perhaps somewhat idiosyncratic, *loci* on topics not ordinarily to be found in the conventional exposition of Christian theology, such as humor (→12:13–16), religious affections (→21:13–14), due process of law (→25:16), friendship as a divine gift (→27:3), and sailing as a Christian theological metaphor (→27:24).

In keeping with its distinctive mission and in accordance with the prescription for the entire series of which it is a part, this commentary on the Acts of the Apostles is, as the editors' instructions put it, "based upon the final form of the text, taken in its canonical context." Therefore the writer of Acts—and of the Gospel to whose narrative Acts attaches itself as a continuation (1:1–2)—will throughout be referred to simply as "Saint Luke." The traditional view of his authorship is widely dispersed throughout ancient Christian writers.[31] It was summarized by Saint Jerome:

> Luke, a physician of Antioch, as his writings indicate, was not unskilled in the Greek language. An adherent of the apostle Paul, and companion of all his journeying, he wrote a *Gospel,* concerning which the same Paul says, "We send

29. Donfried 1974; Wuellner 1976.
30. Johannes Kunze in *RE* 11:570–72; A. Lang in *LTK* 6:1110–12.
31. Loisy 1920, 6–17.

> with him a brother whose praise in the gospel is among all the churches" [2 Cor. 8:18] and to the Colossians "Luke the beloved physician salutes you" [Col. 4:14] and to Timothy "Luke only is with me" [2 Tim. 4:11]. He also wrote another excellent volume to which he prefixed the title *Acts of the Apostles*, a history which extends to the second year of Paul's sojourn at Rome, that is to the fourth year of Nero, from which we learn that the book was composed in that same city.[32]

Use of that nomenclature here does imply that the author of the Third Gospel (Luke 1:1–4) was also the author of Acts (1:1), as the opening verses of the two books and the common address to Theophilus also indicate. Cross-references to the four Gospels here will, therefore, in the first instance cite the Gospel of Luke if possible, and the other three Gospels as appropriate.

But this does not, or at any rate need not, imply an answer, one way or the other, to the mooted historical-critical question of the traditional identification of the author with Paul's companion: "Luke the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14).[33] Harnack, whom "no one could accuse . . . of any prejudice whatsoever in favor of either orthodox theology or traditional views in the realm of biblical criticism"[34]—or, for that matter, in the realm of ecclesiastical dogma—nevertheless affirms the traditional identification in his *Luke the Physician*, arguing at least partly on the basis of the medical vocabulary in the Gospel and in Acts, in which he found evidence of the professional knowledge and training of a physician.[35] And the traditional identification—"the author of the two-volume work is probably Luke the physician (Col. 4:14)"[36]—persists in the scholarly literature. But Henry J. Cadbury, in a dissertation published as *The Style and Literary Method of Luke*,[37] "virtually demolished the contention that St Luke's writing betrayed any specifically medical knowledge or interests"[38] beyond what Aristophanes or Lucian or any other well-educated person could be assumed to possess at the time, thereby giving rise to the almost irresistible bon mot that "Doctor Cadbury acquired his doctor title by depriving Saint Luke of his."

According to a considerably later tradition, Luke, who is commemorated in both the Eastern and Western liturgical calendars on October 18, was not only a physician and the patron saint of physicians, but one of the first Christian iconographers and the patron saint of iconographers.[39] This identification was an application of the widely held belief that "above all Mary, mother of Jesus, may be regarded as the principal source, more or less indirect, for the account of the infancy of the Savior"[40] that is found in the first two chapters

32. Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men* 7 (*NPNF*² 3:363).
33. Haenchen 1971, 3–14 pulls together most of the available material.
34. Gasque 1975, 146.
35. Harnack 1907.
36. Hengel 1979, 66.
37. Cadbury 1920.
38. *ODCC* 259.
39. Onasch and Schnieper 1997, 187, 235.
40. L. Venard in *DTC* 9:981.

of the Gospel of Luke (→1:14). Since an icon was said to be not drawn but written (hence the term iconography), Byzantine writers, notably Andrew of Crete in the eighth century, and then writers in the West, worked out what Ernst von Dobschütz calls "a parallelism between his activity as an evangelist and as a painter," so that Luke's literary portrait of the Virgin Mary and his iconographic portrait of the Theotokos were seen as not very far apart.[41] But by extension, it seems even more appropriate to claim him also as patron saint of church historians, because he had decided, as he explains in the prologue to his Gospel, "having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account" (Luke 1:3), which is an apt thumbnail description of the two things that historians of the church still do as scholars—to research "closely" and on that basis to write up the results of their research in more or less "orderly" fashion. He did this, moreover, not only in the Gospel according to Saint Luke, about which he first wrote these words, but in the Acts of the Apostles, as a second part of his two-volume work or "diptych."[42]

