

THE ACCS NEWSLETTER

Updating Members of
the Ancient Christian Commentary
on Scripture Continuity Program

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A WORD FROM TOM ODEN

Jeff Crosby, IVP's director of sales and marketing, recently had a chance to ask series editor Tom Oden a few questions about the most recent developments in the ongoing production of the ACCS.

ON NEW TESTAMENT VOLUME 1a, MATTHEW 1-13:

CROSBY: It's been said that Matthew stands out as a favorite biblical text of patristic commentators. Why is this so?

ODEN: It was often the first book commented upon. More so it was regarded by the patristic writers as the chief introduction to gospel narrative. While Mark was skipped over as a subject of detailed commentary, Matthew was not.

CROSBY: We'll be publishing two volumes on the Gospel According to Matthew. There must have been a wealth of patristic writings to sift through.

ODEN: The sheer quantity of material from Origen, Chrysostom, Hilary, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great is staggering. One of the most important sources previously untranslated into English is the anonymous work usually called *Opus Imperfectum in Matthaeum*. There is a great deal of material in Theodoret and Theodore of Mopsuestia and Chromatius that has not been easily accessible previously. We at first thought that we could publish Matthew in a single volume but later came to the conclusion that the quality and quantity of the Matthew material necessitated two volumes.

CROSBY: In the introduction to the first Matthew volume, Manlio Simonetti speaks of Origen as an "innovator" for his commentary on Matthew. Can you identify the ways in which his commentary on this Gospel was innovative?

ODEN: Origen was the first to take apart an entire Gospel text sentence by sentence, and in many cases word by word. He was among the first to provide an extensive typological interpretation of New Testament references to the Old Testament. He was pretty consistently interested in setting forth both the plain sense of the text and its spiritual interpretation, but of course, his main focus was often on the spiritual interpretation.

CROSBY: What special insights did Manlio Simonetti bring to the project as editor of the two volumes on Matthew?



ODEN: Professor Simonetti (of the University of Rome and the Augustinian Patristic Institute) is generally acknowledged as the leading interpreter of patristic exegesis in the world. He has extensive knowledge of the contextual background of the New Testament and patristic texts, and of the

wide range of patristic authors that comment on the texts. The ACCS is indeed very fortunate to have his vast experience and insight on these two crucial volumes.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PATRISTIC COMMENTARY
ON THE OLD TESTAMENT:

CROSBY: In the minds of many, the church fathers seemed to focus their commentary on the New Testament, but in reality there is a wealth of rich and valuable commentary on Old Testament passages. Can you make a general comment on the value of the patristic commentary on the books of the Old Testament and what you've found as your volume editors have conducted their work?

ODEN: The principle was established very early in Christian history, and especially formulated after the challenges of Marcion, that

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TOM ODEN, CONT'D.

the Old Testament and the New Testament were equally canonical Scripture to be read in church services. A quick glance at ancient Christian iconography makes it clear how important were the Old Testament narratives for understanding the New. We too expected to find some thin spots in patristic comment on Old Testament passages, but this has not been found to be the case as a whole. In fact, viewed quantitatively, there are far more lines of patristic commentary on the Old than the New Testament. And there are many Old Testament passages that are commented on just as intensively as those most actively commented on in the New Testament. Compare the quantity of commentary on Genesis 2 with Romans 5 and you will see that they are comparable. The patristic writers did not neglect the attempt to show how Old Testament history and promises are fulfilled in the New. ■

PRAISE FOR THE ACCS

“The value of the Ancient Christian Commentary series lies in the recovery of a vigorous tradition, not in foreclosing other approaches to Scripture.”

PRO ECCLESIA, Vol. IX, No. 2

“With each successive volume, the series becomes a more valuable addition to the preacher’s library.”

PREACHING MAGAZINE

“This commentary permits contemporary pastors to scour a library to better explain the church’s traditional understanding of a particular Scripture text. The resource is easy to use and provides a comprehensive digest of many of the ancient investigators’ interpretations.”

THE CLERGY JOURNAL



FORTHCOMING:

Old Testament Volume XIV: *The Twelve Prophets*

The church fathers mined the Old Testament for prophetic utterances regarding the Messiah, but few books yielded as much messianic ore as the Twelve Prophets, sometimes known as the minor prophets, not because of their relative importance but because of the relative brevity of their writings. Encouraged by the example of the New Testament writers themselves, the church fathers found numerous parallels between the Gospels and the prophetic books. Among the events foretold, they found not only the flight into Egypt after the nativity, the passion and resurrection of Christ, and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost but also Judas’s act of betrayal, the earthquake at Jesus’ death and the rending of the temple veil. Detail upon detail brimmed with significance for Christian doctrine, including baptism and the Eucharist as well as the relation between the covenants.

In this rich and vital resource are excerpts from more than thirty church fathers out of which Christians may bring riches both old and new in their understanding of these ancient texts. 288 pages, cloth, 0-8308-1484-1, \$39.99 (Projected release date 2002) ■

FROM THE PUBLISHER

JIM HOOVER, Associate Editorial Director and Senior Editor for Academic and Reference Books

The release of *Genesis 1-11*, edited by Andrew Louth in collaboration with Marco Conti, and *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, edited by Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J., harbinger the many treasures the Old Testament volumes of the ACCS will bring to readers. In some ways the patristic commentary on the Old Testament provides an even more distinctive and theologically rich voice than that on the New. While contemporary trends stress understanding the Old Testament of Hebrew Scriptures in their own contexts, the church fathers would not have understood such an emphasis for, as Joseph Lienhard comments, “the point of departure for much of patristic exegesis of the Old Testament is the Fathers’ belief that the Old Testament is wholly a prophecy of Christ; or, inversely, that Christ is the key to understanding the Old Testament.”

