

# THE ACCS NEWSLETTER

Updating Members of  
the Ancient Christian Commentary  
on Scripture Continuity Program

ISSUE #3  
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## A WORD WITH TOM ODEN

In an effort to keep members of the ACCS continuity program informed of the latest developments in the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture project, IVP's academic sales manager, Emily Varner, caught up with ACCS series editor Tom Oden to ask a few questions about his perspective on this nearly half-way-completed series.

IVP: Well, Tom, the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture is closing in on having half of its volumes complete. To this point, what has been the most rewarding aspect of this project?

ODEN: I am grateful that from the viewpoint of volumes published we have now reached the halfway point. But from the viewpoint of editorial work we are far beyond the halfway point: more like 75 percent through. This means that we are awaiting manuscripts that volume editors have been working on for years (since the project began in 1995) and that are now maturing to their conclusion. We will be very busy during the next two years finishing this editorial work.

The most rewarding aspects of the ACCS project have been working closely with a brilliant and highly competent staff, the privilege of combing over and mining the texts of the ancient Christian tradition, and the wonderful reception the project has had.

IVP: What has been the biggest challenge?

ODEN: The biggest challenge? The Chinese edition. It was the first international translation we decided to do. We have worked hard to obtain the very best leadership (editors, translators, publishers and advisors) for the project we consider the most crucial of all our international translations. But this has been a difficult task. I am happy to say that the project is in good hands and moving along with excellent leadership. Two volumes are already translated into Chinese, using both the traditional script for the diaspora Chinese and the simplified script for the mainline Chinese.

IVP: Many readers are aware of the broad, ecumenical appeal the ACCS has had among laypersons and pastors. Tell me about the response among academic professionals in the fields of patristics, church history and theology. Do you think that the ACCS has had an impact on patristic and ecumenical studies, and if so, what are some examples of its influence?

ODEN: Academic professionals in the fields of patristics, church history and theology are increasingly using the texts of the ACCS. Joel Elowsky and I will soon go to the Oxford International Patristics



Conference where ACCS will gather together many of its friends and international volume editors. All the volumes will be on display there. We will have an opportunity there to hear feedback from our international cooperators on how the receptivity of the ACCS is going in its Italian, Russian and Spanish editions. The quality and visibility of our international editors commend the volumes to the scholarly world of patristic studies. The names of Manlio Simonetti, Angelo Di Berardino, Robert Wright and Mark Edwards are among the most recognizable in that far-flung international arena.

As for the impact of the ACCS on ecumenical studies, I refer our readers and friends to two chapters of my new book, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy: Signs of New Life in Christianity* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2003): "The New Ecumenism" and "Rediscovering the Earliest Biblical Interpreters." The ACCS has from the outset been an ecumenical effort. It is stimulating new interest in the earliest layers of exegesis as the basis for new perspectives on contemporary ecumenism. Evidences of this are found in the conversations that are continuing between the World Evangelical Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, as well as Evangelicals and Catholics Together, and in the newly emerging plans for the recovery of Faith and Order in the North American ecumenical conversation.

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## A WORD WITH TOM ODEN, CONT'D.

IVP: What can you tell us about the next few ACCS volumes to be released?

ODEN: The forthcoming volumes of ACCS are *The Twelve Prophets; Isaiah 1-39; Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon; the Acts of the Apostles; and Revelation*. These are all either in the production process or at some stage of editorial evaluation. They promise to be very important contributions from some of our best contributors.

IVP: On a personal note, what have you been up to lately, Tom?

ODEN: What have I been up to lately? Well, it seems that the ACCS has occupied the principal part of my time and attention. I continue to serve

as an executive editor of *Christianity Today*. I continue to write. One book long in preparation (about fifteen years) will be coming out soon from Princeton University Press—a sequel to my earlier study *Parables of Kierkegaard*, this one on the humor of Kierkegaard. It is a solemn attempt to give an account of Kierkegaard's theory of comedy, and it will provide a collection of some of his funniest passages.