The assignment to base all the commentaries in the series Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible "upon the final form of the text, taken in its canonical context," becomes unusually complicated in the case of the book of Acts—more complicated, in fact, than in the case of any other book of either the Old or the New Testament.[43] In the manuscripts and early versions, Acts presents itself to us not only with the usual collection of more or less significant textual variants (→20:28a), but with something that amounts to two distinct texts, which may in fact be two separate *editions*, even, according to a few scholars such as Friedrich Blass and Theodor Zahn, two successive editions that were both prepared by the author himself (though there is less than total agreement about which edition came first).[44] One of these—which is a major component, among others, of the Greek text underlying several of the most important translations of Acts, including the Syriac, the Old Latin, Luther's German Bible, and the Authorized ("King James") Version of the English Bible—is represented in Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis, so named because it once belonged to Calvin's colleague Theodore Beza, who gave it to the University of Cambridge; in the textual apparatus of critical editions of the Greek New Testament, Codex Bezae is identified by the siglum D. As Philip Carrington says of this recension of Acts:

> It is not merely a question of accidental variation, or of occasional correction by a well-meaning scribe, or of a little addition or alteration; it is a question of a process of revision and re-writing not very long after its composition; and in

41. Dobschütz 1899, 2:275–76; most of the early sources are compiled and critically examined in 2:267–80.

42. Marguerat 1999, 91–92; Tarazi 2001, 19.

43. Trocmé 1957, 21–27; Bruce 1990; Strange 1992.

44. Nock 1972, 2:826–27.

> the case of Acts it has been done very thoroughly. . . . It is impossible to resist the impression that this reviser knew what he was doing.[45]

It has acquired the (quite misleading) designation "Western Text," which, after several attempts to tinker with the nomenclature in various ways, is a title that has probably outlived its usefulness.[46] During the second half of the twentieth century the effort to compare the Western Text of Acts with the rest of the manuscript tradition, both philologically and theologically, evoked a substantial scholarly literature,[47] as a result of which the geographical label "Western" is recognized as having been quite inaccurate.[48] Such comparison suggested, for example, a significant distinctiveness in its treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.[49] Among the other issues in the debate is its allegedly antifeminist (→18:24–26b) prejudice.[50]

In place of the tag Western Text, however, it could, with much greater justification, be labeled *textus a patribus receptus* ("text accepted by church fathers"), and it will be so designated here (with the abbreviation TPR), because, as a leading investigator of it says:

> It is of great importance also that *most of the earliest Church Fathers* who quote the NT reflect the "Western" text substantially, such as Marcion, Tatian (= Diatessaron), Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Cyprian. Ephraem of Syria (4th century) is a notable witness for Acts. . . .
>
> "Western" readings can be identified in some abundance in early Church Fathers like Marcion, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Irenaeus, and Cyprian in the 2d century, and like Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, and even Origen in the 3d century.[51]

And, he could have added, Hilary and Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries. The title "Textus Receptus" is sometimes restricted to the influential edition of the Greek New Testament published by Robert Estienne ("Stephanus") in 1550.[52] But it can be in fact a much broader term, being used to identify not only that edition but any established text of the New Testament, whether Greek or Latin, as well as the text of Old Testament, whether Hebrew or Greek.[53] *Textus a patribus receptus*, therefore, seems to be an appropriate way

45. Carrington 1957, 1:288.
46. Eldon Jay Epp in *ABD* 6:909–12.
47. The scholarly literature and the state of the question have been carefully summarized by Epp 1966, 172–85, and for the two decades after that, by Aland 1986; see also the earlier work of Klijn 1949.
48. Hanson 1965–66.
49. Black 1981.
50. Witherington 1984.
51. Eldon Jay Epp in *ABD* 6:909–10 (emphasis added).
52. Pelikan, Hotchkiss, and Price 1996, 16–17, 102–3.
53. E. J. Revell in *ABD* 6:435.

of designating a special version of the text of the book of Acts that enjoyed such wide circulation and acceptance among ancient Christian writers as well as among later translators and exegetes.

Much of this TPR is documented throughout the books of the New Testament in the apparatus of NA[27], especially in its citations of Codex D, although without many of the patristic citations. But it has now been carefully reconstituted as a complete edition of the Greek text of Acts unto itself, with the Alexandrian Text in parallel columns, by Dominican New Testament scholar Marie-Émile Boismard of the École Biblique.[54] His edition provides thorough documentation not only from Codex D and other Greek manuscripts, but from patristic sources, both Greek and Latin, as well as from the early Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Ethiopic versions, on the basis of a rich collection of manuscripts preserved in many places (including the Ethiopian manuscripts of the Monastic Microfilm Library at Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota); for this documentation Boismard was often obliged to engage in the admittedly tricky enterprise of "retrotranslation" into Greek. Absent the wide-ranging linguistic and scholarly competence that would have been needed to criticize and revise them in detail, Boismard's reconstructions are followed here as they stand. For the purposes of this theological commentary on Acts, then, the prescription of being based on "the final form of the text, in its canonical context," seems to mean usually privileging the variant readings of this TPR where they are not altogether trivial or theologically insignificant. That is not tantamount to claiming it as *the* final form of the text, but certainly to accepting it as *one* final form—also because of its creedal passages (→8:37) and its version of the Golden Rule (15:29), neither of which can be found in other manuscript families. Therefore the English translation of Acts will usually—though not always (→18:24–26b)—be based whenever possible on the TPR (i.e., Boismard 2000), with the RSV serving as the default translation and not specifically identified where the TPR does not present any significant variants. Where there are such variants, they are translated and incorporated into the RSV quotation but under the siglum TPR, so as not to appear to be attributing the variant reading to the RSV; in some cases where the AV reflects the TPR, this translation is used and identified as such (e.g., 8:37 TPR AV).

