Apostolic Commission Narratives in the Canonical and Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles

Proefschrift

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SAMENVATTING
Preface

When one finishes a dissertation, it is interesting to look back on the route and compare the final manuscript with one’s earliest plans. Originally, I wanted to write a book about the conversion of Paul in the Lucan Acts with an appendix on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. On my arrival at Groningen, Professor G.P. Luttikhuizen suggested I pay more attention to non-canonical texts. I gave in after some hesitation, and this was the beginning of an exciting tour of the field of apocryphal literature. My thanks are due to him for being a resolute but tactful advisor, who urged me to develop my own ideas on the subject rather than forcing his on to me. Professors J.N. Bremmer and A. Hilhorst, the co-advisors, have been especially important discussion partners on Greco-Roman literature and patristics. The three of them read my emerging chapters with unrelenting scrutiny, and many of the arguments and footnotes in the book are answers to their remarks.

The roots of this study reach back to earlier stages of my scholarly peregrinations in Hungary, the United States, Romania, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. It would be impossible to mention the names of all the teachers, friends, colleagues, and students, who contributed to the formation of this book. Let me here express my gratitude to Professors J. Bolyki and T. Fabiny (Budapest), D.P. Moessner (Atlanta, now in Dubuque), V.K. Robbins (Atlanta), H. Klein (Sibiu/Hermannstadt), U. Luz (Bern), and S. Vollenweider (Bern, now in Zürich).

The yearly conferences on the early Christian apocrypha, held in Groningen and Budapest since 1994, provided an invaluable impulse for my studies. This pertains not only to the actual sessions, but also to the memorable evenings that the group has spent in the homes of its various members over the years. The present work is also scheduled to be published in the series of that research project.
The Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen provided the material resources as well as a fascinating intellectual milieu. I thank Professor Martin Gosman and the Rudolf Agricola Research School for accepting the research project into their interdisciplinary programme on *Cultural Change*. Colleagues and friends gave advice on a number of particular questions or read chapters of the dissertation, especially Professor R.R. Nauta, G. Xeravits, L. Roig Lanzillotta, J.H.F. Dijkstra, and A. Diem.

My wife Gyöngyi and my daughter Éva have been faithful companions ‘from stage to stage’ (*Acts of Peter and the Twelve* 5.25). This book is dedicated to them.
Introduction

In this study, we will examine the narrative pattern of commission in the canonical and apocryphal apostolic Acts\(^1\). These stories tell how God sent the apostles to various lands and people to spread the Christian message.

Former investigations of commission stories in early Christian literature were usually restricted to the four canonical Gospels and the Lucan *Acts of the Apostles*\(^2\). These studies were inspired mainly by the results of form-critical work on the Jewish Scriptures and Near Eastern Literature\(^3\). With the help of previous scholarship, one can define ‘commission form’ in terms of its constant elements\(^4\):

1) *Introduction*. Remarks are made about the time and place of the commission, as well as the ancestry and titles of the commissioned person.

2) *Confrontation*. The sender appears and breaks in upon the hero’s everyday life. We read about visions, heavenly voices and creatures. The term ‘epiphany’ could also be used to designate this motif.

3) *Reaction*. The commissioned person reacts to the presence of the holy, often covering his face or falling on the ground with fear.

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2. Important works include Hubbard, *Matthean Redaction* and ‘Commissioning Stories’; Mullins, ‘Commission Forms’.


4) **Commission.** The hero is charged with a new duty.

5) **Protest.** The commissioned person claims that he is unable or unworthy to fulfil the task.

6) **Reassurance.** The sender encourages the hero, typically with the words ‘fear not’ and ‘I will be with you’.

7) **Description of the task.** The sender might talk about the hero’s sphere of authority, the details of his service or the specific situation in which he acts—as, for example, the critical situations in Israel’s history.

8) **Inauguration.** A ceremonial act may follow, such as anointing, the laying on of hands, or a sacramental meal.

9) **Conclusion.** The hero begins to carry out the task.

The occurrence of these elements will help us to recognise commission stories in different literary environments. If we take a look, for example, at the famous story of Paul on the Damascus road in *Acts* 9, it is not difficult to isolate most of the above-mentioned components there: introduction, epiphany, fear, reassurance, commission, description of the task, inauguration, and the beginning of Paul’s ministry. Scholars agree that *Acts* 9 presents us with a commission narrative which shows remarkable similarities to the commission of the prophets in the Jewish Scriptures. However, if we want to interpret this narrative as a whole, the idea of ‘commission form’, characterised by the above-mentioned elements, is of limited use. How does, for example, the role of Ananias fit into that ‘commission form’? What is the function of Paul’s blindness and healing? Why are there three visions—rather than only one—in the narrative?

Commission stories (and literary texts in general) provide us with complex models of personality, culture and society. A better understanding of commission narratives requires a shift of approaches. In this study, I will expand the scope of previous research in the follow-
ing directions: (1) The investigation also covers the non-canonical apostolic Acts. (2) In addition to Near Eastern and Jewish passages, the range of textual parallels will include different areas of Greco-Roman literature and various early Christian texts. (3) Different modes of literary analysis will be used to examine various aspects of commission stories as rhetoric, narration, plot, social texture and cognitive structures. (4) Finally, I will interpret commission as a key episode of biographical narratives.

The broader horizon of literary investigation raises the question of how relevant are the parallels mentioned under (2) for the understanding of early Christian texts. It seems reasonable to assume that Near Eastern biographies influenced the Jewish literary tradition, while both Greco-Roman and Jewish biographical models influenced early Christian literature. Suggestions to direct or indirect dependencies will be made in this book, especially in the last chapter. However, phenomenological similarities are not necessarily due to the dependence of texts and traditions upon one another. This problem requires some further consideration.

As a starting point, I will differentiate between three contexts of interpreting literary texts: the anthropological, cultural, and social-historical. The anthropological context has remained more or less unchanged in historical times. In its history, humankind has lived basically in the same sort of natural environment and with very similar biological and psychological capacities. On the cultural level we find major differences in time, space, language, technological skills, religion, social structures and other characteristics. There are no generally accepted criteria to differentiate between cultures. Culture is a rather flexible concept, which allows identifications such as ‘Jewish culture’ or ‘Greco-Roman culture’ together with generalisations like ‘Hellenistic culture’ and even ‘Mediterranean culture’. The most particular level is the social-historical one. We can talk about the history and society of countries, regions, and even particular settlements.

Comparative studies can yield generalisations on all three levels, resulting in overarching anthropological, cultural, sociological, and historical models. I will use a concept of intertextuality that embraces these three levels. Although I will attempt to explain literary parallels, when this is plausible, by suggesting a direct influence of one text on the other (in the form of quoting, imitation, etc.), I will also reckon
with social, cultural, and anthropological levels of intertextuality. Similarities (especially structural ones) are often due to the shared background of two texts in one of these levels. I will suggest historical references as well as more general sociological and cultural orientation also when interpreting the social world of the commission narratives. A combination of cultural and anthropological aspects characterises most literary analyses, and the literary-critical efforts of this study are to be understood in the same context.

The biographical framework of commission narratives is a key factor. The protagonists of these narratives receive life-long tasks that demand full dedication of their time and resources. In my earlier investigations of the Lucan Acts, I approached commission in the frame of the ‘prophetic biography’ as elaborated by K. Baltzer. This is a scheme of five topoi: the commission story (Einsetzungsbericht), the securing of peace, the leading of the holy war, the restoration of social justice, and the purification of the cult. The prophetic biography concentrates on the public activity of the hero and relies on fixed topoi. Although Baltzer suggested the application of his scheme to the New Testament, his categories do not quite fit there. I therefore applied the concept of ‘reconfiguration’, a category of intertextuality, in order to understand how the topoi of the prophetic biography have been transformed in the usage of the New Testament authors. I argued that ‘Luke in the Book of Acts systematically reconfigures the Old Testament prophetic narrative. When “imitating” and “surpassing” the prophetic biography, he presents the early Church as a reconfigured prophetic community. The calling and competence of the apostles as well as the situation and tasks of the congregation are understood in the light of the Old Testament prophetic biographical tradition’.

The application of fixed topoi is known also from the Greco-Roman biographical tradition. Friederich Leo (1851–1914) associated

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7. According to Robbins, *Tapestry*, 97–120, ‘intertexture concerns the relation of data in the text to various kinds of phenomena outside the text’. He differentiates between four types of intertexture: oral-scribal (this includes different modes of citation and imitation), historical intertexture, social intertexture, and cultural intertexture.


this model with the Alexandrian type of biography\textsuperscript{10}. Alexandrian philologists divided their material into categories and attached biographical sketches to their textual editions. They organised the history of philosophy into schools and completed it with the available biographical material of philosophers. In their biographical sketches, they applied neither an elaborated style nor a narrative form. They reported the youth and death of the hero and a series of notes about the hero’s friends, pupils, works, and achievements. Alexandrian biography reached its climax in Suetonius, who applied the approach of a grammarian to his literary work. He did not want to create an artistic portrait, but rather a transparent collection of his biographical material. Leo also identified the peripatetic type of biography\textsuperscript{11}, which preferred the artistic presentation of great individuals and concentrated on the hero’s ethos. In its full-fledged form it was represented by Plutarch\textsuperscript{12}. Among the apostolic Acts we find examples of both models.

Instead of relying on formal categories, Albrecht Dihle proceeded from the function of biography. Starting his discussion with Plato’s \textit{Apology}, he argued that the most important impulse to the development of Greek biography was the conflict of the individual with the community\textsuperscript{13}. The lives of the heroes served as (ethical) models for imitation\textsuperscript{14}. According to Baltzer, the public activity of the hero is the scope also of the prophetic biographies of the Jewish Scriptures. Near Eastern texts bear evidence to the same tendency\textsuperscript{15}. It is difficult to decide how far biographies in Near Eastern and Jewish literatures could serve as examples to be imitated; in Hellenistic times, the heroes of Jewish history are explicitly mentioned as moral examples\textsuperscript{16}. Biographies often served as literary models for the writing of later

\textsuperscript{10} Leo, \textit{Biographie}, 118–45, 318–20.
\textsuperscript{11} Leo, \textit{Biographie}, 85–117, 316–8, 320.
\textsuperscript{12} For the reception of Leo, see Momigliano, \textit{Greek Biography}, 19–20, who prefers to talk about ‘political’ and ‘antiquarian’ approaches to biography.
\textsuperscript{13} Dihle, \textit{Biographie}, 19, 35, 36, for example.
\textsuperscript{14} Dihle, \textit{Biographie}, 20.
An extreme form of literary imitation appears when the records of a Pharaoh’s ‘deeds’, including the names of his enemies, are copied verbatim unto the walls of his temple from a monument two centuries older.

In which sense shall we use the term ‘biography’ in this book? Shall we mean by it the use of certain topoi (Baltzer; Alexandrian type), an artistic portrait with a moral focus (peripatetic type), or the presentation of ethical models (Dihle)? Arnaldo Momigliano, in an attempt to avoid the discussion of ‘how biography should be written’, proposed a practical definition of biography as ‘an account of the life of a man from birth to death’. However minimalist this definition seems to be, it would exclude most of the biographical texts we are going to deal with in this study, since they usually miss the birth and sometimes the death of the hero. They also largely miss historical curiosity or an interest in personal details, attributes that are typically associated with ancient biographies. The literature with which we are concerned is interested in general types rather than personal details. To capture the biographical traits of our texts, we propose the following working definition: biography is the presentation of someone’s public career as a narrative model for life and literature. The questions of form, chronological order, the application of fixed categories, the way the texts deal with the birth and death of the hero will be secondary. These aspects are helpful in the analysis of our texts, but do not decide whether a given piece of literature qualifies as biog-

17. For literary imitation in Greco-Roman and Jewish literatures, see Brodie, ‘Greco-Roman Imitation’, 22–6 and idem, Luke, 33–70, respectively. Cf. p. 33, note 31 below.
19. Momigliano, Greek Biography, 11.
20. Momigliano, Greek Biography, 102, places biography ‘among the […] products of the new historical curiosity of the fifth century BC’. Hellenistic biography, he suggests, is characterised by ‘its distinctive features of erudition, scholarly zeal, realism of details, and gossip’ (103). Swain, ‘Biography and Biographic’, 1–2, proposes that ‘Biographical texts are texts which furnish detailed accounts of individuals’ lives. […] It is the aim of every biographical text to gather detailed information about the individual’.
raphy. We will understand as biographical narratives even parts of larger works, such as the portrait of Paul in the Lucan Acts\textsuperscript{21}.

The literary corpus to be investigated is that of the apostolic Acts. The group of texts designated by this term includes the Lucan Acts, and a number of apocryphal Acts relating the deeds of various apostles. Among the apocryphal Acts, it is usual to differentiate between five ‘major Acts’ and other ‘later’ or ‘minor’ ones\textsuperscript{22}. This study will concentrate on Greek and Coptic writings up to the fifth century\textsuperscript{23}. In the frame of this book, I will not deal with commission in the broader context of religious studies. Visions and call stories are known from different religious traditions and the records of anthropologists. In such a comprehensive study, one should discuss stories about Buddha, Muhammad, well-known Christian figures, leaders of revival movements and sects, shamans and leaders of tribal religions. Although a study that complex would substantially enhance the understanding of commission on the anthropological level, we have to put aside this task for the moment. Thus, we will limit ourselves to the ancient Greco-Roman and Near-Eastern texts that by and large constituted the precedents and the closer environment of early Christian literature.

To sum up, I will pursue a close reading of apostolic commission stories with special attention to their function as biographical models. During my study, I attempt to answer the following questions: What is the narrative concept of divine call that emerges from those texts? How do apostolic commission narratives establish the character of their protagonists? In which typical ways do characters interact in commission stories? What is the function of such narratives in the broader literary frame of the texts? What is the connection between the narrative world of the commission narratives and their social-historical contexts? How did the apostolic Acts utilise existing literary patterns? What is the mutual relation of the commission narratives


\textsuperscript{23} For a survey of the relevant texts, see pp. 23ff below.
found in the different apostolic Acts? In which ways could ancient readers (communities and individuals) use apostolic commission narratives as models for their own lives?

My *hypothesis* is that apostolic commission stories provided biographical models of self-definition in changing social and ecclesiastical environments. In these narratives, groups and individuals modelled their relations to society and Early Christianity. For this purpose, they utilised a large scale of intertextual resources. Commission in the apostolic Acts is an important vehicle of the social and cultural structures of Early Christianity, and as a cognitive scheme, it exerted a lasting influence on European culture.

A few words have to be said in advance about the methodological aspects of this study. As a starting point, I use the form-critical observations of previous scholarship about commission stories. In Chapter 1, I will complete the form-critical description of commission with a number of elements that concern the narrative structure and function of commission narratives. Whereas the form-critical approach asks which are the standard parts of commission stories, my focus is how commission narratives work. The threefold typology suggested in Chapter 2 helps us to understand the social texture of commission. Synchronic-narrative analysis remains the major interest of the main chapters where I examine commission narratives in the individual apostolic Acts, although important historical links will also be considered at several points. In Chapter 10, I organise the motifs observed through the analysis of individual texts into a systematic presentation of commission narratives. As the title of that chapter, ‘Morphology’, suggests, I draw to some extent on the theories of V.J. Propp and A.-J. Greimas. It is, however, not my intention to replace the form-critical model with a rigid structuralist scheme. Rather, actantial analysis serves as a general framework to discuss the most common dramatic relations and developments in commission stories. The notions of Propp and Greimas appear already at earlier points of the study when I speak of ‘sender’, ‘hero’ and ‘helper’ in the texts.

The study has the following design: Chapters 1 and 2 form a tandem and elaborate on the literary context in which the commission stories of the apostolic Acts will be examined. In Chapter 1, I will compare the commission narratives in Plato’s *Apology* and the Lucan *Acts*. These texts and some theoretical passages by Epictetus will pro-
vide new insights into the form and function of commission narratives. This will be followed by an initial overview of commission stories in the apostolic Acts. In Chapter 2, I will survey the motif of divine commission in the literary environment of Early Christianity. In the same chapter, a preliminary typology of commission will be suggested. Chapters 3 through 9 are dedicated to the study of individual commission narratives. Chapters 10 and 11 form another tandem, intended to systematise the close reading of commission passages. In Chapter 10, I will examine the typical motifs of the apostolic commission narratives, and establish a narrative sujet of commission. Finally, in Chapter 11, I will summarise the results of the study with special attention given to the question of literary influence and the role of the apostolic commission stories as biographical models.
1. Commission, Conversion, and Biography

This chapter will look at narrative, rhetorical, and theoretical texts from antiquity, in order to approach the phenomenon of divine commission. We will also discuss the concept of conversion, commission, and biography, as well as the hermeneutical difficulties related to the form and function of commission stories.

‘As God Counselled Socrates’: Stories of Divine Call

In Plato’s *Apology* Socrates first refutes some false accusations, and then raises the question whence prejudice has arisen against him. To answer that problem he tells the story of the ‘Chaerephon oracle’: Socrates’ friend Chaerephon went to Delphi and asked the oracle whether there was anyone wiser than Socrates. Pythia replied that there was none. When Socrates heard the oracle, he began to ponder ‘what does the god mean’ (21b3). As he did not understand, ‘he set himself at last with considerable reluctance to check the truth of it’ (21b7–8). Socrates ‘went to interview a man with a high reputation for wisdom’ (21b9) in order to refute the prophecy, but he realised that he was not wise at all. Thus, since he ‘was trying to find out the

1. We will deal mainly with Greco-Roman culture, a context that was hitherto neglected in the discussion of commission narratives. For the moment, a handful of texts will suffice to sketch the basic concepts. Several additional examples (Near Eastern, Jewish, and Greco-Roman) will be studied in the next chapter.

meaning of the oracle’, he ‘was bound to interview everyone who had a reputation for knowledge’.

The Chaerephon oracle constitutes a recurring theme of Socrates’ first defence. He seeks in Athens someone wiser than himself, but he fails. Finally, ‘Socrates understands that Apollo has entrusted him with a mission’:

But the truth of the matter, gentlemen, is pretty certainly this, that real wisdom is the property of God, and this oracle is his way of telling us that human wisdom has little or no value. It seems to me that he is not referring literally to Socrates, but has merely taken my name as an example, as if he would say to us, ‘The wisest of you men is he who has realized, like Socrates, that in respect of wisdom he is really worthless’. That is why I still go about seeking and searching in obedience to the divine command, if I think that anyone is wise, whether citizen or stranger, and when I think that any person is not wise, I try to help the cause of God by proving that he is not. This occupation has kept me too busy to do much either in politics or in my own affairs. In fact, my service to God has reduced me to extreme poverty. (23a5–c1)

Towards the conclusion of the first defence speech, Socrates affirms once again:

This duty I have accepted, as I said, in obedience to God’s commands given in oracles and dreams and in every other way that any other divine dispensation has ever impressed a duty upon man. (33c)

The episode which Plato reports here is the commission story of Socrates. It tells how Socrates became a philosopher, or more precisely, how he began his public activity as a philosopher in Athens. The god used the Chaerephon oracle to commission him to converse with the people of Athens and look for a wise man among them. This was also commanded to Socrates by the god in (other) oracles and dreams, which he calls the usual way for gods to commission people. He says he dedicated himself fully to his god-given task, and had hardly any time to intermingle with politics or to seek his own benefit. The Soc-

3. Plato, Apology 21e4–22a1: ίτέον [...] ἐπὶ ἀπανταται τούς τι δοξούντας εἰδέναι. Cf. Paul’s visiting the reputed ones (δοξούντες εἶναι τί) of the Jerusalem church (Galatians 2.6).

4. De Strycker and Slings, Apology, 22.

5. Cf. Phaedo 60e4–61a4; De Strycker and Slings, Apology, 82.
rates of the *Apology* has a message that ‘the god had given him for humankind’\(^6\). Within the plot of the book, the purpose of telling his commission story is to defend himself against the accusations of Meletus before the jury of the Athenians. On the referential level, Plato may have intended to defend Socrates’ public activity before his readership. In the rhetorical structure of the *Apology*, the *narratio* of the Chaerephon oracle supports affirmative arguments for the *refutatio* (refutation of opposing views) in the first speech\(^7\).

In *Acts*, we find a similar literary use of a commission narrative. Paul’s story of the Damascus road is probably the conversion story in biblical literature. Since its detailed discussion follows later in this book, I will not paraphrase the episode here. We have to notice, however, that the three versions which Luke offers (*Acts* 9, 22, 26), are considerably different from each other. Twice Luke lets Paul himself talk about his experience on the Damascus road in the frame of apologies: first before the Jerusalem crowd (ch. 22) and then before the proconsul Festus and King Agrippa (ch. 26)\(^8\). The word ‘apology’ occurs eight times (as a noun or a verb) in chapters 22–6\(^9\). In comparison to Plato’s work, one could call these chapters in *Acts* the Lucan *apologia Pauli*. This apology of Paul contains three defence speeches\(^10\), in two of which Paul relates his commission story. In the rhetorical framework of these speeches, the *narratio* of the Damascus road serves as the most important argument\(^11\).

Let us point out the most important similarities between the two texts. Both Plato and Luke composed three defence speeches for their heroes. In one or more of these speeches, the hero relates the story of his divine commission. The commission episode is a key feature in drawing the portrait of the hero. In the rhetorical structure it serves as a *narratio* of the speech and also immediately constitutes an important element of the proof. When telling their stories of divine commission, both Socrates and Paul shift responsibility for their deeds upon

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7. Cf. De Strycker and Slings, *Apology*, 22; also p. 72, note 45 below.
8. The word ἀπολογία is used in *Acts* 22.1, ἀπολογέω in 26.1.
God, a rhetorical technique nicely called *metastasis* by G. Kennedy\(^{12}\). Socrates offers ‘the god of Delphi’ as the witness of his wisdom, and Chaerephon’s brother—since Chaerephon himself is dead—of his commission. Paul names as his witnesses—though not directly to his Damascus experience—the high priest, the elders, and ‘all the Jews’\(^{13}\). Like Socrates, Paul talks about God’s command to him: ‘Get up and go to Damascus; there you will be told everything that has been assigned (commanded) to you to do’\(^{14}\). Similarly to Socrates’ total devotion, Paul claims he ‘was not disobedient to the heavenly vision’.

Or, as he earlier stated to the Ephesian elders: ‘I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus’\(^{15}\).

There are further important motifs in common to be mentioned. The heroes’ missions will occupy them for the rest of their lives. The task to be performed is initially unclear and the hero reluctant. Paul ‘kicks against the goads’, goes to Damascus, and sits there blind among fasting and prayers, not knowing what will happen to him.\(^{16}\) Socrates uses the typical topos of protest: ‘I am only too conscious that I have no claim to wisdom, great or small’. He is ‘for a long time at a loss’ what the oracle means, and then he proceeds ‘with considerable reluctance’. Finally, there is an important secondary character in both stories. Chaerephon in Socrates’ and Ananias in Paul’s commission mediate between deity and hero.

### The Concept of Commission

Our observations about the two texts render it indispensable to look for a hermeneutical framework in which their similarities can be explained. In New Testament scholarship a usual way to interpret commission stories has been to compare them to Old Testament parallels. The concept of a ‘commission form’ has been established and applied

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13. *Apology* 21a; *Acts* 22.5 (twice), 26.5; note also *Acts* 20.23, ‘the Holy Spirit testifies to me’.


to Old and New Testament texts\textsuperscript{17}, and Paul’s conversion itself has been interpreted as a prophetic call\textsuperscript{18}. Did a comparable concept of divine commission exist in the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition, and more closely, in the first century AD?

First, let us consider whether we are correct in quoting Greco-Roman stories about philosophers as parallels to early Christian apostolic stories. Are conversion and call to philosophy appropriate parallels to the \textit{religious} conversion and commission of the early Christian heroes? The structural and functional similarities between the stories of Socrates and Paul that we have highlighted above suggest that the comparison of such texts is a workable alternative\textsuperscript{19}. While conversion and commission episodes in Jewish and Christian texts focus the goals and horizons of human life into a central biographical episode, these human goals and perspectives are also major concerns of eudaemonistic philosophies\textsuperscript{20}.

According to A.D. Nock, ‘in ancient paganism […] philosophy […] held a clear concept of two types of life, a higher and a lower, and […] exhorted men to turn from the one to the other’. Whereas for Nock, it is the moral claim of philosophy that makes it comparable to biblical religion(s), we have to point out—while maintaining his truth—the deeper lying similarities of conversion and call in the two ideological systems. When stressing the motif of ‘conversion’ in the texts—and this was the subject of Nock’s study—the moral implications are pushed into the foreground. When—often using the very same texts—we talk about ‘call’ or ‘commission’, the \textit{existential perspectives} receive the main emphasis. Whereas conversion results in a nobler and godlier conduct, a commission story sets up a new frame-work for human life, with a task to be fulfilled in the centre. It is the narrative, biographical role of commission that we will examine in our study.

The religious affinity of late Stoic philosophy is well-known. A survey of a chapter by Epictetus (\textit{c.} 55–\textit{c.} 135) will illuminate the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} See p. 1, notes 2–3 above.
\item \textsuperscript{18} See p. 2, note 6 above.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Droge, ‘Call Stories’ and ‘Call Stories (Gospels)’ argued for the similarity of the philosopher’s call and the call stories of the Gospels (cf. pp. 54–50 below).
\item \textsuperscript{20} Cf. Nock, \textit{Conversion}, 14.
\end{itemize}
idea of divine commission in the Greco-Roman world in New Testament times. While also discussing the task of philosophers in many other passages of his writings, Epictetus dedicates a full chapter in his *Discourses* to the ‘call of the Cynic’. Instructing one of his acquaintances who has an inclination to take up the calling of a Cynic, he tells the following parable:

> [T]he man who lays his hand to so great a matter as this without God, is hateful to Him, and his wish means nothing else than disgracing himself in public. For in a well ordered house no one comes along and says to himself, ‘I ought to be manager of this house’; or if he does, the lord of the mansion, when he turns around and sees the fellow giving orders in a high and mighty fashion, drags him out and gives him a dressing down. So it goes also in this great city, the world; for here also there is a Lord of the Mansion who assigns each and every thing its place.

The true Cynic has to know, Epictetus argues, that he is sent by Zeus to the people as a messenger to show them that they have gone astray, and as a scout to find out what things are friendly to men and what are hostile. The Cynic has to be prepared to endure sufferings. ‘[K]now yourself, ask the Deity, do not attempt the task without God. For if God advises you, be assured that he wishes you either to become great, or to receive many stripes’. The Cynic should take the trials like Diogenes, taking pride in his distress rather than blaming God for it. Moreover, he must love those who flog him ‘as though he were the father or brother of them all’. The attitude which Epictetus prescribes here reminds us of a number of New Testament passages, and is perfectly fulfilled by Paul, at least as he writes about his ministry in his epistles, ‘boasting’ and ‘rejoicing’ in his sufferings. In the

25. 2 *Corinthians* 11.16–33; *Colossians* 1.24. For Paul’s epistles and stoic philosophy, see recently Malherbe, *Paul* and Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul*. 
Acts of the Apostles  Luke portrays Peter and John as receiving their sufferings as a confirmation of their divine commission.  

Epictetus is also fond of the picture of the Olympic games. The Cynic participates in an Olympic contest, he says, and not in some other miserable or cheap one. Using Diogenes as an example, he also connects the metaphor of the Olympic games to endurance in trials. In a previous chapter he compares preparation for philosophy to ambitions of Olympic victory. In his first epistle to the Corinthians Paul also speaks about two different contests: athletes exercise for the perishable wreath, while Christians for the imperishable one. As for his own ministry, he writes: ‘I am running toward the goal, for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus’.

Freedom, heavenly citizenship, poverty, the welcoming of death, and many other topoi of Epictetus and Paul could be set up side by side. Almost every sentence of Epictetus’ exhortation evokes a passage from the Pauline corpus. For the time being, however, we are concerned with commission in the apostolic Acts. We can find that one of Paul’s speeches in Acts, namely his farewell to the Ephesian elders in Miletus, mirrors exactly Epictetus’ teaching on the Cynic’s call:

27. This was one of the favourite metaphors in Cynic and Stoic philosophy, cf. Pfitzner, Agon Motif, 28–35.
29. Epictetus, Discourses 3.15.
32. The Byzantine scholiast Arethas (c. 850–c. 940) suggested that Epictetus read the New Testament (Schenkl, Epictetus, xv).
33. In the chart below, I added a passage from Discourses 2.3 in row (c) and from 2.20 in row (d).
Miletus speech  
*(Acts 20)*

You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time […] serving the Lord with all humility among tears and trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews (18–9).

I did not shrink from […] proclaiming the message to you (ἐναγγελία), and teaching you publicly and from house to house (20). I did not shrink from declaring (ἐναγγελία) to you the whole purpose of God (27).

I testified about […] repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus (21).

And now, as a captive to the spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me (22–3).

But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course. (24)

I coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothing (33).

Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his Son (28).

The call of a Cynic  
*(Discourses 3.22.1–109)*

The Cynic ought to be free from distraction, wholly devoted to the service of God, free to go about among men (69).

He must be flogged like an ass, and while he is being flogged he must love the men who flog him (54).

He has been sent by Zeus to men as a messenger (ἄγγελος) (23). To show to the individual, as well as to the crowd, the warring inconsistency in which they are floundering about (2.3.23).

Our citizens may be converted and may honour the Divine (2.20.22).

Exile? And to what can anyone thrust me out? Outside the universe he cannot. But wherever I go, there are sun, moon, stars, dreams, omens, my converse with gods (22).

My paltry body is nothing to me. […] Death? Let it come when it will (21).

Man, it’s an Olympic contest in which you are intending to enter your name, not some cheap and miserable contest (51).

I am […] without property. [I have] only earth, and sky, and one rough cloak (47). [It does not fit a Cynic] to devour or put away what people give him (50).

The Cynic has made all mankind his children; the men are his sons, the women are his daughters. And in this spirit he approaches them all and cares for them all. […] It is as a father he does it, as a brother, and as a servant of Zeus, who is father of us all.
The chart could be completed from other passages by Epictetus, and a third column could be added for the Pauline epistles. Further parallels can be found in great number in Dio Chrysostomos and other philosophers. The main interest of this comparison, however, lies in the fact that here Epictetus’ specific and coherent presentation of the philosopher’s divine call is compared to a confession of the Lucan Paul about his ministry, and surprising agreements are found between the two.

We can identify the following common topoi in the two texts: (a) full dedication of one’s life to the service of the deity among people; (b) endurance in trials; (c) being a messenger of God showing his purpose to the people; (d) urging people to convert; (e) wandering from place to place, not fearing the persecutions; (f) not caring even for one’s own life; (g) running toward the goal (like in an Olympic contest); (h) expecting no payment for one’s ministry; and (i) caring for people as a father or shepherd.

As for the last topos, the picture of the shepherd is used also by Epictetus, but it does not designate so much the task of the Cynic, as rather the responsible leader’s worries about his people, like the concerns of Homer’s Agamemnon: ‘For you wail as the shepherds do when a wolf carries off one of their sheep; and these men over whom you rule are sheep’. Further, in Acts the image of the shepherd refers to the office of the Ephesian elders rather than to that of Paul. Finally, the Ephesian elders are appointed as oversees by the Holy Spirit, whereas the fatherhood of the Cynic is rather an imitation of God’s acting as a father.

There are also differences between the literary settings of the two texts. Epictetus’ passage is part of a lengthy series of more or less consistent philosophical discussions. Paul’s farewell is a rhetorical composition by Luke at an important point of his historical narrative.

35. Epictetus warns here to the love of one’s persecutors, which is also a Christian topos (cf. Matthew 5.44), but missing from the Miletus speech.
It is all the more remarkable that Paul’s confession evokes the pattern of divine commission as depicted by Epictetus, and that Luke finds these thoughts an appropriate conclusion of Paul’s journeys in Asia Minor and Greece.

**The Narrative Context: Biography**

Both Plato’s *Apology* and Luke’s *Acts* are biographical narratives. In both texts, it is divine commission that defines the personality of the protagonist. Whatever is told about their characters and deeds is subordinate to and dependent on the call stories. In this way, the commission narrative becomes a literary device to create characters, and it functions as a core element of biographical narratives. The apostolic Acts studied in this book are also biographical narratives, because they present the public careers of their heroes. Some of them give a narrative from birth to death, while others concentrate on a certain period of the protagonist’s life. In the rest of the book I hope to show that commission stories play a similar central role in the apostolic Acts, as has been shown in the *Apology* or *Acts*.

Let us consider the biographical function of commission stories in a broader framework for a moment. Commission seems to play a central role in human life (βίος) reconstructed as a biographical narrative. Commission stories are aetiological: in a narrative form, they give the reason of one’s being who and what one is. They define the main themes of one’s biography. Even in a non-explicitly theistic frame of thought, stories about people’s ‘call’ or ‘mission’ play a central role in creating and maintaining the organised self. The ‘sender’ function can be attributed to different personal or non-personal factors. When viewed from the perspective of a life-story, these ideas are obviously of religious nature.


38. For our concept of biography, see p. 6 above.
In modernity, the idea of divine call is echoed in the concept of ‘vocation’. As Max Weber put it:

Now it is unmistakable that even in the German word Beruf, and perhaps still more clearly in the English calling, a religious conception, that of a task set by God, is at least suggested.

Weber takes this concept as unique to the Protestant thought beginning with Luther’s Bible translation. He claims that there are neither Greek nor Roman equivalents of the idea. ‘Neither the predominantly Catholic peoples,’ Weber suggests, ‘nor those of classical antiquity have possessed any expression of similar connotation for what we know as a calling—in the sense of a life-task, a definite field in which to work’. He concludes, ‘like the meaning of the word, the idea is new, a product of the Reformation. […] But at least one thing was unquestionably new: the valuation of the fulfilment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume’. In fact, the texts hitherto quoted suggest that there is something more to say about that subject. The narrative patterns that we will examine in the apostolic commission narratives and their ancient literary parallels hopefully also provide a better understanding of the modern notions of calling.

Let us turn our attention again to our ancient passages. The apologies of Socrates and Paul are separated by five centuries in time. It is difficult to answer how tradition came down from Plato to Luke, and perhaps it is not the most important question to ask. If we work solely with an idea of traditions descending linearly in time, this may lead to false conclusions. Let us be reminded of the three levels of interpretation (anthropological, cultural, historical) as suggested in the Introduction. Commission stories have intertextual relations with their specific social and historical settings, their cultural context, and long lasting anthropological structures. Our discussion of commission

40. In a lengthy note, Protestant Ethic, 204–5, Weber examines the meaning of the Greek expressions ἔργον, πόνος, τὰ προοήκοντα, and τάξις as well as the Latin opus, officium, munus, professio, and ars, and also the biblical usage, and concludes that none of them has the ethical and religious implications that Beruf and calling do.
41. See pp. 3f above.
extends to all three levels, because culture is available only through its historical manifestations, and anthropological phenomena can be detected only in their various cultural forms. In some cases, we can find a concrete historical Sitz im Leben for the texts. At other times, we have to satisfy ourselves with situating the text in a more general cultural environment. Anthropological structures perhaps play a role more often than we assume. The pattern of commission probably overarches all the three levels. Stories of divine call, as we will see in the following chapter, are detectable in the larger cultural environment of Early Christianity. The form in which they appeared in a given literary tradition was certainly determined by actual historical circumstances, which elicited specific human needs and concerns. Yet the appearance of the model in all of these literatures, as well as in extremely different cultural traditions\(^{42}\), suggests that anthropological factors may be equally important for the understanding of the phenomenon. In this book, we will limit ourselves to the cultural environment of early Christian literature. We will also attempt to establish the sujet of commission and describe the models of self-identification reflected by these texts\(^{43}\). These observations may serve as points of departure for the understanding of the form and function of commission in other ages and different cultures.

Returning to commission in the context of ancient literature, as exemplified up to this point by our textual evidence, let us give a phenomenological description of the commission narrative:

A. A commission narrative is found in a biographical framework. It summarises and defines the main topoi of biography.
B. A commission story tells how a deity (as the ‘sender’\(^{44}\)) commands a (usually human) hero to perform a task.
C. The commission is given through a vision, oracle, or dream, one of the ‘usual ways’ of communication between god and man, as Plato’s Socrates put it.

\(^{42}\) For example, Goodman, ‘Visions’; Lang et al., ‘ Dreams and Sleep’.
\(^{43}\) See Chapters 10 and 11 below.
\(^{44}\) When we talk about ‘sender’ and ‘helper’ (below), we use the terminology of A.-J. Greimas, on whose theory more will be said on pp. 215f below.
D. We can discern the importance of a secondary character, the ‘helper’. Chaerephon in Socrates’ and Ananias in Paul’s commission mediate between the deity (‘sender’) and the hero.

E. The hero has to perform a task in (or for) the public. The mission will occupy him for the rest of his life.\(^{45}\)

F. The episode redefines the relation of the sender and the hero. The hero becomes the agent of the sender.

G. The task is not clear at the first instance, and/or the hero is reluctant. Ambiguity keeps Paul sitting in Damascus among fasting and prayers, and forces Socrates to dialogue in Athens.

H. The hero dedicates himself totally to the mission and neglects his own benefit. In the end he might pay with his life.

Our description is intended to be more dynamic than the ones used in previous scholarship. We want to underline the functional rather than the formal characteristics of commission. What we try to identify is a system of narrative-textual strategies rather than a form or a genre. The aspects outlined here are by no means rigid rules that necessarily apply to all commission narratives. They provide, nevertheless, an initial set of criteria for the examination of commission passages.

**Commission Narratives in the Apostolic Acts**

With these observations in mind, we can preliminarily draw the circle of apostolic commission narratives to be studied in the subsequent chapters. First of all, we have to realise how difficult it is to define the genre ‘Acts’ and the circle of texts belonging to that genre.\(^{46}\) As a point of departure, we will regard as apostolic Acts the texts to which either ancient or modern tradition attached that label. Most of the apostolic Acts are biographical, describing the deeds of the hero and often concluding with his death. The biographical framework is, nev-

\(^{45}\) Accordingly, our concept of commission narratives excludes episodes like Jesus’ commanding Peter to walk on the sea (Matthew 14.29). Mullins, ‘Commission Forms’, 605, takes up this and similar stories into his charts.

\(^{46}\) To my knowledge, no attempt has been made yet to settle this issue. For the problems related to the term ‘acts’ see Mortley, ‘The Title of Acts’; Hilhorst, ‘Apocryphal Acts’, 1–2; for a general discussion see Schneemelcher, ‘Second and Third Century Acts’, and Schäferdiek, ‘Manichean Collection’. 
ertheless, not rigidly followed by all of them: while most of them report the death of the apostle, only the *Acts of Titus*—the latest of the texts we will discuss—mentions the lineage of the hero. Further, the fragmentary nature of the extant texts often makes it difficult to reconstruct the plot of the narrative. The beginning of the *Acts of Paul*, the *Acts of Peter*, and the *Acts of John* seems to be lost altogether.

The Lucan *Acts* provides a relatively simple case: the commission of Paul is told three times, and much of the book presents his deeds. His death, however, is not reported. In the extant parts of the *Acts of Paul*, in contrast, we do not find the commission narrative of the hero. Nevertheless, there is an unpublished Coptic papyrus in the Bodmer Library that probably belonged to these Acts, in which Paul gives a brief report of his commission. The *Acts of John* relates the commission of the hero in three different passages. In the *Acts of Peter* 5, Jesus appears to Peter in a vision and commands him to go to Rome:

Peter, the man Simon whom you expelled from Judea, proving him a sorcerer, has again forestalled you (pl.) at Rome. In short, you must know that Satan is cunning and his power has perverted all those who believed in me; and (in this way Simon) proves himself his agent. But do not delay; set out tomorrow (for Caesarea), and there you will find a ship ready which is sailing to Italy. And in a few days I will show you my grace which has no bounds.

On the one hand, this passage shows some features common with commission narratives: it contains a vision, and the deity endows the hero with a task. The mission to Rome will lead ultimately to the martyrdom of Peter. On the other hand, the vision itself claims that the task to be performed is the continuation of a previous mission. There is no interaction (dialogue) between the sender and the hero as in most commission narratives, and the episode does not change the relation of the sender and the hero. Therefore, we will not include this passage in the detailed discussion of apostolic commission narratives.


48. This is probably also true of *Acts of John* 18, which, however, definitely fits into our paradigm when viewed in the context of the other two commission passages (chs. 88–9 and 113) of the book.
We can find, however, some more ‘Acts’ that deal with Peter among the Nag Hammadi texts. One of them, the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* (NHC VI, 1), narrates the commission of Peter and the other apostles—Peter and John being the real protagonists of the story. The text does not present actual ‘acts’ performed by the apostles, but describes a mysterious journey which serves as a preparation for their ministry.

The *Acts of Thomas* begins with Thomas’ commission to India. It relates the apostle’s protest and how thereupon Jesus sells him as a slave. Although Thomas appears as an apostle from the beginning of the book, the first chapters not only set a new task before him, but also substantially redefine his relation to Jesus. The commission of Thomas begins with the division of the lands among the apostles, a motif that appears in several other texts. Among others, it is related in the *Martyrium prius* of Andrew, the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*, and the *Acts of John by Pseudo-Prochorus*. I will discuss these episodes in Chapter 10.

From the Acts of the fourth and fifth centuries, I have selected three texts which contain interesting commission episodes: the *Acts of Philip*, the *Acts of Barnabas*, and the *Acts of Titus*. In all of the three writings, the relation of the hero to the sender as well as to the social institutions receives much attention. Whereas it is possible that some examples escaped my attention (the discussion necessarily remains selective especially in case of the numerous later Acts)\(^49\), the texts studied below surely represent the main variations and important features of apostolic commission in the canonical and apocryphal Acts. However, before analysing our major passages one by one, we have to consider commission in a larger area of ancient literature. In the next chapter, we will survey a number of commission stories in different literary traditions, in order to gain a perspective for the study of apostolic commission narratives.

