

THE ROLE OF ACTS IN INTERPRETING THE NEW TESTAMENT¹

DAVID P. MOESSNER

The Acts of the Apostles] is a strange new dish . . . strange, I say, and not strange. Not strange, for it belongs to the order of Holy Scripture; and yet strange, because peradventure your ears are not accustomed to such a subject. Chrysostom, *Homiliae in principium Actorum*, iii, 54—Antioch, c. A.D. 387.²

Abstract. The main reason that there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that Luke and Acts were read and studied as one “book” in two sequel volumes by early Christian communities is because the author Luke himself has made this point evident in his carefully crafted overlap of the beginning of Acts with the ending of Luke. The suffering-risen Christ who speaks and acts and takes over the voice of the continuing narrator of the first volume in Acts 1:4b is himself the primary ‘narrative story teller,’ the hermeneutical authority whose voice will hover behind the continuation of “all that he began to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1). Particularly through a metaleptic collapse of the world of Jesus of Nazareth of the Gospel to that of the Risen-Crucified One of the church (Acts 1:4a to 1:4b) Luke signals loudly and clearly that, as Chrysostom put it, Christ is the “real author” of Acts, “*this strange new dish!*”

Keywords: metalepsis; narrator; Luke and Acts prologues; Christ the hermeneut of Acts.

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This text is dedicated to PROFESSOR ULRICH LUZ, without whom these international colloquia would never have taken place, who is indeed the inspiration as well as instigator for bringing Eastern Orthodox and western Roman Catholic and Protestant biblical scholars together to share their goals and passions for the study of the Bible.

² Trans. Henry J. Cadbury, *The Book of Acts in History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), p. 159; cf. φέρε τι καὶ ὑμῖν παραθῶμεν ξενονόψον καὶ καινόν . . . σήμερον βουλόμεθα ἀποτῶν Πράξεων τῶν ἀποστόλων εἰπεῖν. Διὰ τοῦτο εἶπον τὸ ὄψον ξένον, καὶ οὐ ξένον. Οὐ ξένον μὲν, ὅτι τῆς ἀκολουθίας ἐστὶ τῶν θείων Γραφῶν, ξένον δὲ, διότι τάχα ἀήθης ὑμῖν ἢ ἀκοῆ πρὸς τὴν τοιαύτην ἀκρόασιν. (1.2–3, PG 51:71).