By a similar methodological logic, quotations from the Old Testament are based on the Septuagint, which must be regarded as Saint Luke's Bible, and will usually be translated from it (i.e., from Rahlfs 1979) and identified accordingly (to avoid confusion, I use standard English verse numbers for the Old Testament—rather than the numbering systems peculiar to the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, or Vulgate). For example: when, near the beginning of his Gospel (Luke 3:4–6), Luke recounts the inaugural message of Jesus as proclaimed in the synagogue at Nazareth, he has Jesus read from the fortieth chapter of Isaiah (Isa. 40:3–5). In first-century Nazareth such a reading would certainly have

54. Boismard 2000.

been delivered in Hebrew, probably followed by a targum in Aramaic. But the block quotation in Luke is taken directly from the Septuagint, as though it had been read out in Greek. The same is true of the myriad quotations from the Psalms, Isaiah, and the other prophets that appear throughout both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts; significant parts of Acts may without exaggeration be called a catena of such quotations with specifically Christian explanations (→8:30–31). There appears to be no convincing reason to believe that the author of the Acts of the Apostles knew any Hebrew, much less, as Clement of Alexandria is said by Eusebius to have suggested, that he "carefully translated" the Epistle to the Hebrews into Greek (which would have been a formidable literary and linguistic assignment, assuming of course that Hebrews was originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic in the first place).[55] Rather, it may be concluded that he "knew Greek better than he did Hebrew," as the Venerable Bede rather gently put it.[56] The three references in Acts (21:40; 22:2; 26:14) to someone, Paul in the first two and Jesus in the third, speaking τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ mean "Aramaic" and not Hebrew, as does the reference in the Gospel of John to the three languages of the inscription on the cross of Jesus: Ἑβραϊστί, Ῥωμαϊστί, Ἑλληνιστί (John 19:20). Nor, for that matter, is there incontrovertible evidence (though there may be some indication) that the writer of Acts was acquainted with any other Greek translation from the Hebrew than the Septuagint, much less that he himself could have made such a translation or even corrected the Septuagint on his own. From this it seems to follow that here, in interpreting his book, translations into English from the Septuagint rather than from the "original" Hebrew are in order.

55. Eusebius, *Church History* 6.14.2 (*NPNF*[2] 1:261), citing Clement of Alexandria's *Hypotyposes,* which is now lost but was still known to Photius in the ninth century (Quasten et al. 1951–86, 2:16–17).

56. Bede, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* dedicatory epistle (PL 92:938).

ACTS 1

1:1 AV The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach.

The opening verse is clearly intended to be both an introduction to the present book and a cross-reference to the introduction of the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1). Chrysostom explains the cross-reference: "The Gospels . . . are a history of what Christ did and said; but the Acts, of what that 'other Comforter' [John 14:16 AV] said and did."[1] For Luke the author, whether of his Gospel or of the book of Acts, as well as for the authors of the other three Gospels, the acts of Jesus and the teachings of Jesus were inseparable, which may be suggested here grammatically by the use of τε/καί ("both/and") rather than simple καί; it is so construed in the AV's "*both* to do *and* to teach." Yet in the Epistles of Paul, where the message of "Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23) is so central (Gal. 6:14), there is a remarkable selectivity about the "doing"—and very little of the "teaching." The only things Jesus "did" to receive mention from Saint Paul anywhere were the events of Holy Week, his passion and resurrection; there are no infancy narratives, no travels through Judea and Galilee, no miracles, no controversies with his opponents. And the one and only thing Jesus "said" to be quoted verbatim anywhere in the Epistles of Paul—apart from the somewhat oblique reference in 1 Cor. 7:10–12 to what he did *not* say—also comes from Holy Week, the words of institution of the Eucharist (1 Cor. 11:23–27); there are no parables, no Sermon on the Mount, not even the Lord's Prayer, although here in Acts Paul does quote "the words of the Lord, for he himself said, 'The one who gives is blessed rather than the one who receives [μακάριος ὁ διδὼν μᾶλλον ἢ ὁ λαμβάνων]'" (20:35 TPR). The classic creeds (→8:37) followed Paul in making Jesus the teacher and the doer of deeds secondary to Jesus the incarnate, crucified, and risen Lord. They moved directly from confessing

1. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts* 1 (*NPNF*[1] 11:7).

that he "became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, became human," to declaring that he "was crucified on our behalf under Pontius Pilate,"[2] bypassing most of the content of all four Gospels. Nevertheless, the periodic effort, especially in the history of modern theology, to redress this balance by concentrating the significance of Jesus Christ almost exclusively on his teachings can easily, and even fatally, sever the unity in this phrase "both to do and to teach"—and sever both of these from the suffering of Christ.

