

Preface

Many find the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles (ApocActs) fascinating. To others they are strange, even objectionable. I belong to the former group. During the last four decades these texts have constituted one of the three legs upholding my research. The others are ancient popular narrative, broadly construed, and the canonical Acts. The ApocActs are, among other considerations, successors of the canonical book. One of the challenges scholars face when comparing two or more writings is to emphasize both the similarities and the differences. The comparative glass is always half empty and half full. Otherwise stated: when the consensus emphasizes differences, argue for similarities, and vice-versa. (And hope for a great reward in heaven.)

The differences among the so-called major ApocActs, those of Andrew, John, Paul, Peter, and Thomas (*AAndr*, *AJn*, *APl*, *APet*, *AThom*) are substantial, as are their similarities. Most agree that the *APl* is the earliest; it is, in any case, most like the canonical book. This commentary takes the view that the resemblance is not accidental: *APl* knew the canonical book. Not surprisingly, the book before you views *APl* through the lens of the Pauline legacy and in the context of ancient popular narrative. The past ten years of my career have been devoted to Acts and the Pauline legacy and the various components of this work seem, at least to me, to have cohered. The culmination of the former is *Pervo, Acts*, while *The Making of Paul* represents the latter.

Another apology stems from contrary impulses. The ideal commentator on *APl* will know a good half-dozen ancient languages quite well and roam happily through vales of manuscripts. This commentator is not a skilled paleographer; his Coptic had to be reviewed for the project. For Syriac, Armenian, and Ethiopic he has had to rely upon the work of others. The first full and critical text of *APl* has yet to appear in the handsome CCSA series produced by Brepols. Willy Rordorf, aided by others, will be its editor. Upon his labors, in so far as they are known to date, and those of

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others, I am gratefully reliant. Here English readers will have, for the first time, a translation of all known parts of *APL*, as well as the first commentary upon that text.

In preparation for this project a number of papers were prepared and read to the Upper Midwest Region of the Society of Biblical Literature, a conference on the Centennial of Adolph Harnack's *Mission und Ausbreitung* (Berlin, 2010), The Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, the local and national Society of Biblical Literature, and the Minneapolis Area Patristics Society. Work on this ms. was completed in February 2012.

One of the benefits of working with the Christian Apocrypha is the immediate appreciation one has for laborers of earlier generations. The books of Carl Schmidt and Léon Vouaux have been at my side throughout this expedition. Other venerable patriarchs, as it were, include Theodor Zahn, Adolf v. Harnack, and M. R. James. Turning to the recent, I am particularly grateful to the late François Bovon, James Dunkly, Peter Dunn, Julian Hills, Michael Hollerich, Niklas Holzberg, Amy-Jill Levine, Dennis MacDonald, Judith Perkins, Mark Reasoner, Clare Rothschild, Willy Rordorf, and Phillip Sellew.

Note. Citations given under the author's surname or surname and one word only are to be found in the short titles' list following the abbreviations.

Each section of the text includes Comments, Notes, and a distinct bibliography. Comments provide a narrative overview. The notes are largely restricted to technical points, such as terms, and comments on the text. The latter seek to serve two purposes: to demonstrate the instability of the text and, more interestingly, to provide data for the history of *APL*'s reception.

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