

## UNIT 2B NEW TESTAMENT

### 43: Synoptic Gospels - St Luke

#### Provenance and Authorship

St Luke was a missionary companion of St Paul, referred to by the latter in Colossians 4:14 as 'the beloved physician.' Eusebius, the historian, in his *Ecclesiastical History* (III, p. iii, 6) declares that St Luke came from Antioch. St Luke himself was no mean historian in that his gospel shows a particular interest in the historical dimension of the Church's mission. St Ambrose comments that "as compared with the other Gospels, we see greater zeal devoted to the description of events than to the expression of rules of behaviour."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, since St Luke was also the author of the Acts of the Apostles, credence for this view is reinforced. Both works are cross-referenced by St Luke and addressed to a certain Theophilus, a Gentile believer. Origen stresses that the Greek word *Theophilus* means "excellent" and "very strong;" and "if you are the sort of people God can love, then all of you who hear us speaking are Theophiluses, and the Gospel is addressed to you."<sup>2</sup>

The Gospel was probably written in the period 75-80 A.D., that is, after the fall of the temple in A.D. 70 and consistent with the missionary journeys of St Paul that he describes. Acts, we may suppose, was written a little later in the period 80-85 A.D. St Irenaeus (185) refers to St Luke as a follower of St Paul and the transcriber of the Gospel preached by him. This is corroborated by the Muratorian Canon of the New Testament in Rome (170-190). The place of writing of the Gospel is not clear. The Anti-Marcionite Prologue refers to Achaëa, and this is endorsed by both St Gregory the Theologian and St Jerome. However, Rome might be a possibility in that St Luke uses the Gospel of St Mark as a source and shows a concern in his Gospel and in Acts (28:30-31) for how the Church expanded in the Gentile mission from Jerusalem to Rome.

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<sup>1</sup> St Ambrose, *Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 1.4, 7*, quoted by Arthur A. Just Jr, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT III Luke* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Origen, *Homilies on the Gospel of Luke 1.6*, quoted by Just Jr, p. 4.

The Tradition of the Church also refers to St Luke as a writer of icons, the Theotokos being one of his subjects. Interestingly, St Luke has more references to the Ever Virgin Mary than any of the other Gospels, suggesting that the Theotokos trusted St Luke and talked to him honestly about her life and the birth, ministry, death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. This interpretation is strongly supported by the evidence that much of Luke 1, 2 and 24 are unique to St Luke's Gospel.

This particular E-Quip lecture will seek to understand how both the Church Fathers and modern Biblical critics view the Gospel of St Luke and Acts, reflecting on the similarities and differences in the two approaches. On the one hand, "modern commentaries use the latest research in history, philology and literary criticism to carefully analyse texts to determine meaning;" however, it can be argued for some modern Biblical critics that the "application of texts to people's lives is a secondary matter at best and is better left to pastors and teachers in churches and parochial schools."<sup>3</sup> For the Church Fathers, applying Scripture, especially the most difficult passages, "to the lives of ordinary Christians [was] the genius of Patristic exegesis for the life of the Church."<sup>4</sup>

Happily, there is now a growing attempt in many churches to establish "communities of interpretation . . . in which pastors, biblical scholars, theologians, and laity together seek God's guidance in the written word for their communal as well as individual lives."<sup>5</sup> It has even been suggested by George Lindbeck, a Lutheran theologian and Pitkin Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology at Yale University, that:

This [approach to Biblical interpretation] is a dream, a cloud no larger than a hand on the horizon, and yet if it began to be actualized, even if in only a few

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<sup>3</sup> Arthur A. Just Jr., "Introduction to Luke," *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT III Luke*, p. xx.

<sup>4</sup> Just Jr., "Introduction to Luke," p. xx.