"As the Lord Jesus Christ Himself Instructed Us": The Gospel of the Forty Days

1:2–3 TPR He chose the apostles through the Holy Spirit and commanded the preaching of the gospel, . . . for forty days appearing to them and teaching the doctrines about the kingdom of God [διδάσκων τὰ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ].

In concluding its statement of faith, which was to set the norm for the church's doctrine of the person of Christ for the subsequent millennium and a half, until long after the Protestant Reformation, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 put forth the apparently presumptuous claim that everything it was confessing—including the affirmation that the two natures of Christ "undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation [ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως]"—was "[1] just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and [2] as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and [3] as the creed of the fathers handed down to us."[3] Ultimately, these three authorities were in fact a single authority: the Holy Scriptures as Christ had interpreted and fulfilled them according to the tradition (→16:4b). "As the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us," therefore, did not refer only to the four Gospels, but also to this "gospel of the forty days" of "teaching the doctrines about the kingdom of God," just as there was believed to be an oral Torah given to Moses on Mount Sinai alongside the written Torah.[4] As Paul Nadim Tarazi says:

> **The authoritative character of Jesus' teaching is emphasized not only by calling it a "commandment" (*enteilamenos*) but also by immediately thereafter mentioning the "40 days" between the resurrection and ascension. The combination of these two terms could not help but call to the hearer's mind the giving of the Torah during the journey in the wilderness after the Exodus, when Moses spent 40 days receiving God's commandments.[5]**

2. Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed 3–4 (*CCF* 1:163).
3. Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon 18, 25–27 (*CCF* 1:181).
4. Jacob Neusner in Neusner et al. 1999, 3:1447–58.
5. Tarazi 2001, 187.

This "teaching of the gospel for forty days" (*evangelium quadraginta dierum*), which some of the Gnostics seem to have expanded to a period of eighteen months,[6] is a continuation of the instruction given by the risen Lord to his disciples. Earlier, at the conclusion of his Gospel, Luke described this instruction as having begun with the disciples at Emmaus, when, "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, [the risen but as yet unrecognized Christ] interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Its authority was then invoked by the tradition as an explanation of the puzzling differences that are so obvious between the teachings of Jesus about the kingdom of God before the resurrection, as these are presented in the four Gospels, and the structure of the church's kerygma so soon after the resurrection and ascension. The Gospels do not claim to be exhaustive, explaining quite to the contrary that "Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book" (John 20:30); and here in Acts (20:35 TPR), for example, Luke includes an important and oft-quoted saying of Jesus, whether from before the resurrection or from the "gospel of the forty days" after the resurrection, that does not appear in his Gospel or in any of the other three canonical Gospels, but is one of the agrapha:[7] "The one who gives is blessed rather than the one who receives."

Paul's account in 1 Corinthians of the several "appearings" of Christ after the resurrection ("for forty days appearing to them and teaching the doctrines about the kingdom of God"), including the appearance to himself "as to one untimely born" (ὡσπερεὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι) (1 Cor. 15:5–8)—an appearance that is narrated in greater detail three times in the book of Acts (→9:1–4), and with words spoken by Christ—makes no reference to any formal "teaching." But it is to this gospel of the forty days that the fragmentary concluding sections of the Gospels, together with this (also fragmentary) introductory section of Acts—taken all together, a body of text that is considerably shorter than the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7)—trace many of the component elements of what was to become the central teaching, worship, and structure of the church. Thus despite some earlier anticipations in the Gospels (Matt. 24:14; 26:13), it is to this period of Christ's association with his disciples and to "the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation" (Mark 16:9 variant) that the vision of a message for "all nations" (Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:47), indeed for "the whole creation" (Mark 16:15), was attributed; on the basis of this, as the rest of the book of Acts is to narrate, Peter and the twelve, and then Paul and Barnabas, would bring the message from Jerusalem to Athens (→17:18) and to Rome (→28:14). During these final encounters, their confession of Jesus Christ moved from Peter's dramatic earlier recognition of him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16) to the formula by which Thomas, in Augustine's words, "saw and touched the man, and acknowledged the God

6. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.3.2 (*ANF* 1:319).
7. Émile Mangenot in *DTC* 1:625–27.