\(^{49}\) De Santos Otero, ‘Later Acts’, enumerates forty different texts, many of them known in several versions and recensions.
2. Commission in Ancient Literatures

The commission stories of the apostolic Acts have antecedents in a large scale of ancient texts. In this chapter, we will survey five ancient literary circles: Egypt and the ancient Near East, Jewish literature, Greco-Roman biography, the ancient novel, and the canonical Gospels. The question as to how far these texts served as models for the apostolic Acts can be answered only later when we have accomplished a detailed analysis of the apostolic commission stories. This chapter serves to gain a broader perspective of the literary pattern of commission, and to establish a preliminary typology of the genre.

Egypt

The tomb of Rekhmire, vizier of Thutmose III, is decorated with reliefs and inscriptions depicting and narrating the vizier’s career. Rekhmire’s appointment is related in two narratives; one in the third, and the other in the first person. The third person narrative accompanies a relief that shows Thutmose III enthroned, and before him, in accordance with the statement of the inscription, Rekhmire appears for appointment. The third person narrative concentrates on the duties of the vizier. In the autobiographical passage, Rekhmire relates his commission in much detail. The autobiography first reports Rekhmire’s titles and noble descent, and then relates the two audiences

1. Rekhmire was vizier (prime minister, the highest official of the kingdom) under Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, c. 1470–1445 BC; Davies, *Rekh-mi-re’*, vol 1, 3. Baltzer, *Biographie der Propheten*, 137–57, discusses the commission of Rekhmire as a precursor of the commission of the prophets.
2. Davies, *Rekh-mi-re’*, vol 2, plates xiii-xvi. The figure of the vizier was erased, but its place and direction facing the king can be inferred from the titles above it; Davies, *Rekh-mi-re’*, vol 1, 16; Breasted, *Eighteenth Dynasty*, 267–8.
during which he received his commission. Talking about the first audience, he emphasises the fine clothes he wore, and the honour he received from the servants of the Pharaoh. He seems to have received the *insignia* of the vizier and experienced a sort of transformation:

My ability was not as it had been (before); my yesterday’s nature had altered itself since I had come forth in the adornments (of the vizier, promoted) to be the priest of Ma’et. Thus praise of me was established in the midst of both tall and short. Everyone looked upon me as the sheen walls wrought with turquoise.

The actual charge of the vizier takes place at the second audience, when the Pharaoh entrusts Rekhmire with the ‘judgment of cases’ that should be in accordance with what the Pharaoh says. He also encourages the vizier to be strong and not weary. The other two-third of the autobiography tells how the vizier acted out his office.

Another text tells the commission story in the third person. It does not talk about the peripherals of the ceremony, but more accurately describes the task of the vizier. While the autobiography speaks in an enthusiastic tone, the third person narrative says that the office of the vizier ‘is not pleasant at all’ but rather ‘it is bitter as gall’. We can easily identify various elements of commission in these texts: audience, description of the task, act of appointment, encouraging form, and delineation of sphere of authority.

The first person narrative forms the central part of an autobiography. It contains several shorter episodes and describes a sequence of audiences that we can compare to different Jewish, Christian and Greco-Roman passages. The first audience scene relates a mystical experience, surprisingly similar to Apuleius’ account of Lucius’s appearance in the temple of Isis. Lucius tells the story in the first person, in an enthusiastic tone similar to Rekhmire’s. The detailed description of his attire, and the honour and admiration of the people play a major role in the passage. We also have a parallel in the Old Testament. Zechariah describes the appointment of the high-priest Joshua by the

5. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.23–24. See esp. confluunt undique turbae […] varis quisque me muneribus honorantes’ and ‘repente velis reductis in aspectum populus errabat. (‘Suddenly crowds flowed in from every direction […] to honour me with their various gifts’. Trans. J.A. Hanson, LCL)
angel of Yahweh. His filthy clothes are removed, he receives a clean turban and a ‘festal apparel’, and the angel gives him Yahweh’s commands. In the court visions of Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1, the words of commission immediately follow the description of the heavenly scene. Shining raiment is an attribute of divine epiphanies in Hellenistic and early Christian tradition. Paul’s epiphany on the Damascus road is separated from the actual commission: it is a manifestation of God’s power, though not a court vision. Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Paul—unlike Rekhmire, Lucius, Zechariah, and Jesus—do not appear as exalted or glorified in these passages. The pattern of a visionary episode followed by a commission episode is found also in the apocryphal Acts.

Another interesting feature of the Rekhmire passages is the contrast between the first and third person narrations—although they are contained by two separate texts. Within one text we can find this opposition in the Lucan Acts. Paul’s commission is told in the third person in chapter 9 and in the first person in chapters 22 and 26. Also in Acts it is the third person narrative that talks about the ‘bitterness’ of the task: ‘I myself will show him, Jesus says, how much he must suffer for the sake of my name’. In sum, the autobiography of Rekhmire contains several of the structural elements of the commission pattern as found in the early Christian tradition.

Not only the vizier, but also the Pharaoh himself had his commission story. Thutmose III, the Pharaoh’s son from a mother not of the royal family, began his career as a humble priest. This is the way he tells about his ‘installation to be a prophet’: ‘(The god Ammon), my (father) is he; I am his son, whom he commanded that I should be

6. Zechariah 3.1–10
10. Acts 9.16
11. Breasted, Eighteenth Dynasty, 59–68, and idem, New Chapter. I also relied on Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, 446–7. The inscription was found in Karnak and is the introductory speech at an audience that Thutmose III gave on the occasion of the completion of one of his great additions to the Karnak temple of Amon.
upon his throne, while I was one dwelling in his nest’. Then comes
the vision which the young priest saw in the temple:

He made heaven and earth festive with his beauty; he received the
great marvels; […] I prostrated myself in his presence. He set me be-
fore his majesty; I was stationed at the Station of the King [i.e. the
Pharaoh’s place in the temple]. […] (He opened for) me the doors of
heaven.

The hero ascends to heaven as a hawk, where he sees ‘the glorious
forms of the Horizon-God’. Re crowns him, gives him different titles,
and assigns him power over the countries. His rule over both Upper
and Lower Egypt is emphasised. He will do what the god requires of
him and build him a temple in Karnak ‘as an eternal work’.

This commission story also forms part of a larger autobiographi-
cal narrative. There is a court vision in the temple, such as in Isaiah 6,
and a father-son relation between god and king, as in Psalms 2. The
commission story forms a turning point of an autobiographical narra-
tive told in the first person. The honour and glory of the hero at the
moment of commission is emphasised like in the narrative of the vi-
zier. The task is especially defined in terms of the new titles that the
Pharaoh-to-be receives. The text also describes the territory of his
rule.

Another member of the dynasty, Thutmose IV, still as a young
prince, was on the road at noon during a hunting expedition:

A vision of sleep seized him at the hour (when) the sun was in the ze-
nith, and he found the majesty of this revered god speaking with his
own mouth, as a father speaks with his son, saying, ‘Behold thou me!
See thou me! my son, Thutmose. I am thy father, Harmakhis-Khepri-
Re-Atum, who will give to thee my kingdom on earth at the head of
the living’.

Then the text describes the parts of Egypt, which the Pharaoh is
going to receive as his land, and finally we read the prince’s reaction.
This is a vision on the road at noon, like Paul’s vision before Damas-
cus. Its structure is more simple than that of the stories of Rekhmire
and Thutmos III. The details of the vision are given less attention

13. For epiphany at noon, see p. 73, note 48 below.
than the act of commission itself. The relation of sender and hero (‘as father and son’) and the description of the task receive major emphasis. Like the Jewish prophets, the hero is provided with instructions concerning the territory of the mission.

The hero is entrusted with a ‘kingdom’ also in the apostolic commission stories. Paul is sent to the ‘Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel’, Paul and Peter divide the world among themselves into ‘circumcision’ and ‘Gentiles’\textsuperscript{14}, and in the Acts of Thomas the apostles ‘portion out the regions of the world’, in order that each one ‘might go to the region that fell him by lot, and to the nation to which the Lord had sent him’\textsuperscript{15}. Not only in the Egyptian texts, but also in the ideology of Early Christianity the commissioned hero is the representative of the sender at the place where he is sent.

Finally, not only viziers and Pharaohs, but gods themselves had a commission in Egypt. In an interesting passage Re commissions Thoth\textsuperscript{16}:

\begin{quote}
Behold ye, I am in the sky in my (proper) place. Inasmuch as I shall act so that the light may shine in the Underworld and the Island of Baba, thou shalt be scribe there and keep in order those who are in them. [...] Thou shalt be in my place, a place-taker. Thus, thou shalt be called: ‘Thoth, the place-taker of Re’.
\end{quote}

There is a hierarchical order of commission in these texts. Re commissions other gods and the Pharaohs, while the Pharaohs commission the viziers. The viziers, in turn, manage the life of the country. The commissioned persons always rule in a certain territory with full powers, but also in total obedience to their sender’s words. The sequence of commissions provides a hierarchical scheme of power, a universal structure. If somebody becomes commissioned, the life of that person is integrated into this order. In this way, biography is set into a cosmic (and mythological) perspective. The fact that the ‘Sports Stela’ of Amenhotep II almost repeats the story of Thutmose IV\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14}. Acts 9.15 and Galatians 2.7–9, respectively.
\textsuperscript{16}. Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, 8.
\textsuperscript{17}. Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, 448.
shows how well established such cognitive patterns were in that cultural milieu.\(^{18}\)

The commission of officials is a subject still found toward the end of dynastic Egypt. The last Pharaoh was Nectanebo II of the Thirtieth Dynasty, who ruled until 341 BC\(^{19}\). He was the subject of various legends in Hellenistic literature\(^{20}\), and the following episodes suggest that he was a devoted restorer of decaying Egyptian cults. A papyrus reports a vision of Nectanebo\(^{21}\):

[He] is made witness to a carefully designed meeting between the goddess Isis and the god Onuris. The latter, characterised as a giant, approaches the goddess, who is installed upon a throne erected on a papyrus boat, complaining about the neglect of his sanctuary by Nectanebo and, specifically, about the unfinished work on the re-cutting of the obliterated hieroglyphs on the stone walls of the god’s sanctuary in Sebennytos.

After his vision, Nectanebo ‘sets aside a large sum’ and ensures that the work would be finished in a few days, because ‘it was the will of god’. Another story set under Nectanebo relates the commission of the scribe Nechautis\(^{22}\). The papyrus, copied in the 2nd century AD, reports how the Pharaoh restored the cult of Imhotep, relying on data that he found in an ancient book. The Pharaoh’s scribe Nechautis, undertook the translation of the book at the command of the deity.

There are differences between the earlier and later commission stories. The biographies of the Eighteenth Dynasty are written on the hidden walls of magnificent tombs and suggest a static order of things established and maintained through the commission of kings and ministers. The texts from the late dynastic period stand on papyri and show decay, restoration, and changeability. The composition of the later stories and their circulation as late as the 2nd century AD suggest

18. For the ideological function of imitation in Egyptian art, see Frankfort, *Egyptian Literature*, 46–9, 59. For a comparable use of imitation in totalitarian systems in history, see Frye, *Double Vision*, 50ff.
20. Among others, he was thought to be the father of Alexander the Great.
22. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1381, see pp. 236ff below.
that the Egyptian models of this literary pattern could find their way also to Hellenistic and early Christian literature. Trajectories between Egyptian commission narratives and the apostolic Acts can be established through the Greek novels, with which we will also deal below. Egyptian themes are abundant in these texts, and the protagonists of some novels are initiated as the priests of Egyptian cults. Jewish literature provided yet another way for the aforementioned motifs of commission to make their way into the plots of the apostolic Acts. One has to think not only of the call stories of the Hebrew Bible, which probably imitated Egyptian patterns, but also of Hellenistic-Jewish literature: the plot of Joseph and Aseneth, for example, plays in Egypt, and the heroine’s conversion (or better, initiation) to Judaism is the central theme of the narrative.

23. Kerényi, Romanliteratur, has particularly emphasised the influence of Egypt and the cult of Isis on the Greek novels. On the itinerary of the novels he noted (45): ‘Our Greek novels play likewise in a semicircle around Egypt, with this included as the centre’. He suggested that the plot of the novels is an imitation of the myth of Osiris and Isis (p. 229, cf. 58, 61, 127ff, 147ff.). Hägg, Novel, 98, rejects the idea, arguing that the earliest of these novels, Chariton’s one, contains no reference to Egypt, and is the least ‘oriental’ of all. He opposes B.P. Reardon and J.W.B. Barns who claimed that the first (but lost) Greek novels were written under the influence of Egyptian demotic stories (existing in Greek translation) and other narratives.


25. Baltzer, Biographie der Propheten, 148–9 suggests two possible contacts between Egyptian commission stories and Jewish literature. Either Israel took the model of the Pharaoh and the vizier directly from Egypt, and applied it to the relation between Yahweh and the prophet as ‘Vezier Gottes’ (cf. pp. 153–69), or the cultural traditions of Syria-Phoenicia mediated between Egypt and Israel.

26. Burchard, Der dreizehnte Zeuge, 59–87, compares Aseneth’s conversion to the commission of Paul in Acts 9. He finds several parallels (böse Absichten, göttliche Erscheinung, Fasten, Gebet, Heilung, Besuch des himmlischen Mannes/Ananias, Visionen, p. 86–7), but these can be understood, in my opinion, much better within the larger theme of commission than through assuming a direct dependence between the two texts in question.
Jewish Scriptures

Numerous stories of divine commission are found in the Hebrew canon. In this section, I will compare four of them with four passages in Acts, suggesting that the Lucan texts—with or without the intention of the author—imitate them or their details. Such an imitation is all the more likely to occur, since Acts contains numerous direct quotations from the prophetic texts of the Jewish Scriptures. The book ends with a passage from Isaiah’s commission, a verbatim reproduction of the Septuagint text. Allusions to Isaiah’s call are also found in the second narration of Paul’s commission. Luke’s literary technique makes a special use of intertextuality, by not only quoting passages of Jewish Scriptures and alluding to them, but also adapting (emulating) complete narrative cycles. The texts discussed in this section are the commission of king Saul, and the calls of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Jonah.

27. Baltzer, Biographie der Propheten, discusses the following Einsetzungsberichte: Law: Joseph (Genesis 41), Moses (Exodus 2.23–7.7), Joshua (Numbers 27.12–23; Deuteronomy 31, 34.9ff). Prophets: Gideon (Judges 6.11–24), Samuel (1 Samuel 3), Saul (1 Samuel 9–11), David (1 Samuel 16.1–13), Solomon (1 Kings 3.4–11.43), Elisha (1 Kings 19.19–21), Isaiah 6, Ebed-Jahweh (Isaiah 42.1–9, etc.), Trito-Isaiah (Isaiah 61.1ff), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1 and passim), Ezekiel 1.1–3.15, Haggai 1.1, Zechariah 1.1. Writings: Nehemiah 1.4–2.8. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: Ethiopic Enoch 71, Testamentum Levi 8.


The commission of King Saul betrays interesting structural parallels with the story of the Lucan Saul. Although in *1 Samuel* 9–11 we have a longer narrative than in *Acts* 9, we can compare between the disposition of the episodes, the number and function of the characters, and many formal motives. The story of Saul, son of Kish, contains three shorter episodes: (1) Samuel, judge of Israel, recognises and anoints Saul as king. (2) Saul is proclaimed king by the people. (3) Saul defeats the Ammonites. These episodes are encapsulated by scenes where Samuel is the protagonist, and the theological evaluation of monarchy in Israel is the major issue. The text then describes the reign of Saul until his death in the rest of the book. Paul’s (Saul’s) commission in *Acts* 9 is bracketed by the deeds of Philip and Peter, where the problem of mission among the Gentiles is prominent. The themes and episodes of (1) Saul and Ananias, (2) Saul recognised by the disciples in Damascus and Jerusalem, and (3) Saul’s courageous action as an evangelist mirror the threefold division of the Old Testament narrative.

The story of the son of Kish has a fairy-tale beginning: Kish sends out his son to find lost cattle. Saul, accompanied by a slave, sets out on a journey. After passing through different ‘lands’ and looking for the donkeys in vain, they finally decide to visit ‘the seer’ (Samuel), give him a piece of silver, and ask him to tell where the donkeys strayed. Before their arrival, Samuel received a revelation in a vision. Thus the plot gets an unexpected twist, and the rest of the story is about Saul’s kingdom rather than his father’s donkeys. In *Acts* 9, Saul’s mission to collect the followers of Jesus from Damascus corresponds to this plot. The heavenly revelation on the Damascus road changes his plans, and Ananias is also prepared in a vision to make him a disciple.

In the Old Testament story, Saul and the slave participate in a sacred meal at the shrine where Samuel resides, and the next day Samuel anoints Saul. Then he sends them away and foretells three signs which will be fulfilled on their way home. The first one is that people will report to them on the way that the donkeys have already been found, and the last one that Saul will fall in trance with a group of

prophets and ‘be turned into a different person’\textsuperscript{34}. We should remember at this point the autobiography of Rekhmire, who fell into ecstasy and became a prophet: ‘my yesterday’s nature had altered itself since I had come forth in the adornments to be the priest of Ma’et\textsuperscript{35}. In \textit{Acts} 9, the blinded Saul is sitting among fasting and prayers in Damascus, and sees a vision about Ananias coming to heal him. Ananias comes, and after laying his hands on him, his eyes open. Then he is baptised and takes food. Trance, sign, meal, and ritual act (baptism or anointing) are parts of the commission story here as well.

The second episode in the Old Testament tells how Saul was elected king by lot. It is unimportant for our present analysis that this episode must have come from a different tradition. In the text as we have it, it is the continuation of the donkey-story. The tool used here, casting a lot to get an oracle, is typical in Old Testament literature\textsuperscript{36}. It also appears in several of the apostolic Acts\textsuperscript{37}. A third variant of Saul’s election is told in \textit{1 Samuel} 11. Here he appears as a fearful warrior, tearing apart bulls in trance\textsuperscript{38}, and as the rescuer of the city of Jabesh. For the third time, he is elected king. The latter episodes evoke the naturalistic storytelling of \textit{Judges} and are not typically paralleled in the apostolic Acts. However, Saul in \textit{Acts} 9 also proves his charisma among the Damascus disciples, and is confirmed by the board of the apostles in Jerusalem.

The structure of both Saul narratives is based on three main features. (1) The texts combine an initial task (mission) and the actual commissioning. These are the donkey-story and kingship, and the persecution of the disciples and apostleship, respectively. (2) Both stories contain a sequence of smaller episodes where the legitimacy of the hero is questioned and reconfirmed. (3) There is an interplay of the commissioned hero, the helper figure and the community where the hero is going to perform his ministry. This main narrative framework is completed and supported by a series of standard elements: miracu-

\textsuperscript{34}. \textit{1 Samuel} 10.6 (NRSV).
\textsuperscript{35}. Pritchard, \textit{Ancient Near Eastern Texts}, 213, translates ‘Prophet of Maat’.
\textsuperscript{36}. For the sacred lots used in the Jewish Scriptures, called ‘urim and tum-mim’, see de Vaux, \textit{Israel}, 352. Lots also play an important role at a later point of Saul’s biography in \textit{1 Samuel} 14.41–2.
\textsuperscript{37}. See pp. 219–224 below.
\textsuperscript{38}. \textit{1 Samuel} 11.7. On Saul’s gigantic stature see 9.2.
lous sign, festive meal, ritual act, and, even more importantly, experiences of vision, trance, and transformation.

Our second example concerns a famous story of prophetic call: the *Book of Jonah*. There is also an apostolic parallel to this text, namely, Peter’s mission to Cornelius in *Acts* 10. The main theme of both narratives is the reluctance of the prophet to preach to the Gentiles. Both the Assyrian city of Nineveh and the Roman centurion Cornelius represent oppressors of the Jewish people. The scandal for both prophets is that the hated Gentiles might convert to their faith and be saved. As the name of Jonah is emblematic of this problem in Jewish literature, Peter struggles with it the most among the apostles in *Acts*.

The sending of the prophet becomes necessary in both cases because the fame of Nineveh or Cornelius, respectively, ‘ascended’ to God. It is surprising that the narrative of Jonah is not discussed among the examples of the commission form in any of the studies known to us. The elements of epiphany, commission, protest and reassurance are obvious in the text. The occurrence of a miraculous ‘sign’, Jonah’s spending three days in the huge fish, is crucial to the narrative. The ‘sign of Jonah’ became a phrase also used by Jesus in the Gospels. Peter, too, receives a sign in the form of a vision of unclean animals that he has to eat. The reluctance of both Jonah and Peter is marked by the repeated imperative: ‘Get up!’ The converted Gentiles are pictured as outstandingly pious in both narratives.

As the name ‘Saul’ in the previous texts, also here we have ‘catchwords’ connecting the two stories. The city of Joppa is crucial for both narratives (this is where Jonah takes a ship and Peter sees the

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40. Cf. *Acts* 15.7–11. In *Galatians* 2.11–4, Paul relates that Peter immediately turned his back to the non-Jewish Christians as soon as people from the circle of James arrived from Jerusalem. For the reluctance of Thomas, an important motif in his Acts, see pp. 120ff below.
41. The verb used is *αναστηνυσα* both in *Acts* 10.4 and *Jonah* 1.2 (Septuagint).
43. The verbal forms *αναστηνυσα* and *αναστηνυσα* are repeated in *Jonah* 1.2 and 3.2; *Acts* 10 vv. 13 and 20.
vision). Peter is also known as the ‘son of Jonah’\textsuperscript{44}. We have to note that ancient readers were sensitive to names and their meanings. In sum, commission to the Gentiles is the major interest of both stories, and we find similar motifs in them which express the deep conflict inherent to this constellation: forceful protest of the hero, repeated command of the sender, miraculous sign to persuade the hesitant prophet, and the piety of the Gentiles.

The motif of ‘prophet on board’ will appear in several of the apostolic Acts. In the canonical Acts, Paul’s sea voyage occupies the last chapters. It has been taken for a typical Hellenistic feature, or directly the marker of the influence of Greek novels on the book\textsuperscript{45}. Greco-Roman examples are in fact abundant, nevertheless we have to recognise the existence of the motif also in Old Testament literature. In other apostolic Acts, the sea voyage comes at the beginning, namely, the apostles reach their allotted missionary fields in this way. The Acts of John by Pseudo-Prochorus relates a story that is close to that of Jonah\textsuperscript{46}. The apostle is first reluctant to travel to Asia, but Peter rebukes him\textsuperscript{47}. Then John and his companion Prochorus depart from Joppa and suffer shipwreck. All of the forty-six passengers reach the land near Seleucia with only John missing. The passengers fall upon Prochorus and accuse John to be a sorcerer who bewitched them. After forty days, Prochorus arrives at a field called Marmareon, where previously John commanded him to go. While sitting on the seashore, suddenly he catches a glimpse of a wave heaving from the sea with a great noise, which casts out John.

Our third example is the biography of Jeremiah. Rather exceptionally, this prophetic book contains much narrative material, and the story often takes turns similar to the apostolic Acts. As in many Acts, we have a lengthy report of the prophet’s imprisonment, but—as with Paul in Acts—we do not learn about his death. For the book of Jeremiah, the theme of prophetic call is of major interest. The book

\textsuperscript{44.} In Matthew 16.17 Jesus calls him Σίμων Βαριώνᾶ. In John 1.42 and 21.15–17 he is called ‘son of Ἰωάννης’.
\textsuperscript{45.} Pervo, Profit with Delight, 50–7.
\textsuperscript{46.} Zahn, Acta Joannis, 5–14; cf. the Arabic Travels of John in Smith Lewis, Mythological Acts, 37ff.
\textsuperscript{47.} Cf. pp. 263f below.
begins with a commission episode, and the prophet laments the difficulties of his task in several passages\textsuperscript{48}. Controversy between the ‘true’ and the ‘false’ prophets\textsuperscript{49}, and Jeremiah’s faithfulness to his commission are central to the narrative chapters of the book. Almost with the same words as Paul in \textit{Acts} 9, Jeremiah is explicitly sent to the Gentiles: ‘I appointed you a prophet to the nations. […] See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms\textsuperscript{50}. But in the biographical parts of the book we read about Jeremiah’s struggles with his own people rather than his mission among other nations, as in the case of Jonah.

Let us now turn our attention to Jeremiah’s imprisonment. Its story is found in \textit{Jeremiah} 37.11–45.5, and we will compare it to Paul’s imprisonment in \textit{Acts} 21.27–28.30. Both stories presumably narrate the end of their heroes’ lives, but we are left without information as to whether they survived the imprisonment. The historical situation as well as the characters and places of the two stories are similar. In both cases, Israel is occupied by a great empire: Babylon and Rome, respectively. Both prophets are imprisoned in Jerusalem. Later they are taken to a Gentile metropolis: Jeremiah to Tahpanhes, where the Pharaoh resides\textsuperscript{51}, and Paul to Rome, the capital city of the Roman emperor.

We can also draw parallels between the characters of the two narratives. The stories of Jeremiah and Paul are recorded by their faithful companions: just as Baruch, who was taken to Egypt with Jeremiah, Luke (the ‘I’ of the prologues and the ‘we passages’) accompanies Paul on the ship, as the ‘we’ of \textit{Acts} 27.1–28.16 witnesses. Both Baruch and Luke play the roles of companion, witness and chronicler. In

\textsuperscript{48.} \textit{Jeremiah} 11.18–23, 15.10, 17.14–18, etc.

\textsuperscript{49.} Jeremiah is lined up with Micah of Moreseth, a true prophet (\textit{Jeremiah} 26.18–19), and the martyr Uriah (26.20–23). In ch. 28 he has controversy with the false prophet Hananjah, whom Yahweh ‘did not send’.

\textsuperscript{50.} \textit{Jeremiah} 1.5 (την ἐθνην τεθεικά σε) and 1.10 (τὴν ἐθνην τεθεικά σε σήμερον ἐπὶ ἑαυτῆς καὶ βασιλείας). Cf. \textit{Acts} 9.15, 22.21, 26.23.

\textsuperscript{51.} \textit{Jeremiah} 43.9. In history, Tahpanhes was an Egyptian outpost in the Nile delta, where Psammetichos I located a garrison around 663 BC. There is no archeological evidence of a large scale palace at that place. Cf. Jones and Fiema, ‘Tahpanhes’; Keown et al., \textit{Jeremiah}, vol 2, 257.
fact, to have travelling companions who are in a way subordinate to the hero is typical in the apocryphal Acts. From non-Christian literary parallels we can mention, for example, Damis in Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, who also functions as an eyewitness and chronicler\(^52\).

While Jeremiah claims obedience to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, Paul appeals to the Roman emperor. Kings of Israel receive both heroes in audience and are benevolent to them: Zedekiah to Jeremiah, and Agrippa to Paul. While the Babylonian king appoints Gedaliah governor in the land, in *Acts* Paul meets two successive governors: Felix and Festus. Both heroes are protected by officers: Ebed-melech and the tribune Claudius Lysias. Jeremiah is constantly accused by the Egyptian party, as Paul is by ‘the mob’ or ‘the Jews’\(^53\). There is one accuser especially: Johanan ben Kareah, the leader of the Egyptian party, in *Jeremiah*, and Tertullus in *Acts*. Both stories end in the Jewish Diaspora, in Egypt and Rome, respectively.

The plots contain many similar details: Jeremiah was arrested when he wanted to leave Jerusalem through the Benjamin Gate; Paul was arrested in the Temple, and ‘immediately the doors were shut’\(^54\). Jeremiah was beaten, and so was Paul. Right after his arrest, Jeremiah is taken to prison, Paul to ‘the barracks’\(^55\). Both Jeremiah and Paul immediately appeal to the authorities. Jeremiah speaks to the king and Paul to the tribune. They also to speak to the public. Paul speaks from the stairs and before the Sanhedrin. But their words bring about further violence and a plot against them\(^56\). Jeremiah ends up in the cistern. Now they find powerful patrons. Ebed-melech intervenes with the king, while Lysias writes a letter to Felix. Then Jerusalem falls in *Jeremiah*, and Paul is taken to Caesarea in *Acts*.

Here the second part of the story begins. Jeremiah has the goodwill of Gedaliah, and Paul defends himself before the governors Felix


\(^{53}\) *Acts* 21.35 and 22.30.

\(^{54}\) *Jeremiah* 37.13 and *Acts* 21.30.


\(^{56}\) *Jeremiah* 38.4–6 and *Acts* 23.12–15.
and Festus, and King Agrippa. Although the two situations are parallel, there is not much textual similarity.

The third scene begins when the murderers of Gedaliah want to flee to Egypt, and Paul has to sail for Rome. Jeremiah’s travelling company consists of murderers; Paul’s companions are prisoners. But they both have with them a faithful friend, witness and chronicler: Baruch and Luke. On their journey, the heroes encourage the others in sermons, and communicate with God in prayers.

Now we shift to the final act of the story. Jeremiah arrives in Tahpanhes, the city of the Pharaoh; Paul arrives in Rome. They both continue preaching, and they condemn the disobedience of Israel. God has sent his prophets to his people, but they did not listen. At this point, the biography ends. We have prophecies in Jeremiah 46–52, and the letters of Paul, but neither supply data about the end of the heroes’ biographies.

The broader narrative context of commission becomes visible in the Jeremiah narratives. The basic theme is faithfulness among sufferings to the original commission, and the struggle with the hero’s unbelieving and disobedient environment. Imprisonment and journey, the two major narrative elements of the apostolic Acts can be identified in this classical Jewish prophetic book. The stories of Jonah and Jeremiah show that sea journey, preaching in foreign lands, imprisonment, adventurous or miraculous escape from danger, are not necessarily Hellenistic features in the apostolic Acts. The commission of the apostles is the starting point of their ‘acts’ in which they prove their devotion to the divine call, and the same relation can be found between the call and biography of Jeremiah.

The fourth commission episode to be mentioned is the call of Isaiah. The vision begins with the description of Yahweh’s heavenly

57. See especially the use of the prophetic form ‘Thus says the Lord’ (many cases in Jeremiah, cf. Acts 27.24); the prediction of the danger of lives (Jeremiah 42.16, Acts 27.10); the call for obedience (Jeremiah 42.13,21 and Acts 27.21); the encouraging of the listeners to stay (Jeremiah 42.10 and Acts 27.31) with the grant of survival for the obedient and the prediction of death for others.

58. Isaiah 6. For a recent literary critical analysis of the passage see Landry, ‘Strategies’. The short narrative parts of the book provide little biographical context to Isaiah’s commission. Narrative sections are chs. 7 and 36–39, the latter
court: ‘I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him’. The scene reminds one of the commissions of Rekhmire and Thutmose III: ‘He made heaven and earth festive with his beauty’. When Luke describes Paul’s commission in Acts, he makes allusions to this text. This is especially clear in Acts 22, where the vocabulary of the narrative is thoroughly Jewish. Paul sees a vision in the temple, in which Jesus affirms that his testimony has been rejected in Jerusalem, and sends Paul to the Gentiles: ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me. […] Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles’. In the centre of Isaiah’s commission we also find the motif of confrontation with his people, summarised in the words about Israel’s obduracy, a passage that Luke selected as a conclusion to his book:

Go and say to this people: ‘Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand. Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed’.

Isaiah’s sending is to the people of Israel—although the book also contains prophecies against foreign nations. Paul quotes Isaiah’s judgment on Israel at the end of Acts as an argument for continuing his mission among the Gentiles. The narrative of Acts, however, contains a repeated scheme of the apostle’s turning away from his fellow Jews and then still going to them again. In this context, the last words of the book also cannot be taken as a final decision on the issue.

copied form 2 Kings 19–20. Some ‘autobiographical’ motifs of the book, for example, the name of Isaiah’s son in 8.1, are highly allegorical.

59. See Chapter 3, p. 74f.
61. E.g., Isaiah 13–21, 23.
62. As Landy, ‘Strategies’, 81–2, concludes, Isaiah himself suffers from the same barriers of understanding during his vision. This is made explicit in Isaiah 29.11: ‘And the vision of everything shall be for you like a sealed book’. It seems that Paul’s position in Acts is less ambiguous: from his commission in Acts 9, he is shown as ultimately superior to his fellow-Jews, and indeed, to his fellow-Christians.
Finally let us notice that the theme of individual and community—which is irrelevant for the cosmic hierarchy of the Egyptian texts—became important in the context of Jewish literature. Saul, the prophets, and the apostles alike are pictured as exclusive bearers of divine truth, who are always confronted with their communities. They are real ‘heroes’, struggling, winning, and suffering. Many of these heroes meet a tragic end, although their death or martyrdom in most cases is only suggested rather than explicitly reported. The relation of the prophet to other religions and people (Gentiles) is crucial to many of these stories, and constitutes a basic source of conflict first for the prophet himself, and then between the prophet and his community.

**Greco-Roman Literature**

In the previous chapter, we have dealt already with the idea of commission in Greek literature. Here we will add a few interesting examples that contribute to our understanding of the subject in the early Christian context.

Commission in Greco-Roman literature most often occurs as commission to philosophy\(^6^3\). This is often coupled with a certain moment of conversion, similarly to Paul’s Damascus experience. As Nock argued, Greco-Roman antiquity did not expect from religion ‘anything more than cults’, and they ‘looked to philosophy for guidance in conduct and for a scheme of the universe’\(^6^4\). Conversion therefore is most likely to occur within the context of an encounter with philosophy or famous philosophers. However, we remain interested in these stories only inasmuch as they talk about one’s call to practice philosophy, especially if this story appears as the turning point of a biographical narrative.

There are basically three ways of becoming a philosopher in the Greco-Roman tradition: (1) joining a school or a teacher, (2) being a self-made-man, and (3) receiving teachings from divine revelation. A number of anecdotal episodes, many of them preserved by Diogenes

63. Many of these texts are discussed by Gigon, ‘Berufung’ and Droge, ‘Call Stories’.
64. Nock, *Conversion*, 16.
Laertius\textsuperscript{65}, report how people joined a teacher or a school. Socrates is especially known for gaining new disciples by his sudden impact. Xenophon is told to have met Socrates in a narrow passage:

[Socrates] stretched out his stick and did not let him pass along, while he inquired where every kind of goods was sold. Upon receiving a reply, he put another question, ‘And where do men become good and honourable?’ When Xenophon was puzzled, Socrates said: ‘Then follow me, and learn’. From that time on, he was a student of Socrates\textsuperscript{66}.

It is interesting to compare Socrates’ resolute command with that of Jesus when calling his disciples\textsuperscript{67}. The rhetoric of Socrates is also similar to Jesus’ springing from one theme (fishing, burying the dead) to the necessity of following him. The totality of personal commitment involved by the conversion is also significant with Socrates’ disciples:

Aeschines said to him, ‘I am poor and have nothing else, but I give you myself’, and Socrates answered, ‘Nay, do you not see that you are giving me the greatest thing?’\textsuperscript{68}

The commission contains elements of conversion in the case of Polemon. As a young man, one day he ‘burst into the school of Xenocrates quite drunk, with a garland on his head’. Xenocrates, however, went on undisturbed with his lecture on self-control, and Polemon was gradually overcome\textsuperscript{69}. He repented, became a philosopher, and was later elected head of the Academy. The story appears

\begin{footnotesize}
\item[65] Diogenes Laertius’ \textit{Lives}, written in the 3rd century AD, postdates most of the earlier Acts. It is, however, basically a collection of anecdotes that the author derived from earlier texts, and many of which had certainly circulated since several centuries. Cf. Runia, ‘Diogenes Laertius’, 603.
\item[66] Diogenes Laertius, \textit{Lives} 2.48.
\item[68] Diogenes Laertius, \textit{Lives} 2.34. Cf. Jesus’ advise to the rich man: ‘Go, sell what you own, and give it to the poor. […] Then come and follow me’ (Mark 10.27). A similar thought appears in the words of Peter to the lame man at the Beautiful Gate: ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I have I give you’ (Acts 3.6).
\item[69] Literally he was ‘hunted’, ἐθηρῳθη.
\end{footnotesize}
also in the Church Fathers\textsuperscript{70}. The concept of discipleship and succession was typical, of course, also in Early Christianity. It has been suggested that the composition of Diogenes Laertius’ \textit{Lives of Eminent Philosophers}, presenting succession in philosophical schools, relied on a pattern that existed from pre-Christian times, and was used also by the author of \textit{Luke-Acts}\textsuperscript{71}. Succession becomes especially important in the later apostolic Acts, where the hero is identified as the disciple of an apostle: the \textit{Acts of Philip} and the \textit{Acts of Barnabas} are good examples of this.

Autodidacts belong to the second type of philosophical commission. Philosophers who are known in tradition as autodidacts include Heraclitus, Democritus, Socrates, and Epicurus\textsuperscript{72}. As for Heraclitus, there are two ways to understand his ἐδιδασκόμενον ἐμεωντόν\textsuperscript{73}. This means either that Heraclitus was searching as an autodidact, ‘on his own’, or that he pursued introspection in the spirit of the Delphic ‘know thyself’\textsuperscript{74}. Diogenes Laertius means that ‘he was nobody’s student, but he claimed that he “inquired himself”, and learned everything from himself’\textsuperscript{75}.

Whereas historical evidence shows that Democritus was younger than Protagoras and certainly influenced by him, Epicurus makes up a story in which he turns their relation around. Protagoras was a slave, he says, who invented a new method of carrying a burden. On seeing him, Democritus recognised his talent and began to teach him philosophy\textsuperscript{76}. Making Democritus the master—rather than the pupil—of Protagoras, Epicurus probably wants to show him as an autodidact.

\textsuperscript{70} Diogenes Laertius, \textit{Lives} 4.16. Polemon led the Academy from 314 to c. 276 BC. For a list of the patristic applications see Malherbe, \textit{Paul}, 161, note 79.

\textsuperscript{71} Talbert, \textit{Literary Patterns}, 127, describes the literary pattern in Diogenes Laertius as a composite of (a) the life of the founder, (b) the narrative about disciples and successors, and (c) the summary of the doctrine of the school. He argues (133) that works with a similar design existed at least since the second century BC, and (134) both Diogenes Laertios and the author of Luke-Acts followed this pattern.


\textsuperscript{73} Heraclitus, frag. 101 (Diels and Kranz).

\textsuperscript{74} Cf. Robinson, \textit{Heraclitus}, 147; Marcovich, \textit{Heraclitus}, 57.

\textsuperscript{75} Diogenes Laertius, \textit{Lives} 9.5.

\textsuperscript{76} Epicurus, frag. 172 (Usener).
and thus create an example for himself. According to his own statement, Epicurus had namely ‘no teacher’\(^{77}\).

Tradition has it that Socrates had teachers\(^{78}\), but then turned away from natural philosophy and ‘his own conversation was ever of human things’\(^{79}\). Whether or not his dialectic was actually influenced by Zeno of Elea, and his ethics by Archelaus, Protagoras, or anyone else, in the Socratic literature he appears as ‘the ignorant son of the stonemason and the midwife who can play with the greatest Athenians like a cat with a mouse’\(^{80}\). Plato lets him remark sarcastically at the beginning of the *Cratylus*:

> If I had not been poor, I might have heard the fifty-drachma course of the great Prodicus, which is a complete education in grammar and language—these are his own words—and then I should have been at once able to answer your question about the correctness of names. But, indeed, I have heard only the single-drachma course, and therefore I do not know the truth about such matters\(^{81}\).

Other philosophers received their teachings from divine revelation. Aristoxenus reports that Pythagoras received most of his ethical doctrines from the Delphian priestess Themistocleia\(^{82}\). According to the Suda, his name expresses that ‘he reveals the truth not worse than the Pythian’\(^{83}\). The doctrines which Parmenides presents in his *De rerum natura* supposedly were revealed to him by a goddess\(^{84}\). Diogenes Laertius quotes the following epigram about Epicurus:

> Ye toil, O men, for paltry things and incessantly begin strife and wars for gain; but nature’s wealth extends to a moderate bound, whereas

\(^{77}\). Epicurus, frag. 123 (Usener).

\(^{78}\). Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2.19, mentions Anaxagoras, Damon and Archelaus.

\(^{79}\). Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.1.16, περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων σκοπῶν.


\(^{81}\). Plato, *Cratylus* 384b, trans. B. Jowett in Hamilton and Cairns (eds), *Plato*.


\(^{83}\). *Suda* s.v. Πυθαγόρας ὁ Σάμιος (2).

\(^{84}\). Diels and Kranz, *Vorsokratiker*, vol 1, 231.
vain judgments have a limitless range. *This message Neocles’ wise son heard from the Muses or from the sacred tripod at Delphi*\textsuperscript{85}.

Finally, Philostratus writes that Apollonius of Tyana ‘conversed with the gods, and learned from them what makes them rejoice on people and what makes them angry, and also about nature he taught what he had learned from them’\textsuperscript{86}.

As the case of Epicurus shows, philosophers might appear in different traditions with regard to their commission and their source of authority. Being self-taught and being taught by the gods are related ideas\textsuperscript{87}. Xenophon reports that Socrates also received his teachings from Delphi:

First, then, for his attitude towards religion; his deeds and words were clearly in harmony with the answer given by the Pythia to such questions as ‘What is my duty about sacrifice?’ or about ‘cult of ancestors’. For the answer of the Pythia is, ‘Follow the custom of the state: that is the way to act piously’. And so Socrates acted himself and counselled others to act\textsuperscript{88}.