<sup>5</sup> George Lindbeck, "Scripture, Consensus and Community," in Richard John Neuhaus (ed.) *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 99-100. Quoted by Just Jr, pp. xx-xxi.

and scattered places, it would be living proof that Scripture is a unifying and followable text. The news would travel quickly (it always does in our day), and its influence would mushroom. Public opinion might be widely affected, perhaps even quickly, in all communions, and the transformation of the *sensus fidelium* (which takes longer) might follow in due course.<sup>6</sup>

## The Structure of Luke-Acts

In addition to the Prologues of both the Gospel of St Luke and Acts, modern Biblical criticism generally recognises 7 sections in the Gospel and 11 sections in Acts. For example, V. George Shillington offers the following divisions:<sup>7</sup>

### The Gospel of Luke

1. The Origin(s) of Jesus (1:5-2:52);
2. Jesus Getting Ready for Ministry (3:1-4:13);
3. Jesus of Nazareth Teaches, Heals, and Calls Disciples in Galilee (4:14-9:50);
4. The Lucan Journey of Jesus to Jerusalem (9:51-18:14);
5. Jesus in Jerusalem (19:28-21:38);
6. The Narrative of Jesus' Suffering and Death (22:1-23:56); and
7. The Narrative of Jesus' Resurrection/Ascension (24:1–53).

### Acts

1. The Primitive Community of Jesus in Jerusalem (1:3-26);
2. The Mission of Peter as Representative of the Twelve in Jerusalem/Judea (2:1-5:42);
3. The Seven Hellenistai Leaders (6:1-8:40);
4. Paul the Persecutor Transformed into Paul the Missionary for Jesus (9:1-31);
5. Peter's Understanding of Jewish Association with Gentiles Transformed (9:32-11:18);
6. The Word Spreads to Greeks with the Scattering of the Hellenistai (11:19-12:25);

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<sup>6</sup> Lindbeck, pp. 99-100 in Neuhaus, as quoted by Just Jr, pp. xx-xxi.

<sup>7</sup> V. George Shillington, *An Introduction to the Study of Luke-Acts* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015, Second Edition), pp. 2-5.

7. The Mission Narrative about Paul and Barnabas among Jews and Gentiles in Asia (13:1-14:28);
8. The Jerusalem Conference about the Mission to Gentiles (15:1-35);
9. Paul's Other Missionary Travels and Experiences (15:36-21:16);
10. Paul's Arrest and Trial in Jerusalem and Appeal to Caesar (21:17-26:32); and
11. Paul Goes to Rome and Remains under House Arrest for Two Years (27:1-28:31)

In order to draw closer to St Luke's perspective, consider Luke 1:26-38 from the perspective of both the Church Fathers and modern Biblical criticism.

### **The Origins of Jesus**

Archangel Gabriel announces to Mary that she “will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus . . . [when] the Holy Spirit will come upon you” (v. 34). Understandably, Holy Mary was “very perplexed.” Even today we can share in her confusion, because we too have to learn, as Archangel Gabriel tells her, citing the evidence of the pregnancy of Elizabeth in old age, that “with God nothing is impossible” (v. 37). The Church Fathers focus on the virginity of Holy Mary, because as the fourth century Latin poet and hymn-writer Prudentius suggests: “By power of God a spotless maid conceives, / As in her virgin womb the Spirit breathes, / The mystery of this birth confirms our faith that Christ is God.”<sup>8</sup> This overriding of the natural order of virginity is especially significant as a sign of the reality of the Incarnation. The words of St Bede the Venerable, written in the eighth century in a monastery in Northumbria remain a guide to Christian belief throughout all centuries—past, present and those to come. In his *Homilies on the Gospels*, St Bede preached:

We should carefully note the order of the words here, and the more firmly they are engrafted in our own heart, the more evident it will be that the sum total of our redemption consists in them. For they proclaim with perfect

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<sup>8</sup> Prudentius, *The Divinity of Christ* 566-584, quoted by Just Jr., pp.15-16.

clarity that the Lord Jesus, that is, our Saviour, was both the true Son of God the Father and the true Son of a mother who was a human being.<sup>9</sup>

With equal clarity, these words also proclaim that those who claim that Holy Mary had an immaculate birth and was not a normal human being, as well as those who imagine that Jesus is not the Christ, both deny the Incarnation as a central tenet of Christian belief and life. It is a bold but valid claim to affirm in the Orthodox Liturgy for the Annunciation: “Proclaim, people, the good tidings of the re-creation of the world!”<sup>10</sup> As the seventh century Arab monk and theologian, John of Damascus states: “Wonder! God is come among humanity; He who cannot be contained is contained in a womb; the timeless enters time.”<sup>11</sup>