I am living very happily in Oklahoma, where my extended family lives and where I grew up. The technological revolution enables me to keep in touch with friends and projects and mutual concerns around the world. ■



## FORTHCOMING: Old Testament Volume X: *Isaiah 1-39*

For the patristic authors Scripture was not, as Steven A. McKinion notes, “a compendium of Jewish history or even a textbook of Jewish theology but an announcement of the coming Messiah. This understanding of the Hebrew Bible meant that Christian interpreters looked for and believed they found the message of Jesus Christ throughout the Old Testament.”

This volume, of course, contains commentary on such key messianic texts as Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:1-7. Often, though, the church fathers found themselves confronting opposition to their views on several fronts, as is evident in these excerpts from Justin Martyr and Jerome related to Isaiah 7:14:

**VIRGIN CONCEPTION.** JUSTIN MARTYR: In order to ensure that someone does not accuse us of saying the same things as the poets, who say that Zeus came to women for sexual pleasure, we will explain the words of this prophecy clearly. The phrase “behold, the virgin shall conceive” means that the virgin would conceive without intercourse. If she had in fact had intercourse with someone, she would not have been a virgin. God’s power came on the virgin, overshadowed her and caused her to conceive while she remained a virgin. *FIRST APOLOGY* 33.1-4.

**WHAT DOES ALMAH MEAN?** JEROME: Isaiah tells of the mystery of our faith and hope: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.” I know that the Jews are accustomed to meet us with the objection that in Hebrew the word *almah* does not mean a virgin but “a young woman.” And, to speak truth, a virgin is properly called *bethulah*, but a young woman, or a girl, is not *almah* but *naarah*! What then is the meaning of *almah*? A hidden virgin, that is, not merely virgin, but a virgin and something more, because not every virgin is hidden, shut off from the occasional sight of men. *AGAINST JOVINIANUS* 1.32.

These fertile minds have much that can enrich both our understanding and our devotion. May you continue to be enriched by these volumes. ■



## TRANSLATION PROGRESS REPORT

JOEL SCANDRETT, ACCS Translations Project  
Coordinator

**I**VP is pleased to announce that Joel Scandrett will be joining the press in the position of Reference Editor as of January 2004. As Project Coordinator for the ACCS Translations Project, he brings us this update.

To date, five foreign language editions of the ACCS are in the process of being translated and published in various parts of the world, thereby introducing the rich legacy of early Christian interpretation of Scripture to countless individuals beyond the English-speaking world. These editions are Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Russian and Spanish. Let me now provide a brief update on the progress of each edition.

**ARABIC:** The ACCS Arabic edition will publish its initial volume (*Mark*) sometime in the latter half of 2003 and plans to publish with increasing frequency until it reaches four volumes per year by 2005. The ACCS Arabic edition will be published by Balamand University Press in Lebanon and will be distributed throughout the Arabic-speaking world by the International Bible Society. The general editor of the ACCS Arabic edition is Fr. Michel Najim, dean of St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral in Los Angeles and visiting professor of patrology at the University of Balamand.

**CHINESE:** The ACCS Chinese edition has had a difficult time establishing a stable relationship with a publisher. However, Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press of Taiwan (CEF) has recently agreed to publish the ACCS Chinese edition and plans to release the initial volume (the specific volume is yet to be determined) by the end of 2003. With aggressive measures in place to ensure the timely translation and editing of the series, CEF intends to publish four volumes each year beginning in 2004. Dr. Simon Wong, lecturer in Greek exegesis at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, is the general editor of the ACCS Chinese edition.

**ITALIAN:** The ACCS Italian edition has been very fortunate to be assumed by a leading publisher of patristic texts in Italian: Città

Nuova Editrice in Rome. Città Nuova has recently published its initial volumes (*Mark, Genesis 1-11*) and plans to release four volumes per year beginning in 2004. The general editor of the ACCS Italian edition is Dr. Angelo Di Berardino, president and professor of patrology at the Augustinian Patristic Institute in Rome.