whom he neither saw nor touched,"[8] thus, as orthodoxy read the words, confessing him as identical with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as "my Lord and my God" (ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου) (John 20:28). From this time, rather than from that covered by the main body of the Gospels, the disciples' learning "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19) can be dated, and therefore the skeletal outline of the creed, oral at first and later (much later) written down (→8:37). The Gospels ascribe to these manifestations the imperative to baptize (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16), which is, far more than the breaking of bread in the Eucharist (→20:7), the sacramental foundation of the church in the theology of Acts (→22:16), as well as in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.[9] The earlier promise and charge to Peter, which was framed in the future tense "I will build [οἰκοδομήσω] my church" and "I will give [δώσω] you the keys" (Matt. 16:18–19) and then was extended to all the disciples with verbs also in the future tense (Matt. 18:18), could now be spoken in the present tense: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send [πέμπω] you. . . . If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven [ἀφέωνται]" (John 20:21, 23). And it was in this instruction from the risen Lord that the normative method for understanding and interpreting "*all* the scriptures" was grounded (Luke 24:27), on the basis of which the church of the centuries to follow was to build the massive structure of its central theological activity, which was at its core not the construction of speculative systems but the exegesis of Scripture (→8:30–31).

As Reinhold Seeberg says of these several component elements, "these are not Old Testament or Jewish ideas; rather, they are thoughts and provocations that the disciples were convinced they had received from the Risen One."[10] The narrative of Acts, indeed the history of the early church in the following centuries, can be read as the process of making explicit what was implicit in this "gospel of the forty days," of giving ritual form and eventually written form to a tradition, attributed to none less than the risen Lord himself, that was oral in its origins and in its transmission. This certainly did not happen at once; the report in this chapter of the last exchange of question and answer between Christ and his disciples (1:6–8 TPR)—"Is it at this time that you will bring about the restoration, and when will the kingdom of Israel be?" and the answer, "No one can know the time or the seasons," the kingdom of God being the very topic that is used here in 1:3 as a summary of his instruction (→28:23)—stands as a refutation of any such simplistic notion. But it is to this dominical corpus of remembered insights and entrusted beliefs, identified specifically with the precious interval between the resurrection and the ascension, that the church would ever recur. In the second century, Irenaeus, urging that "we must keep the rule [κανών] of faith unswervingly," summoned

8. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 121.5 (*NPNF*[1] 7:438).
9. Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed 10 (*CCF* 1:163).
10. Seeberg 1953, 1:75–79.

his reader back to these very components of the faith.[11] In the third century, Cyprian of Carthage strung together in his *Testimonies* hundreds of passages that he explained in accordance with the rule of faith, as the risen Christ had commanded.[12] And in the fourth century, Athanasius employed this normative hermeneutic to expound key passages of Scripture in defending the Nicene faith against Arianism.[13]

1:4–5 TPR Which, he said, you heard from my mouth.

Within the narrower context of Luke-Acts, "the promise of the Father which you heard from my mouth" here refers explicitly to passages such as Luke 12:12, "the Holy Spirit will teach you," and it anticipates the account of Pentecost in the following chapter (→2:1). But within the broader context of the four Gospels as an entirety, it may be taken as a reference to the closing discourses "from the mouth" of Jesus, which are set down most fully not in any of the Synoptics, but in the Gospel of John (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13–15). The command "not to depart from Jerusalem" sets up the chiaroscuro of a narrative that in succeeding chapters would cover the vast territory of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean world and would find its intellectual and philosophical climax in Athens (→17:18) and then its political and historical climax in Rome (→28:14).

1:6–8 TPR "Lord, is it at this time that you will bring about the restoration [ἀποκατασταθήσῃ], and when will the kingdom of Israel be?" . . . "No one can know the time or the seasons. . . . And you will be witnesses to me."

The verb attributed to the disciples here, "to bring about the restoration" (ἀποκαθίστημι), is connected to the noun "universal restoration" (ἀποκατάστασις πάντων) (3:21 NJB) and may be an anticipation of its use later (→3:21). "Witnesses" here is used in the dual sense of "eyewitnesses" and "witness-bearers" (→2:31).

1:10 Like the "two men . . . in dazzling apparel" in Luke's telling of the Easter story (Luke 24:4), these were not "men" at all, but angels (→12:7).

"He Went Up, He Is Coming Again": Ascension and Second Coming

1:11 This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

11. Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching* 3–6 (SVS 41–44).
12. Cyprian, *Testimonies* (*ANF* 5:507–57).
13. Athanasius, *Discourses against the Arians* 1–3 (*NPNF*² 4:303–432).