### **The Theology of St Luke**

It has been long recognised that there are certain editorial emphases and themes that are beloved by St Luke in his Gospel. The presentational context is, as already indicated, the Church as God's community of salvation, situated temporally between Christ's saving work and his delayed, or rather deferred, coming again. There is a corresponding universalism in St Luke's Gospel. Unlike St Matthew's Gospel, his genealogy starts from Adam not Abraham. Christ is revealed as a “Light for revelation to the Gentiles” (2:32); and the Resurrection Commission to the apostles is “to all nations beginning from Jerusalem” (24:47).

There is an overall humaneness in St Luke's account of the work of Christ and the nature of the kingdom of God. The poor are given preference to the rich and this is the gloss that we read in his version of their Beatitudes (6:20-26). The rich may only be saved if they act upon their responsibility to the poor and this teaching is reflected in many of the parables, such as ... the two debtors, the rich fool, and the rich man and Lazarus. There is a deep concern for outcasts, sinners and the

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<sup>9</sup> St Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels* 1.3, quoted by Just Jr, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Exapostelation of the Annunciation, quoted by Just Jr, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> John the Monk, believed to refer to John of Damascus, *Stichera of Annunciation*, quoted by Just Jr, p. 17.

heretical Samaritans, (5:1-11; 7:36 ff; 9:51-55; 10; 29-37; 17:11-19; 18:9-14; 19:1-10; 23:39-43). Christ's love for sinners is seen as God's compassion for marginal people, the unloved and the despised. Women also feature prominently both in the Gospel, namely the Theotokos, Elizabeth, Anna, the widow at Nain, the penitent harlot, Martha and Mary and the women mentioned in the parables of the lost coin and the unjust judge. This is also apparent in the Acts of the Apostles in the stories about Tabitha, Lydia, Priscilla and the four daughters of St Philip the Evangelist.

The mercy of Christ, moreover, embraces those who fall into sin through ignorance as well as wilfulness; and this is the note of his forgiveness on the cross for those who “do not know what they do” (23:34). St Luke's account of the martyrdom of St Stephen, the proto-martyr, shows the same mercy toward his persecutors, (Acts 7:60). The breadth and depth of Christ compassion in St Luke's Gospel is both extraordinary and compelling. Christ is shown as speaking gracious words (4:22), and yet St Luke shows no sentimentality in his editorial work. Christ's words are also seen as severe and challenging, demanding total and exclusive loyalty. For instance, “if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (14:26) is much more bluntly said than in the Matthean parallel (Matthew 10:37). Likewise, the saying on salt (14:34-35; cf. Matthew 5:13; Mark 9:50) is much more stringent and searching. It would be a mistake therefore to portray the Lucan Jesus as inoffensive, meek and mild. He is merciful to the sinner it is true, but He is also uncompromising in the call to discipleship. This also explains St Luke's emphasis on the Lordship of Christ and the obedience required of His followers. He uses the title “the Lord” at least 18 times in his Gospel and in various combinations, nearly 50 times in the Acts of the Apostles. In this he doubtless reflects the usage of his missionary companion, St Paul in his Epistles.

St Luke could be called the theologian of the Holy Spirit. He is referenced throughout the Gospel, notably in the prophetic mandate of Christ's mission (4:1)

and in the prophecy concerning Pentecost (24:49). In the Acts of the Apostles he goes on to elaborate the Church's mission in terms of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, not once but on a number of occasions. Both the Gospel and the Acts are pervaded by a sense of prayer and Christian joy. The absence of any imminent expectation of the Second Coming drives St Luke from his own experience, to conceive his own time as the age both of the Spirit and of the Church, taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

