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**THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF THEOLOGY, HISTORY
AND LITERARY ARTISTRY IN ACTS: FROM A CANONICAL
READER'S PERSPECTIVE**

A Thesis

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Broadly, the objective of this dissertation is to contribute to the ongoing studies on the biblical theology of the Acts of the Apostles.

CHAPTER ONE examines the canonical critical approach and its underlying presuppositions. Foundational to the present study is the supposition that the whole Scripture is word of God and thus, the expectation of a theological unity that is centered on “the Son” (John 1:1-4; Heb 1:1-4). It is my thesis that some specifics of that theological and Christological unity can be discerned when Acts is read in the light of the preceding canonical contexts which were ordered by the post-Ireneaus early church as hermeneutical guides for interpreting the NT Scriptures. The canonical contexts that are examined are: (1) the immediately preceding context of the Fourth Gospel [CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE], (2) the four Gospels as a unified whole [CHAPTER 4] and, ultimately, (3) the Old Testament [CHAPTER FOUR]. It is proposed that a canonically informed reading may yield significant insight into the theology that not only is inherent in the history Luke records in Acts about the continuation of “all that Jesus began to do and teach” following his ascension, but also guides the literary choices Luke makes in narrating that history.

The present study proceeds from the rhetorical critical observation that the ascension of Jesus, recorded in the opening discourse of Acts, creates the primary rhetorical ‘problem’ addressed in Acts: how will the mission to establish the kingdom



of God on earth, inaugurated by Jesus as narrated in the Gospels, continue post-ascension?

CHAPTER TWO makes a case from a canonical point of view that, among the four gospels, the rhetorical ‘problem’ posed by the ascension of Jesus in the opening discourse of Acts is most anticipated, most intentionally and comprehensively addressed by Jesus in the second half of the Fourth Gospel. It is proposed and argued in this chapter that Jesus’ teaching in the Fourth Gospel about the post-ascension roles of the Holy Spirit and the apostles best facilitates an introduction to and understanding of the theology intrinsic to the history and narrative art in the opening scenes of Acts.

CHAPTER THREE views the opening discourses of Acts from the perspective of the exegetical insights argued in chapter two. Chapter three assesses whether Jesus’ anticipation of and pre-planned response to the “problem” of the ascension is actualized in the opening scenes of Acts.

CHAPTER FOUR addresses the “problem” created by the ascension in Acts from the broader canonical perspective of the four-fold Gospel testimony about Jesus’ mission. It is argued that Jesus’ mission was defined by Old Testament messianic categories and fulfills the mission of Israel. It is proposed that the reader of Acts, being familiar with the four-fold Gospel, may perceive the striking resemblance of Jesus’ mission, gospel and the concurrent conflict and controversy he provoked manifest in the church’s life and ministry in the narrative of Acts. This chapter argues from a broader canonical approach that the tri-fold Old Testament missional roles of prophet, priest and king, which Jesus fulfills as the Messianic servant in the Gospels is clearly exhibited in Luke’s literary choices and underlying missional theology in Acts. The church’s continuation of Jesus’ tri-fold missional roles in Acts yields a second major plot dynamic that permeates the historical narrative of Acts: persecution. It is argued that these two core elements of theology endemic to the canonical history of God’s people work in literary counterpoint in the history and literary art of Luke in Acts. As the post-ascension manifestation of the



body of Christ on earth, the church continues to live out the tri-fold messianic, missional roles of Jesus in fulfillment of his words: “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also” (John 15:20). These two contrapuntal themes set forth the core theology that guides Luke’s literary artistic choices and explains the ebb and flow and interconnectedness of the narratives of the continuation of Jesus’ mission by the church in Acts.

Dedicated to my beloved wife, Linda and my four wonderful children, Christin, Heather, Ryan and Rachel

KEY TERMS

Theology

History

Literary

Canonical Approach

Canonical Reader

Reader-response

Presuppositions

Mission

Ascension

Hermeneutical



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“To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Phil 4:20 NIV



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D.N. Freedman. 6 vols.
ACNT	Augsburg Commentaries on the New Testament
AUSTR	<i>Australasian Theological Review</i>
<i>BibRes</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BETI</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>HTh</i>	<i>Ho Theolgós</i>
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>ITQ</i>	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
IVP	InterVarsity Press
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
MT	<i>Modern Theology</i>
NIBCNT	New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament



<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology.</i> Edited by C. Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, 1975-1985
<i>NLH</i>	<i>New Literary History</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>PTMS</i>	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
<i>PTR</i>	<i>The Princeton Theological Review</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Sacra Pagina</i>
<i>SBT</i>	<i>Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology</i>
<i>Semeia</i>	<i>Semeia</i>
<i>SBLDS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SBLMS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>SNTSMS</i>	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>SJTh</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
<i>StudBib</i>	<i>Studia Biblica et Theologica</i>
<i>Themelios</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>WUNT</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>WBC</i>	Word Biblical Commentary