Aristotle also connected Socrates’ wisdom to Delphi: according to him, Socrates turned to philosophy when he read the famous ‘know yourself’ on the temple of Apollo\textsuperscript{89}. The idea that someone’s wisdom comes from God occurs also in early Christianity. In *Galatians* Paul seems to originate his knowledge about Jesus exclusively from divine revelation:

But when God […] was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me […]\textsuperscript{90}.

From the divine origin of their doctrines, it is only one step to the deification of the teachers themselves. Philosophers who allegedly descended from the gods, went through subsequent reincarnations, went

\textsuperscript{85} Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 10.12, trans. R.D. Hicks in LCL.
\textsuperscript{86} Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 1.1.
\textsuperscript{87} Cf. Odyssey 22.347f; Dodds, *Greeks*, 10.
\textsuperscript{88} Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.3.1, trans. O.J. Todd in LCL.
\textsuperscript{89} Aristotle, frag. 1–3 (Rose\textsuperscript{3}); Cf. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 4.2.24.
\textsuperscript{90} *Galatians* 1.15–17 (NRSV).
down to the Hades, worked miracles, resurrected from the dead, and who were worshipped in cults, include Epimenides, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Epicurus, and Apollonius of Tyana. The heroes of the apostolic Acts also show superhuman abilities, but they always refuse any attempt to deify them. The discussion of this problem—clearly related to the appearance of ‘divine men’ in antiquity—exceeds the limits of this study.

Authors who promoted the image of the prophetic and divine philosopher at the time when the apostolic Acts were written include Philostratus, Diogenes Laertius, Porphyry, and Iambichlus. Greco-Roman philosophers are often told to have been called and commissioned by gods, similarly to the Jewish prophets. In a way they also seem to have fulfilled a similar role in relation to the (religious) value system of their communities as the Jewish prophets in Israel. Obedient to divine commission, they denounced moral corruption, appeared as cult reformers, promoted ways of perfect life, and envisioned the ideal state.

The portrait of Epimenides by Diogenes Laertius is a very instructive example. Epimenides, who lived on the edge of the archaic and classical times (probably 6th century BC), was known in Athens as well as in Sparta. Plato calls him a ‘divine man’, Plutarch one of the seven sages, the favourite of gods, and wise about the divine things. Apuleius praises him together with Orpheus and Pythagoras:

Others call those magicians who bestow unusual care on the investigation of the workings of providence and unusual devotion on their worship of the gods, as though, forsooth, they knew how to perform everything that they know actually to be performed (quasi facere etiam sciant quae sciant fieri). So Epimenides, Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Ostanes were regarded as magicians [...].

91. Already in Acts 14.8–18 we read an attempt to worship Barnabas and Paul as gods.
92. Cf. Cox, Biography, 34.
93. Dodds, Greeks, 142, proposed that Epimenides’ figure has Thracian colours; recently Bremmer, Afterlife, 37, (supporting Burkert’s view) suggests a Near Eastern influence. For ancient testimonies on Epimenides, see Diels and Kranz, Vorsokratiker, vol 1, 27–31.
94. Platon, Laws 1, 642d; Plutarch, Solon 12.
95. Apuleius, Apology 27, trans. H.E. Butler in LCL.
His ritual purification of Athens is reported already by Aristotle⁹⁶. The fullest version of the ‘Epimenides novel’ is found among Diogenes Laertius’ Lives, and we will concentrate on this narrative⁹⁷. In a short introduction we are informed about Epimenides’ descent (son either of Phaestius or Dosias, or Agesarchus), his birthplace (Cnossus on Crete), and appearance (long hair untypical of Cretans). Then comes the commissioning episode⁹⁸:

Once he was sent into the country by his father to look for a stray sheep. At noon he turned aside from the way, and in the shelter of some cave he slept for fifty-seven years. After this he got up and went in search of the sheep, thinking he had been asleep only a short time. When he could not find it, he came to the farm. And when he found everything changed and another owner in possession, he went back to the town very puzzled. On entering his own house there, he fell in with people who asked who he was. Finally, he found his younger brother, now an old man, and learnt the truth from him. So he became famous throughout Greece, and was believed to be a favourite of the gods. (109)

This is immediately followed by the story of the Athenian pestilence. On the behest of the Pythia to purify the city, a ship was sent to Crete for Epimenides, who came to Athens in the 46th Olympiad (595–592). He purified the city, and stopped the pestilence:

He took sheep, some black and others white, and brought them to the Areopagus. There he let them go wherever they pleased, instructing those who followed them that where each sheep should be sacrificed to the local god where it may lay down, and thus the plague would be stayed. Hence even to this day anonymous altars can be found in different parts of Attica, which are memorials of this atonement.

According to another version the plague was stopped when two young men, Cratinus and Ctesibius, were put to death (110). Epimenides refused the money offered to him, and concluded a treaty of friendship and alliance between Cnossus and Athens. Then he returned home and soon afterwards died. By this the ‘novel’ is actually

⁹⁸. Trans. R.D. Hicks in LCL, adapted.
finished (111). We read still the list of works attributed to Epimenides (111–112) and a letter he wrote to Solon (113). The chapter concludes with miscellaneous information (114–115). For example, we are told about Epimenides’ claim that he went through many reincarnations, and about his body being guarded in Sparta.

Epimenides’ ‘life’ thus consists basically of two parts: a call narrative and a typical episode of his activity. The length and disposition of the material is similar to the autobiography of Rekhmire or the Acts of Titus99. That Epimenides’ long sleep takes place in a Cretan cave suggests that the episode relates an initiation100. The two parts of the bios are connected by the motive of the ‘sheep’. As with Saul’s commission in 1 Samuel, the call narrative contains a primary and a secondary ‘mission’. Both Saul and Epimenides were sent by their fathers to look for lost cattle: Saul for donkeys, and Epimenides for sheep. Before they could fulfil their task, both got involved in adventures that diverted them from it. Both went through a kind of initiation experience attesting to their divine election, and became leaders of their communities. As we have seen, the commission of Paul in Acts 9 has a similar structure, where the role of the first ‘sender’ is taken by the high priest, and the primary mission is a ‘police raid’ against heretics in Damascus.

The last example from Greco-Roman literature is the commission story of Dio Chrysostom. A contemporary of Paul and Luke, Dio gives in one of his speeches an autobiographical account of his call as a wandering philosopher101. When banished under Domitian, he began to ponder whether exile is really a painful and unfortunate thing, or whether it can be also light and easy. He decided to draw an oracle from the god:

99. See pp. 26ff above and Chapter 9 below.

100. Cf. Dodds, Greeks, 142 and Bremmer, Afterlife, 37. Long sleep also occurs in Jewish and early Christian writings: Pareleipomena Jeremiou 5; Honi the circle drawer (Babylonian Talmud Taanith 23a and Palestinian Talmud Taanith 3.9); the Byzantine legend of the seven young men; cf. Herzer, Paralipomena Jeremiae 92–100. For encountering gods in (Cretan) caves see Rohde, Psyche, vol 1, 111–45; Faure, Caverns cretoises, 81–197. For long sleep in fairy tales, see Karlinger, Zauberschlaf.

And when I consulted him, he gave me an oracle which was strange and not easy to interpret. For he commanded me to do this very thing in which I am, with full zeal, as some honourable and useful activity, ‘until you go’, said he, ‘to the furthest part of the world’.

Thus our hero exhorted himself ‘neither to fear nor be ashamed’ of his action, ‘put on humble attire’ and set out on his journey. Some took him for a beggar, while others called him a philosopher. He won fame and many came to him and asked him to tell what he thought about good and evil. ‘Again, they invited me to stand in the middle and talk in the public’. The key motif in this commission story is again a divine oracle. It is ‘not easy to interpret’, and the hero also uses his knowledge of literary examples to understand the command. He is sent to the utmost parts of the world, as the apostles, and he leaves behind everything to fulfil his mission.

We should note that Dio is a solitary figure. He has no ‘helper’, no travelling companion. His friend Flavius Sabinus—mentioned at the beginning of the discourse—was executed at the same time as Dio was banished. The social structure of the text is thus different from the hierarchical world of the Near East as well as from the prophetic conflict between hero and community. We have a cosmopolitan hero, who goes wherever the god sends him, and preaches his message fearlessly to people at the ends of the world. Commission is here the exclusive business of the sender and the hero.

The Ancient Novel

The apocryphal Acts have often been claimed to stand close to the ancient novels. In the Greek novels, the dangerous journeys of the heroes frequently begin out of divine will. In the Ephesian Tale by
Xenophon of Ephesus\textsuperscript{106}, the tribulations of hero and heroine are foretold by the following oracle\textsuperscript{107}:

Why do you long to learn the end of a malady, and its beginning?
One disease has both in its grasp, and from that remedy must be accomplished.
But for them I see terrible sufferings and toils that are endless;
Both will flee over the sea pursued by pirates\textsuperscript{108},
They will suffer chains at the hands of men who mingle with the waters,
And a tomb shall be the burial chamber for both, and fire the destroyer;
And beside the waters of the river Nile, to Holy Isis
The saviour you will afterwards offer rich gifts;
But still after their sufferings a better fate is in store.

The characters of the novel immediately begin to interpret the oracle, and thus the oracle contributes to the development of the plot\textsuperscript{109}. It does not give, however, a very precise prediction of the events of the narrative\textsuperscript{110}. Trials are foretold by an oracle in the \textit{Wonders Beyond Thule}\textsuperscript{111}:

There, an oracle declared that they would go to Thule, and that they would see other homeland later but that first they would undergo trials and make atonement for their, albeit unintentional, irreverence towards their parents […]

\textsuperscript{106} Probably mid-second century AD, Hägg, \textit{Novel}, 20; Reardon, \textit{Ancient Novels}, 5; Bremmer, ‘Novel’, 170.

\textsuperscript{107} Xenophon of Ephesus, \textit{Ephesian Tale} 1.6, trans. G. Anderson in Reardon, \textit{Ancient Novels}, 132.

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{λῃστόν θάνατον}, see Liddel-Scott, \textit{Supplement}, 196b.


\textsuperscript{111} Photius, \textit{Bibliotheca} 166.110a, trans. G.N. Sandy in Reardon, \textit{Ancient Novels}, 779–80. The novel dates from the 1st–2nd century AD, Sandy, \textit{ibidem}, 775.
A similar oracle is found in Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*, promising hero and heroine ‘the great reward of virtuous life’, but not warning them of the sufferings. The elaboration of the episode deserves attention:\(^{112}\):

> Without more ado, we set off towards the temple, where the Thessalians had already made all the arrangements for the sacrifice. We had reached the altar, the priest had spoken the introductory prayer, the young man was on the point of commencing the ceremony, when from the inner shrine the voice of the priestess of the oracle rang forth.

> One who starts in grace and ends in glory, another goddess-born:
> Of these I bid you have regard, O Delphi!
> Leaving my temple here and cleaving Ocean’s swelling tides,
> To the black land of the Sun will they travel,
> Where they will reap the reward of those whose lives are passed in virtue:
> A crown of white on brows of black.

> So spake the god, but the bystanders were completely nonplussed and quite at a loss to explain the meaning of the oracle. They each tried to extract a different interpretation from it; each understood it in a sense that matched his own wishes. As yet not one of them had discovered its real meaning, for by and large the interpretation of dreams and oracles depends on the outcome. In any case, the people of Delphi were in too much of a hurry, for they were highly excited at the prospect of this pageant for which such magnificent preparations had been made: no one took the time to investigate exactly what the oracle signified.

The author gives the oracle the form of an epiphany, describes the circumstances and the place (the Pythian games in Delphi), the amazement and obtuseness of the bystanders, and emphasises the opacity of the oracle—as in many stories that we already examined.

The deity sometimes gives orders to the hero in a vision. Apollo and Artemis appoint Calasiris as patron of Theagenes and Charik-

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leia. An angel sends Apollonius, king of Tyre, to the temple of Diana, where he is reunited with his wife.

Divine oracles and commands thus play an important role in these narratives. The novels can assume various kinds of relations between the protagonists and the gods. The suffering of the protagonists is often the result of their offending the deity, but the gods also rescue them from the greatest perils. Furthermore, hero and heroine often experience divine appearances, or descend from a divine lineage, and people worship them. Kerényi claimed that the suffering and deliverance of the heroes imitate the myth of Isis and Osiris:

Reading a Greek novel with the knowledge of an initiate of the mysteries of Isis [...] meant to read it from the perspective of providence instead of the perspective of destiny.

[T]he typical novel and the divine passion narrative [of Isis and Osiris] contain the same set of motifs. [...] One attains salvation in the holy quarter of the Isis temple by participating in the pain and bliss of that journey.

115. E.g., Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 2. ‘Εγώ ταύτα ἐν εἰδέῃν, ἔφη, τοσσύτας ὑβρεῖς ἔξερος τοιοῦτον. ‘How well I know it—for all the indignities Love has made me suffer’, these are the first words of the hero in the novel. In Xenophon’s *Ephesian Tale* 1.1, Habrocomes did not recognise Eros, because he thought he was more handsome and powerful: ‘Eros was furious at this’ (cf. note 117 below).
117. Xenophon, *Ephesian Tale* 1.1: ‘[The citizens] treated the boy [Habrocomes] like a god, and some even prostrated themselves and prayed at the sight of him’. As for the heroine Anthia, ‘often as they saw her [...] the Ephesians would worship her as Artemis’. Of Heliodorus’ heroine, the robbers think ‘she must be a god—the goddess Artemis, or the Isis they worship in those parts’ (*Ethiopian Story* 1.2). The hero is an offspring of Achilles (2.34). Apollonius’ wife is mistaken for Diana (*History of Apollonius King of Tyre* 48): ‘she radiated so much glittering beauty that they thought that she was the goddess Diana’. For other examples, see Kerényi, *Romanliteratur*, 95–9, 256ff.
The protagonists of some novels become priests. In Heliodorus’ novel, Charicleia is a priestess of Artemis at Delphi and Theagenes a priest of Apollo\(^{119}\). At the end of the novel, both are initiated as the priests of the Egyptian gods Sun and Moon\(^{120}\). Apollonius’ wife is a priestess of Artemis (Diana) in Ephesus\(^{121}\). Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* 11 relates Lucius’ initiation into the cult of Isis and Osiris\(^{122}\). In the end, Lucius becomes a priest himself and he walks around proudly with his head shaven: ‘Then, once more shaving my head completely, neither covering up nor hiding my baldness, but displaying it wherever I went, I joyfully carried out the duties of that ancient priesthood, founded in the days of Sulla’\(^{123}\).

We can conclude that divine destiny and guidance, as well as initiation into the mysteries belong to the central themes of ancient novels. How far these episodes can be regarded as commission narratives has to be decided in the larger context of our study.

**Commission Stories in the Gospels**

All four canonical gospels relate that Jesus collected disciples around himself by walking around and calling people to follow him. Many of these stories simply report Jesus’ words of call and how the to-be-disciples follow him immediately\(^{124}\). These narratives are rather similar to our first type of call to philosophy; namely, when someone joins a school or a teacher\(^{125}\). Some of the call stories also include a miraculous act of Jesus, which is understood as divine epiphany by the disciples. Luke’s well-known episode relates that after they were fishing without result for a whole night, Jesus commanded the disciples to cast out the net once again, whereupon they ‘caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break’\(^{126}\). Peter falls down at Jesus’ knees and says, ‘Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man’. According

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119. Heliodorus, *Ethiopian Story* 1.22
121. *History of Apollonius King of Tyre* 48.
122. Cf. p. 27, note 5; p. 239 below.
124. *Mark* 1.16–20 and parallels; *Mark* 2.13–17 and parallels; *John* 1.35–51.
125. Cf. pp. 42f above; Droge, ‘Call Stories’ and ‘Call Stories (Gospels)’.
to John\textsuperscript{127}, when Nathanael comes to Jesus, the latter already knows that he is a ‘true Israelite’ and that he was sitting under a fig tree. In these narratives we can identify the following motifs: encounter with Jesus, miraculous act, astonishment, acclamation of Jesus as divine, words of call, and finally, the disciple’s following Jesus.

Other synoptic passages talk about the call of twelve disciples, whom Jesus sent out to proclaim the kingdom and to heal: ‘he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons’\textsuperscript{128}. The narrative frame of these texts is simple: they state Jesus’ command and attach a list with the names of the twelve. In a Lucan variant of the story, Jesus sends out seventy disciples ‘in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go’\textsuperscript{129}. The \textit{Gospel of Matthew} ends with the ‘Great Commission’\textsuperscript{130}, in which Jesus commands the eleven disciples ‘to make disciples of all nations’. The text ends with the reassurance: ‘Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age’. In the longer ending of \textit{Mark}, we find a somewhat different version of this passage, in which the reassurance clause contains a list of signs accompanying the believers\textsuperscript{131}.

One more passage has to be mentioned from the gospels, namely, the baptism of Jesus, which is reported in all four canonical gospels\textsuperscript{132}. Jesus goes to the Jordan, where John is baptising, and lets himself be baptised. In \textit{Matthew} and \textit{John}, there is a dialogue between Jesus and the Baptist. When Jesus is baptised, the heavens open and the Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove. In the Synoptics, a voice is heard from heaven: ‘You are my beloved son, with you I am pleased’. This sentence has different variants in the other gospels\textsuperscript{133}.

\begin{flushright}
127. \textit{John} 1.47–51
133. \textit{Luke} 3.22 speaks in the third person: ‘This is my son [...]’. In \textit{John} 1.34, the Baptist witnesses that ‘This is the son of God’. The Western textual tradition of \textit{Luke} 3.22 and the \textit{Gospel of the Ebionites}, frag. 3, follow \textit{Psalms} 2.7 and add ‘I have this day begotten you’. Cf. \textit{Gospel of the Hebrews} 2.
\end{flushright}
The commission episodes of the gospels have a relatively simple structure, usually combining one or two motifs. A biographical context can be found only in the baptism of Jesus. These gospel narratives are nevertheless interesting because they provide us with early Christian commission texts before the apostolic Acts were written.

A Preliminary Typology of Commission Narratives

This survey covered only a part of the extant passages about commission. We did not undertake a detailed historical study of the commission pattern, but rather pointed to texts which are representative of the main trajectories of this conspicuous literary structure. We have to omit the discussion of several interesting passages. A certain consistence of form, theme, and motifs is well discernable in the referred texts, but also substantial differences, first of all with regard to the social texture of the narratives.

I suggest a threefold typology of the social texture of commission narratives. The first type is called institutional and is exemplified in its purest form by the early Egyptian stories. Its main characteristic is that it integrates the hero into an institutional hierarchy. It reinforces and justifies the existing order of things, the social-cultural status quo. The hero becomes to represent and to defend this very order. The second type is called prophetic and is represented mainly by the prophetic call stories of Jewish Scripture. In these narratives the conflict between the individual and the community is the central problem. The prophet is in the paradoxical situation of being a member of his social environment but opposing its goals and beliefs. In the very moment that the prophet tries to escape this paradox, either by detaching himself from his environment or giving up his critical stance, he ceases to be a prophet. The third type is called philosophical. In a philosophical commission story, the hero is called to engage in an intimate relation

with his sender, leaving behind the world. The hero is alienated from his environment and becomes an outsider. If he exercises criticism, he does so from the position of a teacher of truth rather than as a suffering member of his own people.

At the same time, the three types of commission offer three biographical models, three modes of interpreting personalities, and three models for the individual to define his relation to society—in fact, to the rest of the world. We can ask to what extent a certain story promotes institutional integration, prophetic conflict with one’s social environment, or the detachment from the institutional frameworks and obedience to one’s own guiding spirit. On a more abstract level, we can speak of different strategies of finding one’s social identity: within the framework of the institutions, against the framework of the institutions, or outside the institutions.

These are not so much clear-cut alternatives, as rather basic components, which are necessarily mixed in most narratives, and in most human lives. They offer different perspectives that will help us to interpret the individual stories. Most of the commission narratives, whether Egyptian, Jewish, Greco-Roman, or early Christian, provide a synthesis of the three basic types.
3. Paul before Damascus

The most surprising feature of Paul’s commission in the Lucan Acts is the threefold narration of the story in Acts 9.1–30, 22.3–21, and 26.9–20. These are not parallel reports in different texts (as in the tomb of Rekhmire), or references to different episodes within the same text (as in the Acts of John)\(^1\). Luke obviously writes about the same event in all the three narratives, but he retells it with surprising discrepancies. There are similar ‘doublets’ and ‘triplets’ in many passages of the Jewish Scriptures\(^2\).

The inclusion of three accounts of the same episode in the book and the differences between them can be explained in more than one way. Several studies assume different sources behind the three versions\(^3\). In looking for the author’s purpose, scholars suggest that Luke offered complementary versions with different theological accents\(^4\).

1. *Acts of John* 18, 88–9, 113, see Chapter 4.
2. Cf. von Dobschütz, ‘Die Berichte’; add *1 Samuel* 9–11. Dobschütz cited parallels also from the Gospels, but concluded that ‘the relation of the three accounts in Acts to each other is yet different’.
4. Stanley, ‘Paul’s Conversion’, argued that ch. 9 expands Paul’s account in ch. 22 (325), while ch. 26 shortens the same (332–3); the three accounts emphasise, respectively, that Paul really saw Christ; that he saw him exalted in glory; and that he was inaugurated as a servant of Yahweh (338). Hedrick, ‘Paul’s Conversion’, 432, concluded that ch. 9 adapts a traditional miracle story of Paul’s conversion, whereas ch. 22 is an edited, while ch. 26 is an abbreviated, version of the legend; the three accounts were composed to correct and complement each
This chapter will approach these repetitions from a socio-rhetorical perspective, with an emphasis on the social world of the texts, and interpret the threefold narration as multiple attempts to define the narrative figure of Paul in *Acts*.

Already in the discussion of King Saul’s commission we found different ways of legitimation that the three episodes described: commission through epiphany, prophetic transformation of consciousness, and a sacramental act in the first narrative; mantic techniques and recognition by the people in the second one; and rising to political leadership as a fearful warrior in the third one. This shows that commission stories about the same hero (with the same sender and helper: Yahweh and Samuel) might situate the plot in very different social structures. In our reading of the three Lucan narratives about Paul’s commission we will be looking for literary strategies of creating social identity, making use of the social typology of commission that we described in Chapter 2 above.

*Aets 9*

(1) Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest (2) and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (3) Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. (4) He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ (5) He asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The reply came, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. (6) But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do’. (7) The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. (8) Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. (9) For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

other. Hedrick’s view of a ‘cumulative effect’ is followed by Witherington, *Acts*, 303–4. According to Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 90, ch. 9 presents Paul as the overthrown enemy, ch. 22 as the loyal Jew, whereas ch. 26 underscores his call as a witness and his faithful obedience to that call.
Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, ‘Ananias’. He answered, ‘Here I am, Lord’. The Lord said to him, ‘Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight’. But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name’. But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name’. So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit’. And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptised, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God’. All who heard him were amazed and said, ‘Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem among those who invoked this name? And has he not come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?’ Saul became increasingly more powerful and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Messiah. After some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night so that they might kill him; but the disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket. When he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the

5. For ‘the disciples’ against ‘his disciples’ (the latter supported by the oldest manuscripts) see Haenchen, Apostelgeschichte, 279 and Metzger, Textual Commentary, 366.
Paul before Damascus

name of Jesus. (28) So he went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. (29) He spoke and argued with the Hellenists; but they were attempting to kill him. (30) When the believers learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. (NRSV)

If we look at the account of Acts 9, we find a highly complex narrative, consisting of several minor episodes with the interaction of a number of characters. Still it has to be understood as one episode in the flow of the Lucan narrative: it is bracketed by accounts about the missionary acts of other apostolic figures. Philip baptises the Ethiopian eunuch in the previous section, and Peter baptises Cornelius in the next one. Paul’s story is also rounded off by a typical Lucan summary on the growth of the church.

The commission story of Paul (called Saul throughout in this narrative) can be divided into the following scenes: (1) Saul’s vision on the Damascus road (verses 1–9); (2) Ananias’ vision (10–16); Saul’s healing and baptism (17–19a); his preaching in Damascus (19b–22); his adventurous escape from the city (23–25); his acceptance in Jerusalem (26–28); and his escape from there (29–30). If we want to take the narrative context seriously—and this is the only possibility for literary analysis—we cannot reduce our investigation to the first three scenes.

The framework of the social texture of the story is drawn by the opposition of ‘disciples’ and ‘persecutors’. This basic scheme ex-

6. For Acts 8–11 as a larger thematic unit see Tannehill, Narrative Unity, vol 2, 113f.

7. A similar summary in Acts 6.7 preceded the trial of Stephen, where also Paul was introduced to the reader (7.58, 8.1–3). Notice that the division given by the two summaries does not correspond to the thematic units observed above. Sterling, ‘Athletes of Virtue’, argues that summaries in Acts highlight the apologetic purpose of the author rather than being markers of structural divisions.

8. The disciples are also ‘those of the Way’ (τὴν ὁδὸν ὁπερὶ δόντως, 9.2). For a comparable use of in the Qumran community, see Community Rule (1QS) 9.18 and 10.21; Damascus Document (CD) 1.13, 2.6, 20.18. For more examples, see Fitzmyer, Acts, 423–4, who suggests that the name comes from Isaiah 40.3 and preserves the original self-identification of Christianity. Guilbert, Les textes de Qumran, vol 1, 65, comments on 1QS 9.18: ‘Le terme de « Voie » désigne le mode propre à la secte d’envisager la fidélité aux prescriptions divines. Par la
presses people’s relation to the central figure of Jesus. The dynamic is created by Saul’s moving from one side to the other. It is remarkable how passively he is dragged across this social field: he is hit on the ground, lead by the hand to Damascus, healed by Ananias, let down from the walls in a basket, introduced to the apostles by Barnabas, and again rescued and sent off by the disciples.

There are basically three levels of church authority involved in the process: a single disciple (Ananias), a local church (Damascus), and finally the supreme authority of the ‘golden age’, the board of the apostles in Jerusalem. Saul is taken before these authorities one by one, where he is examined and confirmed as a disciple. The narrative structure presents a bureaucratic machine which produces, so to speak, apostles from Pharisees. Immediate interaction with the divine sender is reduced to the annihilating demonstration of power on the Damascus road.

This narrative embodies the institutional model of commission, with the purpose of integrating the hero into the institutional framework of a community. This is first achieved through various stages of initiation. Saul’s annihilating experience of the divine power on the Damascus road causes temporary blindness. It is followed by the liminal stage in the house of Judas. Here Ananias, the representative of the divinity appears (the helper figure) and recovers Saul’s sight. Baptism is the final seal on the procedure. Then the new initiate is examined in practice. He produces a ‘masterpiece’ on which basis he is judged by the leading authorities of the community. His bold proclamation in Damascus is the credential which his second helper Barnabas presents to the board of the apostles. Barnabas appears as an ‘advocate’. He plays the role that is assigned to him also by the explanation of his name in an earlier passage of the book: ‘Joseph,
whom the apostles called also Barnabas, which means “son of encouragement.”

The social structure we have here is a fully developed hierarchy. We have to notice that the original mission of the hero occurs within the framework of a similar system: as the agent of the high-priest, Saul is also part of a bureaucratic machine. He acts with official documents in hand. The ‘letters’ he asks from the high-priest most probably serve to identify himself in the synagogues of Damascus and ensure the support of the Jewish authorities of that place. It is ‘agent Saul’ of the high-priest’s police who manages to establish himself within a short period of time as ‘agent Saul’ of the community ‘of the Way’.

However well organised the institutions of the Christian community seem in the narrative, there are also several discrepancies in the text. Ananias is instructed by Jesus in a vision to visit Saul. He protests against the task, and refers to Saul as one who did much evil to the disciples in Jerusalem. Then he talks about the ‘high-priests’ (in plural, notwithstanding the singular of the former episode), who gave Saul authorisation (rather than an epistle). His words suggest that Saul was cooperating with the Jerusalem priestly circles on a larger basis. Jesus’ argument about Saul’s future role as a witness and martyr is enough to refute Ananias’ objections, but this calling is not actually ‘delivered’ to Saul by Ananias. Visiting the blind Saul in Damascus, Ananias talks to him about Jesus ‘who appeared to you on the road’. Notwithstanding Ananias’ claim, the first report does not mention that Saul saw Jesus—he saw only the flashing light that blinded him—, but rather that he talked with Jesus. The heavenly voice promised him that in Damascus he would be told what to do, but Ananias gives him no instructions at all. Jesus told Ananias that Saul had seen a vision about him (Ananias), but Ananias forgets this obvious point of reference when visiting Saul. Instead, he mentions Saul’s first vision on the Damascus road, the one Jesus did not mention to him. Jesus also did not inform him about Saul’s blindness, and did not commission him to baptise Saul.

12. The difference is somewhat explained by the synesthesia that characterised the accounts of visions in antiquity, cf. p. 228, note 66 below.
From the next episode we learn that Saul proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah in the synagogues of Damascus. Then ‘everyone’ is upset by his words, and they recall him at once being the agent of the ‘high-priests’ (in plural). But whom does ‘everyone’ cover? And what was the precise reason of their astonishment? From the narrative context we know that the Damascus disciples were also members of the synagogue (v. 2). It is precisely for them that Saul went to Damascus. The reason of their surprise could not be the content of Saul’s preaching, but rather the change of his role. But where is Ananias, the disciple from Damascus who baptised Saul? Did he disappear, or did he forget to introduce the new convert to the community? A related question is from where did Saul receive the material that he preached. Again, one thinks of Ananias, but his role is not mentioned in this context either. The most probable solution is that Saul was inspired by revelation—an idea that can be inferred from all three accounts in Acts as well as from Paul’s autobiographical narrative in Galatians.

There were evidently members of the synagogues who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. They could be also astonished by the sudden change in Saul’s attitude. Their later plan to kill Saul, however, suggests that they also were scandalised by his message. But was this message so radically new for them? It would be surprising because the presence of the disciples in Damascus has been taken for granted throughout the narrative of Acts 9, and also in the introduction of the Damascus episode itself. Did they not preach in the synagogue? Or did they teach something else than Saul? Saul appears surprisingly lonely as he preaches his new heresy in the synagogues, much like on his later missionary journeys.

In sum, the rhetoric of the text affirms the boldness of Saul as a preacher of Jesus, while his status in the Damascus church remains unclear. The episode implies that the Damascus disciples were endangered by the agents from Jerusalem (like Saul) rather than by their co-religionists in the synagogue, and that the synagogue was tolerant toward the disciples but intolerant toward an enthusiastic guest-preacher. In any case, Saul’s person and proclamation was enough to undermine peace in Damascus, and the disciples found it best to re-

14. Cf. p. 46 above and p. 84 below.
move him from the stage. The whole situation, however, contradicts the efforts of the chapter to integrate Saul into the institutional framework of the disciples’ community.

Such an institutional integration is of course the major interest of the next episode. If we wonder why Ananias failed to smooth the conflict and integrate Saul into the Damascus community, we can be also surprised of the unexpected advocacy from the side of Barnabas in Jerusalem. Barnabas, similarly to Ananias at Straight Road, refers to the vision on the Damascus road, the knowledge of which Luke seems to assume with all his characters who take Saul’s part. Similarly to Ananias, Barnabas also interprets the vision on the road as seeing the Lord. In the narrator’s report, Jesus promised that Saul will be told in the future (λαλήθησέται σοι) what to do, while Barnabas points out that the Lord revealed things to Saul (ἐλάλησεν αὐτῷ) in the epiphany. Barnabas also refers to the courageous proclamation in Damascus ‘in the name of Jesus’. The mention of ‘the name’ switches back to the description of Saul’s role in the dialogue between Jesus and Ananias. Again, there is no mention of Ananias as a witness to Saul’s baptism, and also the adventurous escape seems unknown or forgotten, though it would perfectly fulfil Saul’s calling ‘to suffer’ for the name and testify to his commitment. The conflict with a group of synagogue people and a second adventurous escape serve to create continuity with the ministry in Damascus, and also foreshadow the normal course of Saul’s missionary activity: preach and run.

This brief survey has shown the fragmentary nature of the narrative and the lack of a minute editorial work. It seems that the author combined various pieces of tradition in order to argue for Saul’s

15. The story of the Damascus road might have been generally associated with Paul’s person at the time of Luke, thus the knowledge of his characters of the narrative represents the knowledge of his readership. For the hypothetical ‘Paulusnovelle’ see Löning, Saulustradition, 62f, 93–7; Dietzfelbinger, Berufung, 78–9.

16. The ‘Hellenists’ (9.29) are probably identical with the diaspora Jews who initiated Stephen’s trial in 6.9–14. A closer analysis of that rather puzzling assembly is not with our task here. In the same story, Paul is probably associated with that formation (7.58), but he could as well belong to other groups involved in the action (6.11–3). For the (conceptional) improbability of the alternative reading “Ελληνας (Greeks) see Haenchen, Apostelgeschichte 280. Cf. Johnson, Acts 172, 198; Witherington, Acts, 240ff, 325.
unanimous acceptance and integration into the institutions of the Jesus-followers, but he only set them side by side rather than thoroughly harmonising them. In fact, the majority of readers will be completely satisfied by the narrative as it is, and unconsciously synchronise the contradicting elements.

Interestingly enough, the institutional type of commission that we discerned here has little background in the writings of the Old Testament. In none of the stories quoted in the previous chapter are there authorities confirming the divine call of the hero, or patrons who help them integrate into the institutions. The prophets who belong to the royal court are pictured in several passages as the ‘false prophets’\(^\text{17}\), but nothing is told about their commission or appointment. On the other hand, we have a fully developed hierarchy in the Lucan story: Jesus is the supreme authority who instructs Ananias to act for him. Ananias’ sphere of action is restricted to Damascus. When it comes to introducing Saul to the apostles, the more influential Barnabas\(^\text{18}\) takes the new convert under his protection. The hierarchy from the top to the bottom thus includes Jesus, the apostles, Barnabas, Ananias and the rest of the disciples. In the Egyptian commission narratives we had similarly the supreme god Re, who commissioned the other gods (Thot) as well as the Pharaohs, who in turn commissioned the viziers, who dealt with the rest of the people\(^\text{19}\).

There are also parallels in the other apostolic Acts and in Greco-Roman literature. The *Acts of Barnabas* and the *Acts of Titus* will be considered in detail later in our study. From Rome, we refer to the story of Gaius Flaccus, a negligent youth\(^\text{20}\):


\(^{18}\) Barnabas was already introduced in *Acts* 4.36–7. Luke mentions him as an important donator, who sold his landed property and gave its price to the Jerusalem church. That the apostles gave him a new name (his original name was Joseph) suggests in itself hierarchical subjection, cf. Johnson, *Acts*, 87.

\(^{19}\) Cf. the seven ‘deacons’ in *Acts* 6, who are appointed in order to deal with the everyday matters of the community so that the apostles can concentrate on the ‘word of God’. Also Moses appointed ‘officers’ or ‘judges’ to deal with the minor cases of judgment in Israel while he represented the people before God (*Exodus* 18.13–27).

\(^{20}\) Livy 27.8.5–10, trans. F.G. Moore (LCL), adapted. The story plays in 209 BC.
Because of his irresponsible and dissipated youth Gaius Flaccus, who was odious to his own brother, Lucius Flaccus, and other relatives on account of the same vices, had been seized upon as flamen (flamen captus erat) by Publius Licinius, pontifex maximus. As soon as the charge of rites and ceremonies took possession of his soul (animum eius cepit), Gaius so suddenly put off his old character that no one among all the young men stood higher in the estimation and approval of the leading senators, both of his own family and strangers alike.

He also attempted to revive the old usage that the flamen was automatically invested with senatorship. Indeed, he achieved his goal, but not so much by his position as a flamen, but rather by the sanctity of his life (magis sanctitate vitae). Here the action of a powerful patron (the pontifex maximus) precedes the encounter with the sacred. The result is integration into the institutional order (as opposed to earlier ‘negligence’), acceptance by the authorities, and advance in the social hierarchy.

Finally we refer to Lucian’s Peregrinus Proteus, whose career among the Christians is a parody of the institutional form of commission narrative:

It was then that he learned the wondrous lore of the Christians, by associating with their priests and scribes in Palestine. And—how else could it be?—in a trice he made them all look like children; for he was prophet, cult-leader, head of the synagogue, and everything, all by himself. He interpreted and explained some of their books and even composed many, and they revered him as a god, made use of him as a lawgiver, and set him down as a protector, next after that other, to be sure, whom they still worship [...].

Lucian suggests that it was not at all difficult to integrate into the institutions of the Christians and make quick advance there. He even might have had the opinion that their leaders—or many of them—were charlatans. It is interesting to look at Lucian’s account of the imprisonment of Peregrinus:

22. Peregrinus was προφήτης, θυατήρης, ξυναγωγευς.
23. The Passing of Peregrinus 12.
Well, when he had been imprisoned, the Christians, regarding the incident as a calamity, left nothing undone in the effort to rescue him. Then, as this was impossible, every other form of attention was shown him, not in any casual way but with assiduity; and from the very break of day aged widows and orphan children could be seen waiting near the prison, while their officials even slept inside with him after bribing the guards. Then elaborate meals were brought in, and sacred books of theirs were read aloud, and excellent Peregrinus [...] was called by them ‘the new Socrates’.

Similarly to the martyrdom texts in the apostolic Acts, imprisonment provides here an opportunity to demonstrate the solidarity of the community\textsuperscript{24}. The bribing of the guards and the presence of the women in the prison are especially typical. Though among the apostolic Acts we read about the celebration of the eucharist\textsuperscript{25} rather than about ‘elaborate meals’ (δείπνα ποιούσε), and prayers and hymns rather than the reading of sacred texts. Although the Christian Acts never call their heroes ‘the new Socrates’, Lucian’s ironic remark proves that such imprisonment episodes reminded ancient readers of Plato’s Socrates in \textit{Phaedo} and \textit{Crito}\textsuperscript{26}.

In sum, \textit{Acts} 9 describes Paul’s integration into the institutions of the primitive Christian community. The community is represented by its members with authority, and the helper figure appears as an advocate on the hero’s side. Integration is especially expressed and promoted by common rituals and actions of solidarity. Such narratives may turn into career stories, talking about positions and titles achieved, as shown by the Egyptian texts, the parody by Lucian, and some later apocryphal Acts.

\textsuperscript{24} Cf. Thecla in Paul’s prison \textit{Acts of Paul} 18–9; Paul’s imprisonment in Ephesus (Pap. Hamb. pp. 1–3), \textit{Acts of Andrew} 27–51; \textit{Acts of Thomas} 142–63. One can add some acts of the martyrs: \textit{Perpetua and Felicitas} 3.7; \textit{Montanus and Lucius} 4.7; cf. \textit{Saturnius and Dativus} 5. Eusebius, \textit{Church History} 6.3.3–5 reports how the young Origen comforted the martyrs in their prisons.

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Acts of Thomas} 121.

\textsuperscript{26} Cf. p. 256, note 32 below.
Acts 22

One fourth of the Lucan Acts (chs. 22–8) is dedicated to Paul’s custody. Paul’s trial is given more elaboration than any other event in the Lucan books: the two years of Paul’s trial are told in one fourth of Acts which relates the events of thirty years. Proportionally, the ‘Pauline apology’ occupies the largest part of Luke-Acts, comparable only to the middle section of the gospel (Luke 9–19). It is in this framework that the second and third accounts of the Damascus story are told.

In these two cases, we hear the story from Paul himself. That is to say, not only is the story told from his point of view, but also the narrative voice shifts to him. In other words, we have to do with Pauline autobiographical narrations within a Pauline biographical narrative. This is similar to the farewell speech in Miletus, where Paul talks about his ministry in Asia Minor. But the Miletus speech, which also contains apologetic elements, was delivered before a sympathetic audience, while the Damascus story is told both times before hostile listeners.

Paul himself calls these two speeches ‘apologies’. In the first case it is an ad hoc self-defence before the angry crowd in Jerusalem, while in the second case it is a formal forensic apology before governor Festus and King Agrippa. This is indicated also by Agrippa’s

28. For a chronology see, for example, Becker, Paulus, 32–3.
32. Some caveats are in place before the discussion of those texts. Firstly, as Mack, Rhetoric, 49, warns, rhetorical patterns were ‘never understood in antiquity as rigid templates’. Secondly, these speeches are prosopopoeiae, ‘inventions of a writer on the basis of what a speaker probably would have said, analogous to the speeches in Greek historians’ (Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 37). Finally, ‘the speeches in Acts are often too short for the occasions to which they are attributed; […] those in the classical historians are generally much longer’ (ibidem, 115; cf. Veltman, ‘Defense Speeches’, 252, 256). Cf. note 29 above.
words ‘You have permission to speak for yourself’\(^\text{33}\). The rhetorical form of the speeches is underlined in both cases by Paul’s stretching out his hand—just like earlier in Antioch of Pisidia—assuming a usual orator’s position\(^\text{34}\).

In *Acts* 22, Paul speaks ‘in the Hebrew dialect’—that is, in Aramaic\(^\text{35}\)—after his command of Greek has testified to the colonel Claudius Lysias that he is not an Egyptian terrorist\(^\text{36}\).

