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PhD Dissertation Abstract

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**Symphony of Scriptures:  
An Intertextual Study of Acts 10:1–15:35**

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Acts 10:1–15:35 is a central section in the whole Book of Acts focusing mainly on a major development in the early Christian movement—namely the reception of Gentile Christians in the Church. Undoubtedly, a vital aspect of the process is the use of Scripture. The Holy Scriptures of Israel play a crucial role in framing the dilemmas and offering solutions on the matter. Events are thus portrayed in conformity with certain narratives of the Old Testament, Scripture verses are quoted by missionaries and leaders in order to support certain arguments, characters are shown in contrast and harmony with well known figures of the ancient holy narratives. The challenge lies not so much in identifying the right words, phrases, narratives, themes or books of the Old Testament that are evoked in Acts but much rather in defining patterns of textual correlations. Mainly but not exclusively relying on French literary theorist Gérard Genette's map of transtextuality, it is the goal of the dissertation to enumerate, to group and to evaluate patterns of intertextual connections in Acts 10:1–15:35. Genette's general considerations and the five types of transtextuality in particular provide the framework for my own interpretation of the selected texts in Acts.

### *I. thesis*

*Narratives and utterances in Acts 10:1–15:35 evoke themes and forms of the Old Testament without necessarily making reference to individual passages. This most implicit type of textual transcendence—architextuality—can be located on a different level than allusions and citations, for example. The architextual tendencies of narratives, nevertheless, are just as relevant as the other types. Observing architextual tendencies can potentially result in establishing an architextual economy.*

Unexpected signs of faith shown by high ranking foreign officials attested by prophets or prophetic figures is a well attested literary topos within the Bible. The most prominent instance within the Old Testament for a pagan official to receive the grace of the God of Israel through the interaction with a prophet is the story of Naaman the Syrian as recounted in 2 Kings 5:1-19. Similarly, the healing of a centurion's slave in Luke in 7:1-10 falls into the same category. The elements of the topos can be outlined as the following: (1) a powerful pagan man is in need; (2) the man seeks assistance from the man of God showing faith during the process and finally (3) God's grace is mediated through the man of God. The narrative of the conversion of Cornelius and his household in Acts 10:1–11:18 follows the same logic. Cornelius was in need of instructions from the apostle Peter; Peter, hearing the testimony from Cornelius, announced that it is pleasing before God to accept Gentiles (Acts 10:35); finally the outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles and administering baptism to them were proof of God's favour.

Similarly, the conventional description of hospitality, an ancient Mediterranean topos, is utilised in Acts 10:1–15:35 more than once creating further architextual links. The model text of the topos appears to be the hosting of the messengers by Abraham and Lot in Gen 18–19. The hosting of the three messengers by Peter in Act 10:9–23 and the attempt at the reception of the apostles as gods by the people of Lystra in Acts 14:8–18 both build on the possible divine identity and authorisation of the messengers known from the Old Testament.

The use of Temple language in relation to the activity of the early Church appears to be another significant architextual operation. The use of sacrificial language is at work in portraying Cornelius' piety in Acts 10:1–8 and in describing the choosing of Paul and Barnabas for Gentile mission in Acts 13:1–3. Similarly, creation language and deliverance language of the Old Testament surfaces in the examined section in Acts.

## *2. thesis*

*Two hypertextual operations have been detected in the text of Acts: transposition and thematic imitation. Diegetic transposition, as explained by Genette, provides the most accurate description of transtextual correlation between the narrative of Cornelius' conversion in Acts 10:1–11:18 and the story of Jonah. Imitation, the second hypertextual operation, is more frequent in the text of Acts. Thematic imitation, a term introduced in this work to express imitation of a special kind, can be defined as a hypertextual operation that rests on the correspondence of identifiable characteristic themes, of one or more characters, and includes some form of verbal reverberations between two or more texts.*

Many ancient and modern interpreters of Acts 10:1–11:18 linked the narrative of the Book of Jonah with the narrative of Peter's mission toward the Gentiles in Caesarea. Beyond noting similarities various terms were offered in the history of interpretation to define the textual correlation between the two narratives. Goulder's *contrastive typology* and Wall's *linguistic conceptual correspondence* were meant to describe the correlation in precision. Diegetic transposition as explained by Genette has the potential of accuracy in defining textual correlation between the two narratives. The nature of this type of transtextuality is not reduced to a single point of contact—say a shared motif, or resemblance of a character, or verbal correspondence. The nature of transformation from one text to the other can be viewed as a direct, thematic and diegetic one inasmuch as the action of Jonah is transposed to first century Joppa and Caesarea.

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The hubris and punishment of the king of Tyre of Ezek 27 is thematically imitated in Acts 12:18-23. The two kings are linked by claiming or accepting the claim to be god. The wording of the claim is a clear verbal correspondence. Once this connection is observed, several other points of contact emerge: both men are kings, both wear royal robes, both are punished for arrogance before onlookers. The audience from Tyre and Sidon creates further resonance between the two narratives.

A more complex way of thematic imitation was observed in Acts 12:1-17. Several motifs and episodes of the exodus and of the passion of Jesus Christ are imitated throughout the section. Peter's imprisonment and deliverance is told against the background of the narratives of the exodus and of the passion of the Lord. These are the main hypotexts. In addition, short episodes from the stories of Elijah, of Judith, of Daniel and his friends are evoked in relation to the early Church and to Peter. It is possible to view each thematic imitation separately. However, a thematic coherence can be observed. All the narratives evoked are already imitation of the exodus, or offer very similar settings to the exodus. There is an economy of thematic imitations at work: stories of oppression and deliverance are evoked in Acts in combination with one another. Telling the deliverance of Peter in relation to several deliverances in the Bible is clearly at work.

### *3. thesis*

*Owing to the large number of speeches, metatextuality is yet another very important transtextual type in the five chapters of Acts. In the examined section, Scripture is most openly quoted and alluded to by the speakers of the narratives. Metatextuality, moreover, also involves evaluating and interpreting subtexts. Metatextuality is strongly determined by both the subtext and the communicative intent and the context of the speeches. Texts from the LXX are more or less openly evoked, cited and interpreted to certain effects.*

The metatext in Acts 13:16-25 has a very firm logic to which the subtext is subordinated. Performative mode characterizes the relationship. The logic of Paul's speech is determined by telling the story of God's

initiatives that culminates in David and in his seed, Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of periods of time, most of which were dominated by human agents. Portrayals of periods and of human agents are supported by allusions, quotes and summaries. The intertexts from various books, chapters and verses of the Old Testament are merged to form unified statements on the selected subject.

In contrast with this, a different kind of the metatextual activity can be observed in the second part of Paul's missionary speech: texts are openly quoted and the process of interpretation is revealed. In Acts 13:32-38 several verses from different books are quoted. Each verse is quoted in precisions and interpretation follows. The significance of passages is seen in offering arguments in a chain of arguments. The process of interpretation is revealed. The audience has a role in deciding if the interpretation is appropriate and correct or the opposite is true. This is an instance of interpretative mode.

The third kind of metatextual activity is discernible in James' speech in Acts 15:13-21. Scripture is openly quoted at length. The most notable difference, however, is that interpretation does not happen openly or interpretative gestures are kept to the minimum. Only the introduction formula and changes in the subtexts give clues about meaning drawn from the subtexts. James pointed out that the conversion of the Gentiles agrees with the word of the Prophets. The *words of the Prophets* in the compilation quote imply the restoration of the presence of God that will be available to both Gentiles and Jews.