In the Epistles of Saint Paul, when they are compared with the Gospels, the resurrection of Christ and the ascension of Christ sometimes seem to be conflated.[14] For example, in the formula "therefore God has highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9), which may have come from an earlier hymn or creed, it is not clear which of the two is meant or whether both are meant or even whether there is any distinction between them at all. His great chapter (1 Cor. 15) on the resurrection of Christ (→2:31) and on the general resurrection of the dead (→23:8) not only argues for the resurrection on a variety of grounds, including scriptural exegesis (1 Cor. 15:54–55), early Christian baptismal practice (1 Cor. 15:29), and analogies from nature (1 Cor. 15:37–42), but chronicles the appearances of the resurrected Christ, whether this chronicling is intended as historical evidence or not (→26:26): "He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me" (1 Cor. 15:5–8). But this catalog does not make any distinction of kind, only a distinction of time, between all those appearances before the ascension and the one to Paul on the road to Damascus (→9:1–4), which came after the ascension, followed as this appearance was also by other appearances of the risen Christ throughout the narrative of Acts (→16:9). By contrast, the chronological sequence of Luke's "unsentimental, almost uncannily austere"[15] narrative, like the chronological sequence of the eventual creeds (→8:37), clearly distinguishes between them. The ascension of Christ also appears at the close of Luke's Gospel (Luke 24:50–51), but in much briefer form and without the accompanying promise of the second coming.

With this equation between the Christ who came and the Christ who is to come, Christianity becomes once more—after a brief interval of "realization" during which it could be said that "the kingdom of God has come [ἔφθασεν]" (Luke 11:20) and that it is present "in the midst of you" (ἐντὸς ὑμῶν) (Luke 17:21)—a religion of waiting:[16] "In the Resurrection they saw the end, but not the beginning, and in the Ascension they saw the beginning, but not the end."[17] Thus the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed concludes its recital of what he was and did with the affirmation: "He is coming again with glory to judge the living and the dead; his kingdom will have be no end."[18] This perspective necessitated, already in the New Testament and then in the early centuries of the church, distinguishing among the messianic promises of the prophets (→8:30–31) between those that had come true in the historical birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and those that would come true only at his "second"

14. See the overall discussions in Davies 1958 and Lohfink 1971.
15. Haenchen 1971, 151.
16. Erich Grässer in Kremer 1979, 99–127.
17. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts* 2 (*NPNF*[1] 11:13).
18. Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed 7 (*CCF* 1:163).

coming.[19] Most of the time, the language of the prophets speaks of "the day of his coming" (ἡμέρα εἰσόδου αὐτοῦ) (Mal. 3:2 LXX) in the singular, as though there were only one coming. This has compelled the exegetes of the church to distinguish between the "first coming," in which the prophecy of Isaiah about the suffering servant (Isa. 53) had already been fulfilled (→8:30–31), and the "second coming," prior to which the prophecy of Isaiah about the wolf and the lamb feeding together (Isa. 65:25) would not be fulfilled, and to assign the various prophecies to one or the other of these.

By now, the period between the beginnings of the messianic hope in the people of Israel and the (first) coming of Christ, when his followers felt able to say that the time of waiting had ended, has shrunk to one-half or even one-third of the period since that first coming. Therefore the Christian church has been waiting for the Messiah much longer than Israel had been waiting for the Messiah when it was told, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). The history of the church suggests that Christians are not very good at such waiting, as they have oscillated between an occasional eschatological fervor that stands on tiptoe and asks eagerly (and repeatedly), "Lord, is it at this time that you will bring about the restoration, and when will the kingdom of Israel be?" (1:6 TPR), and their more customary torpor, which has needed to be reminded yet again "that the end of the world comes suddenly," as Cyprian put it on the basis of this passage from Acts.[20] The relation between 1 Thessalonians (4:15–5:4) and 2 Thessalonians (2:1–12), and between the interpretations of each, documents this oscillation.

Therefore Christians need to be reminded that though the usual contrast may be accurate up to a point, it is not adequate to contrast Jewish and Christian belief as the difference between expectation and realization: both of them celebrate the memory and the present reality of "the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people" (Luke 1:68) in the exodus and in the incarnation; and both of them still await the coming of the Messiah.

1:13 Although the sequence of the names of the apostles in the TPR is the same as the one reflected in the RSV and other versions, some other manuscripts read not "John and James and Andrew," but "James and John and Andrew," acknowledging the special standing of James, as this would make itself evident at the apostolic council in Jerusalem (15:13–21). Some manuscripts even read: "Andrew and James and John," reflecting the unique position of Andrew as "the first-called" (πρωτόκλητος),[21] which, because Andrew was remembered as the missionary to the Black Sea region and therefore eventually as the apostle to Constantinople, was to take on church-political significance, conferring on Constantinople its own "primacy" alongside Old Rome.[22] What the lists of

19. *Chr. Trad.* 1:123–32.
20. Cyprian, *Testimonies* 3.89 (*ANF* 5:553).
21. Sophocles 1870, 958.
22. Dvornik 1958.

the names of the apostles in Acts all have in common—and what they share with all the other rosters of disciples and apostles throughout the New Testament—is that the name Peter always appears first (→5:29a).