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today. (4) I persecuted this Way up to the point of death by binding both men and women and putting them in prison, (5) as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. From them I also received letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I went there in order to bind those who were there and to bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment. (6) While I was on my way and approaching Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. (7) I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ (8) I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Then he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting’. (9) Now those

34. *Acts* 21.40, 26.1, cf. 13.40, 19.33. Luke may want to show by this gesture that Paul is a professional orator. The motif probably was a literary topos, cf. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 2.121. We can compare it to the advise of Quintilian, *Education of the Orator* 11.3.141, ‘The left arm should only be raised so far as to form a right angle at the elbow, while the edge of the toga should fall in equal lengths on either side’. Trans. H.E. Butler in LCL; cf. 11.3.159.
36. *Acts* 21.37–8, ‘The tribune replied, “Do you know Greek? Then you are not the Egyptian who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?”’ Luke clearly means that Paul’s cultivated Greek made it impossible to take him for a bandit. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.261–3 and *Jewish Antiquities* 20.169–71, reports that an Egyptian false prophet took a mass of people (through the wilderness) to the Mount of Olives. Luke confused this movement with the terrorism of the Sicarii, who were also active under Felix; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 167–70.
who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. (10) I asked, ‘What am I to do, Lord?’ The Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go to Damascus; there you will be told everything that has been assigned to you to do’. (11) Since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, those who were with me took my hand and led me to Damascus. (12) A certain Ananias, who was a devout man according to the law and well spoken of by all the Jews living there, (13) came to me; and standing beside me, he said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight!’ In that very hour I regained my sight and saw him. (14) Then he said, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear his own voice; (15) for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard. (16) And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name’. (17) After I had returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance (18) and saw him saying to me, ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me’. (19) And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. (20) And while the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was standing by, approving and keeping the coats of those who killed him’. (21) Then he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles’. (NRSV, adapted)

Though Paul does not explicitly identify the case in which he defends himself (quaestio), it can be inferred from the context. Before his arrest, Jews from Asia charge him with (a) teaching against the Jewish people, the Torah, and the temple; and (b) defiling the temple by bringing in Greeks37. The charges do not have to be formally repeated in the speech, since they are clear from the narrative. The main line of defence (ratio) can be concluded from the speech itself: Paul transfers responsibility for his deeds to God38. The story of the Damascus road constitutes the proof to Paul’s defence39. Had Paul not been inter-

38. Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 134, writes: ‘Since Paul does not deny that his actions have been inconsistent with the law, the stasis is best regarded as metastasis, transferring responsibility to God’. Plato’s Socrates argues similarly, cf. p. 14 above.
39. Long, ‘Paulusbild’, 98, identifies verse 3 as narratio, and verses 4–21 as the proof. In the text, however, nothing indicates such a division.
rupted by the mob, Kennedy suggests, he could have added also Scriptural evidence and concluded by an exhortation. A comparison with the defence before Agrippa, however, suggests that we should not expect much more formal rhetorical argumentation even if the speech were completed. In Acts 26.22–3 Paul claims that he preaches ‘nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place’, and concludes with a Lucan creed rather than a Scriptural quotation: ‘that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles’. We have to conclude that the main emphasis in this speech (ch. 22) falls on the retelling and reframing of the commission story, which serves itself as an argument supporting the ratio.

41. Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 135.
42. Witherington, Acts, 668, claims: ‘In which [the narratio] Paul will insinuate what the following proofs will involve, but they are never developed’.
43. One has to keep in mind the warning of Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 37: ‘Only a few speeches in the New Testament, the Sermon on the Mount and the defense of Stephen, for example, are extensive enough to represent an entire speech without compression or abbreviation’. Cf. note 32 above.
44. Cf. Luke 24.25–6: ‘Then he [Jesus] said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”’ In both cases, Luke quotes an early Christian hermeneutical thesis rather than any actual testimony. For the elementary rhetorical use of citation, see Hermogenes, Progymnasmata, in Hock and O’Neil, Chreia, vol 1, 177; cf. Mack, Rhetoric, 44, 46. Luke uses lot of real scriptural testimony at other places, cf. Fitzmyer, ‘Use of the Old Testament’ and Sanders, ‘Prophetic Use’.
45. Although this is not a standard dispositio when compared to the rules of the handbooks, it has its exact parallel in Plato’s Apology. In Socrates’ first speech, the narratio of the Chaerephon oracle and its consequences also served as a major part of the proof (see pp. 12f above). This manner of composition was probably taught by Isocrates (436–338 BC). De Strycker and Slings, Apology, 60, observe: ‘According to Syrianus, the well-known Neo-Platonist […] Isocrates taught that “one should narrate the event (τὸ πρᾶγμα), what preceded it (τὰ πρὸ τοῦ πρᾶγματος) and what followed it (τὰ μετὰ τὸ πρᾶγμα), and make clear the intention with which each of the parties acted in their own way”. […] When we compare the Narration of the Apology with those of the Orators, we find that they have scarcely anything in common; however, the Narration in the Apology confirms exactly to Isocrates’ advice’. And so the narration of Paul, we may add.
The narrative of Acts 22 contains only three episodes, of which the vision in the temple is found only in this version. The introduction of the first vision is further amplified, so that it can serve also as a description of Paul’s career and thus as an exordium of the speech. The reference to the time (‘at noon’) may serve to underline the authenticity of the first person narrative, but we also find it elsewhere as a topos of commission narratives. We find three major changes here as compared to Acts 9: (a) The insertion of the notice about the travelling companions into the dialogue stresses the exclusivity of the vision. In the first version this remark occurs only later. There, others hear the voice, but do not see the light. Here, everyone sees the light but only Saul hears the voice. (b) Saul’s question ‘What shall I do?’ gives emphasis to the act of commissioning. (c) The three days of blindness and fasting are omitted.

These changes suggest that the motif of divine election and commission came to the foreground, while the defeat of the persecutor is less important. The tendency is confirmed by the changes made in Jesus’ promise: ‘You will be told about everything that has been

46. The way Luke changed here the grammatical person from the third to the first (cf. Acts 9.1–3 and 22.4–6) is in the manner of a typical school exercise, cf. Theon, Progymnasmata, 101. This also suggests that the author created the speech from a third person narrative rather than of any kind of notes or personal memories. For studies representing some form of the latter opinion, see Brown, ‘Paul’s Hearing’, 319–22, to which add Stanley, ‘Paul’s Conversion’, 325 and Witherington, Acts, 309.

47. Witherington, Acts, 671.

48. In addition to Acts 22.6 and 23.10, it is found in the commissions of Thutmose IV (pp. 29 above), Epimenides (Diogenes Laertius, Lives 109, cf. pp. 47ff above), and Thomas (Acts of Thomas 2, Bonnet, Acta apostolorum, vol 2/2, 101, line 8, cf. p. 120 below). For noon as a typical time for epiphanies in antiquity, see Bremmer, Afterlife, 128 and 185, note 5. Versnel, ‘Epiphany’, 48, quotes IG XIV, 1014 on Pan appearing ‘overtly, not in a dream but in the middle of the day’.

49. For a survey of scholarly opinions on this difference, see Meyer, ‘Light and Voice’, 28–30, who considers both versions as ‘equally appropriate ways of declaring that Paul’s fellow travellers did not share in his christophanic encounter’ (34). Yet, Luke’s moving this remark earlier in the second narrative suggests to me a stronger emphasis on exclusivity. For a classical example of exclusive revelation, see Iliad 1.193–8, where only Achilles can see Athene: ‘none of the others saw her’; cf. Dodds, Greeks, 14–5.
assigned (τέτοιοται) to you to do’. The vision of Ananias, so central to the structure of the first narrative, is eliminated. Ananias is not called a ‘disciple’ either, but rather his ethos is established by his credentials as a devout Jew: ‘pious according to the Law’ and ‘testified to by all the Jews’. There is not only no vision, but also no reference to Ananias’ commission to come to Paul. We are not told how he learned about Saul and how much time has passed since Paul’s vision on the Damascus road.

Paul’s healing is reported with a few words—without mentioning the laying on of hands—and then the event is interpreted as a sign of divine election. The conclusion is drawn: Saul should quickly get baptised and be cleansed from his sins. The episode is considerably different from the first version. It is more crisply and logically told, and it contains inside links which make up for the lack of description of outside circumstances. Thus Jesus’ words ‘you will be told’ are here actually fulfilled by Ananias. Also the promise ‘you will be my witness’ points further toward Saul’s temple vision. This version of the Ananias episode provides a real joint between the visions on the Damascus road and in the temple.

What is still intriguing in this episode is the careful circumvention of all Christian vocabulary. Ananias is introduced as a pious Jew, talking about the will of the God of the fathers and about the vision of the Righteous One. Identifications like ‘Jesus the Messiah’ or ‘Jesus the Son of God’ are avoided in the whole story. While the ‘Righteous One’ is also a messianic name, applied to Jesus by Peter and Stephen earlier in the book, it also allows a wide range of associations with biblical heroes or with Yahweh. The call of Saul is depicted here as something to be interpreted in the context of Jewish piety, and deeply rooted in Israel’s tradition.

The third episode is mentioned only in this version. The vision in the temple further links Saul’s career to traditional Jewish topoi. He is not only shown himself as a pious Jew praying in the temple, but his vision also evokes the call of Isaiah. Already ‘the glory of that light’ in verse 11 echoes ‘the glory of Yahweh’ in Old Testament epipha-

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51. Cf. for example Genesis 7.1, Job 32.2, Psalms 7.12, 2 Maccabees 12.6.
nies, alluded also in Isaiah’s temple vision. As the reference to Isaiah shows, the frequent Jewish topoi in this version are hardly to be understood as apologetic arguments before a Jewish audience. Paul is not presented simply as a pious Jew, but rather as a prophet called by Yahweh. This is an offensive rather than a defensive manoeuvre. Imitating Isaiah with an apologetic purpose would surely miss the point. From Josephus we know that there was no shortage of prophets in Israel in the first century AD: ‘Impostors and demagogues, under the guise of divine inspiration, provoked revolutionary actions and impelled the masses to act like madmen’. Indeed, Claudius Lysias has just concluded that Paul was not the Egyptian false prophet—was Paul intending to prove the opposite? Especially in that narrative context, it is hard to believe that Paul wants to establish his ethos before his fellow Jews as a prophet. The real importance of the use of Jewish vocabulary is to reinterpret the Saul-story of chapter 9 against a specific cultural and literary background—for the implied reader rather than for the assumed Jerusalem audience.

The episode itself is briefly told and clearly structured, similarly to the previous one. The only difficulty is produced by Saul’s words:

Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. And while the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was standing by, approving and keeping the coats of those who killed him.

Relying on the standard framework of a commission story, exegetes understand Saul’s answer functioning as a protest against the divine

52. (Exodus 16.7, 24.16, etc.), cf. Isaiah 6.3.
54. As Veltmann, ‘Defense Speeches’, 256, concludes, Paul never makes a claim of innocence in the introductions of the Lucan apologies (as most of the heroes do in the Greco-Roman parallels).
55. Josephus, Jewish War 2.259; cf. Horsley and Hanson, Bandits, 160–89; Boring, ‘Early Christian Prophecy’.
56. Alternatively, one may argue that Paul identifies himself as an oracular prophet in his speech. For oracular prophecy in the first century AD, see Boring, Sayings, 22–52; Horsley and Hanson, Bandits, 172–87. Paul, however, does not tell the future (as Agabus does in Acts 11.28 and 21.10–14); rather he appears as a charismatic leader.
The words are similar to Ananias’ objection in *Acts* 9.13–14, additionally relating also Saul’s role at Stephen’s death. Jesus’ answer to Paul, as well, is an abbreviated form of his answer to Ananias in *Acts* 9, beginning with exactly the same words: ‘Go, because I…’. Paul’s words, however, simply cannot be understood as a protest against what Jesus first tells him. They are rather arguments confirming Jesus’ claim that Paul was not accepted in Jerusalem: ‘Of course not’, Saul answers, ‘because I was well known as a persecutor of the Church’. The point he makes here is identical with the argument of the synagogue members of Damascus (9.21), who claimed that Saul’s ethos completely undermines his message. Moreover, the solution is similar: ‘hurry and quickly leave the city’.

It is characteristic of this narrative that we do not learn of any contact with the disciples in Damascus and Jerusalem. In the second version of Paul’s commission we find nothing from the institutional framework of the first story: the disciples, Barnabas, the apostles, helpers and rescuers, ‘walking in and out’, the peaceful growth of the church are all forgotten altogether. The use of Jesus’ name is avoided again. As I have suggested earlier, in *Acts* 22 Saul’s commissioning and legitimisation come directly from the God of Israel.

Whereas mediation by helper figures was foremost in the previous version, in this narrative the immediate communication with the sender receives the major emphasis. This narrative mainly represents the ‘prophetic’ model of commission. The integration of the hero into the institutional framework of a community gives way here to the election of the individual as a messenger responsible for his deeds only to the sender. This is expressed by the final word of the story: ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the nations’ (22.21). This echoes Jeremiah’s commission: ‘I appointed you a prophet to the nations’ and ‘Today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms’.

A prophetic role assumes the hero’s ambivalent status in a community. On the one hand, he remains a member of his social group; on

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58. So Hubbard ‘Commissioning Stories’, 120; Mullins, ‘Commission Forms’, 606; Storm, *Paulusberufung*, 64.
59. See especially verse 14, ‘the God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will’.
60. *Jeremiah* 1.5 and 10.
the other hand, he becomes responsible to his sender rather than to his group. It is precisely Paul’s loyalty to Jewish culture and society that is emphasised throughout this narrative. Nevertheless, the rhetorical framework of the text shows him standing alone before the crowd, and arguing that he has to act as God ordered him to do. The conflict is best characterised by the dialogue in the temple: Paul (preaching about Jesus) is not accepted in Jerusalem, and therefore he is sent to the ‘nations’. This motif is typical of Acts, together with the fact that Paul tells the story precisely to his own people by whom he is rejected in the narrative, and from whom he has turned away already several times in the book. This ambivalent position in one’s social group is the most characteristic of the prophetic commission.

Acts 26

Paul tells his commission in Acts for the second time before king Agrippa. For this occasion, Luke makes the political elite of Caesarea gather in the royal audience hall: Agrippa and his wife Berenice (‘with great pomp’, πολλῆς φαντασίας), the proconsul Festus, the military leaders, and the nobility. The narrative suggests that Paul is handled as a captive of strategic importance for the Empire. If for the first time he told his story to the mob, now he retells it before an exclusive audience.

(2) ‘I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am to make my defence today against all the accusations of the Jews, (3) because you are especially familiar with all the customs and contro-

61. Identifiable as Herod Agrippa II; cf. Fitzmyer, Acts, 748–9. Not indicating the language of the speech, the author lets us assume Paul told this defense in Greek.

62. Acts 25.23. Who were exactly the άνδρες κατ’ ἔξοχήν? The expression κατ’ ἔξοχήν is attested in the meaning ‘par excellence’ (Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, 599). Probably we do not have to think of a specific social group here: Luke wants to assure the reader that there was ‘everyone who counted in the city’.

63. Pervo, Profit with Delight, 32ff, comes to the same conclusion in connection with Saul’s transport to Caesarea (Acts 23.23–35): ‘It required 470 men and two days to rescue Paul from the hands of his co-religionists. […] While enjoying the excitement, the reader is assured, not for the first or the last time, that Paul is a VIP’.
All the Jews know my way of life from my youth, a life spent from the beginning among my own people and in Jerusalem. (5) They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I have belonged to the strictest sect of our religion and lived as a Pharisee. (6) And now I stand here on trial on account of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors, (7) a promise that our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship day and night. It is for this hope, your Excellency, that I am accused by Jews! (8) Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? (9) Indeed, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (10) And that is what I did in Jerusalem; with authority received from the chief priests, I not only locked up many of the saints in prison, but I also cast my vote against them when they were being condemned to death. (11) By punishing them often in all the synagogues I tried to force them to blaspheme; and since I was so furiously enraged at them, I pursued them even to foreign cities. (12) With this in mind, I was travelling to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, (13) when at midday along the road, your Excellency, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. (14) When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It hurts you to kick against the goads”. (15) I asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The Lord answered, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. (16) But get up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you. (17) I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you (18) to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me”. (19) After that, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, (20) but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance. (21) For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. (22) To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place: (23) that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would
proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles’. While he was making this defence, Festus exclaimed, ‘You are out of your mind, Paul! Too much learning is driving you insane!’ But Paul said, ‘I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth. Indeed the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am certain that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe’. Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Are you so quickly persuading me to become a Christian?’ Paul replied, ‘Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that not only you but also all who are listening to me today might become such as I am—except for these chains’. (NRSV)

Paul’s speech before Agrippa is the best elaborated of his apologies. He begins with an exordium, containing an appeal to the judge (verses 2–3) and an introduction to establish his ethos before the audience (4–5). Similar to the apologies before the Sanhedrin and before Felix, Paul states that he is on trial because of his hope in the resurrection of the dead (verses 6–7). His main argument seems to be that resurrection was promised by God to the fathers and is hoped for by every pious Jew. The point for judgment is whether ‘God raises the dead’ (verse 8). His proof consists of two main parts. In the first part (verses 9–21) he retells the conversion story, in the second part (22–27) he refers to scriptural evidence, and finally he concludes by an exhortation (28–29).

Does this mean that we have to read the third narrative of the conversion story as an argument for resurrection? In that case the encounter with the risen Lord should prove that there is in fact resurrection from the dead. This, however, does not seem to be a major concern in the story. If we look at the broader context, we will recog-

64. Cf. 23.6 and 24.21.
65. We cannot speak of scriptural citation as proof in this case, cf. note 44 above.
66. This analysis certainly applies the rules with freedom (cf. note 32 above), extending the speech to the subsequent dialogue. For different dispositions, see Neyrey, ‘Forensic Defense, 221’; Witherington, Acts, 737. The perplexing issue is again that the bulk of the speech consists of a narratio. This is a classical problem also in the analysis of Galatians 1.11–2.14, cf. Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 144–9.
nise that the theme of ‘resurrection’ became involved in Paul’s de-

fence speeches only in an indirect way: Before the Sanhedrin, men-
tioning it was a trick inspired by the situation to stir dissension be-
tween Pharisees and Sadducees. Later before Felix, Paul recalls this
episode as the only occasion when he had caused disturbance. In nei-
ther case is ‘resurrection’ the actual focus of the defence. This also
suggests that the *quaestio* of the speech before Agrippa should not be
taken literally. Beyond some formal references to ‘Moses and the
prophets’, we do not find real arguments supporting this point. Nev-

ertheless, the story does make claims about Satan and conversion,
which are missing from the other two versions. Although resurrection
is not especially argued for here, the third version—rather than the
previous two ones—betrays a definite interest in theological argu-
mentation.

The presentation of Saul as a persecutor is elaborated into an epi-
sode of its own. A series of new motifs are invented. We are informed
about Paul’s voting for the execution of Jesus’ followers, and his au-
thorisation by the ‘high-priests’—in plural, as Ananias and the Da-
mascus disciples formulated it in *Acts* 9. Whether ‘voting’ means a
formal participation in jurisdiction or not, the importance of Paul and
his official status in these actions is clearly emphasised here. He him-
self punished the Jesus-followers. His role as an ‘inquisitor’ is sug-
gested in that he forced the disciples to ‘blaspheme’—most probably
against Jesus. Altogether, he was ‘furious beyond measure’. The rhe-
torical function of this catalogue is to embellish the topic ‘Saul the
persecutor’ as much as possible in order the make the ‘conversion’ all
the more impressive.

This is a typical technique applied by Greco-Roman conversion
stories: When describing the outrageous youth of Polemon, Diogenes
Laertius adds that ‘he actually carried about with him money to pro-
cure the immediate gratification of his desires, and would even keep
sums concealed in lanes and alleys. Even in the Academy a piece of
three obols was found close to a pillar where he had buried it for the


69. This can be understood in the context of *prosopopoeiae*: Luke wants to
show that Paul was a theologian of resurrection—an issue that Paul himself ar-
gued with much vehemence in *1 Corinthians* 15.
same purpose.\textsuperscript{70} In the previous section of this chapter we have discussed the conversion of Gaius Flaccus, where Livy applies similar topoi. Let us also quote the story of Thespiesius by Plutarch\textsuperscript{71}:

[He] spent his early life in great dissipation, and then, soon running through his estates, had for some time practised a further villainy brought on by his straitened circumstances. Reversing his attitude toward wealth, he now courted it […]. Abstaining, then, from no shameful act conducive to gratification or gain, he accumulated no very considerable fortune, but in a brief space a prodigious reputation for villainy.

In these stories the detailed and even passionate description of the hero’s moral corruption prepares the way for the climax of the narrative that brings about a radical change in the hero’s behaviour. We find the same tendency in Paul’s narrative, although he is concerned about his attitudes toward Jesus and his followers rather than his moral character. Consequently, the motif of conversion is stressed in Acts 26 more than in the other two accounts.

The narration of the epiphany contains a number of new details. Though it happened at noon, the light was ‘brighter than the sun’, it shone around Paul as well as his companions, and all of them fell on the ground. It is for the first time stated that Paul actually saw the light. As also the substitution of ‘shine’ for ‘flash’ and the complete omission of blindness suggest, the motif of defeat or punishment is almost completely eliminated, while the moment of revelation is confirmed. The theatrical details prepare the way for the commissioning.

That the heavenly voice spoke ‘in the Hebrew dialect’ serves double purposes. First, it underlines the authenticity of the revelation. It also prepares the use of the name ‘Saul’, supposing that Paul’s audience did not know his Jewish name. In this way the clause stresses the distance between the Greek-speaking Hellenist Paul and the Aramaic-speaking Jew Saul.

The famous ‘kick against the goads’ is probably a direct quotation from Euripides\textsuperscript{72}, and it fulfils the rhetorical topos of ‘citation of

\textsuperscript{70} Diogenes Laertius, Lives 4.16, trans. R.D. Hicks in LCL. Cf. p. 43 above.

\textsuperscript{71} Plutarch, On the Delay of Divine Vengeance 22 (Moralia 563b–c); trans. Ph.H. de Lacy in LCL, adapted.
authority’. It is in sharp contrast to the claim of Jesus speaking ‘in Hebrew’, and shows that Paul the Hellenist prevails here above Saul the Jew.

According to the rules of commission stories, we read reassurance of the divine protection. Then the task of Paul is more closely specified:

To whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that

72. For classical expositions of the problem, see Windisch, ‘Christusephanie’ and Vögeli, ‘Lukas und Euripides’. The key passage is Euripides, Bacchanales 795, ἰδόμι’ ἀν αὐτῷ μᾶλλον ἰθυμοῦμενος / πρὸς κέντρα λαστίζομεν θνητοῖς ἀν θεό. (‘Better slay victims unto him than kick / Against the pricks, man raging against God’. Trans A.S. Way in LCL. Cf. Euripides, frag. 604, πρὸς κέντρα μὴ λάστίζει τοῖς κρατηθοίοι σοι.) W. Nestle, Windisch and Vögeli pointed out further coincidences between Euripides and Luke, and claimed that the latter used the parallels consciously in an attempt to picture Paul as one ‘fighting against god’ (θεομάχος). Smend, ‘Untersuchungen’ 36–7, gives other occurrences of ‘kick against the goads’ suggesting it was a proverb, but maintaining Luke’s direct dependence on Euripides (41).

Johnson, Acts, 435 and Witherington, Acts, 745, mention three additional references. The phrase is quoted as a proverb by Julian the Apostate, ἐπὶ τῇ ἔξοδῳ 5.5 (Oration 8.246B): δφην ἡ παρομία, πρὸς κέντρα λαστίζειν. His witness from the fourth century AD is hardly a decisive argument on Luke’s usage. God uses κέντρον to force humans also in Psalms of Solomon 16.4 and Philo, On the Decalogue 87 (varia lectio). For the ‘god-fighters’ (θεομάχοι) of Greek literature, see pp. 124f below.

73. Acts 26.17, ἐξαιρούμενος σε ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ καί ἐκ τῶν ἑθνῶν. In Acts the middle voice of ἐξαιρέω is used consistently in the sense of ‘deliver’ or ‘rescue’ (e.g. from Egypt), similarly to the Septuagint: Acts 7.10,34, 12.11, 23.27; cf. Exodus 3.8 and Psalms 36.40 (37.40 LXX). This is consistent with the classical usage of ἐξαιρέωσις ἐκ, cf. Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, 581 and Supplement 120. The alternative translation (followed by few, e.g. the Dutch Leidse Vertaling) is ‘choosing you’. In this meaning (‘choose for oneself from the booty’) the verb usually appears with a genitive (Liddell and Scott, ibidem), but the addition of ἐκ is not surprising since the classical genitivus separationis is normally completed by ἄπο or ἐκ in the New Testament (Blass – Debrunner – Rehkopf, Grammatik, 145, §180). However, Paul’s election ‘from the nations’ is very difficult to interpret in the context of Acts.
they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me⁷⁴.

Although a few expressions in this passage occurred already in the earlier versions (‘send out to the Gentiles’ and ‘forgiveness of sins’), here we find a completely new topic introduced: the conversion from darkness to light and from the power of the Satan to the power of God as well as the promise of the share among the holy. The conflict between the powers of God and Satan is an important theme in Luke-Acts⁷⁵, and it is occasionally combined with ‘light and darkness’, as in the expression ‘power of darkness’⁷⁶. Luke also uses the phrases ‘turn to God’⁷⁷ and ‘fruits worthy of repentance’⁷⁸ elsewhere in the context of conversion, and ‘share’ occurs in a comparable meaning⁷⁹. In the Miletus speech Paul uses both ‘repentance to God’ and ‘inheritance among all who are sanctified’⁸⁰. But the combination of all these elements into a theology of conversion, especially the application of the dualistic symbolism of light and darkness (reminding one of the vocabulary of the Gospel of John), is particular to this passage in the Lucan books⁸¹.

This version of the story of ‘Paul before Damascus’ stands very close to the philosophical examples presented in the previous two chapters⁸². The ideal Cynic described by Epictetus, the commission of

⁷⁶. Luke 22.53. In other passages, such as Luke 1.77–9, 2.30–3, Acts 13.47, darkness and light symbolise salvation (under the influence of Isaiah 42.6–7) rather than conversion.
⁷⁹. Acts 8.21, οἵτινες σοι μερίς οὐδὲ κλῆρος ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦτο (You have no part or share in this). Cf. Acts 1.17, 7.5. For the idea of ‘lots’ in antiquity, see pp. 219–224 below.
⁸⁰. Acts 20.21,32.
⁸¹. Cf. Poimandres 28; Joseph and Aseneth 8.10, 15.12; 1 Peter 2.9; 2 Clement 1; Norden, Agnostos theos, 6–7.
⁸². Malherbe, Paul, 154–63, identifies important philosophical themes in Acts 26. Like moral philosophers, Paul claims divine guidance, does not confine his activity to a corner (retiring from the public, of which Christians as well as Stoics
Socrates and Dio Chrysostom, and especially the claim that Pythagoras, Epicurus and others received their doctrines from divine revelation. Though Paul claims that these ideas are derived from Moses and the prophets (cf. vv. 22–23), from the narrative one concludes rather that these doctrines were revealed to him on the Damascus road. He emphasises his obedience to the ‘heavenly vision’, and gives a picture of his early activity of wandering preacher demanding ‘conversion to God’ and ‘deeds appropriate to conversion’. There is no talk about Ananias, Barnabas, baptism, disciples, or ‘the Way’, but also no mention of ‘Son of God’, ‘Jesus the Messiah’, or prayers in the temple. What we have here is the message of Lystra and Athens. Paul urges people (much in the style of Epictetus) to convert to God, and warns them (much in the style of the Stoics) to revise their morals.

Paul is, indeed, emancipated here from any institutional framework as a wandering philosopher who exclusively obeys his ‘daimonion’—to speak with Plato’s Socrates. Let us add one more passage from the Apology:

Well, supposing, as I said, that you should offer to acquit me on these terms, I should reply, Gentlemen, I am your very grateful and devoted servant, but I owe a greater obedience to God than to you (πείσομαι δὲ...), speaks fearlessly before rulers, and offers himself as an example (Acts 26, vv. 16–7, 22, 26, and 29; Epictetus, Discourses 1.29.36, 55–7). Like Paul (v. 24), the Cynics were often regarded mad because of their ascetic life or unconventional behaviour.

83. These were argued in 9.20 and 9.22, respectively, but they are missing also from chapter 22. In 26.23, however, Paul quotes scriptural arguments (see p. 72 above) about the Messiah.


86. Note that Socrates’ ‘daimonion’ tells him rather what not to do: ότι μοι θεόν τι και δαιμόνιον γέγνεται: [...] ἐμοί δὲ τοῦτ’ ἐστιν ἐκ παιδὸς ἀρξώμενον φωνή τις γεγομένη, ἢ ὅταν γένηται ἡ αὐτοπρέπεια με τοῦτο δ ἐν μέλλω πράττειν, προτρέπει δὲ οὕτω (...that I am subject to a divine or supernatural experience [...], a sort of voice which comes to me, and when it comes it always dissuades me from what I am proposing to do, and never urges me on). Apology 31c–d, trans. H. Tredennick in Hamilton and Cairns (eds), Plato.

87. Plato, Apology 29d.
and so long as I draw breath and have my faculties, I shall never stop practicing philosophy and exhorting you and elucidating truth for everyone that I meet. I shall go on saying, in my usual way, ‘My very good friend, you are an Athenian and belong to a city which is the greatest and most famous in the world for its wisdom and strength. Are you not ashamed that you give your attention to acquiring as much money as possible, and similarly with reputation and honor, and give no attention to thought to truth and understanding and the perfection of your soul?’

When we apply the category ‘philosophical’ to the third narrative of Paul’s commission experience, we have to be aware that in philosophy itself there are various types of commission narratives, and they are told in different situations with different purposes. These might fall rather far from the philosophical ideal of Socrates and Epictetus. Favorinus, for example, the disciple of Dio Chrysostom, told a kind of ‘commission story’ before the emperor—quite in the manner as Paul before Agrippa—as an excuse for his opportunism in the question of whether he should take the service of high-priest:

O Emperor, he said, I had a dream of which you ought to be informed: My teacher Dio appeared to me, and with respect to this suit admonished and reminded me that we come into the world not for ourselves alone, but also for the country of our birth. Therefore, O Emperor, I obey my teacher, and I undertake this public service.

The application of the ‘commission story’ means ‘I obey you but only because I obey the revelation’. The social rhetoric of this story—if we want to apply to it our own typology—is institutional rather than philosophical. Other philosophers’ commission stories can be called ‘prophetic’: Socrates obeys the god, quarrels with his people, and is put to death by them. In sum, philosophy itself has its different types of commission—but this falls beyond the scope of our study. Our category of ‘philosophical’ commission, as in the other two cases, basically designates a narrative structure and a sociological model, where the hero is commissioned directly by the sender, without any reference to an institutional framework, owes loyalty only to the sender, and acts much on his own, obeying his ‘daimonion’.

88. The story of Favorinus (c. AD 80–c. 150), as recorded by Philostratus, Lives of the Sophists 490, trans. W.C. Wright in LCL.
Conclusions

In Chapter 2, I have suggested that commission narratives can be interpreted with the help of the three categories of ‘institutional’, ‘prophetic’ and ‘philosophical’. This typology proved helpful in interpreting the threefold narrative of Paul’s commission in the Lucan *Acts*. We found that the orientation of the first version is institutional. In this story Paul is integrated into different groups and institutions of the community ‘of the Way’. This is understandable also in the broader narrative context, where also Matthias, Barnabas and the seven Hellenists are appointed and supervised by the ‘twelve’. In the second version, Paul addresses his fellow Jews in Jerusalem: the major issue here is his relation to his co-religionists. In this case, his commission defines his call against his religious background. Again, the problem which here culminates is present already in the larger narrative framework. Earlier in chapter 15, Luke arranged for an apostolic conference whose subject was the relation of Paul’s teaching to Jewish tradition. Although he let the conflict be formally settled there, it becomes acute again from chapter 21, where Paul is attacked by James and his conservative party. In order to conciliate them, Paul performs purification rituals in the temple and takes four men with him, whose costs he pays himself. This leads to the confrontation with the mob in the temple, which provides the immediate context of the second narration of the commission story.

Luke achieved the different characterisations of Paul’s commission in *Acts* 22 and 26 partly by relying on different traditions of Jewish Scripture. When portraying the young Saul in *Acts* 7–8 and his commission story in chapter 9, he drew on the narrative about the appointment of King Saul in *1 Samuel* 9–11. There we find a typically institutional concept of divine commission. Namely, the one that Jewish tradition inherited from Egypt. The narrative of Paul’s trial, in turn, makes use of the biography of Jeremiah. The blueprint that Luke used this time is characteristically a prophetic narrative in terms

90. See Chapter 1, 34ff.
91. See p. 32, note 25.
of our typology, and Paul’s story as well as Jeremiah’s one presents the conflict of the prophet with his people. In this section, Luke inserted the second account of Paul’s commission. Paul’s vision in the temple alludes to the temple vision of Isaiah\(^93\) and emphasises Paul’s rejection in Jerusalem. This whole narrative section thus focuses on the conflict between the prophet and his community. In the final part of Acts, Paul finds himself, again, in conflict with James and his conservative party in Jerusalem\(^94\). Paul’s primary conflict is thus with his fellow-Christians, from which the conflict with the visitors of the temple arises\(^95\).

The third narrative addresses the problem from a radically new perspective. Paul is elevated, so to speak, above the frameworks of institutions and religious tradition. Nothing else than the heavenly revelation is left from the commission story. The message entrusted to him is neither Christian nor Jewish: Luke picks up here the philosophical line of the Athenian scene where Paul debated with Epicureans and Stoics. The reactions of the proconsul Festus and King Agrippa are probably to be understood as sarcastic as was the reaction of the Athenians\(^96\). Thus, on the one hand, Luke seems to admit that Paul is not a really convincing philosopher. On the other hand, he lets Paul make extensive and adventurous journeys across the Mediterranean, and attests his ability to address different audiences all over the re-

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93. See Chapter 1, p. 40f.
95. Acts 21.23f and 27f. In order to conciliate James’s party, Paul takes four men with him to the temple and pays the costs of their purity rituals.
96. Acts 26.24 (μαύνη Παύλε, τά πολλά σε γράμματα εἰς μανίαν περιτρέπει) and 26.28 (ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις χριστιανὸν ποιήσαι), cf. 17.18 (τί ἐν θέλοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν) and 17.32 (ἀκουομέθα σοι περὶ τούτου καὶ πάλιν). Especially Agrippa’s answer in 26.28 and the interpretation of ἐν ὀλίγῳ gave much headache to the exegetes. Malherbe, Paul, 161–3, quotes contemporary opinions about instant conversion: ‘accounts of such conversions, or the claim that one had undergone a sudden change, expectedly met with ironic, if not sarcastic responses. Such responses are the more intelligible when it is recognised that the conversion accounts had a protreptic purpose, especially when they drew attention to the speaker or another convert as an example to follow’. Agrippa recognised such a purpose in Paul’s account, and he rejected the impetuous response.
gion. He certainly needs a model other than that of the disciple or the prophet, and the figure of the wandering philosopher is at his hand.

In sum, the narrative of the Lucan Acts makes use of all the three types commission, picturing Paul alternately as a disciple, prophet and philosopher.

Appendix: the Acts of Paul

The Acts of Paul in its extant form does not contain the commission of Paul. There is, however, a text that was preserved in Coptic (like a great part of this Acts) and relates Paul’s commission:

My brothers, listen to what happened to me while I was at Damascus during the time when I used to persecute the faith in God. When His mercy—which proceeds from the Father—came to me, it was his Son whom he announced to me so that I might live in Him, for there is no life outside of the life in Christ. So it was that I entered into a great assembly, helped by blessed Judas, the Lord’s brother, the one who from the beginning had given to me the high love of the faith. At that time I lived my life as a believer in grace, aided by this blessed prophet and by the revelation of Christ, begotten before all time. Since He was proclaimed, I rejoiced in the Lord, nourished by His words. As a result, when I was able to be judged worthy of the ministry of the word, encouraged by Judas, I spoke to the brothers, and I did it in such a way that I was loved by those who heard me. But when evening came, I left the agape which Lemma, the widow, with her daughter Ammia, were giving. I walked, therefore, at night, desiring to go to Jericho of Palms.

The basic motifs of the narrative agree with the accounts of Acts as well as of Galatians 1: Paul was a persecutor of the Church, but he became a Christian in (or near) Damascus. The report of his stay in

97. This seems to be consistent with Paul’s own claim in 1 Corinthians 9.20.


99. Rordorf, ‘Paul’s Conversion’, 143, suggests that the author knew Galatians, but did not know Acts (contra Pervo and Bauckham).
Damascus is more coherent than in *Acts* 9. Paul does not ‘immediately’ preach, but rather follows the catechisis of Judas and speaks only when prompted by the latter. He is perfectly integrated into the community: when he speaks to the brothers they ‘love him’ and two women accompany him when he leaves. Judas from Straight Street (*Acts* 9.11) is identified as the Lord’s brother, probably Judas Thomas ‘the twin’, from the authority of Thomasine texts of Early Christianity. His role as a helper is quite different from that of Ananias and Barnabas: Judas does not baptise Paul, nor escorts him to higher authorities. Judas himself represents authority in the story, and he accepts Paul without hesitation from the first moment.

While describing Paul’s relation to the Church as smooth as possible, the text nevertheless maintains that Paul’s gospel of Jesus (the Son) was revealed to him directly by the Father. The latter claim is also implied by the accounts of *Acts* (especially in ch. 26, see above), and corresponds to Paul’s claim in *Galatians* 1.15–6. However, in his early period as a believer, Paul is lead by two authorities: the ‘blessed prophet’ (most probably Judas) and the revelation of Christ. We probably can understand this in such a way that Paul’s revelation becomes interpreted with the help of an official prophet of the Church. In that sentence, Paul’s ‘mentor’ is mentioned in the first place, having a higher authority than his private revelation. In other words, Paul’s gospel has to be adjusted to tradition, and his claim on independent authority is limited by the existing institutional order.

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102. Brock, ‘Acts of Paul’, 120–4, interprets the text of the papyrus in the context of the *Acts of Paul*, and suggests that Paul’s commission by the Father, his subsequent trip to the desert, and his activity in the *Acts of Paul* imitate the gospel narratives. Although this is an interesting perspective, we have to notice that Paul’s authority here is not as unquestionable as Jesus’ in the Gospels, and is less independent than in the rest of the *Acts of Paul*. A detailed exegesis of the text will be possible when the Coptic text is published.
4. The Acts of John

Among the early apostolic Acts, only the Acts of John and the Acts of Thomas narrate the commission of their heroes. In the Acts of John we find three commission stories of the apostle: chapter 18 relates his sending from Miletus to Ephesus, chapters 88–9 the call of John and James, and finally chapter 113 tells about John’s call and celibacy. This threefold narration resembles the threefold report of Paul’s conversion in the Lucan Acts, containing one biographical (third person) and two autobiographical (first person) narratives. The relation of the plots of the respective texts to each other is, however, different in the two books: whereas Paul’s conversion stories are re-readings of the same plot, centred around the encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road, in the Acts of John there is little coincidence between the events narrated in the individual passages. From the reader’s point of view, however, the process is similar: we gradually receive information about John’s commission, and build up our story adding new ele-


2. The third person narratives are Acts 9 and Acts of John 18–9; the first person narratives are Acts 22 and 26, Acts of John 88–9 and 113.
ments and modifying our previous reading. In this respect, the book bears an interesting retrospective structure, with the call story developing toward the end of the narrative, where John’s farewell speech sheds new light on it.

**Acts of John 18**

The *Acts of John* in its recent form is a modern reconstruction from a fragmentary textual tradition. In the manuscripts, its episodes usually accompany the later and more widespread *Pseudo-Prochorus*. The first commission episode in chapter 18 stands at the head of the reconstructed text of the *Acts of John*. Scholars seem to agree that the original beginning of the book is lost, and we have different suggestions as to what stood originally before this episode. Nevertheless, the passage logically introduces the Ephesian activity of the apostle, and is likely to have stood near the beginning of the original text. It is confirmed by the fact that none of the earlier apocryphal Acts have an extant formal prologue similar to the canonical *Acts* (something that Schäferdiek proposes), while the apostle’s departure to a new scene

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is a typical beginning in the extant narratives. This is chapter 18 of the *Acts of John*:

John hastened to Ephesus, prompted by a vision. For this reason Damonicus and his relative Aristodemus and the very rich Cleobius and the wife of Marcellus persuaded him with some difficulty to remain a day at Miletus and they rested with him. When they had left early in the morning and had covered about four miles, a voice from heaven was heard, ‘John, you are to procure for your Lord at Ephesus the glory which you know, you and all your brethren with you, and some of those there who shall believe through you’. And John rejoiced, realizing what it might be that was to happen to him at Ephesus, and said, ‘Lord, behold I go in accordance with your will. Your will be done’.

The narrative reports two subsequent visions of John, the first of which serves to launch the story, and the second contains the actual commissioning words. We can see a similar structure in many commission narratives. However simple the plot seems to be, the episode contains several minor details that are not easy to interpret. First, one may ask whether John received the first revelation in Miletus or whether Miletus was already a stop on his journey after the revelation. The second question is whether his companions were with him from the beginning, or joined him only in Miletus. Further, one may inquire whether the persons called by name are identical with the travelling companions involved in the second scene. Finally, one has to explain the sudden appearance of first person plural in the revelation episode. We hope to solve these problems in our interpretation of the passage.

We suggest that chapter 18 enables the reconstruction of two different plots. According to the first plot, John received a revelation in

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7. In the *Acts of Peter*, Paul leaves Rome; in the *Acts of Thomas*, the apostle departs for India; Philip in his *Acts* leaves Galilee.
11. Although one can explain away most problems by referring to the hypothetical contents of the lost beginning, we try to answer the questions in the framework of the given text.
Miletus to depart for Ephesus, wanted to leave immediately, but members of the church in Miletus (Damonicus and other people called by name) convinced him to leave only a day later. John and others departed early in the morning. Among the companions, we may find the aforementioned people from Miletus\(^\text{12}\), but also others—for example, the first person narrator. After a while, they heard a voice speaking with John, who became excited about the adventures awaiting him in Ephesus.