Genesis, quite naturally, provided the source for the early church’s understanding of the human condition. The themes of the original creation of the universe, the making of humankind in the image of God, the tragedy of the Fall and original sin were all thoughtfully pondered from the first three chapters of Genesis. Taking their cue as well from the apostle Paul, the fathers explored the first Adam as the archetype for the second Adam, Jesus Christ, in whom redemption was accomplished and brought to light. Note, for example, the layers of Irenaeus’s ruminations on Genesis 3:15:

Christ completely renewed all things, both taking up the battle against our enemy and crushing him who at the beginning had led us captive in Adam, trampling on his head. In Genesis God said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and the seed of the woman. He will be on the watch for your head, and you will be on the watch for his heel.” From then on it was proclaimed that he who was to be born of a virgin, after the likeness of



Adam, would be on the watch for the serpent’s head. This is the seed of which the apostle says in the letter to the Galatians, “The law of works was established until the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” He shows this still more clearly in the same epistle when he says, “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman.” The enemy would not have been justly conquered unless it had been a man made of woman who conquered him. For it was by a woman that he had power over man from the beginning, setting himself up in opposition to man. Because of this the Lord also declares himself to be the Son of Man, so renewing in himself that primal man from whom the formation of man by woman began, that as

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MORE PRAISE FOR THE ACCS

“The publication by InterVarsity Press of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, under the editorial leadership of Thomas C. Oden, promises to enrich both preaching and exegesis for many years to come.”

Modern Reformation Magazine July/August 1999

“[This is] one of the most promising publishing ventures in evangelical scholarship.”

TIMOTHY GEORGE

in *Christianity Today*, February 9, 1998

“[The series] should quickly earn a place in the libraries of all who desire to have their understanding of Scripture broadened and deepened by some of our most profoundly insightful forebears in the faith.”

The Presbyterian Layman

“This series, rightly used, will enhance the lessons of Sunday School teachers, the sermons of every pastor as well as academic papers. It is an essential library holding for every Christian college and university, and church libraries as well.”

E. EARLE ELLIS

in the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, Summer 2001

FROM THE PUBLISHER, CONT'D.

our race went down to death by a man who overcame, and as death won the palm of victory over us by a man, so we might by a man receive the palm of victory over death. (*Against Heresies* 5.21.1)

It is not surprising that the fathers offer us a feast from Exodus with its narrative of the Passover and the flight from Egypt, themes picked up by the New Testament writers. Many of the fathers were keenly aware of the subtleties of the original languages of Scripture as well, and sometimes found theological significance in the interplay. Note Augustine's comment on *pascha* (the word for "Passover" as it appears in our Greek New Testaments):

[The word] *pascha* is not, as some think, a Greek word, but a Hebrew one [*pascha* is the Aramaic form of the Hebrew *pesach*]; yet most conveniently there occurs in this name a certain congruity between the two languages. Because in Greek [the word for] "to suffer" is *paschein*. For this reason "pascha" has been thought of as a passion, as though this name has been derived from [a Greek word for] "suffering." But in its own language, that is, in Hebrew, "pascha" means "a passing over." For this reason the people of God celebrated the pascha for the first time when, fleeing from Egypt, they "passed over" the Red Sea. So now that prophetic figure has been fulfilled in truth when Christ is led as a sheep to the slaughter. By his blood, after our doorposts have been smeared [with it], that is, by the sign of his cross, after our foreheads have been marked [with it], we are freed from the ruin of this world as though from the captivity or destruction in Egypt. And we effect a most salutary passing over when we pass over from the devil to Christ and from this tottering world to his most solidly established kingdom. And therefore we pass over to God who endures so that we may not pass over with the passing world. (*Tractate on the Gospel of John* 55.1)

With the wealth of insight supplied from an abundance of excerpts such as these, we are convinced that our understanding of the Old Testament, as well as contemporary preaching and exposition from the Old Testament, will be deeply enriched by the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, matching or even surpassing its value in understanding the New. ■

ACCS VOLUMES

Next Available:

MATTHEW 14-28 Edited by Manlio Simonetti.
350 pages, cloth, 1469, \$39.99 (available March 2002)

GENESIS 12-50 Edited by J. Mark Sheridan.
300 pages, cloth, 1472, \$39.99 (available June 2002)

THE TWELVE PROPHETS Edited by Alberto Ferreiro.
288 pages, cloth, 1484, \$39.99 (available September 2002)

Currently Available:

GENESIS 1-11 Edited by Andrew Louth.
lii + 188 pages, cloth, 1471, \$39.99

EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY
Edited by Joseph T. Lienhard.
400 pages, cloth, 1473, \$39.99

MATTHEW 1-13 Edited by Manlio Simonetti.
350 pages, cloth, 1486, \$39.99

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

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

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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:

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

LUKE Edited by Arthur Just

JOHN Edited by George Dragas

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REVELATION Edited by William Weinrich