We may readily understand why St Luke does not emphasise the imminent prospect of the Second Coming since he is writing some 50 years after the Resurrection. This does not mean, however, that he lacks an eschatological dimension to his narrative and prophecy; far from it, he incorporates the Little Apocalypse of St Mark in chapter 21. Nonetheless, upon reading St Luke's Gospel, one does not get the sense that the End is just around the corner as is the case with that of St Matthew and St Mark. In the Passion narrative St Luke incorporates his own distinctive references to the agony in the Garden, the women of Jerusalem, the Emmaus story and the resurrection appearance to the Eleven. The account of the Ascension at the end of the Gospel connects neatly into Acts by relocating our attention to the Temple and the worship of the early Christian community. From there—Jerusalem—the movement is to Rome via Asia Minor. Indeed, it has been suggested that at least one of St. Luke's primary motives in writing the Gospel was to commend the Christian faith to members of the Roman court circle, which may or may not have included Theophilus. This is in keeping with St. Luke's mission orientated, historicising approach that sees the Gospel and Acts as two parts in but one drama of the advance of the Kingdom of God and the Church.

### **The Place of St. Luke's Gospel within the Synoptics**

Finally, let us consider whether or not St Luke represents a developed and mature later stratum in the Tradition. This assumption is sometimes made but without a clearly substantive basis. The following points count against it:

- (1) St Luke (as St Matthew) is clearly dependent on St Mark. Where he prefers his own material (L) or that which he holds in common with Matthew (Q) there is no reason to suppose that St Luke's sources are necessarily late. Their provenance will remain unproven at least and until (if ever) we discover a text with its own historical signature.
- (2) There are archaisms in St Luke which indicate faithfulness and restraint on his part. For all the fact that he emphasises the Holy Spirit the reference in Luke 11:20 to the "finger of God" suggests that his recension—that is, his critical revision of the text—is preferable to that of St. Matthew who **does** reference the Holy Spirit in the parallel verse of Matthew 12:28.

The legacy of St. Luke is a Gospel that presents a vivid image of Christ as a most merciful Saviour, challenging in His call but exquisitely loving in His care for outcasts and penitents. This is a Gospel that is not merely theoretical about the place of the Church in the scheme of salvation but both practical and historical. As any good historian might, St Luke leaves his final chapter (Acts 28) unfinished.

### **A Beautiful Epilogue: Jaroslav Pelikan's Commentary on Acts**

The formerly Lutheran, later Orthodox layman, historian and theologian, Jaroslav Pelikan (1923-2006) defined himself as "by training and scholarly experience . . . a historian of Christian doctrine" who had "not so much investigated what the Bible *meant* as what is *has been taken to mean*."<sup>12</sup> When at the age of 79 Dr Pelikan was offered an opportunity to write a theological commentary on the Book of Acts, he responded with a study of Acts that offers an outstanding reflection on how St Luke (and he) perceived the Early Church. Pelikan provides strong evidence for St Irenaeus's conviction that "anyone who keeps unchangeable in [themselves] the rule of truth received through baptism will recognize the names and sayings and

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<sup>12</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Acts* (London: SCM Press, 2006), "Preface," p. 17 [italics in original].



parables of the scriptures.” As St Augustine commented on Jeremiah 31:33: “The creed [of the Church] is learned by listening; it is written, not on stone tablet nor on any material, but on the heart.”<sup>13</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan has provided firm evidence of the validity of the visions of both St Irenaeus and St Augustine, as will be clear from the Biblical template to this lecture on Acts 15.

In “Introduction: From Apostolic Church to Church Catholic,” Pelikan begins with the words of St Stephen that “Moses . . . was a powerful speaker and a man of action” (Acts 7:22) and applies those words to St Luke’s “entire narrative of the book of Acts itself.”<sup>14</sup> For Pelikan and perhaps for many other readers, “Taken simply as a tale of adventure, [Acts] is by far the most action-packed book in the New Testament.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Pelikan rightly views St Luke as “patron saint of church historians . . . [who] explains in the prologue to his Gospel [that his aim is] having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account” (Luke 1:3). Indeed, this is viewed by Pelikan as “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.”<sup>16</sup> As a part of researching “closely,” Pelikan reminds us that in interpreting the writings of St Luke, “translations into English from the [Greek] Septuagint rather than from the [much later] ‘original’ Hebrew are in order.”<sup>17</sup>

Pelikan is very much aware that his commentary

is based on what may turn out to be 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

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<sup>13</sup> The quotations from St Irenaeus *Against the Heretics* 9.4 and St Augustine, *Sermon 212.2* are drawn from R. R. Reno, “Series Preface” to *SCM Theological Commentary on the Bible*. Pelikan, *Acts*, pp. 12, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Pelikan, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> Pelikan, p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Pelikan, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Pelikan, p. 35.