Mary the Theotokos

1:14 Together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus.

The RSV rendering of σύν in 1:14 as "together with," rather than simply "with," as in the AV, serves to emphasize association rather than mere accompaniment, and therefore the solidarity of the disciples then, and of the church ever since, with Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as the unique and special place of the one who on the basis of Luke's Gospel has been saluted as "blessed . . . among women" (Luke 1:42) in the Christian community from the very beginning. While the Apostle Paul does not mention the virginal conception of Christ and refers to Mary the Theotokos only indirectly (Gal. 4:4) and never by name, much less by that later title (→19:26), Luke invokes her name more often, and allots more space to her story, than the other evangelists, including John, into whose care she was entrusted by Christ on the cross (John 19:26–27), or all the other New Testament writers combined. On the basis of his repeated statements that "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19, 51), it is taken to be evident, to "anyone who accepts the total historicity of this account," that "above all Mary, mother of Jesus, may be regarded as the principal source, more or less indirect, for the account of the infancy of the Savior" in his first two chapters,[23] or even that Luke based those chapters and his word portrait of the Blessed Virgin Mary on personal interviews with her. His identification of his historical source in the tradition "delivered to us by those who from the beginning [ἀπ' ἀρχῆς] were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke 1:2) would then be above all a reference to her. Specifically, she was the single eyewitness "from the [*very*] beginning" and the preeminent human actor for his narratives of the annunciation, nativity, and infancy, with their translationlike Greek (especially in the Magnificat) and their many unique and intimate details, which would have been known to her but to no one else (Luke 1–2). It was a recognition of this privileged position when, in the iconographic tradition, Luke was eventually portrayed (often also in icons) as having written the original icon of her, drawn from life.[24] Again in this verse, he singles out only her name, along with those of the (eleven) apostles and "*the* women" (the Greek article being distinctive of the TPR, although the RSV does employ it in English), as those who "with one accord devoted themselves to prayer" (→4:24–30).

23. L. Venard in *DTC* 9:981.
24. Onasch and Schnieper 1997, 187, 235.

As part of the typological interpretation of the Old Testament (→8:30–31), there developed a parallelism between the First and the Second Eve, corresponding to the parallelism in the Pauline Epistles between the First and the Second Adam (Rom. 5:12–15; 1 Cor. 15:21–22):[25] Eve sinned by voluntarily disobeying the word of God (Gen. 3:1–6); Mary believed and obeyed it by her voluntary declaration, "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). By the time this parallelism between Eve and Mary became explicit and was written down, which happened sometime in the second century,[26] it was not being proposed as a novelty or argued as a point of controversy, but appears to be taken for granted as a topic with which readers could be expected to be already familiar. Similarly, the earliest written references to the title "Mother of God" (θεοτόκος) for her are ambiguous, being identified by the lexicon as "interpolated" or "if authentic."[27] But the use of this term by Alexander of Alexandria, who died only three years after the Council of Nicea, was almost matter-of-fact;[28] and not long afterward, the emperor Julian "the Apostate" criticized his onetime fellow believers for constantly invoking the title "Theotokos."[29] That was why the Council of Ephesus in 431 felt entitled to claim, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, that in promulgating it, it was doing so "not by way of addition but in the manner of a full statement [οὐκ ἐν προσθήκης μέρει, ἀλλ' ἐν πληροφορίας εἴδει], even as we have received and possess it from of old from the Holy Scriptures and from the tradition of the holy fathers."[30] "In the icons of the Ascension," therefore, "the Mother of God occupies a very special position. Placed directly below the ascending Savior, she is as it were the axis of the whole composition." Thus "the principal place in them is given to a group consisting of the Mother of God, angels and apostles, whereas the principal figure, the ascending Savior Himself, is almost always much smaller than the other persons depicted and is as it were secondary in relation to them."[31]

The reference here to the "brothers" of Jesus has also been seen to call for some explanation, because it seems to contradict the references to Mary as ever virgin (ἀειπάρθενος, *semper virgo*), which are early though not primitive (at any rate in the written sources as these have come down to us).[32] The most detailed patristic explanation of the title "brothers," which was shared and even quoted by Luther, comes from Saint Jerome. As the translator of the Bible into Latin and as probably the greatest biblical scholar in the ancient church after Origen,

25. Daniélou 1960, 40–41.

26. Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching* 33 (SVS 61); *Against Heresies* 5.19.1 (*ANF* 1:547).

27. *PGL* 639.

28. Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistle to Alexander of Constantinople* 12 (PG 18:569).

