

THE ACCS NEWSLETTER

Updating Members of
the Ancient Christian Commentary
on Scripture Continuity Program

VOLUME I
SPRING/SUMMER 2001

A CONVERSATION WITH TOM ODEN

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep subscribers to the ACCS continuity program updated on the latest developments in the whole Ancient Christian Commentary project. Toward that end, IVP's Jeff Crosby recently asked several questions of ACCS general editor Tom Oden.

Q: *THE ANCIENT CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON SCRIPTURE series just completed its second year in publication, with six volumes now in print. Can you give us some sense of the response you've heard from readers?*



A: The response has been favorable beyond all our expectations. I have been surprised at the number of times people have said to me that they are using a particular volume for devotional use, by their bedside or for daily meditation. I have been surprised at the number of continuing subscribers we have, "now above seven thousand," which is far more than we had expected. I have been surprised at the extremely favorable reviews we have received. The few critical reviews we have received have been taken very seriously and adjustments made where possible. I have been surprised at how widely among diverse communions (Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant) this series is being received, appreciated and used.

Q: *Stepping back just a bit, can you give our readers a "behind the scenes" glimpse at how the ACCS even came to be?*

A: My graduate students at Drew were the first to impress upon me the urgent need for such a series. I had thought of it many times before, as early as the mid-seventies, but never conceived that it might fall to me to take leadership in it. At the invitation of Drew University I called together a group of scholars in 1993 to make an appraisal of the need and a feasibility assessment. Once having

taken that step, things began quickly to fall into place: the series was needed and could be done. From then on, my life has been almost totally absorbed in this project.

Q: *What were your goals, your hopes for the series?*

A: My goal was to provide an accessible means for anyone to read the Bible in concert with the mind of the believing church in its earliest period of scriptural teaching. I wanted pastors to have access to the ancient exegetes in their preaching, and lay persons to be able to have a sense that the Bible they are now reading has been read before by faithful people, and that earlier readings, particularly from a time when there was greater consensus in the worldwide Christian community on scriptural interpretation, would bear fruitfully upon our present readings. I hoped for a series that had volume editors of the highest competence from worldwide scholars from all Christian communions. I hoped for a readable series, presented in a reader-friendly style. I hoped that we in our translations could do sufficient justice to the depth of content and pungency of style of the classical Christian exegetes. I hoped that this would be from the outset a truly ecumenical effort including the best Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant scholars and translators.

Q: *Which of those aspirations have, in your estimation, been realized?*

A: I have read every line of every volume published, sometimes many times over, and I am deeply gratified at the overall result. We are constantly refining the details of the project as we go along. My original hopes have been more than fulfilled. Nothing of this magnitude comes off to everyone's satisfaction in some particulars, but I must say that what we have done thus far has stood up well in the face of the very few critics we have had.

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A CONVERSATION, CONT'D.

Q: *What have you and Christopher Hall found to be, as series general editors, the most challenging—and the most rewarding— aspects of this undertaking?*

A: The most challenging volume to edit has been Matthew. It turned out to be much longer than we had expected. Its selections were chosen by one of our most distinguished volume editors, arguably the world's most renowned expert on patristic exegesis, Prof. Manlio Simonetti of the University of Rome and the Augustinian Patristic Institute. We were offered a feast of selections from the greatest of ancient commentators, many of whose works had never been translated. We are now moving toward the end of the translation and editorial work on Matthew, and I think the readers will be rewarded by all the special efforts that have gone into this commentary.

Q: *Can you describe the process your volume editors have used in mining for the best of the patristic writings on Scripture?*

A: This process is more fully described in the general introduction to *Genesis 1-11*, but the gist of it is this: Our research teams executed Boolean searches in the Latin and Greek texts, using key Latin or Greek words or combinations of words, in order to identify scriptural references or allusions in the ancient Christian writers. These were then sent to the volume editors to be considered for

potential selection based upon our editorial criteria. The editors were responsible for surveilling all the homiletic and complete or partial commentary materials that were available, and for translating these texts into English, excepting those that were already sufficiently and adequately translated. This leaves us with a huge data base of “hits” from our computer searches, much larger than we were able to include in the printed volume. We hope to find an appropriate way to make these digitalized texts available at some future time, but that will only be dealt with after we have the printed version in hand. Meanwhile, we work diligently to produce the remaining volumes. We are also producing an original languages version of the ACCS, which is being used for our international translations into Spanish, German, Chinese, Russian, Italian and Arabic.

