

**The
ACTS
of the
APOSTLES**

An introductory commentary

by

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By the same author

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A NOTE ON THE FORMATTING OF THE TEXT

The text of Acts is presented in narrow columns on the outer side of the page. The commentary is presented in wider columns towards the inside of the page. When the commentary extends beyond the page on which the text of Acts is presented, the whole page is given over to it.

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PREFACE

This is a companion volume to *The Gospel according to Saint Luke: an Introductory Commentary*, published by Chevalier Press in 1997. In his introduction to his two-volume work Luke writes: 'After investigating everything carefully from the very first, I decided to write an orderly account so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed'(Luke 1:3-4). In volume one he recounts the action of the Spirit of God in the ministry of Jesus. Here in his second volume he recounts the continuing action of the risen Jesus in the life of the church.

Of course Luke has his own perspective on the history of the early Christian communities. The fact that *Acts* was treasured, copied and distributed throughout the Christian world, tells us that Christians judged it to be inspired. Some scholars respect it as a profound theological work but distrust it as history. That is not the position adopted in this commentary. The more we know of the first century Hellenistic world the better does Luke appear as a historian. Upon close examination claimed discrepancies between *Acts* and what we know of Paul from Paul's own letters disappear and Luke's work is revealed as a rich resource for our understanding of Paul from one of Paul's collaborators. At the same time it is important to realise that the centre of attention is not Paul or any other apostle. Luke never allows our attention to stray from gazing with wonder at what the Spirit of the risen Christ is doing in the world to continue Jesus' mission of revealing God as a God of love who is constantly drawing people together, whatever their racial identity, into a community of love. This is a message we still need to hear.

I wish to express my thanks to the Provincial Council of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) for giving me the time in 2000 to return to the library of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome to do my research for this commentary, to Father Henry Bertels SJ who made the library available to me, and to the General Administration for giving me a home while in Rome. I thank also the parishioners of Saint John the Apostle parish in Holt, Canberra, for accompanying me through a ten-week lecture series that enabled me to polish up the text. A special thanks to my confrere, Father Paul Stenhouse MSC, for undertaking the publishing of this volume.

Luke ends the Acts with Paul in Rome 'proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness'(Acts 28:31). May this modest volume contribute to this proclamation.

– Easter 2003