According to the second plot, John was rushing down the road from an unknown place to Ephesus, accompanied by a group of Christians, including the first person narrator. As they came near to Miletus, four members of the group convinced the apostle to spend a day in the city. Early in the morning, they (possibly accompanied by people from Miletus) set out for Ephesus, and then heard the heavenly voice on the road.

Both reconstructions have implications for the interpretation of the whole book. In the first case, the narrative takes a special interest in Miletus. John seems to have spent a longer period there, and he leaves only because a vision instructs him to go to Ephesus. The reader is supposed to know by name at least two persons from the city, Damonicus and Marcellus. This suggests that in a more complete version of the *Acts of John*, a longer cycle about the apostle’s Mile- sian activity preceded chapter 18, where also Damonicus and Mar- cellus played a role.

Two mentions of Miletus in the *Acts of John* may support this scenario. First, in chapter 19 we read that ‘someone’ assured Ly- comedes in a vision that he sent ‘a man from Miletus named John’, who would raise his wife\(^\text{13}\). Another mentioning of Miletus occurs in chapter 37, where ‘brothers from Miletus’ urge John to proceed to Smyrna. Andronicus, however, rebukes them, and the apostle decides to stay and visit the famous Artemision. We do not find these refer-

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13. Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 88–90 (following Wikenhauser, ‘Doppelträume’, 107–8) interprets chapters 18–9 as a ‘double dream’ narrative. We find the structure here somewhat different, because in John’s visions there is no reference to the healing of Lycomedes’ wife.
ences forcing us to adopt the first plot, because they make sense also if John spent only one night in that city. As for ‘the brothers from Miletus’, they are mentioned only here and never explicitly identified with the names of chapter 18.

We also have to consider two philological problems. As for the translation of ἔπειψεν τὸν Ἐφέσον, we can see two solutions. The first possibility is ‘long for’, and this would fit into the first plot: ‘John was longing for Ephesus’ (while still in Miletus). This would normally require, however, either a different preposition (περί) or a subsequent infinitive. The attested usage of ἐπείγαμα εἶς is ‘hasten’ or ‘run’ to somewhere, as all the modern translations render the passage, but this fits better into the second plot than into the first one. The other difficulty is συνανασαυωμένοι αὐτῶ, which makes better sense if the four people called by name were underway with John. Then the clause means that they either were already taking a rest in Miletus, or convinced John that they would do so.

The second plot implies that there is no need for a Miletus cycle preceding chapter 18. After perhaps a short prologue, the story begins with John’s travelling to Ephesus, the place of his miraculous acts. The people in the opening chapter may be known figures of the church where the tradition originated, possibly delegates of the church of Ephesus. We will opt for this second scenario, because it gives a smoother reading of the text, especially with regard to ἔπειψεν and

14. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 614a, lines 4–9. The verb occurs with an infinitive in the Greek Vatican Codex 654 (Bonnet, *Acta apostolorum*, 159, line 30), in a passage that we discuss below: ‘John sought to run straight (εὐθυδρομένιν ἔπειψεν) to the shore near the city of the Milesians’.

15. For example, ἐπειγόμενος εἶς Ἡρώδη (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 14.79.3).

16. Koine Greek uses the present participle (συνανασαυωμένοι) also in final clauses (instead of the future participle), cf. Blass – Debrunner – Rehkopf, *Grammatik*, 347, §418.4. Otherwise, one can also translate ‘keep him back for one day when they were taking a rest with him in Miletus’. In the first plot, συνανασαυωμένος αὐτοῖς would make some sense: ‘that he would rest with them for one more day’.

17. Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 17 agrees that ‘nothing forces us to suppose that the missing beginning of the AJ was very long’.

18. A rather confusing passage in chapter 59 seems to identify Cleobius as an Ephesian. In the same chapter, we read about envoys from Smyrna.
Finally, there is a passage in the folios 145–6 of the Greek Vatican Codex 654, which Bonnet edited as chapters 14–7 of the Acts of John, and which supports my solution. When ‘the king of the Romans’ dies, John (in the company of Prochorus) leaves the island of Patmos clinging to a cork oak. He navigates his vessel to the shore near Miletus, and finding a small village there, sits on a stone and teaches the people. ‘Then he got up from there and travelled to the city of the Ephesians. During his journey he went into the city of the Milesians’. In Miletus, the apostle ‘accomplished many miracles’, ‘made many disciples of Christ at that place into heavenly citizens’, and survived an attempt of the evildoers to poison him. Then we learn that the inhabitants of the small village venerated the stone on which the apostle sat while teaching them. The next sentence already goes, ‘when we arrived in Ephesus, all the people came out to greet the apostle’.

This passage conforms to our preferred scenario in three respects. First, the only concrete event that it connects to Miletus is the poisoning story, which imitates the Acts of John in Rome. Even the local legend of an unnamed nearby village receives more attention. In Miletus, there are no persons mentioned by name either. Second, the text describes precisely the same situation that we reconstructed: John is travelling to Ephesus and makes a short stop in Miletus. After his visit there, he continues his journey ‘rejoicing’, as in chapter 18. Third, the Miletus episode is told in the third person, while the first person


20. Bonnet, Acta apostolorum, vol 2/1, 160, lines 20–2. The text contains the expression οὐρανοπολίτης, a word attributed to Plato by the anonymous Prolegomena to Plato’s Philosophy X, οἱ δὲ καθαροὶ καὶ ὑπὸ αὐτὸν ἀλλαχοῦ οὐρανοπολίται λέγομεν (cf. Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, 1273a). Its use is documented from the late fourth century AD onward; Lampe, Lexicon, 978; Sophocles, Lexicon, 824; cf. the electronic Thesaurus Linguae Graecae.

narrator reappears after Miletus\(^{22}\), as in chapter 18. This suggests that we have to do with two different versions of the same tradition.

Consequently, our reading of chapter 18 has an analogy in the rich tradition of the *Acts of John*, while a longer stay in Miletus with a local narrative cycle and distinguished disciples is unattested. We can hypothesise that the ‘lost beginning’ of the book was simply a statement that John was released from his exile on Patmos after the death of Domitian\(^{23}\). Finally, we can regard the present chapter 18 as a commission story that formed the introduction to the original *Acts of John*.

*Acts of John 88–9*

The next commission story appears in chapters 88–9, in the context of John’s preaching (chs. 87–105). We will not engage in the debate about the latter’s position within the *Acts of John*\(^{24}\), because it does not affect the order of the three commission narratives. Another peculiarity of this section, the ‘polymorphic’ appearance of Christ, will be

22. Much of the *Acts of John by Prochorus* is told in the first person.
23. From different premises, Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 16, reaches a similar conclusion: ‘the AJ began with a scene describing the end of John’s exile on the isle of Patmos’.
24. Schäferdiek’s arguments, ‘Johannesakten’, 132–4 and ‘Acts of John’, 178–9, are convincing for the postulation of some lost episodes (including the imprisonment of Drusiana and John in a tomb). The question is whether we have to add John’s preaching (chs. 87–105) to this hypothetical complex, and place it before chapters 37–86. Schäferdiek claims that both the reference in chapter 87 to Drusiana’s account (‘because Drusiana said, “The Lord appeared to me in the tomb etc.”’) and John’s depiction of God in chapter 103 (‘he hears us all, as now also myself and Drusiana, because he is the God of the imprisoned’) must immediately follow the lost episodes. Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 30, note 18, answers that the perfect εἰρηκνίας in chapter 87 ‘does not suggest that Drusiana had recently given her account’. However, we have to notice that the same refers to immediate antecedents at the end of the gospel section (ταῦτα εἰρηκνότος πρὸς με in chapter 102, ‘after he said these things to me’) and in chapter 113 (Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 311, line 6). Lalleman does not deal with Schäferdiek’s argument concerning chapter 103. Consequently, one still has to consider seriously Schäferdiek’s reconstruction, which is also followed by Junod and Kaestli and the majority of translations.
important for the interpretation of the commission passage. This is the text:

For when he had chosen Peter and Andrew, who were brothers, he came to me and to my brother James, saying, ‘I have need of you, come unto me’. And my brother said, ‘John, this child on the shore who called to us, what does he want?’ And I said, ‘What child?’ He replied, ‘The one who is beckoning to us’. And I answered, ‘Because of our long watch that we kept at sea you are not seeing straight, brother James: but do you not see the man who stands there, fair and comely and of a cheerful countenance?’ But he said to me, ‘Him I do not see, brother; but let us go and we shall see what it means’. So we steered the boat in silence, and we saw him helping us to beach the ship. And when we left the place, wishing to follow him again, he again appeared to me, bald-headed but with a thick and flowing beard; but to James he appeared as a youth whose beard was just starting. We were perplexed, both of us, as to the meaning of what we had seen.

The story evokes the call of John and James in the synoptic tradition. A closer look, however, will reveal that it has little in common with those texts. The Acts of John does not discuss the ‘choosing’ of Peter and Andrew in any detail, and it contains almost nothing of the information about John and James that is found in the synoptic text: that they were the sons of Zebedee, had hired workers, and were repairing the nets on the shore. They omit the point of the story, that ‘they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Jesus’. What remains is the general setting: at the side of the sea, Jesus calls John and James, brothers and fishermen, after he has ‘chosen’ Peter


26. James, Apocrypha anecdota, 4, lines 8–9, suggests εἰς γῆν for σιγή, which is accepted by Junod and Kaestli, Acta Iohannis, vol 1, 193.

27. δόπεσθαι seems to be a confusion of ἐποίμα and ὁπάξω.


and Andrew, who were also brothers. Everything else is different from the Synoptics: the brothers are at sea (we do not know which one) rather than on the shore, we read Jesus’ words to them, and he helps them bring the boat on the shore.

The main peculiarity of the story is that the brothers see Jesus in different forms, a feature that has attracted the attention of scholars. However, we have to notice that apart from Jesus’ different forms, the whole story tells a divine epiphany rather than a synoptic gospel narrative. John’s words at the beginning of chapter 89 especially emphasise this when he says, ‘he appeared to me (ἐμφανίζεται) again’. We can say that all John’s autobiographical accounts about Jesus have an epiphanic character, and there is no significant difference between Jesus’ appearances before and after the cross. This corresponds to the fact that the Acts of John does not mention the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Among the commission stories in the apostolic Acts, only the Acts of John refers back to the call of the disciples in the gospels, while all others talk about commission stories as related to the mission of the early Church. However, the narrative in chapter 88 of the Acts of John transforms the synoptic ‘call story’ pattern into an epiphany. The commission of Thomas at the beginning of his Acts provides another interesting example: Jesus initially appears in a vision, but then he acts as a flesh and blood person. None of these texts presupposes a radical change in the relation between Jesus and the apostles during time, a change that we find in the canonical writings between the pre-Easter gospel narratives, the post-resurrection narratives, and

32. These are found in chapters 88–101 and 112–3.
33. Lalleman, Acts of John, 162–3. Lalleman (p. 35) found that there is no mention of the incarnation either. He describes (p. 208) the Acts of John as ‘docetic’ in the sense that ‘the text presents only a divine Christ and emphatically denies his humanity’.
34. Acts of Thomas 2–3; cf. Chapter 5 below.
the canonical Acts\textsuperscript{35}. Consequently, the three commission narratives of the Acts of John—although one of them echoes the theme of ‘the call of the disciples’—talk about a continuous apostolic commission. Chapter 113, which we will discuss later, affirms this continuity when it relates Jesus’ words to John on chastity at his different ages, without presupposing any change in John’s apostolic status and the way Jesus communicated with him\textsuperscript{36}.

Scholars have paid attention to the ‘polymorphic’ appearances of Jesus in the Acts of John, although they use the term in different ways\textsuperscript{37}. The strictest sense of the term is ‘a metamorphosis of such a kind that the person or deity can be seen differently by different people at the same time’\textsuperscript{38}. Indeed, our text relates that John and James saw Jesus in different forms at the same time, and this recurs in chapter 89. However, in the preaching of John we can see no distinction between this sort of (synchronic) polymorphy and the (diachronic) metamorphosis, the subsequent appearance in various forms\textsuperscript{39}. Immediately after the second parallel vision of John and James, John relates that Jesus’ body was sometimes soft, but sometimes hard as stone. In the same section (ch. 89), he remembers that Jesus’ eyes were always open, and that he often saw him as a small figure looking upwards to the sky. We can see no reason to separate these remarks about Jesus’ appearance from each other, and pick out only those where he appears in different forms simultaneously. Rather they form together the theme of the ‘polymorphous Jesus’\textsuperscript{40}. The

\textsuperscript{35} One should compare, for example, Matthew 4.18–22, 10.1–42, and 28.16–20, or Luke 5.1–11, 9.1–6, 10.1–20, 24.36–53, and Acts 1.4–8.

\textsuperscript{36} In other words, the Acts of John does not have a sense of the ‘middle of time’ which Conzelmann, Die Mitte der Zeit, 139–41, attributed to Luke-Acts. The ‘time of Jesus’ and the ‘time of the Church’ are not clearly distinct. In other words, the christology of the apocryphal Acts implies a particular ecclesiology.


\textsuperscript{38} Lalleman, ‘Polymorphie’, 99.

\textsuperscript{39} Recently Garcia, ‘Polymorphie’, 31, proposes a broad definition: ‘La polymorphie peut être ainsi globalement définie comme un thème religieux et littéraire, où est souvent mise en scène l’apparition d’une divinité sous une ou plusieurs formes autres que la sienne propre’.

\textsuperscript{40} Junod and Kaestli, Acta Iohannis, 466–93, analyze chapters 87–93 and 104–5 as a rhetorical unit, and speak about John’s ‘twelve testimonies’ of Jesus’
discussion of polymorphy in chapters 87–93 provides the immediate context of the commission narrative, whereas the ritual dance and the ‘mystery of the cross’ in chapters 94–101 (which also elaborate on polymorphy) provide a broader frame.

In the parallel visions of John and James, Jesus assumes the following forms: a child (παιδίον), a handsome man, a bald man with long beard, and a youngster (νεανίσκος). It is apparent that these images depict a man at his different ages. We may add John’s observation that immediately follows about a small and distorted man 41, and understand it as a description of an old man. With the exception of James’ second vision (a youngster), the images appear in a sequence from childhood to old age. One cannot avoid the conclusion that Jesus somehow grows older in the eyes of the brothers. We can also discern that both brothers see an older figure for the second time than they did at first. Does this symbolise some form of spiritual progress? 42 It is difficult to find literary parallels for such an interpretation 43. It is easier to demonstrate the idea that Jesus revealed himself according to the abilities of people 44. The Acts of Thomas speaks about the ‘polymorphous Jesus’ who appears ‘according to the measure of our manhood’ 45. Origen repeatedly states this in connection with the synoptic transfiguration narrative 46. In the Gospel of Philip we read: ‘He (Je-
sus) did not appear as he was, but in the manner in which they would be able to see him (πῶς εἴτεν οὕτως ζήσον θάνατον). […] He appeared to the great as great. He appeared to the small as small. He appeared to the angels as an angel, and to men as men. 47. Indeed, in the Acts of John 90, John alone can see a second transfiguration after the one he saw together with James and Peter. 48. There is also a distinction between the brothers, inasmuch as in the parallel visions John sees mature men whereas James only young boys. 49.

Nevertheless, it would be mistaken to regard these chapters as a chain of purely symbolic statements about Christ’s polymorphy, and overlook the unfolding narrative plot. The structure of chapters 87–105 is that of a gospel narrative. 50. It begins with a prologue and the call of the disciples at the sea, relates Jesus’ transfiguration (in two versions), a visit in the house of a Pharisee, 51, and the multiplication of bread. 52. There are episodes that do not readily evoke any of the canonical gospel narratives: John watches Jesus on several occasions, Jesus never blinks his eyes, leaves no footprints on the ground, and once pulls John’s beard. The ritual dance replaces the last supper, and a peculiar crucifixion scene, concluding directly with the ascension, closes the section. In sum, we find a ‘miniature gospel’ inserted into the Acts of John, which the apostle relates in the first person singular.

52. Mark 6.35–44. This is the only miracle that we find in all the four canonical Gospels. The Acts of John inserts it into the frame of the dinner at the Pharisee’s house.
There is only one miracle in this gospel, and no healings, because these are "unspeakable." Among the episodes that we can identify with the canonical gospels, the synoptic stories are in the majority. However, the narrative as a whole focuses on the characteristically Johannine theme of Jesus’ self-revelation before his disciples. The prologue states that John relates these things in order that the listeners "might see the glory about Jesus"—clearly echoing the prologue of the *Gospel of John*. Concerning its overall structure, ‘John’s miniature gospel’ evidently talks about a gradually unfolding self-revelation of Jesus, beginning with the child whom James saw on the shore and concluding with the cosmic vision of the cross of light. We would not go as far as talking about the ‘maturing spirituality of Christian groups’, but the disciples as well as the readers evidently receive an increasingly elaborate view of Jesus.

However, John cannot share everything with the listeners even at the end of the ‘gospel’: ‘When he had spoken to me these things, and others which I know not how to say as he would have me, he was taken up’ (102). John concludes the first part of the gospel section (the ministry of Jesus) with the following words: ‘For we must at the present keep silent about his mighty and wonderful works, inasmuch as they are mysteries and doubtless cannot be uttered or heard’ (93). This formulation is close to the epilogue of the *Gospel of John*:


54. We tend to identify the synoptic stories as Lucan. The invitation to dine in the Pharisee’s house (εἰ δὲ ὑπὸ τινὸς ποτὲ τῶν φαρισαίων κληθείς) clearly echoes the beginning of a Luke story. In both *Luke* 7.36 (ἐρωτᾷ αὐτὸν φαρισαίος) and 11.37 (ἤρωτα δὲ τις αὐτὸν τῶν φαρισαίων), we read that a Pharisee (called Simon in *Luke* 7.41) invited Jesus. In contrast, *Mark* 14.3 (δύντος αὐτοῦ ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ Σίμωνος τοῦ λεπροῦ) and *Matthew* 26.6 (τῷ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γενομένου ἐν Βηθανίᾳ κτλ.) state that Jesus was in Bethany in the house of ‘the leprous Simon’.


57. Cf. note 42 above.
‘But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written’\textsuperscript{58}. John spoke similarly also in the prologue of the gospel section: ‘I, indeed, am able neither to set forth to you nor to write the things which I saw and heard’ (88)\textsuperscript{59}. At Jesus’ transfiguration, the disciples see ‘such a light on him that it is not possible for a man who uses mortal speech to describe what it was like’ (90). We can see that as the gospel narrative unfolds, John repeatedly talks about more and more unspeakable things that remain hidden. The apostles, and especially John, received much ‘unspeakable revelation’ that they cannot share with others.

Therefore, there is a tendency that proceeds in parallel with the unfolding revelation, and that is the growth of secrecy and intimacy of the revelation. Above we discussed the possibility that John’s figures in the parallel visions are superior to James’ ones. After the brothers’ second vision (bald man and young lad), ‘both were at a loss what their vision wanted to be’, and when they followed him, ‘both became gradually more perplexed’. The next sentence apparently contrasts John’s observation with the brothers’ common experience: ‘Yet to me there appeared a still more wonderful (παραδοξότερον) sight’. The comparative degree adds further emphasis to the exclusivity of the observation. After the transfiguration scene, John alone approaches Jesus. At a later occasion, all the disciples of Jesus (ἡμῶν πάντων τῶν μοιθητῶν αὐτοῦ) were sleeping in a house at (the lake of?) Gennesaret, but John alone (ἐγὼ μόνος) was watching what Jesus was doing. Two echoes from the Gospel of John that we did not mention yet, emphasise intimacy in a particularly sensible manner. On the mount of transfiguration, first James, Peter, and John together saw Jesus’ shining light, but then John alone approached Jesus ‘because he [Jesus] loved him’. Then he alone observed Jesus’ fantastic polymorphous appearance, and talked to him. This is the only reference in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{59} The text echoes the prologue of John’s gospel especially when it talks about seeing Jesus’ ‘glory’.
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Acts of John that John was the ‘beloved disciple’, and our text explicitly connects it with John’s exclusive experiences about Jesus60.

The motif of the beloved disciple first occurs in the Gospel of John in the narration of the last supper: ‘One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was leaning on his bosom’61. The Acts of John detaches this episode from the last supper, and presents it as a habitual manner of John reclining at the table: ‘When I sat at table he would take me upon his breast and I held him; and sometimes his breast felt to me to be smooth and tender, and sometimes hard, like stone’ (89). The motif of physical touch occurs once more: ‘Sometimes when I meant to touch him, I met a material (υλωδης, lit. ‘woody’) and solid (παχυς, lit. ‘thick’) body; and at other times when I felt him, the substance was immaterial and bodiless and as if it were not existing at all’. The theme of physical touch, we suggest, is not only a vehicle for the subject of polymorphy. Physical closeness is a peculiar aspect of commission in the Acts of John, a synonym for the intimate spiritual relation between master and disciple.

Why did the gospel section of the Acts of John emphasise the subject of fondness and intimacy between master and disciple? Was it due to an interest in anecdotal details, or did it have a deeper-lying theoretical reason? This matter has precedents in classical literature. In Plato’s Symposium, when Socrates after some delay arrives for the dinner, Agathon expresses his wish that Socrates would recline next to him62: ‘Here you are, Socrates. Come and recline next to me; I want to share this great thought that has just struck you in the porch next door’ (175c8–d2). Socrates namely had been waiting outside, deeply immersed in his thoughts. He complies with Agathon’s wish, reclines next to him and answers: “My dear Agathon”, Socrates replied as he took his seat beside him, “I only wish that wisdom were

60. In the Gospel of John, all five occurrences of the expression are in the second half of the book (from chapter 13 on). This indicates that also the canonical Johannine gospel tradition associates the phrase with the revelation of Jesus before his disciples.

61. John 13.23, Ἰν ἀνασαίμενος εἰς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα ἦγέσῃ ὁ Ἰησοῦς. John 21.20 as well connects the two motifs: ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved […]’, who also leaned on his breast at the supper’.

62. Trans. M. Joyce in Hamilton and Cairns (eds), Plato, adapted. I follow K. Dover’s commentary at many points.
the kind of thing once could share by sitting next to someone—if it flowed, for instance, from the one that was full to the one that was empty, like the water in two cups finding its level through a piece of worsted’” (175d4–7). Then the company decides to spend the night by each of them delivering an encomium about Eros.

In his speech, Socrates reports what the wise Diotima had taught him about Love63. The speech consists of two parts, the first one describing the nature of Eros, the second describing its effect on people64. Eros, she said, is ‘a very powerful spirit (δαίμον μέγας), and spirits (πνεῦν τὸ δαιμόνιον) are half way between god and man’ (202d14–e1). ‘They (spirits) are the envoys and interpreters of men’s things to gods, and of gods’ things to men (202d3–4). Born of Resource (Πόρος) and Need (Πενία), Eros is barefoot and homeless, but also a schemer (ἐπιθετικὸς) after the beautiful and good (203b–d). The gods and the wise do not seek wisdom, because wisdom is already theirs. Neither do the ignorant, because they are satisfied with what they are. Eros is between them, a philosopher, because Eros is the love of what is beautiful (ἐρως περὶ τὸ καλόν), and wisdom is one of the most beautiful things (204a–b) 65.

Speaking of the effect of Eros, Diotima differentiates two groups of people. Most people are ‘fertile in body’ (ἐγκυμονες κατὰ τὰ σώματα). They turn to women and raise a family, in the hope that they secure immortality, a memory of themselves, and happiness (208e2–6). Those, in contrast, who are ‘fertile in soul’ (οἱ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν), conceive and bear the things of the spirit: ‘Wisdom and all her sister virtues’. They look for beautiful souls, educate them, and procreate more beautiful and immortal children66.

63. Plato, Symposium 201d–212b.
64. Plato, Symposium 201d–212b. The nature (das Wesen) of Eros: 201e8–204c6; the effect (das Wirken) of Eros: 204c7–212c3. Cf. Stier, Rede der Diotima; Hupperts, Eros dikaios, vol 2, 170–1.
65. Eros is thus intermediate between (1) wise and ignorant, (2) beautiful and ugly, (3) mortal and immortal; cf. Chen, Acquiring Knowledge, 38. These are three types of striving, and therefore, three possibilities of ascent, attested also in the Phaedo; ibidem, note 4.
66. Plato, Symposium 208e–209e. ‘Who would not prefer such fatherhood to merely human propagation, if he stopped to think of Homer, and Hesiod, and all the greatest of our poets? Who would not envy them their immortal progeny, their
Then Diotima comes to ‘the final revelation’ (τὰ τέλεα καὶ ἐπιστήμων, 210a1). She differentiates between a lower and a higher sort of knowledge, and claims that not everyone is capable of acquiring the latter.67 ‘The candidate for this initiation cannot, if his efforts are to be rewarded, begin too early to devote himself to the beauties of the body. First of all, if his preceptor instructs him as he should, he will fall in love with the beauty of one individual body, so that his passion may give life to noble discourse.’68 Then one becomes the lover of the beauty which is manifested in all beautiful bodies; thereafter of the beauty of laws and institutions. ‘And next, his attention should be diverted from institutions to the sciences, so that he may know the beauty of every kind of knowledge […] until he will come upon one single form of knowledge, the knowledge of the beauty I am about to speak of’ (210c7–d9). Diotima then describes the highest phase (210e1–6):

Whoever has been initiated so far in the mysteries of Love (τὰ ἔρωτικά) and has viewed all these aspects of the beautiful in due succession, is at last drawing near the final revelation. And now, Socrates, there bursts upon him that wondrous vision which is the very soul of the beauty he has toiled so long for.

At this point, Diotima gives a description of the beauty that the lover-initiate-philosopher contemplates.69 Finally, Diotima recapitulates the whole journey (211b6–d1):


68. Diotima speaks about three persons. (1) The initiate is called ‘lover’ (ἐρωτής), a name used for the philosophers also in Phaedo 66e2. (2) The object of his love is a ‘beautiful body’, in whom he procreates ‘beautiful words’. (3) The third figure is ‘the leader’, who can be identified as the μυστήριος of the mysteries. This is the role of Diotima beside Socrates. The initiate, however, may accomplish his journey also without a leader (210b9–c1). Cf. Hupperts, Eros dikaios, vol 2, 203.

69. 210e6–211b5. I highlight only the main points: beauty is eternal (ἀει δὲ), it neither comes into being nor perishes (οὔτε γεγονόμενον οὔτε ἀπολλομένον), neither increases nor diminishes (οὔτε αὐξημένον οὔτε φθόγγον), is always itself
And so, when his correct boy-loving (παιδεραστεῖν) has carried our candidate so far that he begins to catch sight of that beauty, he is almost within reach of the final revelation. And this is the way, the only way, he must approach, or be led toward the matters of love (τὰ ἐρωτικά). Starting from individual beauties, the quest for the universal beauty must find him ever moving upwards, stepping from rung to rung—that is, from one to two, and from two to every lovely body, from bodily beauty to the beauty of institutions, from institutions to learning, and from learning in general to the special lore that pertains to nothing but the beautiful itself—until at last he comes to know what beauty is.

When Socrates has finished his speech, Alcibiades arrives and reclines between Agathon and Socrates. A handsome young man, he relates that once he invited Socrates and offered to sleep with him (218b–219d). ‘If there is one thing I am keen on it is to make the best of myself, and I think you are more likely to help me there than anybody else’ (218d1–3). Socrates answered (218d7–219b2) that Alcibiades had to find him ‘so extraordinarily beautiful’ that his ‘own attractions (εὐμορφία) must be quite eclipsed’. Alcibiades was trying, Socrates suggested, ‘to exchange the semblance of beauty for the thing itself’. ‘We must think it over one of these days,’ Socrates concluded, ‘and do whatever seems best for the two of us’. Alcibiades thought that Socrates gave in, lay beside him, but to his disappointment, nothing happened between them. Alcibiades, who ‘seemed to be still in love with him’ (222c2–3), now goes on praising Socrates. Finally they agree that Agathon will change his place and lie between Alcibiades and Socrates. Agathon rises up to do so, but then a reveling band enters and spoils the order of the banquet.

We have seen how the Symposium interconnects the themes of intimacy between master and disciple, love, and the way to perfection. Socrates teaches that the intimacy between master and disciple, of which Agathon and Alcibiades think in erotic terms, must be clean and spiritual. The real Eros is a guide who leads one to the view of

by itself (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό), is in its own company (μεθ’ αὐτοῦ), and is uniform (μονοειδές).

70. Beside its rhetorical function, this recapitulation gives emphasis to the correct order of the steps of cognition (Erkenntnisschritte; Sier, Rede der Diotima, 160).
beauty. The Symposium helps us to understand why and how the Acts of John could elaborate on the Johannine gospel traditions of the beloved disciple and John’s leaning on Jesus’ bosom.

It is important to compare the role played by Socrates in the narrative parts with the theory of cognition as laid down in the Diotima speech. If we depart from the theory of Diotima in interpreting the relation of Socrates to his pupils (Agathon and Alcibiades), we have to conclude that in them Socrates is the ‘lover’ or philosopher, the one who proceeds toward the vision of the beauty, and he ‘procreates beautiful words’ in his students. In terms of the Diotima speech, the student is not immediately destined to see the ultimate beauty. One has to assume, however, that the student will become himself a ‘lover’ one day. In the Acts of John, the role of the ‘lover’ is taken by Jesus. The idea that he ‘procreates beautiful words’ in John is especially applicable to the revelation of the cross of light: ‘But to you I am speaking, and listen to what I speak. I put into your mind to come up to this mountain so that you may hear what a disciple should learn from his teacher and a man from God’ (97). Further, in accordance with the Diotima speech, Jesus has need of teaching John: ‘John, there must be one man to hear these things from me; for I need one who is ready to hear’ (98). It is impossible, however, to claim that it is Jesus who reaches the vision of the absolute beauty in this way.

This contradiction will be solved if we look at the narrative parts of the Symposium, where Socrates is characterised as ‘superhuman’, someone who has already achieved the highest phase of contemplation. In these passages, it is always his pupils who are admiring his beauty, and want to dine beside him or sleep with him. They either hope to share in his wisdom (Agathon) or Socrates teaches them to do that (Alcibiades). This description of the roles already can be applied to the relation of Jesus and John. Both texts use the topics of fondness, intimacy, and celebration to approach the theme of spiritual perfection. Socrates teaches the whole company at the banquet how to ascend to the realm of the absolute beauty. Jesus, after manifesting himself in different ways to his disciples, not least during common

71. In his encomium, Alcibiades praises Socrates as ‘truly superhuman’ (δαμόνιος ὡς ἀληθῶς, 219c1). According to Hupperts, Eros dikaios, 262, ‘Socrates is an example of an erastes-philosopher who is on the second level’.
meals, finally lets them participate in the ritual dance. Socrates is willing to share his spiritual beauty with Alcibiades to help him to achieve excellence. Jesus reveals his polymorphic body to John, and finally shows him the cosmic vision of the cross of light so that he might hear ‘what a disciple has to learn from the master, and a human from God’.

Finally, the idea of twofold initiation is present in the Acts of John, as well as in the Symposium. In the Symposium, it emerges as a distinction between the ‘Lesser’ and ‘Greater Mysteries’, only the latter leading to the vision of the beauty. In the Acts of John the first level includes miracles and ethical teaching, and the second level contains the final revelation as described on the foregoing pages.

Inevitably, there is some difference between the symbolisms of the two books. The Symposium uses a plainly erotic vocabulary (ἐρως, παιδεραστεω), while the Acts of John designates the relation of John and Jesus with more general terms of ‘fondness’ (ἀγαπω, φιλεω). In the night, Alcibiades lies beside Socrates and puts his cloak around him, whereas John only watches Jesus from a distance, after wrapping himself in his cloak. Sensual overtones, however, are not missing from the Acts of John either. The intimacy of Jesus and John during meals is even more direct than that of Socrates and Agathon at the banquet. The handsome young man on the shore whom John sees is physically attractive (ευμορφος), depicted precisely as Alcibiades (ἡ παρὰ σοι εὐμορφία).

With regard to our commission narrative, this literary parallel prompts us to add three important aspects to its interpretation. First, a progress in the subsequent polymorphic figures express a tendency of an unfolding revelation. Second, an unspeakable secret accumulates about the words and deeds of Jesus. Third, we can speak of developing intimacy and love (whether we interpret it as ἐρως or ἀγάπη) as...
the vehicle of revelation, a drive to acquire knowledge from and about
the master, or, as Diotima put it, the guide toward the vision of the
absolute beauty.

**Acts of John 113**

We find the third commission narrative in the farewell speech of John.
If one follows Bonnet’s reconstruction of the text, this episode comes
soon after the gospel section, whereas in Schäferdiek’s sequence the
bulk of the narrative material falls between the two passages76. Al-
though it contains no direct references to the previous two commis-
sion episodes, it evokes especially the topics of the second commis-

sectors. Let us quote the passage77:

> You who have preserved me also till the present hour pure to yourself,
> and free from intercourse with a woman; who, when I inclined in my
> youth to marry, appeared to me and said, ‘I am in need of you, John’;
> who prepared for me beforehand my bodily weakness; who, on the
> third occasion when I wished to marry, prevented me immediately,
> and said to me at the third hour on the sea, ‘John, if you were not
> mine, I would let you marry’; who for two years mutilated me (ὁ
> πηρόσαξ με)78, so that I would mourn and entreat you, submitting my-
> self79; who in the third year opened up the spiritual eyes, and gave me
> back my visible eyes; who, when I regained my sight, disclosed to me

76. For the possible order of the sections, see p. 96, note 24 above.

tion (the Metastasis or *Consummatio*), there are now more manuscripts available
than Bonnet used. Junod and Kaestli also published two alternative Greek texts of
the Metastasis (pp. 317–43), together with the Coptic text (pp. 383–97). John tells
these words in a prayer, therefore the text originally consists of a series of parti-
cipial clauses, with which he addresses the deity: ‘The one who preserved me etc.’.

78. In the context of this narrative, ‘mutilated’ can be understood as ‘blinded’.
However, John was also known in church tradition as a eunuch: Tertullian, *On
Monogamy* 17.1, calls him *spado* (Greek σπάδων, eunuch); Jerome, *Against Jovi-
nianus* 1.26, calls him *eunuchus*.

of the reflexive pronoun after this verb in this meaning is standard usage, cf.
Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1338 (A.II.2). The use of middle voice in this mean-
ing is unorthodox, but not exceptional in the Koine, cf. Blass – Debrunner –
Rehkopf, *Grammatik*, 261, §316.3.
the repugnance of gazing upon a woman; who delivered me from temporary show, and guided me to the eternal one.\textsuperscript{80}

The apostle speaks about the things from which Jesus released him: ‘the foul madness of the flesh’, ‘bitter death’, ‘the secret disease of the soul’ and its ‘open deed’, and ‘the one who rebelled in him’. Then he speaks of the things Jesus gave to him: ‘spotless love to him’, ‘a safe way to him’, ‘undoubting faith in him’, and ‘pure thoughts toward him’. He continues:

[W]ho have given the due reward to every deed; who have set it in my soul to have no other possession than you alone—for what can be more precious than you? Now, since I have accomplished your stewardship with which I was entrusted, make me worthy, O Lord, of your repose, and give me my end in you, which is the unspeakable and ineffable salvation.

This passage governs the discourse toward the end of the book, the peaceful death of the apostle. From this perspective, John gives a summary of his divine call, and the subject of his commission belongs organically to that theme. His task is only generally designated: ‘I am in need of you, John’. The apostle is commissioned here neither to ‘procure glory for the Lord’ (ch. 18) nor to become initiated in order to lead others (chs. 87–105). His sole task seems to be his own perfection. At first sight, the topic of encratism occupies a major position in this autobiographical summary.\textsuperscript{81} It tells how Jesus thwarted three

\textsuperscript{80} Although \(\epsilon\iota\varsigma\;\tau\iota\;\nu\;\alpha\iota\mu\iota\nu\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha\varsigma\) is elliptic, it is logical to connect it with the preceding \(\phi\alpha\nu\tau\omega\alpha\omicron\iota\alpha\). Elliott completes the phrase with \(\zeta\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\), ‘guided me to eternal life’, which corresponds to the Coptic \(\epsilon\lambda\mu\kappa\nu\alpha\nu\pi\varepsilon\gamma\iota\varphi\omega\iota\;\epsilon\tau\iota\nu\iota\varsigma\;\epsilon\tau\iota\iota\iota\;\epsilon\rho\omicron\alpha\) (Junod and Kaestli, \textit{Acta Iohannis}, 394, lines 15–6).

\textsuperscript{81} Lalleman, \textit{Acts of John}, 217, affirms that ‘it is commonly assumed that the AJ and the other AAA [apocryphal Acts of the apostles] originated in a strongly ascetic environment and that they are very much characterized by their asceticism’, and supports this with an extended bibliographical survey (\textit{ibidem}, notes 1–3). Our passage is quoted in the \textit{Pseudo-Titus Epistle}, which was written in the fifth century, according to its subtitle, ‘on the state of chastity’ (for the relevant passage see Junod and Kaestli, \textit{Acta Iohannis}, 139). De Santos Otero, ‘Pseudo-Titus Epistle’, 54, affirms that this writing ‘absorbed with a special enthusiasm the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles’ (which he calls ‘strictly ascetic’). Lalleman, \textit{Acts of John}, 234–5, claims that our text teaches ‘celibacy for some’.
times John’s wish to marry, and in this context, one tends to read John’s various miseries in body and soul as sexual sins and desires.

How does this passage relate to the other two commission stories? As for the first passage, John’s claim ‘I have accomplished your stewardship with which I was entrusted’ responds to the conclusion of chapter 18, ‘Your will be done’. However, there seem to be no particular cross-references between the two texts. In contrast, we can find several points in common with the second commission episode. There are two points in the plot of chapter 113 that tempt the reader to match them with the call story of John and James. First, at John’s first attempt to marry, Jesus’ claim ‘I have need of you’ repeats his words on the shore in chapter 88. Second, Jesus’ appearance ‘on the sea’ after John’s third attempt also reminds one of the same episode. Neither identification seems satisfactory. If we opt for the second possibility, we have to place many events (visions and punishment) before the call story. If we chose the first solution, we arrive at the following plot: John wants to get married, but Jesus calls him (together with James) and wishes him to remain unmarried. He wants to get married for the second time, but Jesus strikes him with illness. The third time he receives revelation at sea—in that case, the Mediterranean Sea rather than the Lake of Gennesaret—and Jesus blinds him for two years82. Then Jesus opens his physical as well as spiritual eyes, and cleans and heals him in the way that he relates in the rest of his prayer. Thus, the first attempt to marry is connected with John’s call as a disciple, while the second and third with his call as an apostle. The commission to Ephesus, with which the book begins, occurs as the last of these episodes.

It is also possible that the original readers had a substantially different perspective on the narrative, due to the existence of additional texts unknown to us, the later insertion of some parts, or a different sequence of the sections. These circumstances might have changed even several times during the early history of the text. However, there are more possibilities to establish a connection between the second and third commission episodes than the mere reconciliation of the narrative plots. Since chapter 113 evidently belongs to the conclusion

82. Paul’s blindness in Acts 9 offers a close parallel. For illness as a motif of commission, see pp. 234–240 below.
of the book—whatever we think of the sequence of the preceding chapters—it is reasonable to read it with an eye at the whole gospel section. In that case, we will find that this concluding passage describes a similar progress of revelation as John’s miniature gospel. Both begin with the claim that Jesus has need of John, and conclude with the theme of a large-scale vision. There is even a progress between the two conclusions: the cross of light is but a ‘hint’\(^\text{83}\), whereas at the end of chapter 113 John is already prepared for ‘the end in Jesus’ and the ‘unspeakable salvation’. John’s increasingly close relation with Jesus guides him towards the view of the final things (in chapter 104), which corresponds to salvation (in chapter 113).

Love appears as a guide to the vision of beauty in John’s prayer (chs. 113–4). The text combines the metaphors of love and affection with the expressions of seeing. Jesus does not permit John to marry, and repeatedly expresses his claim on him: ‘I am in need of you’ and ‘you are mine’. This culminates in John’s blindness, when he ‘submits’ to Jesus. Subsequently, Jesus establishes in John a ‘spotless love’ and a ‘safe way’ toward him. He sets it in his soul to have no other possession than Jesus. John’s blindness is also the starting point of the building up of a new vision in him. First, Jesus opens John’s spiritual eyes and makes the sight of women hateful for his visible eyes. Then he guides John from the sight of transient things to the sight of the eternal. Finally, John reaches the end in Jesus.

This progress resembles love’s way to absolute beauty as described in the *Symposium*. Let us remember what Socrates taught in the Diotima speech\(^\text{84}\): ‘Whoever has been initiated so far in the mysteries of Love and has viewed all these aspects of the beautiful in due succession, is at last drawing near the final revelation. And now, Socrates, there bursts upon him that wondrous vision which is the very soul of the beauty he has toiled so long for. […] And this is the way, the only way, he must approach, or be led toward the matters of love. Starting from individual beauties, the quest for the universal beauty must find him ever moving upwards […] until at last he comes to know what beauty is’. The different phases of John’s life corre-

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spond to this description. In his career, we may discover the elements of the ‘Lesser’ as well as of the ‘Greater Mysteries’. The more elementary stage of encratism is followed by the superior stage of the contemplation of the unspeakable beauty. Whereas the initiate lover-philosopher of the Diotima speech gained immortality, John at the climax of his ascent receives salvation. We may conclude that John’s farewell speech summarises the message of the gospel section in a theoretical discourse, describing a similar structure as the way of perfection in the *Symposium*.