‘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.<sup>18</sup>

The firmness of this conviction from a scholar of Pelikan’s stature is a joy to every Orthodox Christian. However, that firmness is also an immense challenge to Messianic Jews with their deep attachment to the person of the Messiah and their avoidance of His Church, as well as to Roman Catholics and Protestants—and especially to the modern ecumenical movement with its own avoidance of True Christian doctrine. May every reader of and listener to this E-Quip lecture who is not an Orthodox Christian take up the gauntlet—the daunting challenge—that Jaroslav Pelikan and the E-Quip lecturers are now throwing down before you.

HOWEVER—and it is a very big however—several thousand years of Orthodox Church experience on earth have not always followed the path laid out by its Founder, Jesus Christ. Therefore, Pelikan’s challenge certainly applies to us Orthodox Christians as well. In *The Vindication of Tradition*, Pelikan stresses that “Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.”<sup>19</sup> Pelikan closes his study of tradition with the words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: “What you have as heritage, / Take now as task; / For thus you will make it your own!”<sup>20</sup> The template for the Orthodox interpretation of Biblical texts developed by Father Theodore G. Stylianopoulos which follows this lecture, applied here to Acts 15, offers an excellent opportunity to implement Goethe’s (and Pelikan’s) challenge.

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<sup>18</sup> Pelikan, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven, CO: Yale University Press, 1984. p. 65. Pelikan continues: “And, I suppose I should add, it is traditionalism that gives tradition such a bad name.”

<sup>20</sup> Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition*, p. 82.

# A Template for the Orthodox Interpretation of Biblical Texts

## Lecture 43: Acts 15:1-33—The Council at Jerusalem

In accordance with the proposal of Fr. Theodore G. Stylianopoulos that Orthodox biblical interpretation ought to have a three-level approach, the following template is offered for preachers, teachers, bible study leaders, catechists and students of the Scriptures generally:<sup>1</sup>

Level	Process	In Tradition / Fathers (Theoria)	Applicable Now (Praxis)
<b>Exegetical</b>	<b>Historical / Contextual</b>  <i>(using the full range of critical tools)</i>	In <i>Acts</i> Jaroslav Pelikan notes of chapter 15 that “in virtually every chapter of the book of Acts there is evidence of ongoing theological disagreement, at the surface or hovering just beneath it... “At least by hindsight, it is possible to see here in Acts previews and intimations of coming theological controversies, some of which would not erupt until many centuries later in the history of Christian doctrine” (p. 170).	The principle that “much debate” (15:7) was required to settle disagreements within the Church was established by the Council at Jerusalem. This led to future ecumenical councils to resolve theological and pastoral conflicts.
	<b>Allegorical / Typological</b>  <i>(as derived from Tradition)</i>	The “principle of ‘economy’ is a continuing theme of the book of Acts: ‘Observe God’s providential management,’ Chrysostom says about the entire book. These four middle chapters of the narrative, from chapter 14 through chapter 17, articulate the interpretation of human history as the ‘economies’ or ‘dispensations’ or ‘providential management’ of the living God ‘who knows the heart. . . Luke is defending “God’s activity in the world”’ (Pelikan, <i>Acts</i> , p. 173). In other words, the Lord manages history efficiently to achieve His purposes.	Just as the Lord deals with theological disputes and personal conflicts in Acts, He does the same in our lives. The model of action and the growth of the Church set out in the book of Acts is a Type—a series of events—that prefigures and symbolizes our own lives, just as events in the OT prefigure the NT. The Lord draws us into His purposes.
<b>Interpretative</b>	<b>Spiritual / Ethical</b>	As Pelikan points out in <i>Vindication of Tradition</i> , “we . . . have some choices to make. One . . . is whether to understand our origins in our tradition or merely to let that that tradition work on us	Pelikan continues his reflections on the recovery of tradition with a personal word to each of us: “But to base recovery on ignorance and implicit faith, as some