Q: *The writings on the Gospel According to St. Matthew are extensive and will actually be published in two volumes. Can you comment on Simonetti's work on Matthew, which is scheduled for publication in the autumn of 2001?*

A: In addition to what I have already said, I think the reader will be especially blessed upon reading these twin volumes. We benefit by having some of the most extensive homilies and commentaries, in some cases full and highly circumspect commentaries, on this Gospel, in contrast, for example, to Mark's Gospel. Scholars may be surprised at how interested the ancient Christian writers were in textual criticism, language analy-

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ACCS: Old Testament I: Genesis I-II Available April, 2001

The rich tapestry of the creation narrative in the early chapters of Genesis proved irresistible to the thoughtful, reflective minds of the church fathers. Within them they found the beginning threads from which to weave a theology of creation, fall and redemption. Following their mentor, the apostle Paul, they explored the profound significance of Adam as a type of Christ, the second Adam.

The six days of creation proved especially attractive among the fathers as a subject for commentary, with Basil the Great and Ambrose producing well-known Hexaemorons. Similarly, Augustine devoted

portions of five works to the first chapter of Genesis. As in previous volumes within the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, the range of comment contained in this volume—edited by Andrew Louth, professor of patristic and Byzantine studies in the department of theology, University of Durham, in England—spans from the first century to the eighth and from East to West, from Greek and Latin speakers to Syriac. *lii + 188 pages, cloth, 0-8308-1471-X, \$39.99.* ■



FROM THE PUBLISHER

As the in-house editor for the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, I welcome the opportunity to share with you some perspective on the series and what lies ahead. Undertaking a project of this size and scope provides many a challenge to the research team at Drew University and to us as a publishing house. As I often tell the hard-working graduate assistants at the ACCS office at Drew, the twenty-ninth volume will be the easiest! It is impossible to anticipate all the potential difficulties of producing a comprehensive set like this. We continually learn and make adjustments as we go.

For example, we have long awaited and anticipated the volume on Matthew from Manlio Simonetti. Simonetti is one of the foremost patristic scholars in the world today, and so we were delighted when we persuaded him to take on this volume. A native Italian speaker, however, he only agreed on the condition that the ACCS research team take on the responsibility for translating his Greek and Latin extracts from the fathers into English. As it turned out, few of these selections had been translated before, and so the team was left with a monumental effort. Ill health slowed the progress of the principal translator of these selections in the early stages, and so the work was finally turned over to others, who have now completed their work. Imagine my dismay, however, when I discovered that the manuscript was more than twice the optimal size for the series.

At first, I thought it might be easy just to cut some selections, reluctant as I was to do that after the more than two years of work it took to complete the translation. But I quickly discovered that trimming the selections would not be at all easy. There was little repetition and much of value to be found in the material selected. And truth to tell, the early fathers had much more to say about Matthew than the other Gospels. So, in the end, we decided to produce two volumes on Matthew, increasing the number of anticipated volumes to twenty-eight.

You will be glad to know, as are we, that we appear to be reaching a time when several of the volume editors are completing their

work all at once. In the early stages of the project, we were continually facing delays as busy volume editors found it difficult to meet our original schedules. Now we hope to be able to keep a good flow moving through our production processes. *Genesis 1-11* is well underway, with *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* to follow. The two volumes on Matthew should then appear in quick succession in October and November.

It is a privilege to work on this series, which has stimulated so much interest and offers such opportunities for growth to the church and to individuals. My [CONT'D. NEXT PAGE](#)



PRAISE FOR THE ACCS

“This series will perform a major service to the cause of ecumenism.”

AVERY DULLES, S.J.
Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society,
Fordham University

“For the ongoing ecumenical conversation, and the accurate application of early Christian thought, and the current hermeneutical debate as well, the Ancient Christian Commentary will prove itself to be a really indispensable resource.”

J. I. PACKER
Board of Governors Professor of Theology,
Regent College

“It is hard to think of a more worthy ecumenical project to be undertaken by InterVarsity Press.”

BRUCE M. METZGER
Professor of New Testament, Emeritus,
Princeton Theological Seminary

“We are pleased to witness publication of the ACCS series. It is most beneficial for us to learn how the ancient Christians, especially the saints of the church who proved through their lives their devotion to God and his Word, interpreted Scripture.”