**The Ascent of the Soul and Apophatism**

The commission narratives of John, especially the second and third stories, show theological peculiarities that have to be discussed in more detail. That the *Acts of John* relied on Platonic texts is absolutely believable. Already Schäferdiek associated the text with ‘Hellenistic cultivated classes’, who were inclined to ‘philosophical life’\(^{85}\). The commission narrative of chapter 113 shows similarities with views about the ascent of the soul to absolute beauty that were held by the Alexandrian philosophers and especially by the Neo-Platonist Plotinus (c. 205–70)\(^{86}\). Consider especially the following passages\(^{87}\): ‘Let him who can, follow and come within, and leave outside the sight of his eyes and not turn back to the bodily splendours which he saw before. When he sees the beauty in bodies he must not run after them’ (1.6.8). ‘And what does this inner sight see?’ (1.6.9) For improving the inner sight, Plotinus describes a similar sequence of contemplation as the Diotima speech: ‘beautiful way of life’, ‘beautiful works’, ‘the souls of people who produce the beautiful works’\(^{88}\). ‘This alone is the eye,’ Plotinus concludes, ‘that sees the great beauty. But anyone who comes to the sight blear-eyed with wickedness, and unpurified, or weak and by his cowardice unable to look what is very

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86. Cf. O’Meara, *Plotinus*, 100–10; Miles, *Plotinus*, 130–61. For the idea as part of a common Alexandrian heritage, see Sinnige, *Six Lectures*, 26–47.
bright, he sees nothing, even if someone shows him what is there and possible to see’ (1.6.9).

Another peculiarity of the text is its emphasis on ‘secrecy’. Whereas religious secrets of various kinds were found in Greco-Roman antiquity, including Early Christianity89, the notion of secrecy that the Acts of John uses can be identified with a specific theory called apophatism. It becomes especially clear from the term ἄρνητος (unspeakable) used in chapter 9090. Apophatism claims that human language is incapable of talking about God: mystical experience is the only way to know him. In various forms, it is represented, among others, in Plato’s Parmenides 142a, in Middle Platonism (1st century BC–3rd century AD), in the thought of Philo of Alexandria (c. 25 BC–50 AD), Justin Martyr (died in 165), and Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215), as well as in Gnostic texts and the Corpus Hermeticum (2–5th century AD)91. As an elaborate system, apophatism appears with Plotinus92, and (Pseudo-)Dionysius the Areopagite93. In a characteristic passage, Plotinus claims: ‘Strictly speaking, we ought not to apply any terms at all to It’ (6.9.3).

In the Acts of John, as in later Neo-Platonic systems, apophatism logically implies the theory of the ascent of the soul. Since human language cannot encapsulate the essence of God, the soul has to be purified and transformed in order to be able to experience God in a mystical union. Whereas chapters 88–102 describe various forms of

89. Religious secrecy was often related to something that had to be concealed, as in the examples of Bremmer, ‘Religious Secrets’. The same applies to the ‘messianic secret’ of the gospel tradition, although there the disciple’s lack of understanding is also important (cf. Schweizer, Introduction, 125f, recently Theissen, ‘Die pragmatische Bedeutung’). Cf. 2 Corinthians 14.2, Gospel of Thomas 13.


93. Fifth or sixth century AD, cf. p. 201, note 17 below. However, the Neo-Platonic form of the idea was used already by Christian thinkers much earlier. Synesius of Cyrene (370–c. 414) was a student of Hypatia (370–415) in Alexandria at the end of the 4th century, and later wrote hymns in which he used apophasis to talk about God. Seng, ‘Reden’; Vollenweider, Synesios, 13–27.
mystical experience, chapter 113 emphasises the necessity of gradual purification.

Conclusions

The three narrations of John’s commission in his Acts are different from each other in many aspects. We suggested that the first account formed the beginning of the original Acts of John. This episode uses traditional motifs of commission, which are also known, for example, from the Lucan Acts: twofold vision, epiphany on the road, and travelling companions. It gives a brief statement of the task that Jesus sets before John. The final episode in turn offers a retrospective view of John’s career, but it refers to a broader spectrum of biographical data than those touched upon in the rest of the Acts of John. This may also confirm that it comes from a different source than the Asian tradition. Moreover, it contains elements that are known from the second narrative: the narrative motif that Jesus called John on the sea, and the whole (Neo-)Platonic epistemological concept. This shows that those two speeches of John, both containing autobiographical flashbacks, are closely related.

The position of the second account is highly interesting. Since it is contained in a (single) separate manuscript, its place in the narrative sequence is hypothetical. Its position in the narrative plot, however, can be established with more certainty. As a part of the miniature gospel narrative, it wants to tell events that are antecedent to the plot of the Acts of John. It uses synoptic (Lucan?) as well as Johannine gospel motifs and elaborates them into a symbolic narrative of the intimate relation of John and Jesus.

Appendix: Date and Place of Composition of the Acts of John

Our findings allow some conclusions also about the historical aspects of the composition of this writing. First, chapters 88–102 and 113 present John’s commission in a similar way, both sections relying on the Platonic idea of ascension to the beauty, especially as described in the Symposium. If the ‘Gnostic chapters’ (94–102) were added later to the book, they remained faithful to the concept of commission that was already present in the book. The second and third commission
The Acts of John

stories suggest a similar Platonic influence and were probably composed in the same area at the same time. Our investigations point towards Alexandria, the place of origin suggested also by Junod and Kaestli. This was the city of Philo and Clement, and it was there at the beginning of the third century that Ammonius Saccas (died c. 242) initiated Neo-Platonism. Ammonius Saccas, who did not leave any writings behind, was the teacher of Plotinus as well as of Origen (184–254). The Acts of John shows not only a general influence of Middle Platonism, but rather it uses Platonic tradition much in the same way as Plotinus, although on a less sophisticated level. We can detect contacts of the commission narratives with two great theologians of Alexandria of that time. Clement of Alexandria quotes a peculiar motif of the gospel section around 200: ‘There are traditions that when John touched that body that was outward, he extended his hand in depths, and that the solidity of the flesh in no way hindered it but rather gave way to the hand of the disciple’.

If we put these clues together, we come to the conclusion that the Acts of John was revised in Alexandria at the beginning of the third century by educated Christians who were influenced by Neo-Platon-

94. Lalleman, Acts of John, 46, claims that the gospel section (belonging to his section B) is ‘more esoteric’ than the Asian narrative (his section A) to which chapter 113 belongs. If we consider the similarities of the two commission stories (belonging to Lalleman’s section A and B, respectively) this it is not necessarily the case.


ism just emerging in that city\textsuperscript{99}. Clement probably knew the tradition about Jesus’ body before it became part of the \textit{Acts of John}; Origen could have already known the text itself\textsuperscript{100}. In sum, we suggest that an earlier form of the \textit{Acts of John}, consisting of the Asian narrative cycle\textsuperscript{101} arrived at Alexandria in the last quarter of the 2nd century, where the two larger speeches of John (roughly identifiable as the gospel flashback and the farewell speech) containing the second and third commission narratives, were added to it\textsuperscript{102}.

\textsuperscript{99} Cf. p. 256 below.

\textsuperscript{100} Eusebius, \textit{Church History} 3.1, quotes ‘tradition’ (παράδοσις) from Origen on the apostles, including a reference to John’s Ephesian mission and martyrdom. Junod, ‘Origène, Eusèbe’, 242, concludes (contra A. Harnack) that Eusebius could actually take the passage from Origen; MacDonald, \textit{Acts of Andrew}, 56–9, argues that Origen’s information comes from the Apocryphal Acts. However, the idea that Origen knew several of the major Acts, does not especially confirm the Alexandrian links to the \textit{Acts of John}.

\textsuperscript{101} Bremmer, ‘Apocryphal Acts’, 156–7, argues that the social terminology of the Asian narratives locates them to Aphrodisias and Northern Lycia.

\textsuperscript{102} This hypothesis will have to be checked in the future against the whole of the \textit{Acts of John}, with special attention to the source-critical problems of the book.
5. The Acts of Thomas

Whereas the Acts of John reports the apostle’s commission in three separate passages, the Acts of Thomas contains one continuous commission story at the beginning of the narrative. This interesting episode, which offers possibilities for various symbolic interpretations, has drawn the attention of scholars writing on the Acts of Thomas. We begin with a brief summary of this episode.

The book begins with the description of the ‘apostolic lottery’, a motif that frequently occurs at the beginning of the apostolic Acts. The apostles gather in Jerusalem and cast a lot in order to see to which part of the world the Lord sends each of them. Thomas’ lot falls to India, but he refuses to depart and seeks excuses: his inability due to his bodily weakness and his ignorance of the language. At


3. For a detailed discussion, see pp. 219–224 below.

4. Bonnet, Acta Apostolorum, vol 2/2, 100, lines 5–6, λέγων μὴ δύνασθαι μήτε χωρέιν διὰ τῆς ἀσθένειας τῆς σαρκός κτλ. Figuratively, χωρέω can mean ‘to be capable of’, cf. Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, 2015b. It occurs in this meaning in Acts of John 88 (line 4 in Junod and Kaestli, Acta Iohannis, vol 1, 191). Therefore, the two verbs are synonyms, forming a case of hendiadys: ‘neither capable nor fitted because of bodily weakness’. LaFargue, Language and Gnosis, 67, argues that χωρέιν is a (Gnostic) term for spiritual-mental advancement, attested in Corpus Hermeticum 1.27. Thomas’ words imply that the body has to be overcome so that the spirit can advance. This is similar to John’s sickness and healing in Acts of John 113. Cf. John 21.25; Acts of John 88; p. 103, note 58 above.
night the Saviour appears to him and encourages him, but Thomas answers: ‘Send me wherever you want to send me: to India I do not go’. At this point, the Indian travelling agent Abbanes appears whom Gundaphorus entrusted to buy a builder (τέκτονον) for him. Jesus sees him on the marketplace at noon and sells Thomas, whom he shows to the merchant from a distance. They sign a contract, and only then, the Saviour brings Thomas to Abbanes. The merchant asks him, ‘Is this your master (δεσπότης)?’ Whereupon Thomas answers, ‘Yes, he is my Lord (κύριος)’. Abbanes says, ‘I bought you from him’, and Thomas remains silent.

The next morning Thomas embarks with Abbanes, carrying with himself his price, which he received from the Lord. Jesus takes leave of him with the words ‘Let your price be with you together with my grace, wherever you may depart’. A highly interesting dialogue between Abbanes and Thomas rounds off the scene. When Abbanes asks Thomas about his craftsmanship, the latter answers: ‘Of wood [I can make] ploughs, yokes, scales, boats, oars for boats, masts, and disks, and of stone columns and temples, and royal palaces’. And Abbanes confirms, ‘Such a craftsman we need’.

**Protest and Reassurance**

One can easily recognise the similarity between our text and the commission stories of the Jewish Scriptures. As in many of those narratives, the sequence commission–protest–reassurance creates the basic dynamics of the plot. In the Jewish Scriptures, the pattern is espe-

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5. While Jesus previously appeared in vision at night (διὰ τῆς νυκτὸς), now he is on the marketplace at noon (τὸ μεσημβρινὸν). For epiphanies at noon (probably meant to be more powerful than visions at night) see p. 73, note 48 above. Jesus’ physical presence is found also in chapter 11.

6. For Jesus as δεσπότης see pp. 125–134, note 44.

7. The Greek ἤπαξ ζέεν also implies Thomas ‘found rest’, ‘consented’.


9. LaFargue, *Language and Gnosis*, 70, translates ‘May your authority be with you’. Although τιμή in the passage may symbolically refer to the authority that Jesus assigned to Thomas at his commission, its primary meaning ‘price’ also fits the context perfectly, as we will see later.
cially significant in the commission stories of Moses, Gideon, Saul, and Jeremiah. The Acts of Thomas represents this scheme more characteristically than any other apostolic commission stories do.

In the biblical parallels, the protesting heroes often mention ‘smallness’, but this refers to little significance (or honour) rather than the lack of bodily or mental strength. Thomas also mentions weakness (ἀσθενεύω), which occurs in the same sense in the Septuagint version of Gideon’s commission. Jeremiah is ‘young’, which is also close to what Thomas means. Both Jeremiah and Moses mention their inability to speak. Jeremiah complains, ‘behold, I do not know how to speak’. Moses says, ‘I am of heavy lips and heavy tongue’. This is parallel with Thomas’ objection that he does not know the language of the Indians.

The reassurance is also similar to the commission stories of the Jewish Scriptures. In a vision, Jesus promises Thomas ‘Do not be afraid […] my grace is with you’. ‘Do not be afraid’, a frequent expression of encouragement in biblical texts, occurs in the answer to Jeremiah’s protest. It is immediately followed by ‘because I am with you’, as in the commissions of Moses and Gideon, being another usual form of encouragement in the biblical passages.


13. Jeremiah 1.6 (נְבֶהָרָה, גַּע).


15. Exodus 4.11. The Septuagint interprets ‘heavy lips’ as ‘stuttering’. In the version of Exodus 6.10–13, Moses is of ‘uncircumcised lips’ (ἐλογος in the Septuagint).


17. Jeremiah 1.8 (μὴ φοβηθῇς, 8). ‘Do not fear’ is widely attested, but is not especially frequent in the commission narratives (as, for example, Hubbard, ‘Commissioning Stories’, 105, suggests).

18. Also in Jeremiah 1.17,19, 26.28; cf. Genesis 26.24 (Abraham), 28.15 (Jacob), etc.; Psalms 73.23 (Septuagint 72.23); Isaiah 41.10; Acts 18.10. The usual Hebrew form is מִשָּׁלָכֵל (or מִשָּׁלָכֵל, 8), the Greek is ἔγνω (εἰμί) μετὰ σοῦ. Again, the expression is frequent but not typical in the commission passages.
It is remarkable that Jesus does not answer Thomas’ actual objections. In the biblical parallels, Yahweh promises Moses ‘I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say’\(^{19}\) and appoints Aaron as his spokesman\(^{20}\). Gideon is assured ‘you shall cut Midian as one man’\(^{21}\). In the *Acts of Thomas* Jesus does not promise he will help Thomas with speaking or will strengthen him in his weakness. He does not even promise he will be with Thomas: it is rather his ‘grace’ that is with him\(^{22}\). Does this divergence signify a different relation between the sender and the hero than in the Old Testament commission stories? One might argue that in the Old Testament the hero usually functions as the ‘mouth’ or ‘hand’ of the sender, who puts the appropriate words on his lips, directs and strengthens his arms\(^{23}\).

Whereas Thomas is left on his own with a more independent authority\(^{24}\). As the twin brother of Jesus he replaces him, as it were. Indeed, several passages of the *Acts of Thomas* emphasise that Thomas and Jesus are twins, and they look alike\(^{25}\). If we consider the whole story, however, we can see that Jesus’ farewell from Thomas in the commission story does not mean that he is left on his own as his representative. Jesus’ active presence and the idea that it is he who acts through Thomas are attested all over the text\(^{26}\). ‘Replacement’, indeed, occurs in the first act, but here Jesus acts instead of Thomas,

23. See above; cf. *Numbers* 21.38; *Isaiah* 42.6; *Jeremiah* 1.6–10, 17–9; *Psalms* 32.8, 144.1.
24. Also Herczeg, ‘Theios aner’, 33–8, argues that the heroes of the Apocryphal Acts stand close to the ideal of the divine men, who are more on equal terms with the gods than the biblical heroes.
rather than the latter representing the former. In addition to the idea of ‘twin’, on which many interpretations of the book have concentrated, the relation of the sender and the hero is also defined in the commission narrative through the metaphors of ‘slavery’ and ‘selling’, which we will examine later in this chapter.

Another peculiar motif of the story, the repeated protest of the hero after the reassurance by the sender, is also not without its parallels in the Old Testament. An excellent demonstration for the existence of such a story line in the Jewish Scriptures is the above-mentioned commission of Moses. In the narrative of Exodus 3–4, Moses protests not less than five times against his mission. He invents a different objection each time: ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?’; ‘And if they ask me, “What is his name?”, what shall I say to them?’; ‘They will not believe me and will not listen to my voice’; and ‘I am not a man of words, neither I was yesterday or the day before, nor I am after you have spoken to your servant’. For the fifth time, having run out of excuses, he says, ‘Send [him] whom you will send’. Either this can be a submission to the divine will or a desperate final attempt to escape: probably Yahweh will still send someone else.

The most famous disobedient prophet is Jonah, but the pattern of commission–protest–reassurance appears with substantial modifications in his case. When Yahweh sends him to Nineveh at the beginning of the story, Jonah—instead of protesting against the commission—simply tries to escape to Tarsus. His protest, or even better his complaint, appears only at the end of the story, and the ensuing dialogue forms a theological evaluation of the plot rather than a commis-

27. Acts of Thomas 11, ‘And he [the bride-groom] saw the Lord Jesus bearing the appearance (ἡν ἄπειραστιόν) of Judas Thomas and conversing with the bride etc.’.
28. LaFargue, Language and Gnosis, 70, takes this motif as an interruption of the biblical narrative pattern.
29. Exodus 3.11,13; 4.1,10 (NRSV, adapted).
30. Exodus 4.13. The Hebrew phrase יִזְכָּר נָא לְהוֹו אֵל לָךָ is difficult to translate. The prepositional structure תִּזְכָּר נָא לָךָ marks an instrument rather than an object: ‘Send by the hand of him etc.’. The Septuagint renders ‘Choose someone else whom you will send’. ‘Send someone else’ (NRSV) seems to be an overinterpretation. Durham, Exodus, 48, translates ‘send anybody you want to send’, and gives ‘send, please, by a hand you will send’ as the literal translation.
sion episode that launches the events. Since there is no protest, there is no place for a reassurance either, and Yahweh completes his will through the sea storm and the fish. This story pattern is closer to the second scene of Thomas’s commission, where Jesus sells him without his knowledge. We have two different models here: On the one hand, in the sequence of commission–protest–reassurance, the hero stands in a dialogue with the sender much as an equal partner. On the other hand, in the latter story pattern the hero is subordinate and defenceless. This motif is common to Jonah, Thomas, and another famous ‘deceived’ prophet, namely, Jeremiah. His words depict the defenceless position of the hero:

O LORD, you enticed me, and I was enticed; 
you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed. 
I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me.

Consequently, these commission narratives do not only tell how the divinity calls and sends the hero; there is also an element of violence involved. In this respect, these narratives are similar to the stories of ‘god-fighters’ (θεομάχοι), to which Paul’s Damascus story in Acts is closely related. In both narrative schemes, the hero finds himself in opposition with the deity, and the deity overcomes the hero. Yet, there are major dramaturgical differences between the two patterns. In the

32. That Thomas did not know he was sold seems to me evident for several reasons. First, he was not present when Jesus made the deal with Abbanes; Jesus showed him to Abbanes from a distance (ἐπὶ μακρόθεν, Bonnet, Acta apostolorum, vol 2/2, 101, line 11). Second, in his answer to Abbanes’ question whether Jesus is his master (δεσπότης), Thomas uses Lord (χάριος), Jesus’ usual title (ibidem, 102, lines 7–8, cf. below), rather than repeating Abbanes’ word that directly expresses a master-slave relation. Third, Abbanes’ words ‘I bought you from him’ (ibidem, lines 8–9) would be superfluous (in this otherwise economic narrative) if Thomas had known this fact before. Finally, Thomas’ reaction also suggests he has just learned he is sold.
33. Jeremiah 20.7 (NRSV). The distress of the prophet is expressed with five different roots in a threefold parallelism: ἐινά (open), ἐπανά (be strong), and ἐπλατέσθη (prevail), παλαμ (laugh), and παραλίβανον (mock).
‘god-fighter’ pattern the conflict between the divinity and the θεομάχος is generated by the hero’s arrogance. Further, the story of the θεομάχος actually concludes by his spectacular defeat, and although sometimes he becomes an agent of the divinity in the end, this is not necessary for the solution of the plot\textsuperscript{35}. On the other hand, in the Acts of Thomas and the other examples that we quoted above, commission itself causes the conflict and the action of the sender, and after his defeat the hero always becomes an agent of the sender.

To sum up the first section of this chapter, we have found analogies from the Jewish Scriptures to various aspects of commission in the Acts of Thomas: the sequence of protest and reassurance, the repeated objection of the hero, and the use of power by the divinity to force the hero to obedience. Expressed in psychological terms, the hero understands his call in this pattern as a destiny forced upon him by the sender. We will further refine these observations through analysing two highly symbolic motifs of Thomas’ commission: the selling into slavery and his craftsmanship.

**Slavery and Craftsmanship**

Selling as a slave is frequent in the ancient novels\textsuperscript{36} and occurs in other apostolic Acts as well\textsuperscript{37}. ‘The motifs of exposure, kidnapping and abduction by pirates are among the most maligned of literary plot devices, but ancient comedy and the novel would be unthinkable without them. They allow the characters and readers to get out and see the world […]; they provide the thrill of sudden changes of status […], and they register extraordinary recognitions and paradoxical encounters\textsuperscript{38}. Whereas the Acts of Thomas agrees with the novels inas-

\textsuperscript{35} 2 Maccabees 3.24–40 and 4 Maccabees 4.1–14 end with the spectacular defeat of Heliodorus and Apollonius, respectively; cf. p. 234, note 92 below.

\textsuperscript{36} Kerényi, Romanliteratur, 198–9, esp. notes 95–6; Söder, Apostelgeschichten, 148–50; Wills, ‘Slavery in the Novel’; cf. Hermas, Visions 1.1.1.


\textsuperscript{38} Fitzgerald, Slavery, 93
much as selling to slavery occurs at the beginning of the story and launches the plot, the use of the motif can be fully understood only if we examine it in a religious context.

Slavery (ἄγχωσια, δέσμιοι, δεσμά, δουλεία) as a religious concept presents itself in different forms in the cultural environment of the Acts of Thomas. That a deity owns his or her adherents as slaves appears in various forms in this context. According to the traditional Jewish view expressed in the book of Leviticus, Yahweh owns the members of Israel as slaves: ‘For to me the sons of Israel are slaves. They are my slaves whom I brought out of Egypt, I the Lord your God’39. This traditional Israelite interpretation of one’s belonging to Yahweh might have been the source of the frequent use of expressions as ‘slave of Christ’ in the language of Paul and the Pauline literature40. At least two alternatives have been suggested as the basis of the Pauline usage. One is the idea that a deity buys a slave to set him or her free (an idea attested by the inscriptions in the wall of the temple of Apollo at Delphi)41, and the other one is the notion that the initiates of a mystery cult are (at least during the initiation period) the slaves of the deity42.

Whatever the origin of the Christian usage of the master and slave metaphor may have been43, the Acts of Thomas uses it in a different way than the above-mentioned religious systems. The basic difference is, namely, that Jesus does not buy Thomas, or owns him, but rather sells him to someone else. The traditional Christian usage appears in the story when Abbanes asks Thomas, ‘Is this your master?’ and Thomas answers, ‘Yes, this is my Lord’. Thomas, however,

39. Leviticus 25.55. The idea had roots in oriental culture, where concepts of ruler/subject and master/slave were closely interwoven; cf. Callender, ‘Servants of God(s)’; Combes, Slavery, 43.

40. For example Romans 1.1, Galatians 1.10, Colossians 4.12, Titus 1.1 (also James 1.1, 2 Peter 1.1, Judas 1.1). In Galatians 4.7, in contrast, Paul claims that the Christians are ‘sons’ rather than ‘slaves’ of God. For this paradox, see Combes, Slavery, 94.

41. Deissmann, Licht vom Osten, 271–80. The idea is explicit in 1 Corinthians 6.20, ‘For you were bought with a price’ (ἡγοροθητε γὰρ τημῆς) and 7.23.

42. Reitzenstein, Mysterienreligionen, 192–215, at 192 and 196; Fitzgerald, Slavery, 111–2.

43. Recently cf. Combes, Slavery, 68–94.
does not repeat the merchant’s word δεσπότης, but says κύριος, the more usual title of Jesus. Although both words can refer to an actual slave-owner, the use of two different expressions, of which the second is the usual title of Jesus, indicates that there is an element of cheat in the situation. This ‘cheating’ consists of an unusual application of the slave metaphor in the text, and Thomas falls prey to this theological innovation. The reinterpretation of the slave metaphor consists of two elements. Firstly, the social status of Christians did not change because they regarded themselves as ‘slaves of Christ’. The Acts of Thomas, however, translates the sociological metaphor ‘slave of Christ’ into sociological reality. Secondly, the very purpose of being Christ’s slave was not to be the slave of someone else. In both respects, Jesus breaks the rules of the game, giving a radically new interpretation to the slavery metaphor.

In antiquity, selling free people into slavery was a usual practice. Poor parents often sold the children whom they could not nourish. Free persons from the lower class sold themselves in the hope of a more secure existence. Christians sold themselves into slavery in order to release someone else, or to give their price to the needy.

44. The word δεσπότης occasionally refers to Jesus in the New Testament (2 Peter 2.1 = Jude 1.4), but more frequently to God. It is sometimes used for Jesus in the apocryphal Acts (for example, Acts of Philip 117, Acts of Titus 2). In the Acts of Thomas, it is a name for the Father (30, 97, 104). It probably refers to Jesus in chapter 78 (Bonnet, Acta apostolorum, vol 2/2, 193, line 8). In the other recension (the main witness of which is the Parisian Greek Codex 1510, called ‘P’ by Bonnet, Acta apostolorum 2/2, xvi), Thomas applies it to Jesus when he tells King Misdaios that Jesus sold him (ch. 163, Bonnet, Acta apostolorum 275, vol 2/2, line 15 and 276, line 12).

45. Cf. note 32 above.

46. Both aspects are discussed in 1 Corinthians 7.17–24. In verse 23 Paul warns, ‘You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters’.

47. Aelian, Historical Miscellany 2.7; Suetonius, Grammarians 5; Pliny, Letters, 10.65 and 66; Code of Theodosius 3.3.3 and 5.10.1; cf. Wiedemann, Slavery, 118–9.

48. Dio Chrysostom, Discourses 15.23, ‘Great numbers of men, we may suppose, who are freeborn sell themselves, so that they are slaves by contract, sometimes on no easy terms but the most severe imaginable’ (trans. J.W. Cohoon in LCL). Cf. Bartchy, ‘Slavery’, 67.

49. 1 Clement 55.2, cf. 1 Corinthians 7.23.
Debtors were sold by their creditors. Nevertheless, the most significant for our passage is the stealing of people and selling them into slavery, which had been a widespread practice in the Mediterranean basin for many centuries. Although within the Empire piracy had been eliminated and kidnapping had been reduced by the middle of the 1st century BC, the idea is assumed by the text of the New Testament when ‘manstealers’ (ἀνδραπαραπτόμενοι) are included in a catalogue of sinners.

Similarly, the commission episode of the Acts of Thomas presents Jesus as a manstealer or kidnapper, who sells the free man Thomas as a slave. The subject is also frequent in the Greek novels, where the hero and the heroine are sold into slavery as part of the tribulations that the gods inflicted on them. In Xenophon’s Ephesian Tale, for example, this is clearly part of Eros’ defeating the rebellious Habrocomes. The hero of Xenophon, overcome by Eros whom he has despised, falls in love with Anthia (1.4). Before their marriage, an oracle promises them sufferings and salvation (1.6). Habrocomes marries Anthia (1.8), and then both of them are kidnapped and sold as slaves (2.2). The changes in Habrocomes’ status parallel the career of Thomas. When he fell in love with Anthia, ‘Habrocomes pulled at his hair and tore his clothes; he lamented over his misfortunes and exclaimed: “What catastrophe has befallen me, Habrocomes, till now a man, despising Eros and slandering the god? I have been captured and conquered, and am forced to be the slave of a girl (παρθένος δουλευόμενος)”’. When he is kidnapped, however, his metaphorical slavery turns into slavery in the sociological sense.

There is an important difference, however, between the sort of slavery that appears in the novels and in the Acts of Thomas. In the novels, slavery is a cruel punishment or a trial of the gods, and consequently it means an inferior social status (the heroine is typically sold into a brothel). The slavery of Thomas is different. It better resem-

50. For example, Plutarch, Moralia 429d–e; cf. Wiedemann, Slavery, 36–44.
51. 1 Timothy 1.10, Revelation 18.13; cf Wiedemann, Slavery, 110–7.
52. Xenophon, Ephesian Tale 1.4.1, trans. G. Anderson in Reardon, Ancient Novels, 130.
53. Xenophon, Ephesian Tale 5.5ff; Apollonius King of Tyre 33ff. Roman authorities applied this to Christian martyrs, e.g., in the Martyrdom of Agape, Irene, Chione, and Companions 6.2. Trophima suffers the same punishment in the Acts
bles those cases when people sold themselves to obtain special jobs. Slavery in that case could have meant the way to obtain important administrative positions. Erastus mentioned in Romans 16.23 as the ‘city treasurer’ (ὁίζωνόμος τῆς πόλεως) of Corinth, was probably such a slave. In fact, the new occupation of Thomas as the architect of king Gundaphorus was such a high position. It also fits the pattern that before his departure to India Thomas receives his price (τίμημα) from Jesus, who also says good-bye to him with the words, ‘Let your price (τιμή) be with you [...] wherever you may depart’. Before speculating over the abstract meaning of τιμή, we have to consider it as a synonym for ‘price’. It was namely usual that persons who sold themselves into slavery deposited their price. This might have formed the basis of one’s personal funds and ensured that one could buy his freedom back.

The comparison with the contemporary Roman practice of slavery helps us toward a better understanding of the narrative function of the selling scene. First, the episode does not (primarily) depict Thomas as a ‘servant of God’ either in the sense of the Jewish tradition, the Pauline usage, or the mystery religions. Second, it refers to the historical fact of ‘manstealing’ when telling how Jesus deceived Thomas. Third, slavery is not meant here as a punishment or revenge as in the novels, and consequently it is not coupled with a humiliating social position. Thomas’ function as an ‘architect’ of Gundaphorus is...
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not only an important office, but also a metaphor of his task as an apostle. Finally, Jesus gives Thomas the possibility to buy back his freedom. Therefore, his slavery retains an element of willingness, which also becomes important for the soteriological interpretation of the episode.

In the analysis of Thomas’ selling into slavery, his function as a craftsman receives a crucial importance. This is emphasised already in the commission episode itself, when on Abbanes’ inquiry Thomas enumerates the things he can fabricate: ‘Of wood ploughs, yokes, scales, boats, oars for boats, masts, and disks, and from stone columns and temples, and royal palaces’. What shall we do with this seemingly haphazard list? It is possible to refer to the tradition that Jesus himself was a carpenter, and that this probably played a role in the shaping of Thomas’ figure. We can find some of the above-mentioned objects in references to Jesus’ original occupation, and many patristic texts attribute allegorical meanings to them. Ordericus Vitalis in the twelfth century claimed that when Thomas mentioned ‘sailing’ he spoke ‘mystically of the knowledge of his art’.

In our interpretation of the passage, however, we will first pay attention to the structure of the list itself. There are two text-critical problems to begin with. The word ‘scales’ (τρυπάνας) appears to be out of context and scholars have been inclined to accept the reading of the Syrian text, namely, ‘pricks’. This would result in a group of three, consisting of basic agricultural instruments, each playing an

58. Similarly to Peter and Andrew’s occupation as fishermen in Matthew 4.18–9.
59. This reminds us of the ancient novels, where ‘no one falls irrevocably into the orbit of slavery’, which corresponds to the sociological fact that ‘Roman law regarded freeborn status as inalienable’ (Fitzgerald, Slavery, 93).
60. That Jesus was a carpenter appears in Mark 6.12. Bornkamm, Mythos, 20–1, quotes the relevant patristic passages.
61. Quoted in Bornkamm, Mythos, 21.
62. Nöldeke, in Lipsius, Apostelgeschichten, vol 2/2, 423. However, the approach of Bornkamm, Mythos, 20, is questionable when he simply corrects the Greek to τρυπάνας, because we do not have this reading in any of the Greek manuscripts. Another possibility is offered by the textual variant τρυπάνης. Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, 1830, define this as a ‘thong for working a τρύπανον’, if we are correct, a leather strip for driving a carpenter’s borer.
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important role in Jewish and Christian symbolism. The second group consists of three objects related to sailing, but we can perhaps add a fourth element, especially if we accept the reading ‘pulleys’ (τροχιλέας)64. The final part contains three architectural objects. The three groups differ from each other considerably. While the first consists of simple agricultural tools, produced by a rural carpenter, the items in the last one require the highest architectural proficiency. The three groups not only appear in an ascending order of difficulty, but also the three elements of the last group. The most composite object, the palace, comes at the end of the whole list, and it anticipates the heavenly palace that Thomas will build for Gundaphorus.

In the narrative of Thomas and Gundaphorus (ch. 17), the whole list occurs repeatedly, but only three items appear otherwise in the book: the plough, the temple, and the palace, that is, the first and the last two elements in the list. ‘Plough’ occurs in a free quotation of Luke 6.19 in the martyrdom: ‘I put my hands on the yoked plough and did not turn back lest the furrows do not go crooked’65. ‘Temple’ occurs frequently in Thomas’ speeches and prayers, and it always means the body of Christians, which has to remain clean66. ‘Palace’, as we already mentioned, appears in the ‘second act’67. When Thomas receives the task to build a palace for Gundaphorus, he gives all the money to the poor and thus builds a palace in heaven. The use of these concepts in the Acts of Thomas seems to suggest that Thomas’s list marks a way of perfection, or a way of salvation: ‘putting one’s hand on the yoke’ means the beginning of Christian life, ‘temple’ stands for ascetic life, and ‘palace’ for the heavenly dwelling which

64. A diminutive of τρόχος (wheel). Two codices (Bonnet’s H and Z) read τροχιλέας (pulleys), and two (Bonnet’s U and R) τροχιλόσων (diminutive of the latter). The form τροχιλέας appears also in ch. 17 when Thomas repeats the list before king Gundaphorus.
66. The idea is found in chs. 86, 87, 94, 144, 156, and follows 1 Corinthians 3.16–7, etc. In ch. 79 the Jerusalem temple is meant.
one earns with a pious life on earth. It would be an overinterpretation to force all the objects in the list into this scheme. Nevertheless, it is clear that the ascending order of complexity that appears in the list corresponds to a progress in life that leads toward heaven. In this way we can provide a simple and reasonable interpretation of the cryptic workshop inventory and, indeed, of the whole commission episode, without going into speculative details and remaining within the narrative world of the text.

The dialogue with King Gundaphorus at their first encounter is decisive for understanding Thomas’ craftsmanship. After Thomas has enumerated the things he can make, Gundaphorus asks him, ‘Can you build a palace for me?’ Whereupon Thomas answers:

Yes, I shall build it and finish it; for because of this I have come, to build and to do carpenter’s work.

A comparison with the New Testament will show that this is a solemn statement about Thomas’ mission. First, we can easily discern the relationship between this sentence and the so-called ‘ich Worte’ of Jesus. We can immediately narrow down the circle to the sayings about Jesus’ coming, the so-called ‘ὁλόθονα-sayings’. These sayings in the first person singular are statements about the purpose of Jesus’ coming: ‘I have come to call not the righteous but sinners’. Another element of this sentence as well deserves our attention, namely, the proleptic position of διὰ τοῦτο (‘to this end’). Alternating with εἰς τοῦτο, in New Testament Greek this phrase typically appears in sen-

68. Hilhorst, ‘Heavenly Palace’, 64, finds that whereas earning the right to a heavenly dwelling through charity is attested before the Acts of Thomas, building it during one’s lifetime is a new development in the literary tradition.

69. At this interpretation, we proceed from the final compositional unity of the text. For a synchronic analysis, we put aside the problem that the different styles of ‘acts’ 1–6 and 7–13 may indicate their independent transmission. Cf. Bornkamm, Mythos, 2–3; Drijvers, ‘Acts of Thomas’, 323.

70. Acts of Thomas 17, my italics. Bonnet, Acta apostolorum, 125, lines 8–9, διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ ὢλθον, οἰκοδομήσα καὶ τεκτονεῖσα.


73. Mark 2.17 (NRSV).

74. Such a use of διὰ τοῦτο and εἰς τοῦτο seems to be rare before the New Testament. In the Septuagint, διὰ τοῦτο normally introduces consequence
tences that declare one’s purpose: ‘For to this end also I wrote, that I know your worth’. Among the sentences that apply this structure, we can find especially numerous statements related to people’s commission: ‘However, to this end I received mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show the utmost patience’. ‘For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living’. The most remarkable passage for our purpose is in the dialogue of Jesus and Pilate in John’s passion narrative. On Pilate’s question ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answers:

You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.

This statement uses the proleptic structure with εἰς τὸ γένος twice in a typical ἤλθον-saying. Moreover, Jesus pronounces this emphatic formula in his answer to Pilate, similarly to Thomas, who uses it before King Gundaphorus. Consequently, when Thomas begins his sentence with ‘for to this I came’, he is introducing an emphatic statement about his commission.

Into this framework of Thomas being the ‘architect of salvation’, we can integrate the remaining, equally important motifs of his commission narrative. Many elements suggest that his fate mirrors that of Jesus, which is anticipated already in the twin-metaphor. Thomas is

(Psalms 1.5, 15.9 [16.9 LXX], etc.) and εἰς τὸ γένος (which is less frequent) never has a proleptic position (cf. Psalms 75.8 [74.9 LXX], 144.13 [143.13 LXX], 3 Maccabees 1.21). It seems that they do not have such a function elsewhere in the apostolic Acts either (cf. Acts of John 39, 97, 104).

75. 2 Corinthians 2.9.

76. The phrase εἰς τὸ γένος occurs altogether fourteen times in the New Testament, and in eleven cases it introduces a statement about the commission of Jesus or the Christians: Mark 1.35, John 18.37 (twice), Acts 26.16, Romans 14.9, 1 Thessalonians 3.3, 1 Timothy 4.10, 1 Peter 2.21, 3.9, 4.6, 1 John 3.7.

77. 1 Timothy 1.16.

78. Romans 14.9 (RSV).

79. John 18.37 (RSV, my italics), ἐγὼ εἰς τὸ γένος γεγέννημαι καὶ εἰς τὸ γένος ἐλήλυθα εἰς τὸν κόσμον, ἵνα μαρτυρῆσον τῇ ἄλλῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ.

80. Kuntzmann, Symbolisme, 176, concludes ‘there is no doubt that the author of the Acts [of Thomas] largely drew on the writings of the New Testament, particularly on the biographical fragments of Jesus, for the elaboration of the story of Thomas’ missionary life. […] This leads to the result that the biography of Tho-
praised because his slavery brought salvation to others: ‘Twin brother of Christ, apostle of the Most High and initiated into the hidden word of Christ, who receives his secret utterances, fellow worker of the Son of God, who being free has become a slave, and being sold has brought many to freedom’\(^{81}\). In another passage, Thomas suggests the parallel between Jesus and himself: ‘I thank you, Lord, in every respect, that you died for a short time, that I may live in you for ever, and that you have sold me, to deliver many through me’\(^{82}\). But this quotation also marks the significant difference between the two careers, namely, that Jesus’ death brought salvation to others, which is not true of the latter’s death. Thomas’ death is only a release from slavery for himself: ‘I have become a slave; therefore today I do receive freedom’\(^{83}\). In sum, Thomas’ slavery brings salvation to others because of his apostolic ‘craftsmanship’—but his suffering and death themselves have no effect on others\(^{84}\).

**Conclusions**

In the commission of Thomas in his Acts, we have identified three major themes: (1) the defeat of the resisting prophet, (2) reinterpretation of the slave motif as selling into slavery, and (3) craftsmanship as a metaphor of perfection and salvation. These themes are interrelated and built upon each other in such a way that each development offers a specific interpretation of the previous element. Thomas is not only defeated through his selling as a slave, but his defeat immediately re-

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\(^{81}\) Acts of Thomas 39. Bornkamm, Mythos, 19, discussed this passage, together with the following ones.

\(^{82}\) Acts of Thomas 19.


\(^{84}\) This has to be added to the interpretation of Bornkamm, Mythos, 19: ‘Thomas’ selling into slavery is a widely attested motif in the novels and the legends, but for the Acts of Thomas it has more significance: the fate of the Saviour is repeated in it, who humiliated himself in order to set his people free’. But the distinction between Thomas and Christ remains clear in spite of their being twins. As Pesthy, ‘Thomas’, 72, puts it, ‘Thomas himself never becomes the Saviour, and he never claims it to be, he is only the helper of the Saviour’; cf. ibidem, 67.
ceives a positive, soteriological interpretation. Thomas’ spectacular defeat and Jesus’ appearance as a manstealer are necessary steps toward establishing Thomas as an architect of King Gundaphorus\textsuperscript{85}. He is commissioned as an architect in the same manner that Andrew and Peter are commissioned as fishermen in the Gospel narrative\textsuperscript{86}.

The commission of Thomas shares motifs with the classical Old Testament commission stories as well as with the Greek novels. Yet the impact of the former, together with allusions to the figure of Jesus in the New Testament and in the patristic tradition seems far more decisive in the narrative. The \textit{Acts of Thomas} fits well into the category of the ideal biography, beginning with the commission of the hero and finishing with his death. The hero’s death is, however, less important in the Old Testament ideal biographies than in the Gospels and in the early apocryphal Acts which always relate the hero’s martyrdom. Thomas’ commission itself presents craftsmanship and architecture as a biographical program.

\footnote{85. In the Coptic \textit{Acts of Bartholomew} (cf. p. 125, note 37 above), Bartholomew asks Peter to sell him to a merchant so that he may get into the merchant’s vineyard and preach there. The vine, of course, receives a symbolic meaning in his preaching.}
\footnote{86. \textit{Matthew} 4.18–9.}
6. The Acts of Philip

The Acts of Philip is an extensive collection of loosely connected episodes\(^1\). However, it is possible to identify four cycles within the material: chapters 1–2, 3–7, 8–14, and chapter 15 with the martyrdom\(^2\). A part of the text is extant in two versions, a shorter and a longer one. This is the case with chapters 3 and 8, where the two commission narratives are found\(^3\). There is no commission narrative preceding the first act, which relates that Philip was coming from Galilee and raised the son of a widow. The first reference to commission occurs in chapter 3, where a loosely connected sequence of ‘acts’ begins (chs. 3–7).