**RUSSIAN:** Due to a number of logistical, bureaucratic, and administrative challenges, only one volume (*Mark*) of the ACCS Russian edition has been published to date. However, that volume has been well received, with strong indications of interest in the entire series. If all goes according to plan, four more volumes should

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## WHAT WE'RE HEARING ABOUT THE ACCS

*Reading Scripture through the lenses of these early Christian commentators sheds new light on old stories; this commentary will be an indispensable tool for both scholar and pastor.*

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

*This is a landmark series that will fascinate scholars and lay-people alike.*

Craig Blomberg in THEMELIOS

*The editors, their collaborators and InterVarsity are to be congratulated on the publication of these handsome and extremely useful volumes.*

Abraham J. Malherbe in RELIGIOUS STUDIES REVIEW

*Appreciation of patristic reflections on Scripture continue to grow, and this resource will feed that trend. Each volume gathers a wealth of patristic commentary on a particular biblical book . . . The selections from the early Christian writings . . . are presented with a minimum of additional commentary or annotation so that the reader can savor first hand the reflections of the patristic materials.*

Donald Senior, C. P. in THE BIBLE TODAY

be published by the summer of 2004, in which case the ACCS Russian edition will have clearly demonstrated its viability. The general editors are Mr. Konstantin Gavrilkin and Mr. Sergey Kozin, doctoral candidates in historical theology and New Testament studies (respectively) at Drew University. The ACCS Russian edition will be published through their publishing house, Gernemevtika, which is located in Tver, Russia.

**SPANISH:** The ACCS Spanish edition is our oldest and best-established non-English edition, with seven volumes published to date and three to four volumes being released annually. Ciudad Nueva of Madrid, a leading publisher of patristic texts in Spanish, publishes the ACCS Spanish edition. The general editor of the ACCS Spanish edition is Dr. Marcelo Merino Rodriguez, professor of patrology in the faculty of theology at the University of Navarra.

As one might imagine, the administration of each of these editions is a massive undertaking. For each language edition, we must locate, recruit and contract the services of a general editor, teams of qualified translators and editors, and a publishing house. Once these personnel have been acquired, it then falls to the general editor and publisher of each edition to ensure that the volumes are translated, edited and published in a timely manner, all the while maintaining the highest level of scholarly work. This is a difficult task in its own right, even without the unpredictable circumstances—such as the SARS epidemic in China or the political turmoil in the Middle East—that inevitably arise and further complicate these projects.

However, while the logistical challenges to the production of each of edition have been formidable, I have been amazed time and again by the manner in which the necessary personnel have appeared at just the right moment, as if providentially placed there in anticipation of our project. For that, and for each of these remarkably talented and committed individuals, I am grateful beyond words. Without them, none of these editions would have been possible. ■

## ACCS VOLUMES

### *Coming Soon:*

THE TWELVE PROPHETS Edited by Alberto Ferreira  
(available October 2003)

ISAIAH 1-39 Edited by Steven A. McKinion  
(available December 2003)

PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, SONG OF SOLOMON Edited by J. Robert Wright (available March 2004)

HEBREWS Edited by Philip D. W. Krey & Erik M. Heen  
(available June 2004)

### *Currently Available:*

GENESIS 1-11 Edited by Andrew Louth

GENESIS 12-50 Edited by Mark Sheridan

EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY Edited by Joseph T. Lienhard

MATTHEW 1-13 Edited by Manlio Simonetti

MATTHEW 14-28 Edited by Manlio Simonetti

MARK Edited by Thomas C. Oden & Christopher A. Hall

LUKE Edited by Arthur A. Just Jr.

ROMANS Edited by Gerald Bray

1-2 CORINTHIANS Edited by Gerald Bray

GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS Edited by Mark J. Edwards

COLOSSIANS, 1-2 THESSALONIANS, 1-2 TIMOTHY, TITUS, PHILEMON Edited by Peter Gorday

JAMES, 1-2 PETER, 1-3 JOHN, JUDE Edited by Gerald Bray

### *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

ISAIAH 40-66 Edited by Mark Elliott

JEREMIAH, LAMENTATIONS Edited by Dean O. Wenthe

EZEKIEL, DANIEL Edited by Kenneth Stevenson & Thomas McCollough

JOHN Edited by George Dragas

ACTS Edited by Francis Martin

REVELATION Edited by William Weinrich