29. Julian, *Against the Galileans* 262 (LCL 157:399).

30. Formula of Union of the Council of Ephesus (*CCF* 1:169).

31. Ouspensky and Lossky 1999, 194–95.

32. Among the earliest, Athanasius, *Discourses against the Arians* 2.70 (*NPNF*[2] 4:386 and note).

Jerome certainly knew this and the other New Testament passages referring to "brothers of Jesus" at least as well as the gainsayers of his time (and of our time); but he argued against Helvidius that "in Holy Scripture there are four kinds of brethren—by nature, race, kindred, love," so that passages such as this did not necessarily contradict the perpetual virginity of Mary.[33]

1:15 TPR Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples.

Although the TPR version of several crucial passages does present interesting variations, the primacy of Peter in these early chapters is evident (→5:29a), raising more questions than it answers about the primitive structure of "faith and order" in the church (→6:2–4).

1:16–20 The scripture had to be fulfilled.

This is the first of many references throughout Acts to the "fulfillment," and therefore to the normative interpretation, of this or that Old Testament Scripture (→8:30–31). The difference between the remorse of Judas and the repentance of Peter, together with the recurring use of phraseology such as "this scripture *had to* [δεῖ] be fulfilled" (1:16 TPR) gave rise, in Augustine and Calvin and in many lesser theological minds, to deeply troubling reflection about the relation between divine foreknowledge and human free will (→13:48): Could it be, in the inscrutable mystery of the ways of God (Rom. 11:33), that Judas Iscariot had been divinely predestined both to his shocking act of betrayal and to his own terrible end?

1:21–22 In his Gospel (Luke 6:13), Luke recorded how Jesus "called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles," and their names are recorded. From 1:15, which in the TPR reads "among the *disciples*" rather than "among the brethren," and then from this sentence and from the usage here in Acts (→6:2–4), it is clear that the company of those with the title "disciples," which could also "increas[e] in number" (6:1) and could include relative neophytes (19:1–7) as well as woman disciples (→18:24–26b), was much more inclusive than the twelve "apostles." With the apostasy of Judas, the integrity of the twelve had to be restored, perhaps because of the typology of the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:28–30). These verses list, in almost technical language, the credentials that a candidate had to possess to be added to the other apostles, beginning with being "a male" (ἀνήρ) (→18:24–26b); and Matthias possessed the credentials. But did Paul qualify as an apostle on this basis? On some later lists and in some later depictions of the twelve, the two groups of six are headed by Peter and by Paul, with no mention of Matthias.[34] Paul's claim to be "an apostle" because he had "seen Jesus our Lord"

33. Jerome, *Against Helvidius* 16–18 (*NPNF*² 6:341–43).
34. Onasch and Schnieper 1997, 188–89.

(1 Cor. 9:1) on the Damascus road (→9:1–4; →16:9), even though he had not "known Christ after the flesh" (2 Cor. 5:16 AV), did make him "a witness with us to his resurrection" in a special way, which was shared by Stephen, though only in the hour of his death (7:56). But "witness to his resurrection" here as elsewhere seems to refer primarily to those in any generation who bear witness to it—"witnesses *to me*" (μοι μάρτυρες), the TPR has at 1:8, not μου μάρτυρες ("my witnesses")—rather than only to those of the first generation who had witnessed it (→2:31).

1:23–24 TPR And he put forward two . . . and he prayed and said.

This is one of the many striking textual variants included in the TPR of Acts: καὶ ἔστησεν (rather than ἔστησαν, "they put forward") δύο and καὶ προσευξάμενος εἶπεν (rather than προσευξάμενοι εἶπαν, "they prayed and said"). This use of the singular would locate in only one of the apostles, presumably in Peter who had been speaking (1:15), the authority for nominating the candidates to fill the office vacated by Judas and for praying on behalf of all, although both textual traditions attribute the casting of lots to all the apostles—the TPR reads ἔδωκαν κλήρους αὐτῶν rather than αὐτοῖς—and the ultimate decision remains exclusively a divine one in either textual tradition, through the casting of lots, which was seen not as a matter of "dumb luck" (τύχη) but as a revelation of the will of God.[35]

1:24 With its reminiscences of passages such as "O Lord, thou hast proved me and known me" (κύριε, ἐδοκίμασάς με καὶ ἔγνως με) (Ps. 139:1 LXX), the uniquely Christian adjective "knower of hearts" (καρδιογνώστης) identifies one of the distinctive attributes of "the living God" (→15:8–9), who has "set . . . our secret sins in the light of thy countenance" (Ps. 90:8).

1:25 NEB Which Judas abandoned to go where he belonged.

This could mean simply "where he deserved to go" or, more ominously, "where he was intended to go" (→13:48).

1:26 TPR And he was numbered among the twelve apostles.

With δώδεκα rather than the ἕνδεκα of the manuscript tradition underlying the RSV, the TPR is employing "the twelve" as a technical title (→5:29a). Augustine (in Latin) uses, and seems to reflect, a compromise reading between the two: "as the twelfth, together with the eleven apostles" (*cum undecim apostolis duodecimus*).[36]

35. Beardslee 1960–61.
36. Boismard 2000, 59.