Acts of Philip 3

At the beginning of chapter 3, Philip meets Peter and the disciples ‘in a certain city’, and addresses them in the following way\(^4\):


\(^{2}\) Amsler, Acta Philippi, vol 2, 21. Whereas the third and fourth cycles are clearly detectable units, the first two ‘cycles’ are rather haphazard.

\(^{3}\) For an overview of the textual witnesses see Amsler, Actes de l’apôtre Philippe, 88.

\(^{4}\) This chapter is preserved in two codices, the shorter version in the Greek Vatican Codex 824 (11th century, quoted as V), the longer in Codex Xenophontos 32 from Athos (14th century, quoted as A). We deal with the shorter text first.
I entreat you, who won the crown of Christ in the apostolic rank (ἐν τῇ ἐπισκόπῳ τάξει), endow me with your power that I may go and preach, and take part in your glory in heaven. You showed your zeal according to your power. Pray, therefore, also for me now, that I may go and preach the gospel, and may be counted among those who realised the power that is in them.

Peter and the disciples pray for Philip. Then ‘the blessed John’ speaks, and reminds Philip that ‘Andrew went to Achaia and Thrace, Thomas to India and the wicked flesh-eaters, and Matthew to the relentless cave dwellers, whose nature is savage, and the Lord is with them’. He encourages Philip not to wait, because Jesus will be also with him. They pray for him and send him out to preach (εἰς τὸ κήρυγμα).

In this narrative, Philip’s legitimacy comes from the apostles Peter and John. This falls in line with the accounts of the canonical Acts about Philip, one of the seven Hellenists. Acts introduces Philip among the seven whom the Jerusalem church entrusted with the task of charity. We learn that the apostles ‘prayed and laid their hands on them’. Later Philip preaches in Samaria. When the apostles in Jerusalem hear that ‘Samaria had accepted the word of God’ they send out

5. *Acts of Philip* 3.1. Cf. *Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC VIII, 2) 132.15–133.5: ‘Now I want you to know, our brother [that] we received orders from our Lord and the Savior of the whole world that [we] should come [together] to give instruction and preach in the salvation which was promised us by our Lord Jesus Christ. But as for you, you were separate from us, and you did not desire us to come together and to know how we should organize ourselves in order that we might tell the good news’. Trans. M.W. Meyer in Robinson (ed), *Nag Hammadi Library*, 434.

6. The *Acts of Philip* identifies the apostle of the Gospels (and the list of *Acts* 1.13) with the Hellenist of *Acts*. This is evident also in the long text of chapter 3. Although in the first part of the chapter Philip seems to be identical with the Hellenist of *Acts*, in 3.9.1–7 he speaks as a disciple who was with Jesus, witnessed his ascent to heaven, and received the Holy Spirit. Already Papias blended the two figures when he spoke of the daughters of the apostle Philip (Eusebius, *Church History* 3.39.9, cf. *Acts* 22.8–9). Theissen, *Religion*, 351, note 15, recently argued for the identification of the Philip of the *Gospel of John* and the Philip of the Lucan *Acts* (6.5, 8.5–40, and 21.8), on the basis that Luke was interested in separating the disciple Philip from the Hellenist.


Peter and John, who pray that the new converts may receive the Holy Spirit, because ‘they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus’. Then Peter and John lay their hands on them, and they receive the Holy Spirit. The important difference between the two narratives is that in the Lucan Acts Philip does not ask for the apostle’s support. In the same passage, however, Simon Magus beseeches Peter and John to give him the power to share the Holy Spirit by laying his hands on others, and this might have influenced the formulation of the episode in the Acts of Philip.

The author of the longer text added further elements of divine commission to the episode. In the Codex Xenophontos (A) we first find additions to the story, and then a completely new version. Among the minor additions, one is especially interesting if we relate it to the passage in the Lucan Acts. When Philip addresses Peter and the disciples, he calls them συμπνευμονες, the ones who have the same Spirit. This is probably a reaction to Acts 8, where he is not capable of giving the Spirit to the new converts, and Peter and John have to help him. This is also understandable because he did not receive the Spirit in Jerusalem with the twelve. Our text affirms that Philip is equal to them as a possessor of the Holy Spirit. According to the second version of the story, Philip reports his mission in Athens (ch. 2 of the Acts of Philip), and the disciples praise God. Then Philip asks John and Peter,

‘I beseech you, blessed John, and you, blessed Peter, pray for me, so that I too may accomplish my apostleship (την ἀποστολήν μου) as the Lord entrusted to me’. When they were praying at length for him, a voice came from heaven and said, ‘Hurry, Philip! Behold, my angel is with you’, do not neglect your task’. The blessed Philip went out rejoicing in the same hour, because he was found worthy of such a

9. Cf. Simon’s words δότε κόμωι την ἐξουσίαν ταύτην with Philip’s words ἔνθυσε μόσσατε καμέ.
10. We have to do with a hapax legomenon, and therefore the translation necessarily remains interpretative. Bovon et al., Acta Philippi, vol 1, 77, translate ‘mes compagnons par l’Esprit’. For the interpretation see Amsler, Acta Philippi, vol 2, 151.
12. The archangel Michael helped Philip in 1.8 and 11, and will be with him in Martyrdom 31.
voice. He took three breads and five staters with himself, because he went for a long journey. Jesus was secretly walking with him and strengthened him, and opened the senses of his new man. The Spirit of the Lord filled him with answers, because earlier he did not have enough practice in speaking.

The divine epiphany that we find here is very similar to the visions in the commission narratives discussed in previous chapters. Instead of legitimation through the apostles, this version of the episode speaks about legitimation from Jesus in a revelation. Yet, I hesitate to call it a commission story. First, Philip speaks about apostleship as something that he has already received earlier. Second, if we compare the episode with the structure of the commission stories, we find that it lacks most of the crucial elements (conflict, protest, description of the task), and is restricted to the motifs of reassurance and reference to the beginning of the hero’s ministry.

The story can be interpreted as the manifestation of power conflicts between different Christian groups, who identified themselves with the individual apostles. If we try to situate it in our basic typology, we find that it is close to the institutional form of commission. It confirms the overall hierarchy of the Church by integrating the hero into that structure. Philip’s authority is dependent first on Peter’s and then on John’s. The longer text tries to democratise this system by emphasising equality between the apostles, and linking Philip’s legitimacy immediately to divine epiphany.

The long text further relates how Philip prays to Jesus on the road:

Filled with the Holy Spirit in grace, he longed for the sight of the glory and said, ‘Lord Jesus, describe for me the words of that understanding. If the concord of your visitation is with me, and if I am worthy of that understanding, as my brethren, reveal yourself to me. […] You, who offered to us the good things from your father’s good-

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14. The expression ἡ ὄμονοια τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς is as difficult to translate as many others in this prayer. (Already remarked by Bovon et al., Acta Philippi, vol 1, 82, note 23.)
ness, Saviour of the weak, reveal yourself to me, the one who loves you’. (3.4.2–7, 12–14)

As an answer to his prayer, a tree appears in the desert, and an eagle on it. The apostle recognises that Jesus appeared to him in that form, and—speaking ‘by the Spirit’—he glorifies Jesus and the Father. Then Jesus promises the apostle again that he will guide, protect, and strengthen him. Speaking animals as helpers of the apostles are familiar figures in the apostolic Acts, and the Acts of Philip is especially fond of them: from chapter 8, a leopard and a kid will be Philip’s faithful travelling companions. However, a theriomorphic representation of Jesus is rather surprising in an early Christian text. It was probably inspired by another apocryphal legend, the Paraleipomena Jeremiou, the Christian edition of which can be dated to the first half of the second century.

The Acts of Philip develops the tradition of polymorphy and metamorphosis of Christ in a radical way when it turns to the theriomorphic representation of Jesus. The eagle appears because Philip wishes to see Jesus—he had already heard his voice—as further evidence of his equal rank among the apostles. Jesus neither explicitly confirms Philip’s position as an apostle, nor does he give him a task or assign a missionary field to him. Therefore, we can classify this narrative as a story of divine call, emphasising the theme of reassurance (a specific motif of commission), rather than a complete commission narrative, where the assignment of a task plays a major role.

Acts of Philip 8

In chapter 8 of the Acts of Philip another sequence of ‘acts’ begins (chs. 8–15). This takes Philip and his companions to the city of Opheorymos, interpreted as ‘the promenade of the serpents’ and occasion-
ally also identified as Hierapolis of Phrygia in Asia Minor\(^{18}\), where Philip suffers martyrdom. The chapter begins with the division of the missionary fields\(^{19}\), where Philip receives ‘the country of the Greeks’. He finds this task difficult and begins to complain. His sister Mariamne\(^{20}\) speaks to the Lord about him, who appoints her as his companion. This is also necessary because Philip is audacious, irascible and likely to inflict much punishment on the people\(^{21}\). Jesus sends also Bartholomew and John with them\(^{22}\). He also orders Mariamne to disguise herself as a man—to which the long text adds an explanation about Adam, Eve, and the serpent, disclosing also that their destination will be Opheorymos, ‘the promenade of serpents’.

Then Jesus said to Philip, ‘Why do you hesitate, Philip? Did you not hear my teaching: “Behold, I am sending you [plur.] out like sheep into the midst of wolves”? Do not fear, therefore, their savageness. I will be always with you [sing.], helping and assisting [you]. Behold, I


\(^{19}\) Only the beginning of the chapter is preserved in \(A\). As a witness to the longer text of this chapter, we have the Athenian Codex 346 (15th century, quoted as \(G\)). For the division of the missionary fields, a frequent motif in the apostolic Acts, see pp. 219–224 below.

\(^{20}\) In \(G\) Mariamne ‘keeps record of the allotted lands’.

\(^{21}\) It is interesting to compare this with Jesus’ remark in the long text that ‘the character of women went into Philip, and the manly and brave character into you [Mariamne]’. The text echoes the classical Roman ideal: loosing one’s temper is a feminine trait of character and a man who acts out of anger is ridiculous; cf. Brown, Body and Society, 12.

\(^{22}\) According to the long text (\(G\)), Bartholomew is sent ‘to suffer with him’ (συμπάσχειν), and John is sent ‘so that he would encourage (παρασθαρφύνῃ) them in the sufferings of martyrdom’. Cf. the classical example of Aaron, who was sent to serve as a mouth for Moses (Exodus 4.16).
send you [plur.] out as rays, I, the sun of righteousness. I am with you everywhere.23.

From this point on, the two extant witnesses considerably differ from each other. The text of G elaborates at length on the theme of commission. The metaphor of the rays evokes a meditation about the beneficent operation of the sun and the moon due to the providence of the Father.24 For this reason, Jesus concludes that Philip and his companions have nothing to fear. Jesus will be with them in all dangers, and if people will persecute and abuse them, he will be there as ‘a good physician’ for them. If vipers threaten them, they only have to raise the cross, and the vipers will bow their heads.25 But Philip is yet worried. He is afraid that if he goes to his allotted place, they will persecute him, because ‘their nature is the serpent’. He will then avenge himself, and therefore transgress the commandment of Jesus not to take revenge.26 In his answer, Jesus tells about creation as the combination of contradictory elements: light and darkness, water and fire, good and bad. Then he tells the story of the Flood, pointing out that Noah brought also unclean animals to the ark. Peter remembered this when he asked Jesus, ‘Do you want me to forgive my brother seven times, as Noah forgave?’28 Then the discussion of providence in the creation continues with the lesson that ‘you yourself should work for the salvation of the whole cosmos’. Now Philip and all who were with him, ‘rejoiced in the teaching and precepts of the Lord’.

Here the two texts unanimously state that Philip, Bartholomew and Mariamne, ‘holding the right hand of the Saviour’ departed to the

23. Acts of Philip 8.5 (V). Cf. Acts 26.17–8, ‘to whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light’. ‘Sun of righteousness’ comes from Malachi 4.2 (3.20 LXX); the phrase was frequently applied to Jesus in the early Church, cf. Lampe, Lexicon, 606, s.v. ἀπανθέλεις B4.


28. Matthew 18.21-22 and Luke 17.4. There Peter does not mention Noah. However, he has to eat unclean animals in Acts 10.9–16, which God ‘has made clean’. 
land of the ‘Ophians’. This is the conclusion of the chapter in G. As for V, it relates a highly interesting story of a leopard that wanted to devour a kid, but instead both animals received a human voice from Philip, praised God, and followed the apostles.

The differences between the two versions are considerable at first sight, but there is a core that remains the same in both. If we set aside for a moment the episode of the leopard and the kid in V and the lesson of natural philosophy in G, the basic narrative tells about the division of the missionary fields, Philip’s protest, Mariamne’s intercession, and the appointing of Mariamne, Bartholomew (and John) as Philip’s companions.

The division of the missionary fields, which we encountered already in the Acts of Thomas, is a frequent motif of the apostolic Acts—although it is not found in the earliest ones. Where it occurs, it always stands at the beginning of the narrative. This confirms that chapter 8 forms the beginning of a cycle that ends with the martyrdom, and can be best titled as ‘The Acts of Philip in the city of the serpents’. This episode talks about the commission of Philip quite differently from chapter 3. Philip has a stable position among the apostles, and his authority is not dependent to any extent on Peter, John, or others. The redactor who connected this sequence with the preceding ‘acts’ made no effort to harmonise the profiles of the protagonists.

The next motif is also typical, belonging to the basic elements of commission. Similarly to Thomas, he is unhappy with the land allotted to him. It is, however, difficult to talk about ‘protest’ in Philip’s case. He is reluctant, he murmurs, but does not protest. Although he is

29. Acts of Philip 8.15. Both texts are silent about John, who was also sent with them in 8.3.
31. For this reason, in the case of the Acts of Philip I refrain from interpreting the text and the different commission motifs within the framework of a single plot.
32. Cf. Acts of Thomas 1, Bonnet, Acta apostolorum, 100, lines 8–9 and 101, lines 1–2: ‘Send me wherever you want to send me: to India I do not go’. For that passage and the dynamics of commission–protest–reassurance, see pp. 120–125 above.
an apostle with full powers, he relies on the mediation of his sister Mariamne to settle his conflict with the sender. The helper figure in
this commission narrative becomes more important than in any other
text that we have examined. In this passage, indeed, Mariamne is an
alter ego of Philip, rather than simply his helper. She talks with Jesus
on his behalf, and she has to go everywhere with him. The long text
explains that the female nature ‘went into Philip’, while the male
character went into Mariamne (see above). Although Mariamne has to
disguise herself—because Eve put on the skin of the serpent—this
affects only her outward appearance, and does not mean that she has
become a man. She appears as a female counterpart of Philip when
they baptise the converts in the city of Opheorymos: ‘And Philip bap-
tised the men and Mariamne the women’. When he healed the blind
Stachys, he first ‘put his finger into the mouth of Mariamne’, then ‘he
smeared [his eyes]’. Clearly, Philip healed the blind man with Mari-
amne’s spittle. They healed in cooperation. Or even better, the heal-
ing power of Philip came from Mariamne. The relation of Philip and
Mariamne is a variation on the theme of twins and brothers, an es-
teeemed motif in early Christian tradition. Mariamne could just as eas-
ily deserve the cognomen ‘twin’ as Thomas. When the text introduces
Mariamne, it also mentions Martha who ‘serves’ and ‘works’, implic-
itly identifying them with the sisters Mary and Martha of Bethan y.

In the Martyrdom text of the Acts of Philip, Mariamne and Nicanora,

34. Acts of Philip 8.3.1.
35. Acts of Philip 8.4.16, τὸ ἀπόδυμα τοῦ ὄφεως […] ἐνεδύσκοντο διὰ τῆς
Εὕας. The expression ἀπόδυμα seems to be a hapax legomenon. In the context it
must mean ‘slough’, the layer of skin that a snake leaves behind, cf. Bovon et al.,
Acta Philippi, vol 1, 246, note 16.
order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling
your males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom
38. Acts of Philip 14.7. The text breaks off here. Bovon et al., Actes de Phi-
lippe, 328, note 33, suggest that the lacuna resulted from censorship. Cf. Mark
7.33, 8.23, John 9.6.
the proconsul’s wife, are also twins (*Acts of Philip*, Martyrdom 9)\(^{40}\). Mariamne also seems to replace Philip’s four daughters as his female companions, as they nowhere appear in the *Acts of Philip*\(^{41}\). Unlike Thecla at Paul’s side (in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*), or Peter’s daughter, she is neither Philip’s disciple nor subordinate to him in any way. Her emancipated—indeed, leading—position among the apostles is similar to the figure of Mary Magdalene in a group of texts related to the Gnostics and the Nag Hammadi Library. One of the most important instances is the *Gospel of Mary*.  

**The *Acts of Philip* and the *Gospel of Mary***

The *Gospel of Mary* relates the gathering of the apostles after Jesus’ ascent to heaven\(^ {42}\). The extant part begins with a dialogue of Jesus and the disciples about nature and sin. The dialogue ends with words of commission: ‘Go then and preach the gospel of the kingdom. Do not lay down any rules beyond what I appointed for you, and do not give a law like a lawgiver lest you be constrained by it’\(^ {43}\). After saying this, Jesus departed from them. The disciples

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\(^{40}\) Other famous siblings in early Christian tradition include Peter and Andrew, John and James, Mary and Martha (also Lazarus) of Bethany, Jesus and James (and Jude), Alexander and Rufus (*Mark* 15.21), Clement and his brothers (*Recognitions*), Jesus and Thomas (see pp. 133f above), Mary (Magdalene) and Salome (*Pistis Sophia* 132), and Maximilla and Iphidamia (*Acts of Andrew*).


\(^{42}\) Only a part of the text is extant. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 3525 (late 3rd century) and Papyrus Rylands 463 (early 3rd century) contain fragments in Greek. The main witness is Berlin Codex 8502, containing a Coptic translation from a Greek text that was somewhat different from the text in the two papyri. The *Gospel of Mary* probably existed (maybe in a different form) already in the second century. Cf. Pasquier, *Évangile selon Marie*, 4; Luttikhuizen, *Gnostische geschichten*, 38. The Coptic and Greek texts with an English translation are found in Wilson and MacRae, ‘Gospel According to Mary’. In the Greek text, Mary is called Mariamme.

\(^{43}\) *Gospel of Mary* 8.21–9.4. An alternative reading is ‘I have left no commandment but what I have commanded you, and I have given you no law, as the lawgiver did, lest you be bound by it’.
were grieved and wept greatly, saying, ‘How shall we go to the gentiles and preach the gospel of the kingdom of the Son of Man? If they did not spare him, how will they spare us?’

Now Mary stands up and encourages them, ‘Do not weep and do not be irresolute, for his grace will be entirely with you and will protect you’. Peter asks Mary to tell the words of the Saviour that only Mary heard, because the Saviour loved her ‘more than the rest of women’. Mary recounts a revelation about the ascent of the soul past the cosmic powers. Andrew and Peter receive her report with reluctance, and Peter cannot believe that Jesus revealed this to a woman. But Levi rebukes him, ‘Peter, you have always been hot-tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. But if the Saviour made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Saviour knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us’. The end of the text states that ‘they began to go forth [to] proclaim and to preach’.

The *Gospel of Mary* also shows some traits of the commission narratives, emphasising the role of the helper figure at the expense of other motifs. It contains few narrative elements and lacks the biographical interest that characterises the apostolic Acts. Its central figure is Mary. Although the text does not identify her with any of the women by this name in the New Testament, she is most probably Mary Magdalene, who appears as an important witness to Jesus’ passion and resurrection in the canonical gospels, and in apocryphal writings. She is a dialogue partner of Jesus and receives special revelations. In the *Gospel of Philip* (late 3rd century) Jesus calls Mary Magdalene, who appears as a rival of Peter:


47. In *The Sophia of Jesus Christ* 98 and 114 (1st century), the *Dialogue of the Saviour* (2nd century), and especially in *Pistis Sophia* (early 3rd century). The first two texts speak about Mariamme and Mariam, respectively, the third about Mariam or Maria Magdalene.
Mary Magdalene his ‘companion’\(^{49}\), whom ‘he loved more than all the disciples and used to kiss her on her [mouth]’\(^{50}\). It is noteworthy that the text tells about three women who were with Jesus, namely his mother, her sister, and Magdalene. Each are called Mary, but only Mary Magdalene has the title ‘companion’. The *Gospel of Mary* reports both claims of the *Gospel of Philip* about Mary. Peter says that Jesus loved Mary more than the rest of women\(^{51}\), but when Levi rebukes Peter he adds that Jesus also loved her more than the rest of the disciples\(^{52}\). We may conclude that the figure of Mary in the *Gospel of Mary* reflects the portrait of Mary Magdalene in the aforementioned texts. In these writings, Mary Magdalene takes the role of the ‘beloved disciple’ as John in the Johannine tradition. And similarly to John, her special position as the companion of Jesus enables her to receive revelations that the rest of the disciples do not.

The parallels with the *Acts of Philip* are evident. The ‘weeping’ of the disciples, the mediating position of Mary, the encouraging words to the disciples, and the disapproval of Peter’s irascible temperament, even the formulation of many parts echoes chapter 8 of the *Acts of Philip*. Also in the longs text of *Acts of Philip* 8, there is a teaching of Jesus about nature and salvation. The *Gospel of Mary* probably served as a source to Philip’s commission story in the *Acts*

48. Cf. Isenberg, ‘Introduction’, 134. Isenberg proposes that the original language of the book was Greek, but it was composed in Syria. The text is an ‘eccentrically arranged’ compilation of traditions related to different subjects, including seventeen sayings and a few deeds of Jesus. Cf. Isenberg, ‘Introduction’, 133 and ‘Gospel of Philip’, 139.

49. *Gospel of Philip* 59.9, \(\text{τεκοινω̃ς}\).

50. *Gospel of Philip* 63.34–6. ‘Mouth’ is a feasible conjecture. According to the *Gospel of Philip* 59.2–6, ‘It is by a kiss that the perfect conceive and give birth. For this reason we also kiss one another. We receive conception from the grace which is in one another’. Kiss must be understood in the sacramental context of the *Gospel of Philip*. Rites enable the body to enter the world of light after death. The word ‘loved’ is also a conjecture, but there is hardly any arguable alternative for it. Cf. Isenberg, ‘Gospel of Philip’, 140–1; Luttikhuizen, *Gnostische geschriften*, 69. For a recent analysis of the sacramental language of the book in the context of Jewish and Christian sexual symbolism, see DeConinck, ‘True Mysteries’, 245–58.

51. *Gospel of Mary* 10.2–4, \(\text{παρα πκεκοκπειε κεφαλη (κεφαλη?)}\). Cf. the words of Elizabeth to Mary in *Luke* 1.42, \(\text{ευλογημένη σου ἐν γυναικίν} \).

52. *Gospel of Mary* 18.14–5, \(\text{ἀμοσοφίᾳ θησαυρος} \).
of Philip 8. Whether this was a direct or indirect influence, this writing—together with the related tradition about Mary Magdalene—helps us to understand the role of Mariamne in that episode\(^5\). As a record keeper of the allotted lands (in the long text) and ‘elected among women’, she appears as the confidante of Jesus standing above the apostles. She intervenes on behalf of Philip and escorts the apostle to support him. In the *Acts of Philip*, however, Mariamne is also closely associated with Philip. Rather than competing with him as Mary does with Peter in the *Gospel of Mary*, being Philip’s sister and the one who completes his personality, she is depicted as the apostle’s companion. This is, indeed, the key to understanding her figure: her close relationship with Jesus as well as Philip enables her to play a role similar to that of the Johannine Paraclete\(^5\). Mariamne’s remarkable role in the healing of Stachys also gains deeper sense in light of the Gnostic tradition about Mary (Magdalene). Philip’s putting his finger into the mouth of Mary can be connected with Jesus’ kissing her. Bodily contact mediates divine power from Jesus to Mary, and then from Mary to Philip. Earlier we have seen a similar idea of intimacy in the *Acts of John*, where bodily contact served as a source of knowledge about the polymorphous Jesus.

**Conclusions**

In the commission stories of his Acts, Philip is an ambivalent character. This is apparent already in his identity: he is an amalgam of Philip the disciple and Philip the Hellenist\(^5\). The *Acts of Philip* probably derived the figure of Mariamne from the *Gospel of Mary*; Mariamne completes and balances the character of Philip. The commission narratives contain references to the Jewish Scriptures. The *Acts of Philip* could have used the Lucan *Acts* in depicting the relation of Philip and the other apostles, and it drew on the *Acts of Thomas* in reporting the division of the world among the apostles. With the *Acts of Peter and

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53. Amsler, *Acta Philippi*, vol 2, 312, states that Mariamne ‘is no one else than Mary Magdalene of the gospels’, with traits of the figures of Martha and Jesus’ mother.
55. Cf. p. 137, note 6 above.
the Twelve, as we will see in the following chapter, it shares the motif of the apostles’ commission to heal people.

Philip appears as a somewhat marginal figure in the company of the apostles, first seeking their confirmation and then rebelling against his allotted missionary field\(^5\). His commission story also contains mystical and speculative elements; it is enough to think about Jesus’ appearance to Philip in the form of an eagle (see below) or his cosmological explanations to him. The group of the Acts of Philip, therefore, may have understood itself as an eccentric stream marginally related to an established institutional Church\(^5\).

Appendix: The Eagle in the Acts of Philip and the Paraleipomena Jeremiou

The Paraleipomena Jeremiou\(^5\) is a Jewish legend with a Christian interpolation, dating from the first half of the second century AD\(^6\). In contrast to the narrative chapters of the canonical Book of Jeremiah, where rebels take the prophet to Egypt\(^6\), it relates how Jeremiah accompanied the people of Jerusalem to Babylon, and then led them home. In the meantime, his secretary Baruch remains in the devastated city and God’s angel commands him to write a letter to the captives. At this point, an eagle appears to Baruch, sent by God to deliver

\(^{56}\) At the beginning of the Letter of Peter to Philip (note 5 above) he is also depicted as a ‘loner’.

\(^{57}\) For the relation of ‘groups’ and texts, see p. 260 below.


\(^{59}\) Herzer, Paralipomena Jeremiae, 177–92, dates the Jewish text between 125 and 132, the Christian ending a little after 136. Recently Schaller, Paralipomena Jeremiou, 678–81, suggested 118–132 AD for the Jewish text, but left open the question of the date of the Christian ending of the book.

\(^{60}\) Jeremiah 43.1–7.
the letter to Babylon⁶¹. Baruch addresses the bird: ‘You who are chosen from among all the birds of heaven, for this is clear from the gleam of your eyes: tell me, then, what are you doing here?’ Compare this with Philip’s words to the eagle on the tree: ‘O you graceful eagle, with your wings spread out, fly up and carry up my prayer [to heaven]. […] For I can see that you are a chosen bird, and that your beauty is not of this place’⁶². The eagle arrives at Babylon and sits on a pole outside the city, reminding one of the eagle sitting on the tree in the desert in the Acts of Philip.

Then Jeremiah comes along, leading a group of Jews who bring a corpse to bury it outside the city. The eagle talks to Jeremiah: ‘I say to you, Jeremiah the chosen one of God, go and gather together the people and come here so that they may hear a letter which I have brought to you from Baruch and Abimelech’. Again, one can compare this with the manner in which the eagle addresses Philip: ‘Behold, I have blessed you because of your prayer, and in my glory, I condescended to you. I will strengthen you with my light among those who do not know me and I will become strong in you. Powerful times are coming. […] I will not depart from you nor leave you alone. […] Raise up, Philip, and go: behold, I am with you’⁶³. The most surprising incident follows; Jeremiah gathers the people along with the women and children, and brings them to where the eagle sits. Then the eagle comes down to the corpse and revives it. The text adds: ‘Now this took place so that they might believe’. The people are astounded and exclaim,

Is not this the God who appeared to our fathers in the wilderness through Moses? And he made himself into the form of an eagle, and now he has appeared to us through this great eagle?⁶⁴

The eagle then orders Jeremiah to read the letter to the people. The narrative of the Paraleipomena Jeremiou expands the imagery to the same point as the Acts of Philip: the eagle becomes the actual representation of the deity. This becomes clear also in the words of Philip: ‘Now indeed, Lord Jesus Christ, you are the one who revealed your-

⁶⁴. Paraleipomena Jeremiou 7.20.
The Acts of Philip

self in this form, as you are accustomed to appear to the saints. [...] Great is this form, the form in that I behold you.\(^{65}\)

The function of the eagle in the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* is rather surprising. Whereas the eagle was a unanimously positive symbol in Greco-Roman culture\(^{66}\), it is very difficult to reconcile the appearance of Yahweh in the form of an eagle with Jewish tradition. The Torah categorised the eagle as an unclean animal\(^{67}\). In the Near East, the eagle was the symbol of Baal Shamem, ‘the Lord of Heaven’\(^{68}\). The ‘desolating sacrilege’ (βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως) that the Seleucid King Antiochus IV erected in the temple in 168 BC\(^{69}\), probably contained the statues of eagles, representing this deity\(^{70}\). Josephus relates that Herod the Great placed the image of an eagle above the temple gate, which raised the anger of the people and was destroyed\(^{71}\). He also describes the eagles on the ensigns of Vespasian’s army marching into Galilee\(^{72}\), as a symbol the Romans believed to secure their victory.

Whereas the image of the eagle is repeatedly attested as an offensive symbol for the Jews in Hellenistic times, in the Hebrew Bible the eagle often occurs as a positive symbol. Yahweh brought Israel ‘on eagle’s wings’ out of Egypt, those who trust in God shall ‘mount up

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65. *Acts of Philip* 6.2–6. There are two possible interpretations of ὀσπερ ἐςθας ἐπιφανεσθαι τοῖς ἐγίοις. It can mean that Jesus appears to all the saints (and so he also appeared to Philip) or that he usually appears in the form of an eagle to them (and so he appeared also to Philip in this form).


68. Klauser, ‘Baal-Schamim’, 1079. Baal Shamem is attested in Phoenicia from the ninth century BC, and in Hellenistic times his cult was widespread ‘from Hatra to Carthage’.

69. *1 Maccabees* 1.54. *Daniel* 9.27 is a *vaticinatio ex eventu* that reports the same event.

70. Schroer, *In Israel gab es Bilder*, 352–3. Schroer’s interpretation relies on the text of Daniel, which she reads ‘on the wings of the abomination there is the ⤆ום’. The *m’shomem* could be an astral symbol (cf. Baal Shamem). Zeus Olympios in *2 Maccabees* 6.2 is then a Graecised form of Baal Shamem. The earlier hypothesis was that the object described in *Daniel* and *1 Maccabees* was the altar of Zeus Olympus; cf. Koch, *Daniel*, 136–40 and Wenham, ‘Abomination of Desolation’, 28–9.


72. *Jewish War* 2.123.
with wings like eagles’, and the heavenly creatures in Ezekiel’s court vision have the face of an eagle on one side. Archaeological evidence shows that the image of an eagle as a decoration of synagogues was usual in late antiquity. Finally, the eagle functions as the messenger of Yahweh in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 77.19–25. This text is parallel with the Paraleipomena Jeremiou, and praises the eagle that surpasses all the other birds. There is, however, no trace of the eagle working miracles or being identified with Yahweh. The difference between these two parallel texts shows excellently the limitations of Jewish symbolism of the eagle. We can conclude that although the eagle often represented the oppressors of Israel from the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD, apart from this period the Jews used the eagle also as a positive symbol in literature and art. They refrained, nevertheless, from identifying it with their God, as other nations did. The Paraleipomena Jeremiou seems to be the only exception.

Theriomorphic symbolism was not unknown to early Christian tradition. An obvious example is Jesus as a lamb in Revelation 5, where the participants of the heavenly liturgy praise him: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals’, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered’, and ‘To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever’. The eagles in the Paraleipomena Jeremiou and the Acts of Philip are praised in a similar manner. The symbolism of the lamb was widespread in early Christian literature, and specifically served to interpret Jesus’ death. Whereas the Fathers of the second century criticised

73. Exodus 19.4, Isaiah 40.31 (cf. Psalms 103.5), Ezekiel 1.10. Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.8 used the latter passage to justify the number of the Gospels, and claimed that the eagle symbolises the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Notwithstanding later tradition, he identified the eagle with the Gospel of Mark (and not the Gospel of John).


75. One of the writings certainly used the other, but there is no consensus which was earlier. Cf. Herzer, Paralipomena Jeremiae, 72–7 (suggesting the primacy of the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch).

76. For the eagle as Zeus/Juppiter, see Pliny, Natural History 10.5.

77. 1 Corinthians 5.7; cf. John 1.29,36; Acts 8.32; etc.
and ridiculed the role of the eagle in Greek mythology, later the eagle appeared as a symbol of Christ. In the *Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena* 17–8 we read a vision that contains, among others, an eagle. The interpreter later says that the eagle stands for Christ. The vision in general imitates the eagle visions of *Ezekiel* 17, 4 *Ezra* 11–2, or the *Acts of Thomas* 91. In other early Christian texts, eagles appear around the throne of God, at the gates of the Paradise, or escort the righteous ones to heaven. Ambrose compares Jesus to an eagle whose nest is the Church. In addition to these written sources, there is evidence of the eagle symbolising Christ in early Christian art.

However, whereas the symbolism of the eagle was inevitably popular in early Christian literature, I did not find a text, other than the *Acts of Philip*, where an eagle would talk and identify itself as Christ.

In the radical use of the eagle imagery, the *Acts of Philip* is as unique among the early Christian texts as the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* among the Jewish writings. It is important to note, however, that the latter text received its final form from Christians. Was the identification of the eagle as Yahweh the work of a Christian redactor? The wider popularity of the eagle image in Christianity than in Judaism would support the idea. The eagle resurrects a corpse, which also fits Christ’s image as a physician. Whether it was a Jewish or a Christian redactor, who made that surprising identification in the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou*, he could find much inspiration in Greco-Roman art.

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81. *Sermons* 46.2.
82. For example, the eagle sits on the cross and Christ’s monogram on the sarcophagi (Schneider and Stemplinger, ‘Adler’, 92); an eagle of spread wings wearing a cross on its chest decorates one of the capitals in the fourth century cathedral of Elusa in the Negeb (Negev, ‘Elusa’ 486). In the *Acts of Philip* 3.5 the eagle’s wings were also ἐκτεταμένα κατὰ τὸν τύπον τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ σταυροῦ.
thought where the eagle was a representation of the supreme God, the
guide of souls (*psychopompos*), and its parts bore healing powers.\footnote{83}
The image of an eagle on the top of a pole (precisely as it appears in
the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou*) was part of the triumphal wear of the
consuls and the Caesars. A Jewish redactor may have adapted this
symbol polemically, as a Christian redactor could refer in the same
manner to the eagle as the symbol of the emperor’s cult. The symbol-
ism of the eagle in the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* can be probably ex-
plained with the Jewish wars and/or the Christians’ confrontation
with the emperor’s cult. It fits perfectly in the *Acts of Philip* for a dif-
derent reason: the eagle was known as the natural and mythological
enemy of the snake, the most important demonic symbol in the *Acts
of Philip*\footnote{85}.

The two writings in question are unique in early Christian litera-
ture with regard to the radical theriomorphic representation of Yah-
weh or Christ as an eagle. If one of the two texts borrowed from the
other, it was the *Acts of Philip* that is two centuries younger than the
*Paraleipomena Jeremiou*. The latter text was widely read in the Eastern
Church in late antiquity, and it cannot be excluded that it served
as the source of the startling epiphany in the *Acts of Philip*.

\footnote{83} For ancient references to these and the following points, see Schneider and Stemplinger, ‘Adler’, 88–91.
\footnote{84} Cf. p. 225 below.
\footnote{85} *Acts of Philip* 8.4.6–10 (*G*), 13.1.11–2, etc.
\footnote{86} Schaller, *Paralipomena Jeremiou*, 693, thinks ‘an early and broad circulation’ of the text ‘very plausible’. The Ethiopian Church included it in the canon, and in other orthodox churches it found its firm place in the monastic lectionary. From antiquity, it survives in Greek, Ethiopic and Armenian; early medieval versions include Romanian and various Slavic languages; cf. *op.cit.*, 696–8.
7. The Acts of Peter and the Twelve

The *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* from Nag Hammadi differs from the apostolic Acts discussed in the previous chapters. Instead of reporting the teachings and miracles of an apostle, the narrative concentrates on the commission of the twelve apostles. The text resembles fairy tales and is filled with symbols. The narration changes back and forth between the first and third persons, the first person narrator being identified as Peter (1.30).


2. Schenke, ‘Acts of Peter and the Twelve’, 414, compares it to Lucian’s *True Story*, which is, however, a literary composition of much larger scale (not to mention its overtly sarcastic tone). From Jewish and Christian literature, one may cite perhaps the *Book of Tobit* or the ‘Hymn of the Pearl’ in the *Acts of Thomas*. Whereas all of these parallels are imperfect, nevertheless, they point out something *Märchenhaftes* (fairy tale-like) in the story. Fairy tale is still the best name for these short narratives with a straightforward plot that is based on the motif of wandering, in the course of which the hero deals with angels, demons, monsters, speaking animals, some dangerous, others helpful, and prevails in the trials and difficulties. Molinari, *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*, 83–92, suggests *narratio fabulosa*, quoting Macrobius’ *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (late 4th or early 5th century AD). Macrobius defines ‘fabulous narrative’ as a fable that ‘rests on a solid foundation of truth’. He describes a subcategory of fabulous narrative, where the plot involves ‘a decent and dignified conception of holy truth, with respectable events and characters, presented beneath a modest veil of allegory’. 
Journey to the Nine Gates

Let us summarise the contents of the book. Following some scattered words of the badly damaged beginning of the text, we learn that the apostles were resolute to fulfil their ministry:

And in our hearts, we were united. We agreed to fulfil the ministry to which the Lord appointed us. And we made a covenant with each other.

When the opportune moment comes from the Lord, they go down to the sea and find there a ship. The sailors are kind—as was ordained by the Lord—and they embark. After sailing a day and a night, a wind comes that takes them to a small city in the midst of the sea called Habitation. A man comes out of the city, ‘beautiful in his form and stature’, whose appearance is described in detail, and who cries out in the city, ‘Pearls, pearls!’ Peter greets him, and he identifies himself as a fellow stranger. He cries again, ‘Pearls, pearls!’—but the rich men of the city do not even recognise him because of their disdain. The poor, however, ask him to show them the pearls. The merchant invites them to his city, where he will not only show them pearls, but will also give pearls to them free.

In a dialogue with Peter, the merchant identifies himself as Lithargoel, ‘the interpretation of which is, the light, gazelle-like stone’.

3. The upper part of the first eight pages (out of the total twelve) is damaged, thus the beginning of the narrative is also unclear.

4. *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* 1.9–10. Ἀλπὸς ὀρφήν ὀρφᾶτ, ‘we were of the same mind’, cf. 1 Corinthians 1.10, ἤτε δὲ [...] ἐν τῷ οὖν νοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ οὖν γνώμῃ; see also *Acts* 2.44.

5. The upper parts of all the pages (2–7) containing the episode in this city are damaged (see note 3 above), and ironically, the name of the city seems to have occurred precisely in those lost parts. Thus it actually appears nowhere in this account, only in a flashback at 10.3. Schenke, ‘Acts of Peter and the Twelve’, 416, argues that ‘behind the catch-words of the city names [Habitation, Nine Gates], or round about them, there stand all kinds of elements which are not intended to yield any proper sense, and at any rate do not carry on the narrative at all’. These words, according to Schenke, belong to the names of the cities, giving complex names like ‘Be founded on endurance’.

Then he describes the road to his city: ‘No man is able to go on that road, except one who has forsaken everything that he has and has fasted daily from stage to stage’⁷. On the road, there are black dogs, which kill people for their bread; robbers, who kill them for their garments; wolves, which kill them for water; lions, which eat them for the meat in their possession; and bulls, which devour them for the vegetables that they carry. Finally he tells the name of the city: ‘Nine gates’⁸. The apostles forsake everything and set out to Lithargoel’s city. They do not take garments with them, nor water, meat, or vegetables. Thus, they evade the robbers, wolves, lions, and bulls. As they sit down in front of the gate and talk, Lithargoel appears as a physician: ‘An unguent box⁹ was under his arm, and a young disciple was following him carrying a pouch full of medicine’ (8.16–9). The apostles do not recognise him, but he identifies himself first as Lithargoel and then as Jesus himself. He gives them the unguent box and the pouch, and commands them,

Go into the city from which you came, which is called Habitation. Continue in endurance as you teach all those who have believed in my name, because I have endured in hardships of the faith. I will give you your reward. To the poor of that city give what they need in order to

⁷. Acts of Peter and the Twelve 5.21–5. ‘Fasting daily from stage to stage’ (ΡΙΝΗΣΤΕΥΕ ΦΙΛΗΡΑΗ ΧΙΝ ΝΟΗΜ ΩΧ ΝΟΗΜ) may either designate a spiritual journey (of preparation), or an actual manner of travelling from monastery (μονή) to monastery.

⁸. Schenke, ‘Acts of Peter and the Twelve’, 417, relates the subsequent words also to the name of the city, ‘In nine gates, let us praise him, mindful that the tenth is the chief gate’; cf. note 5 above. The gates probably represent subsequent heavens (idem, ‘Taten des Petrus’, 13).