METROPOLITAN THEODOSIUS
Primate, Orthodox Church in America

A CONVERSATION, CONT'D.

sis, contextualizing texts, and literary and rhetorical analysis of texts—interpretive competencies that we sometimes wrongly ascribe only to modern interpreters.

Q: *The first Old Testament volumes of the ACCS will be releasing in April and August of 2001. What can readers expect to find as your volume editors release their works on the Old Testament volumes?*

A: Volume I of the OT commentary, *Genesis 1-11*, has been edited by Professor Andrew Louth of Durham, with the assistance of Marco Conti. This volume will demonstrate to modern readers how seriously the early Christian writers took each and every narrative and passage of OT Scripture. These passages in the early chapters of Genesis are among those most fully and explicitly commented upon by patristic exegetes. The modern reader will be astonished at the rich quality of exegesis of the creation narratives and early biblical history. The same goes for Professor Joseph Lienhard's editing of *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*, except for the understandable fact that some few passages of Leviticus were only sparsely commented upon by ancient Christian writers, as one might expect. Joseph Lienhard has made a very careful and illuminating selection of sources that will be pertinent in unexpected ways to contemporary Bible study.

Q: *What have you found to be most surprising as you've worked with these historic texts and introduced them to a twenty-first-century audience through the ACCS?*

A: How pertinent they remain to contemporary life. How precisely they were often capable of making distinctions still helpful to Scripture interpretation. How profoundly their lives have been shaped by the Holy Spirit. ■

FROM THE PUBLISHER, CONT'D.

reference library for patristic study has grown as I have tried to keep pace in helping our team make these volumes as clear and accurate as possible. We stand at a privileged place in history where we can draw from these rich resources. Thank you for your interest in and support of the series. ■

JIM HOOVER, *Associate Editorial Director, InterVarsity Press*

ACCS VOLUMES

Next Available:

GENESIS 1-11 Edited by Andrew Louth.
lii + 188 pages, cloth, 1471, \$39.99 (available April 2001)

EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY
Edited by Joseph T. Lienhard.
400 pages, cloth, 0-8308-1487-6, \$39.99 (available August 2001)

Currently Available:

MARK Edited by Thomas C. Oden and
Christopher A. Hall. *xxvii + 281 pages, cloth, 1487, \$39.99*

ROMANS Edited by Gerald Bray.
xxviii + 404 pages, cloth, 1491, \$39.99

1-2 CORINTHIANS Edited by Gerald Bray.
xxiv + 348 pages, cloth, 1492, \$39.99

GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS
Edited by Mark J. Edwards. *xxvi + 322 pages, cloth, 1493, \$39.99*

COLOSSIANS, 1-2 THESSALONIANS, 1-2 TIMOTHY,
TITUS, PHILEMON Edited by Peter Gorday.
xxxiv + 346 pages, cloth, 1494, \$39.99

JAMES, 1-2 PETER, 1-3 JOHN, JUDE
Edited by Gerald Bray. *xxx + 288 pages, cloth, 1496, \$39.99*

Forthcoming:

GENESIS 12-50 Edited by Mark Sheridan
(available December 2001)

JOSHUA, JUDGES, RUTH, 1-2 SAMUEL
Edited by John R. Franke

1-2 KINGS, 1-2 CHRONICLES, EZRA, NEHEMIAH,
ESTHER Edited by J. Ligon Duncan III

JOB Edited by Anders Bergquist

PSALMS 1-50 Edited by Craig Blaising & Carmen Hardin

PSALMS 51-150 Edited by Quentin Wesselschmidt

PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, SONG OF SOLOMON
Edited by J. Robert Wright

ISAIAH 1-39 Edited by John Sailhamer & Steve McKinion

ISAIAH 40-66 Edited by Mark Elliott

JEREMIAH, LAMENTATIONS
Edited by Dean O. Wenthe

EZEKIEL, DANIEL
Edited by Kenneth Stevenson & Thomas McCollough

THE TWELVE PROPHETS
Edited by Alberto Ferreiro *(available March 2002)*

MATTHEW 1-13
Edited by Manlio Simonetti *(available October 2001)*

MATTHEW 14-28
Edited by Manlio Simonetti *(available November 2001)*

LUKE Edited by Arthur Just

JOHN Edited by George Dragas

ACTS Edited by Francis Martin

HEBREWS Edited by Philip D. W. Krey & Eric Heen

REVELATION Edited by William Weinrich