		without our understanding it, in short whether to be conscious participants or unconscious victims, once understood, the tradition, unlike our biological DNA, does confront us with a further choice: . . . the choice between recovery and rejection, with a range of possibilities that combine partial recovery with partial rejection. That choice too is real” (p. 53).	previous generations have done, or to base rejection on ignorance and bigotry, as many in our own generation have done. is not worthy of a free and rational person” (p. 53f).
	<b>Personal / Social</b>	Pelikan insists that “A ‘leap of progress’ is not a standing broad jump, which begins at the line of where we are now; it is a running broad jump through where we have been to where we go next. The growth of insight—in science, in the arts, in philosophy and theology” requires the integration of Tradition. ( <i>Vindication of Tradition</i> , p. 81).	If we seek to grow closer to the Lord’s will for ourselves—or for the Church through “much debate” and a possible Council, --we need to reflect on how past Tradition and new insights balance.
<b>Transformative</b>	<b>The Call to Holiness</b>	Quoting John Henry Newman’s, <i>The Arians of the Fourth Century</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed., p.378, Pelikan insists that “the authentic tradition of orthodoxy was not a matter to be decided by an intellectually formulated ‘rule of faith’ set forth by scholars and theologians, but by ‘the rule of prayer of ‘the thousand[s] of silent believers, who worshipped in spirit and in truth” ( <i>Vindication</i> , p. 30). Although thousands did not participate in the Council of Jerusalem, it was “the rule of prayer” linked to debate that transformed the Church, opening it to non-Jews.	The call to holiness grounded in tradition need not overwhelm us. As Pelikan urges, “the very concept of tradition cannot be defined until a specific tradition has been studied in some depth, in the details of its concrete historical development” ( <i>Vindication</i> , p. 52). To be trans-formed as a Christian begin by trying to under-stand one tradition.
	<b>The Call to Witness</b>	For a detailed modern critique of the call to witness in Luke 2:21-33 and Acts 15, see V. George Shillington, <i>An Introduction to the Study of Luke-Acts</i> , pp. 66-78. “What might seem good to the	Shillington argues that the authority of “the Jerusalem Jewish centre” was later not observed by Paul who “ignored the decree in his mission among the Gentiles”

	<p>Holy Spirit and the Antioch ‘brothers’ must pass the test in the court of Jerusalem under the authority of James the Just (cf. Galatians 2:12). In this sense then, the ideology that guides the narrative of Acts 15 is that the Jerusalem-Jewish centre wields authority for all. From there the Christian missionary activity in the world is set on course” (p.76).</p>	<p>(cf. 1 Cor. 8,10; Galatians 1:6-2:14). (pp. 76-77). Tension remains today between Jews and Gentiles over whether Jesus is the Messiah and how the Old and New Covenants interact.</p>
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<sup>1</sup> In “*The New Testament, An Orthodox Perspective, Volume 1: Scripture, Tradition, Hermeneutics,*” (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997, Ch. 7), Fr. Theodore sets out three levels serving a sound Orthodox hermeneutical process. These are: **1. Exegetical** - using all critical, contextual, textual and literary methods to determine “the level of understanding of the biblical text in its historical context of literary form and conceptuality ...” (p. 190). **2. Interpretative** – evaluating means derived from the exegetical stage as applicable contextually to the reader’s contemporary issues and concerns (p. 197). **3. Transformative** – experiencing life changing practical applications of insights derived from the previous two stages.

In ALL of these three levels, the Orthodox context must be the Church as the locus of divine revelation and inspiration. Here the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth as manifested in the biblical text, the teachings of the Fathers and the liturgical context. In Ch. 4, p. 115 f., Fr. Theodore explains the historical and spiritual exegetical approaches which, following the Fathers, must be applied throughout. Classically these have concerned the Antiochian emphasis on the “literal” or historical approach and the Alexandrian emphasis on the allegorical and typological interpretations that reveal the inter-connectedness of all Scripture in Tradition at deeper levels of understanding.