⁹. The word appears as ΝΑΡΤΟΣ in 8.16, and as ΝΑΡΩΣ in 9.30. Krause, ‘Petrusakten’, 58, note 4, identified it with νάρθηξ. Note also the similarity to νάρδος, designating different sorts of ‘nard’, plants whose aromatic extracts were used in medicines, cf. Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, 1160. The woman in the house of the leprous Simon, and Mary of Bethany both poured ointment of nard (μύρον νάρδου) on Jesus’ head or feet, respectively (Mark 14.3, John 12.3).
live until I give them what is better, which I told you that I will give you for nothing (10.1–13).

When Peter doubts how they could provide for the needs of the poor, Jesus answers that his name and the wisdom of God surpasses gold, silver and precious stones. He gives them the pouch (this is a repetition in the narrative, cf. above) and adds, ‘Heal all the sick of the city who believe in my name’\(^{10}\). Now Peter

signalled to the one who was beside him, who was John: ‘You talk this time’. John answered and said, ‘Lord, before you we are afraid to say many words. But it is you who asks us to practice this skill. We have not been taught to be physicians. How then will we know how to heal bodies as you have told us?’ (11.3–13)

Jesus answers,

[T]he physicians of this world heal what belongs to the world. The physicians of souls, however, heal the heart. Heal the bodies, therefore, so that through the real powers of healing for their bodies, without medicine of this world, they may believe in you, that you have power to heal the illnesses of the heart also […]. (11.16–26)

Finally, Jesus warned the apostles against partiality to the rich in many churches, and ordered them not to dine in the houses of the rich, nor make friends with them, rather ‘judge them in uprightness’ (12.8–9); and he ‘departed from them in peace’ (12.18–9).

The Acts of Peter and the Twelve and Pachomian Monasticism\(^{11}\)

At the end of the text, the time of the apostles is suddenly blended with the present of the narrator. The contemporary reader may have had the feeling that he or she arrived from the past to the present, and also received a ready-made moral lesson as in an Aesopian tale: Jesus disapproves of the influence of the rich in the Church. This simple

\(^{10}\) Acts of Peter and the Twelve 10.34–11.1. Cf. Acts 3.6, where Peter says to the lame man, ‘I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk’ (NRSV).

\(^{11}\) In his recent monograph on the Acts of Peter and the Twelve, A.L. Molinari interprets the text against the background of the Decian persecution (250 AD). This section attempts a different interpretation. Cf. note 40 below.
conclusion, in fact, captures much of the complicated symbolism of this short narrative. It seems as if the author had been aware of the difficulties of the interpretation of his text, and unwilling to leave the deciphering to chance, he laid down different possibilities within the text itself. For a more advanced interpretation, we can also turn to the text itself. After their arrival at ‘Nine gates’, Peter relates,

We rested ourselves in front of the gate and we talked with each other about that which is not distraction of this world. Rather we continued in contemplation of the faith. As we discussed the robbers on the road, whom we evaded, behold Lithargoel, having changed, came out to us (8.6–15).

First of all, let us note the pun in the Coptic: the same expression (Ctx 2pẩn), literally ‘take the face of’, is used both for ‘talk’ and ‘distraction’. In order to preserve the cohesion in English, one can translate ‘we talked about what is not the talk of this world’. Rather, they continued in contemplation of faith, or literally, they ‘remained in an exercise of faith’. This implies that the previous journey was already an exercise of faith itself, which the apostles now continue. The actual topic of their contemplation is nothing else than the dangers of the road. We learn that they ‘discuss’ (τάλογο) the robbers, who, as we learned earlier, kill people for their costly garment. This is the first or second difficulty of the road, a symbol that seems to subsume all the others. The costly garment of the world stands for possessions and bonds that prevent one from beginning the journey to the city. All the other dangers are connected to some sort of food (bread, water, meat, and vegetables), and the apostles’ travelling without them is most probably a reference to fasting. Let us remember that Lithargoel explicitly stated previously that fasting was a prerequisite to accomplish

12. The verbCtx, meaning ‘take’, is widely used to create composite phrases in Coptic. The prepersonal form (status pronominalis) 2pẩn can belong to two different nouns, ə conversing ‘face’) and 2ροογ (‘voice’), Layton, Coptic Grammar, 103. In 12.4–5,Ctx ə exactly corresponds to the Greek πρόσωπον λαμβάνειν in Luke 20.21 and Galatians 2.6, ‘to show deference to someone’.


14. In 5.28–31, Lithargoel also speaks about the dogs who kill people for their bread, but they are not mentioned during the actual journey in 7.26–8.3.
The journey to the city\textsuperscript{15}. The travel narrative is evidently understood here as a spiritual exercise.

The apostles’ ‘talk’ further expresses that contemplation takes place in a community. These details, when we put them together, suggest that the \textit{Sitz im Leben} of the book is the life of a monastic community, rather than ‘wandering asceticism’\textsuperscript{16} or other individualist form of monastic life. Pachomius, the father of coenobite monasticism, organised communities from the early 320s in Upper Egypt\textsuperscript{17}. They had a uniform dress\textsuperscript{18}. In contrast to other monastic liturgies that emerged in Egypt and in the West and put heavy emphasis on the singing of the Psalter, in the Pachomian community it was the reciting of Scriptures and reflecting on them that shaped daily life\textsuperscript{19}. Such a meditation may be meant by the ‘exercise of the faith’ (perhaps better ‘spiritual exercise’) of Peter and the twelve. A number of themes mentioned in Pachomius’ monastic \textit{Rules}\textsuperscript{20} are discussed in a similar manner by the \textit{Acts of Peter and the Twelve}. First, let us quote the rule describing how the newcomer should be admitted to the monastery:

\textbf{Rules 49}  
We rested ourselves in front of the gate

\textbf{Acts of Peter and the Twelve 8.6–15}  
We rested ourselves in front of the gate

and be taught the Lord’s prayer and as and we talked with each other about

\begin{footnotes}
15. Cf. note 7 above.
\end{footnotes}
many psalms as he can learn. He shall tell his story carefully (diligenter sui experimentum dabit): has he done something wrong and, troubled by fear, suddenly run away? [...] Can he renounce his parents and spurn his own possessions? If they see that he is ready for everything, then he shall be taught of the rest of the monastic discipline.

Then they shall strip him of his secular clothes and garb him in the monastic habit. He shall be handed over to the porter so that at the time of prayer he may bring him before all the brothers.

The parallels are impressive. Peter and the twelve rest themselves before the gates as the newcomer at the entrance of the monastery\textsuperscript{21}. Just as the novice learns the Lord’s Prayer and Psalms, so the disciples engage in a spiritual exercise. In the same manner that the novice examines his past and the way he came to the monastery, so the disciples discuss the dangers of the road to the Nine Gates. While the novice examines if he can renounce the world, the disciples renounce the ‘distraction of this world’. As the novice is stripped of his secular cloth, the disciples had to come to the gates without a costly garment. Finally, in the same manner that the novice is handed over to the porter, Lithargoel comes out to the gates to receive the disciples.

Further, the ‘dangers of the road’ that the disciples had to avoid, can be understood as the breach of different monastic rules:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rules</th>
<th>Acts of Peter and the Twelve</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As regards the small loaves given to the housemasters to be distributed to those who dedicate themselves to greater abstinence and do not want to eat in common with the others, they must see to it that they give them to no one as a favour, not even to someone going away (79). If the brothers who are sent</td>
<td>The one who carries bread with him on the road, the black dogs kill because of the bread (5.28–31).</td>
</tr>
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out on business or are staying far away
eat outside the monastery, the weekly
server who accompanies them shall
give them food but without making
cooked dishes,
and he shall himself distribute water as
is done in the monastery. No one may
get up to draw or drink water (64).
No one shall [...] carry jars full of wa-
ter [...] until the housemaster says so
(123).
No one shall take vegetables from the
garden unless he is given them by the
gardener (71). [Fish broth (liquamen de
piscibus) is consumed only by the ill
(43–6).]
The one who carries water with him,
the wolves kill because of the water
(6.1–3).
The one who is anxious about meat
and green vegetables, the lions eat be-
cause of the meat. If he evades the li-
ons, the bulls devour him because of
the green vegetables (6.4–8).

It is notable that the warnings in the Acts of Peter and the Twelve
are uttered by Lithargoel. The text views the monastic rules as given by
Jesus in a different shape. This is consistent with the legend that an
angel gave the Rules to Pachomius on a bronze tablet22. Obedience to
the Pachomian rules was a matter of salvation: ‘Whoever transgresses
any of these commands shall, for his negligence and his contempt, do
penance publicly without any delay so that he may be able to possess
the kingdom of heaven’23. The city of Habitation could be readily un-
derstood by the Pachomian monks as the symbol of the monastery. In
the Bohairic Life of Pachomius, Saint Antony says: ‘Then the path of
the apostles was revealed on earth. This is the word our able Apa Pa-
chomius undertook. He became the refuge for everyone in danger
from the one who has done evil from the beginning’24.

Various features of the Acts of Peter and the Twelve can be inter-
preted against this background. First, it describes the novice’s arrival
at the monastery, the renunciation of the world, and the life-saving
power of the community rules. Second, Lithargoel’s giving precepts
to the disciples is analogous to the angel’s bestowing the Rules to Pa-
chomius. It is also possible that Pachomius himself became identified

22. Palladius, Lausiac History 32.
23. Rules 144.
24. Bohairic Life of Pachomius 127, trans. Veilleux, Pachomian Koinonia,
vol 1, 23–295.
with Lithargoel\textsuperscript{25}. Thirdly, on the figurative level, the text describes a spiritual journey among different dangers and temptations. It reflects the exercises and development of the monk who meditates over the dangers of the world and the polymorphy of Jesus. The animals threatening him on the road are tempting demons. Wolves, lions, and bulls all occur in the vivid description of the temptation of Saint Anthony (c. 251–356) in his biography by Athanasius (295–373)\textsuperscript{26}, and it is not unlikely that the \textit{Acts of Peter and the Twelve} took the motif from traditions about Antony. It is remarkable that from the list of animals mentioned by Lithargoel (5.28–6.8), one is missing in the disciples’ account of the journey: ‘the black dogs’ do not appear in Antony’s temptation either. This change can attest the gradual assimilation of the two traditions: Antony’s legend was probably well-known in the monastic communities at the time of the final redaction of the \textit{Acts of Peter and the Twelve}.

The final dialogue between Jesus and the disciples also fits into the framework of monastic life. It comprises three major themes: Jesus’ sending the apostles to the poor (10.1–21), commission to heal them (10.22–11.26), and warning against the rich (11.26–12.16). When Jesus commands the apostles to serve the poor, Peter gives an answer that reflects the circumstances of monastic life: ‘Lord, you have taught us to forsake the world and everything in it. We have renounced them for your sake. What we are concerned about [now] is the food for a single day. Where will we be able to find the needs that you ask us to provide for the poor?’ (10.15–21) Jesus (giving them a pouch of medicine) answers, ‘Heal the sick of the city who believe in my name’ (10.33–4). When John protests, saying that they are not trained as physicians, Jesus responds:

Rightly have you spoken, John, for I know that the physicians of this world heal what belongs to the world. The physicians of the souls,

\textsuperscript{25} Pachomius had visions, and regarded himself as a salient figure of salvation history. Tradition made him the successor of prophets and apostles. Rousseau, \textit{Pachomius}, 57–63.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Life of Antony} 9. The demons assumed the forms of lions, bears, leopards, bulls, serpents, asps, scorpions, and wolves (9.6). Pachomius himself is tempted by demons in the \textit{Bohairic Life of Pachomius} 21, although not in the form of animals. On the questions of authorship and date of the \textit{Life of Antony}, see Bartelink, ‘Introduction’, 27–35.
however, heal the heart. Heal the bodies first, therefore, so that through the real powers of healing for their bodies, without medicine of this world, they may believe in you, that you have power to heal the illnesses of the heart also. (11.14–26)

This passage can be understood again in the light of Pachomian tradition. It fits well into the programme of Pachomius, for whom the monastic community was an instrument of salvation. Within that context, we can understand the paradoxical ‘healing of the body without medicine of this world’. Ascetic life in the monastery transformed the body in order to achieve the salvation of the soul. Moreover, Pachomius himself is reported to have performed many miraculous healings. He also expounded his theory of healing to the brothers:

Do not think that bodily healings are healings; but the real healings are the spiritual healings of the soul. So, if today a man who was blinded in his mind through idolatry is led to the way of the Lord, to the point of seeing plainly and acknowledging the Creator, is that not healing and salvation for the soul and for the body before the Lord at once and forever? And if someone else is dumb from lying, not speaking the truth, but his eyes are opened for him and he walks in righteousness, again is that not healing?

We can see that the subsequent levels of bodily and spiritual healing were present in Pachomian tradition similarly as in the Acts of Peter and the Twelve. Besides, the Rules attests the medical provisions for the sick of the monastery, and Pachomius’ care for them is reported in his biographies. Healing ‘the sick of the city who believe’ may reflect this other aspect of healing, the caring for the members of the monastic community.

In the last section of the closing dialogue Jesus exhorts the apostles to condemn the rich:

Do not dine in their houses, nor be friends with them, lest their partiality may influence you. For many in the churches have shown partiality to the rich, because they also are sinful, and they gave occasion for

27. Rousseau, Pachomius, 58.
29. Bohairic Life of Pachomius, 41
30. For example, Rules 40–6.
others to do [likewise]. But judge them with uprightness, so that your ministry may be glorified, and that my name also, may be glorified in the churches. (12.1–13)

The ‘partiality of the rich’ that has to be avoided can be perfectly understood in the context of early hagiography,

[which] gives the impression that the only care dogging these monks in their alternative, monastic world was eluding the visitations, solicitations, and flatteries constantly thrust on them by pursuing admirers\(^32\).

However, the ideal picture drawn in these hagiographic texts has to be compared with contemporary social reality\(^33\). Monasteries were competing for patronage, and a great number of failed monks went begging in the cities, many of whom actually gained entry into houses. The middle part of our passage actually reflects the practice of competition for patronage (12.4–8): ‘For many in the churches have shown partiality to the rich, because they also are sinful, and they gave occasion for others to do [likewise]’. Note that in the warning, ‘partiality’\(^34\) is supposed to be exercised by the rich, whereas the explanation makes it plain that the churches are guilty of doing it. As in the hagiographic text, proud theory (there illustrated with the example of the famous ascetics) is contrasted with miserable practice. The conclusion of the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* can be compared to the warning of Nilus of Ancyra (390–430) half a century later:

> If we remain tranquil in our monasteries preserving in prayer and psalms, and if we do not press upon the people of the world, then God will rouse those very people […] and compel them furnish our bodily needs gladly\(^35\).

To the internal evidence of the text, we may add the widespread view that the Nag Hammadi codices themselves were manufactured and used in a Pachomian monastery\(^36\). If one looks at the history of the

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34. Coptic τρεποντος λαμβάνειν and note 12 above.
community, one finds two possible periods when the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* could be written. The first of them comprises the years from the founding of the first monastery around 323\(^3\) to Pachomius’ death in 346. The second period extends from Pachomius’ death to 367, when Athanasius’ paschal letter certainly restricted the production and use of heterodox literature\(^3\). If we assume that the figure of the Lithargoel in the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* was seen as a symbol of Pachomius, a date after the latter’s death is more likely. When Theodore assumed leadership of the community after an interim period of disturbances, Pachomius’ figure was soon idealised to consolidate the institutional order of the monasteries\(^3\).

Let us summarise the major points of this section. (1) The narrative of the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* can be understood as an allegorical tale about the monks’ renunciation of the world. (2) The text handles some typical administrative issues of cenobite monasticism in a similar way as the *Rules* of Pachomius. (3) The *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* addresses the sociological conflicts of monasticism that also influenced early hagiographic literature. (4) The central character of the book might have been inspired by the figure of Pachomius that was surrounded by legendary tradition soon after his death. (5) Finally, the use of the text in the Pachomian monasteries fits into the larger theory of the production and use of the Nag Hammadi Codices in that milieu. In conclusion, several features of the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* make it plausible that the final redaction of the book took place in Upper Egypt in a Pachomian monastery between 347 and 367\(^4\).

\(^3\) Veilleux, ‘Monasticism’, 273.

\(^3\) Bohairic Life of Pachomius 189. Veilleux, ‘Monasticism’, 290–1, warns that the purge of the monasteries from heretic books, an idea repeatedly echoed by scholarship, has not been proven.


\(^4\) Molinari, *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*, 233, proceeding from different premises, also suggests Egypt as the place of the final redaction. He also suggests (p. 76) that its genre is ‘between a revelation dialogue and a church order’. However, he connects the text with the Decian persecutions, and therefore dates it to the second half of the third century. He suggests Alexandria, rather than Upper Egypt, as its place of origin. The two hypotheses perhaps can be combined (an earlier form of the text might have come into being under the circumstances that
Relation to the Other Apostolic Acts

If this is true, our document was written about the same time in Egypt as the *Acts of Philip* in Asia Minor. The parallels between the two books, which we are going to discuss shortly below, can be explained with the help of a third text, which perhaps was identical with one of the sources of the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*. First, one may refer to the presence of animals in both narratives. Philip and his companions domesticate a leopard and a kid on the road, annihilate dragons, and charm snakes. Dragons and snakes represent the evil, whereas the leopard and the kid probably symbolise the latter days as foretold by the prophets. The animals of the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* are demonic symbols, as we noticed above. Since animals play a role in many of the apostolic Acts, we should not attribute too much importance to this coincidence. Further parallels between the two texts include the identification of Jesus as a physician, the giving of medicines to the apostles and their commission to heal people.

As we have just seen, in the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*, Jesus appears as a physician in the figure of Lithargoel. In the *Acts of Philip*, all three motifs occur abundantly. In chapter 3, Philip prays, ‘Physician of our inner man, strengthen also me with your wisdom’.

Molinari assumes), but this would require a careful re-examination of the whole text from a redaction-critical perspective.

41. Cf. p. 136, note 1 above.
43. Molinari, *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*, 52, identifies three sources, represented in the following sections: story of the pearl merchant (1.1–9.1); the resurrection appearance (9.1–29); and the author’s theology (9.30–12.19). For earlier theories see *ibidem*, 20–31.
45. *Isaiah* 11.6–7. (According to verse 8, also the vipers will be harmless.) In the temptation of Antony, the leopard also occurs as a demonic symbol (cf. note 26 above).
46. Cf. recently Matthews, ‘Animals’.
In chapter 4, he heals Charitine, the daughter of Nicoclides, friend of the king. The girl says to her father, ‘Behold, last night I heard news about a foreign physician, who preaches about foreign medicines that are in his store. He is the only one who can heal me’. When Nicoclides asks Philip if he is the doctor, he answers, ‘Jesus is my physician, the healer of hidden and visible [illnesses]’. Later he encourages Charitine, ‘Do not be afraid, girl, the medicines of my physician are going to heal you’. When the girl is healed, she confesses, ‘I worship the physician who is in you’.

The theme returns in the commission episode of chapter 8. Jesus himself encourages Philip, ‘I will put medicines on your wounds, and take them [and put them] on your hurts, and I will be your good physician’. When they meet the leopard that attacked the kid, Philip says to Bartholomew, ‘Let us go and see him who was smitten and healed, and who healed the smiter’.

In chapter 13, Philip and his companions arrive at Opheorymos and establish themselves in an abandoned medical dispensary:

Entering into the village, the apostles found a dispensary in the vicinity, which was vacant and none of whose physicians was there. Philip said to Miriam: ‘Here our Saviour has preceded us and has prepared for us this spiritual dispensary. Let us occupy it and find rest, because we are exhausted from the exertion of the road’. To Bartholomew, he said: ‘Where is the unguent box (νάρθηξ) that the Saviour gave to us on that occasion when we were in Galilee? Let us set up practice in this dispensary and attend to the sick until we see what purpose the Saviour sets for us’.

51. Acts of Philip 8.18 (V), ἵδωμεν τὸν πεπληγμένον ἱαθένται καὶ θεραπεύοντα τὸν πλήξαντα (trans. Elliott, Apocryphal New Testament 516, adapted). This may contain a reference to Jesus, who was wounded (and killed), but God healed him and he became the healer of those who crucified him.
In chapter 14, the blind Stachys says to his sons\textsuperscript{53}, ‘There are people sitting at the gate, and I heard that they said, “let us settle in this dispensary, and heal every suffering and every illness”’ (14.1.10–1). Stachys entreats Philip, ‘I beseech you, man of God, cure me from this suffering’. He relates his vision of a young man with three faces (child, woman, old man); the woman put a lamp to his eyes, and they were filled with light. He has seen the vision three times, and interprets it as a vision of God, ‘I believe that God is the one who revealed himself to me’ (14.4).

Although references to Jesus as a physician are widespread in Early Christianity, yet the medicines of Jesus and the apostles, healing as the task of the apostles, and especially the unguent box that Jesus gave them, are so close to the *Acts of Philip* that a literary connection between the two texts becomes likely. It seems that what Jesus commissions the apostles to at the end of the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*, they fulfil precisely in the *Acts of Philip*. Whereas the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* ends where the apostles are supposed to begin healing the people, in the *Acts of Philip* an explicit commission to heal is missing.

There is also a reminiscence of Johannine traditions at least at one point in the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*. In the final encounter with Jesus (Lithargoel), Peter, who was afraid to ask him any more, urges John to speak for him. The critical words are ‘He signalled to the one who was beside him, who was John’ (11.3–4). The scene can be compared to the *Gospel of John*, where during the Last Supper one of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’\textsuperscript{54}

The two texts are even closer to each other, if we revise the translation ‘beside him’ as ‘on his bosom’\textsuperscript{55}, ‘he’ referring to Jesus rather

\textsuperscript{53} Note the parallels between the whole Stachys episode and Tobit’s blindness and healing in the *Book of Tobit*.

\textsuperscript{54} *John* 13.23–5.

\textsuperscript{55} *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* 11.3–5. \textit{ἐτῶπογως ἐπὶ ἑαυτήν} literally means ‘the one who was on his breast, who is John’. However, the idiom is not
than Peter. Apart from the question whether we interpret this clause as an echo of the *Gospel of John*\(^{56}\)\(^\)\(,\) the text evidently suggests that John was in a confidential relation with Jesus and could ask him things that others could not. Mary or Mariamne plays the same role in the *Acts of Philip* and other texts. This is a special variation of the ‘helper’ function in the commission narratives, which we may label as the ‘confidential’. This function can be filled by different figures who have attributes in tradition that make them fitting for this role, as Mary Magdalene or John.

Another feature that connects the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* with the *Acts of John* (as well as with the *Acts of Thomas*) is the presence of polymorphy. Here polymorphy is presented as metamorphosis, the subsequent appearance of Jesus in various forms. The subsequent appearances are related to different stages of the disciples’ journey, and the disciples do not recognise Jesus until they arrive at their destination. The spiritual journey described in the text leads to a true vision of Jesus. From this perspective, the commission of Peter and the twelve is similar to the commission of John in the *Acts of John* 88–105 and 113. Both describe the ascent of the soul, in which encounters with the polymorphous Jesus play a central role.

**Conclusions**

Various references suggest that the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* was written in a Pachomian monastery between 347 and 367. Most of its symbolic motifs are rooted in that monastic milieu. In addition to that, one of its sources had contacts with the tradition of the *Acts of Philip*, and it also incorporated the motif of John as a mediator between Jesus and the disciples. Its plot is quite different from the story line of the other apostolic Acts. It is not biographical in the sense as the other apostolic Acts: it does not contain miracles, teachings, and legendary details from the life of an apostle. Instead, it contains one long commission narrative, describing a journey through the stages of contemplative ascetic life. It is not a biography, but rather a biographical

\(^{56}\). Cf. *Acts of John* 89.
program, an abstract model for imitation. In its present form, it does not seem an introduction to a longer text, but rather a self-contained allegorical tale about divine call to an ascetic and spiritual life.
The *Acts of Barnabas* is one of the ‘later’ apostolic Acts, and it has received little attention in modern research. Lipsius and De Santos Otero found the *Sitz im Leben* of the text to be the church-political milieu of Cyprus in the fifth century. According to this interpretation, the book was intended as a proof of the ‘apostolicity’ of the Church of Cyprus, supporting its efforts to gain institutional independence from the patriarchate of Antioch, the main issue being the right to consecrate its own bishops. While the canonical *Acts* mentions Barnabas’ Cypriote birth and his missions there, the *Acts of Barnabas* adds the founding of churches, the consecration of bishops, and also locates the apostle’s grave on Cyprus, the latter being at that time a criterion of ‘apostolicity’.

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The Story

Before going into more details, it is worth summing up the plot. The book is titled ‘The Travels and the Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Barnabas’. The first two chapters contain a preface by the inscribed author ‘John’ (in chapter 3 identified as John Mark), who will narrate the whole story in first person. In the next two chapters John Mark and Barnabas are sent out by visions on their missionary journeys. In chapter 5 the story assumes the ‘itinerary style’ of the canonical Acts and the Acts of Paul:

After I was instructed in these things by him, we remained in Iconium for many days. [...] From there, we came to Seleucia, and after staying three days sailed away to Cyprus. [...] Setting sail from Cyprus we landed in Perge of Pamphylia. Then I stayed there about two months, wishing to sail to the regions of the West, but the Holy Spirit did not allow me. Turning back, therefore, I again sought the apostles, and on learning that they were in Antioch, I went to them.

Chapters 6 to 10 contain an elaborated version of the controversy between Barnabas and Paul reported in Acts 15.36–41. John Mark entreats Paul for his departure in Pamphylia. In two visions Paul is warned to let Barnabas go to Cyprus, and himself instructed to travel to Jerusalem.

The narrative here reassumes the ‘itinerary style’. The major difference to chapter 5 is that the itinerary described here is not known from the canonical Acts (or the Acts of Paul). The rest of the book can be seen as an extension of Acts 15.39: ‘Barnabas, taking Mark with himself, sailed away for Cyprus’. They want to cross to Cyprus from

4. The ‘itinerary style’ (a special form of travel account in the first person) probably had its roots in the Odyssey, and became a standard form followed by many Greek authors: Odyssey 14.244–58; Lucian, True Story 1.6; Pseudo-Lucian, Ass 36–41; Achilles Tatius, Leucippe and Clitophon 3.1–5, etc. Reports of military expeditions and accounts of sea storms often assume a similar style. Cf. Norden, Agnostos theos, 313–27; Pokorný, ‘Romfahrt des Paulus’, 234–8; Robbins, ‘By Land and by Sea’, 217–28; Pervo, Profit with Delight, 57.

5. The itinerary of Acts 13 (esp. verses 4 and 13) is followed here, except that in Acts Iconium comes much later (14.1–6). One should note, however, that the itinerary of the Acts of Paul and Thecla begins precisely in Iconium; cf. note 41 below.
Laodicea, but because of the unfavourable wind they visit first localities in Isauria and Cilicia. On the island of Pithyusa they are entertained by the pious Euphemus (ch. 11), and in Anemurion they convert and baptise two Greeks (chs. 12–3).6

One of the Greeks, Stephanus by name, wants to follow them, but Barnabas does not allow him to come. They manage to cross to Crommautica on Cyprus by night (ch. 14), and put up with Timon and Ariston, who are temple servants. Timon falls ill and Barnabas cures him by laying his hands upon him. He also cured many others in the regions where they proceeded by laying upon them ‘the wisdom (μαθηματα) he received from Matthew, a book of God’s voice, a text about miracles and teachings’7.

In chapter 16 Barnabas and Mark are not allowed to enter the city of Lapithus because there is an idolatrous feast (εἰδολομανά) in the theatre. Thus, they rest a little at the city gates, and this will be a recurrent motif in the narrative8. Timon, the temple servant healed by Barnabas in Crommautica, joins them here. Through the mountains they arrive at Lampadistus9. This is Timon’s place of origin, and they are entertained here by Heraclius (or Heraclides) whom earlier Barnabas converted and baptised in Citium. They appoint him as a ‘bishop of Cyprus’ (ch. 17) and plant a church at Tamasus.

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6. For the localities on the itinerary see Lipsius, ‘Acten des Barnabas’, 288ff. For “Ελλην meaning ‘pagan’ see note 11 below.
7. We do not quite see the point in the complicated identification of Barnabas’ book, evidently meant to be a copy of the Gospel of Matthew: in ch. 22 it is called τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, in ch. 24 again μαθηματα. In the Acts of Andrew (Gregory of Tours, Epitome 23), when Trophima is condemned to prostitution she protects herself by putting a copy of the Gospel (evangelium quod secum habebat) on her breast (cf. p. 128, note 53 above). For books with magical power in antiquity, see Speyer, ‘Das Buch’; for books as relics, see Vezin, ‘Les Livres’. In patristic Greek μάθημα often means Scripture or Gospel (Lampe, Lexicon, 819, s.v. B4), here it might be a pun with Μαθηματος (as A. Hilhorst suggests to me). Why Barnabas and John Mark sailed to Cyprus by night also remains unexplained. On the temple servants (John Mark fulfilled a similar post, ὑπηρέτης τοῦ ἀρχιερέως τοῦ Διῶς; before his conversion) we will come back later in this Chapter.
In Palaia Paphus (ch. 18) Rhodon, another temple servant, is converted and joins them. At this point ‘some Jew called Bariesus coming from Paphus’ appears, who recognises Barnabas as the earlier companion of Paul. He is of course Bar-Jesus or Elymas, known from Acts 13 as the ‘magician’ and ‘false prophet’ from Paphus. He will be the negative protagonist in the narrative, the arch-enemy of Barnabas (much like Simon is Peter’s rival in Rome in the Acts of Peter) who stirs up the Jews against Barnabas at all places on Cyprus. Thus, they cannot enter Paphus and proceed to Curium.

Near Curium (ch. 19), Barnabas and his companions find a certain δρόμος, which can mean either an event (race) or an object (course), and has the adjective ‘abominable’ (μεμορός). There are naked men and women, and ‘lots of deception and error’ (πολλῆ ἁπάτη καὶ πλάνη). Barnabas turns around to rebuke the place and the ‘Western part’ collapses. Many people are wounded and killed, but a few manage to escape to the nearby temple of Apollo. At Curium Bariesus turns up with a ‘great multitude of Jews’, and Barnabas with his team have to lodge under a tree outside the city.

In a village, they meet Aristoclianus (ch. 20), who was consecrated bishop by Paul and Barnabas. He entertains the missionaries in a cave where he lives in the mountains. In Amathus they find a multitude of indecent (ἀσεμνος) men and women who are pouring libations in a temple on the mountain. Bariesus finds them also here, and turns the Jewish population against them. Thus, Barnabas and his

10. A late spelling for μεμορός.
11. This seems to be a strange residence for a bishop. Aristoclianus could be a hermit, but his task was explicitly that of a missionary: he was sent back to his village ‘because of the many pagans (Ἐλληνες, cf. Lampe, Lexicon, 451b) who lived there’. The scene can also be a reminiscence of the persecutions, the first of which (immediately after the martyrdom of Barnabas) is reported by Alexander the Monk, Encomium 550–553 (cf. note 27 below). The episode can be perhaps better understood in connection with the next scene (see below).
12. It is quite possible that pagan rites occurred in the rural areas and hidden places still at the time of the Acts of Barnabas (cf. also chs. 18, 21, 22). This makes also the situation of a ‘bishop’ like Aristoclianus understandable: ‘A village might be formally catechized by a resident monk, followed by a presbyter who recited the Christian liturgy at a local chapel. Some baptisms might occur, but the populace would summon the aid of the traditional deities in their daily concerns […]’ (Trombley, Hellenic Religion, vol 1, 148).
group cannot enter the city. But an eighty year old widow who does not worship the idols takes them into her house for an hour. They shake the dust off their feet against the pagan temple.\(^{13}\)

In Citium (ch. 21) they find ‘much uproar’ in the hippodrome, and no one receives them. They shake the dust off their feet and rest at the gates next to the aqueduct. Near to Salamis (ch. 22) there is a religious festival again. They find here Heraclides and educate him how to preach the gospel, how to found churches and install officials to them.

Arriving at the city of Salamis, they go to a synagogue ‘near to the so called Biblia'\(^ {14}\) and Barnabas teaches from the Gospel which he received from Matthew. This is the spot of Barnabas’ martyrdom. Bariesus appears (ch. 23) and stirs up the Jews who take hold of Barnabas and try to deliver him up to Hypatus (his name itself meaning ‘consul’), the governor of Salamis.\(^ {15}\) When the pious Iebusaius (or Eusebius), kinsman of Nero, arrives on the island, the Jews take action themselves, drag Barnabas by his neck to the hippodrome and burn him ‘so that even his bones became dust’. They wrap up the ashes in lead and plan to throw it into the sea.

John Mark, however, together with Timon and Rhodon, stole the ashes in the night, and buried them together with the book from Matthew at a hidden place. It was the fourth hour of the night on the second day of the week. From the rest of the book (chs. 25–6) we learn how John Mark and his companions managed to escape from the Jews, spending three days in a cave, and finally sailing over to Alexandria. John there continues teaching the brothers ‘of everything that he learned from the apostles of Christ’, the ones from whom he also received the name Mark from baptism. The text is rounded off by a doxology.

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14. Bonnet, Acta apostolorum, vol 2/2, 301, lines 15–6, εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν τῆς ἐπίλεγουμένης Βιβλίας (or Βιβλίας). Lipsius did not identify this place. Is ‘Biblia’ perhaps an epithet of the synagogue (although this makes the grammatical structure clumsy)? Cf. Acts 6.9, ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ τῆς λεγομένης τῶν ἀπὸ Κύπρους κτλ.
15. Either the name must be corrected to ‘Hypatios’ (supported by the Parisian Codex) or the word ἔγεμον understood as a gloss, cf. Lipsius, ‘Acten des Barnabas’, 284, note 1.
Political Themes

Evaluations of the Acts of Barnabas (the few we have) are mainly interested in the church-historical setting of the book. Walker is close to classifying it as a reliable historical document: ‘[T]his work has more air of truth about it than any of the others [i.e., other Acts]. There is not much extravagance in the details, and the geography is correct, showing that the writer knew Cyprus well.’ If one feels an ‘air of truth’ in the book, it is due, in our view, to two components. One is the feature emphasised also by Lipsius, namely, the accurate geography. This indicates the presence of Cypriote local traditions in the text and the pen of a local patriot as the editor of the book. Further, the Acts of Barnabas imitates the style of the canonical Acts better than any of the other apocryphal Acts. This is mainly achieved by the rather schematic use of the itinerary style, references to names and events in the Lucan Acts, and the use of a prologue (also mentioning Jesus’ incarnation, words and deeds). It cannot be said, however, that this book is less ‘extravagant’ as far as the miraculous elements are concerned. Barnabas’ conspicuous ‘rebuking’ of the ‘abominable race’ (ch. 19), for example, turns into a massacre that is unparalleled in the other Acts (see below).

True enough, we know more about the immediate historical circumstances of the genesis of these Acts than is usual with other examples of the genre. In addition to the documents about the church-political conflicts with Antioch and the declarations of the independence of the Cypriote church in the fifth century (see note 2 above), there are also reports on the finding of Barnabas’ tomb on the island. Three sources from the sixth century write about the finding of Barnabas’ tomb under the emperor Zeno, the location of which had earlier became unknown because of the persecutions. The major difference is, however, that they all know about the finding of the whole corpse (rather than of ashes), with the Gospel of Matthew on its

breast. Since it makes no sense writing about the ashes when the whole body is thought to be found, the earliest of these sources helps us to set the latest date for the writing of the *Acts of Barnabas*. This date then will be 527, when the church-historian Theodorus Lector (reporting on the finding) died. The earliest date of writing for our text can be inferred from an indirect argument: in the records of the Ephesian council of 431, whose *decreta* confirmed the position of Cyprus, the Cypriotes do not mention Barnabas at all.

Knowledge about the church-political background may certainly help us to interpret some details of the narrative. First of all, in chapters 6 to 10 the necessity of a second ministry on Cyprus is argued for in length. The original plan of the apostles is to begin their second missionary journey in the East and then visit Cyprus (ch. 7). But Barnabas repeatedly entreats Paul to go first to Cyprus and visit ‘his own ones in his village’ (while Lucius wants to visit his own city Cyrene)\(^\text{18}\):

> When they finished teaching in Antioch, they gathered on the first day of the week and decided to set out for the places of the East, and then go to Cyprus, and oversee all the churches in which they had spoken the word of God. But Barnabas entreated Paul to go first to Cyprus and oversee his own ones in his village.

> Paul, however, saw a vision in [his] sleep that he should hasten to Jerusalem because the brothers expected him there. But Barnabas asked that they would to go to Cyprus and spend the winter there, and then go to Jerusalem for the feast.

> [Barnabas said,] ‘Since it has thus seemed good to you, Father Paul, pray for me that my labour would become worthy of praise. […] For I go to Cyprus and hasten to be made perfect’.

> Paul said to him, ‘The Lord stood by me also this night, saying, “Do not force Barnabas not to go to Cyprus, for there it has been prepared for him to enlighten many”’.

None of these sentences appear in any of the other Acts, and all of them emphasise the importance and divine necessity of Barnabas’s second ministry on Cyprus. The conflict, which in the canonical *Acts* is referred only in a passing remark, becomes an elaborated debate here. The ministry on Cyprus is not even an issue in *Acts* 15.36–40, where Mark is the only cause of the dissent. In the *Acts of Barnabas*, however, it is supported by several arguments. First, it is Barnabas’ personal will. His loyalty toward his homeland is emphasised. Further, he regards the island as the place where he has ‘to be made perfect’; that is, the place of his future martyrdom. Finally, the most significant argument is Paul’s vision where he is instructed to support Barnabas’ plans because they fulfil divine dispensation.

Another theme of major political interest is the establishing of churches and clergy on Cyprus. We learn about the consecration of two bishops: Heraclides is consecrated ‘bishop of Cyprus’ by Barnabas in Tamasus (ch. 17). Aristoclianus, in turn, was consecrated by Paul and Barnabas (ch. 20). The two of them had been considered in local tradition as the first bishops on the island. Moreover, the itinerary of the narrative touches all the episcopal seats of Cyprus: Laphitus, Tamasus, Curium, Citium, and Salamis. Barnabas and his team also plant a church at Tamasus (ch. 17). It is even more remarkable that they teach bishop Heraclides the know-how of church administration:

> When we found there [in Salamis] Heraclides again, we taught him how to proclaim the gospel of God, and establish churches and ministers in them.

This shows Heraclides a clergyman of similar importance as Titus or Timothy, who are instructed about the administration of churches by

21. Lipsius, ‘Acten des Barnabas’, 290: ‘The itinerary is planned with the purpose that Barnabas may travel through all parts of the island, both on the coast and inland. […] Meanwhile he touches all the places that were later to become an episcopal see: Laphitus, Tamasus, Curium, Citium, and Salamis’.
Paul in the canonical epistles bearing their names. The *Acts of Barnabas* thus demonstrates that the Cypriote church came to being through the hands of the apostle Barnabas—he ordained its first bishops, founded or supervised all of its important congregations, and laid down its institutional frameworks.

The last theme of political importance to be mentioned is the martyrdom and the grave of the apostle. The possession of the remains of the apostle was regarded just as important in the contemporary political debate as the founding of the church by the apostle. It is therefore all the more surprising that the text does not seem to provide sufficient certainty at this point.

Let us examine briefly four crucial issues: The narration of the martyrdom, the remains of the apostle, their placement, and the precious manuscript. (1) The narration of the martyrdom (ch. 23) is strikingly terse. Within a few lines Barnabas is lynched by the ‘Jews’. Superficial references are made to a governor and a pious relative of Nero. There is no process, no imprisonment, no farewell address to the brothers or revelational sermon in the minutes of death, which all seem to have been obligatory topoi of the apostolic martyrdom texts.

(2) The apostle is dragged by the neck from the synagogue to the hippodrome and then burned on a pyre. The ashes are then put into linen and closed into lead. Does this mean that they put them into a vessel that was made of lead, or rather that they cast lead around it? In either case, such a relic provides little clue for identification. This makes sense, of course, if there is a similar thing at hand (not too difficult even to forge), of which it has to be proven that it is identical with the vessel containing the remains of the apostle. All the documents from Cyprus, however, talk about the full body of the apostle, the location of which was forgotten and then newly found.


25. Casting lead around the remains may have had the purpose of preventing resurrection, as J.N. Bremmer suggests to me.

(3) The place of the burial by John Mark and his companions is identified ambiguously (ch. 24). ‘Where the Jebusites lived’ might identify the cave, as well as the area in general. The mentioning of ‘a certain place’ and ‘a cave’ (without article) in the Greek seems to support the latter reading. We also read that they bury the remains ‘in a hidden place’. In the possession of a concrete finding, one could have given a precise description of the place. The time of the burial is indicated by the exact hour, and in view of the competence of the author in local geography, we would expect a similar precision also at the description of the place.

(4) The last issue related to the martyrdom is the placement of the precious manuscript into the tomb. In the later documents it is found on the breast of the apostle, and told to be a copy made by him of the Gospel of Matthew. This confirms the claim that the corpse is that of Barnabas. If the text is an autographon, however, it is certainly more precious, and even lends higher authority to the teaching of Barnabas, but counts less as a piece of evidence for the identity of the ashes.

The above four points, although they do not exclude the possibility, certainly make it less evident that the text was written to prove the identity of a concrete relic. Although the knowledge of the church-political events of the period is useful for the interpretation of the text, it cannot be connected with certainty to any of the related historical events or documents. Especially when looking at the proportions of the narrative, one can see that the problem of the apostle’s death and remains is not the major concern of the author. The idea of a (political) tendency in early Christian texts, so typical for Lipsius’ generation, sheds light only on a narrow segment of the narrative. In the

27. Lipsius, ‘Acten des Barnabas’, 284, note 2, quotes a Latin translation which supports the first possibility: collocavi in cripta, quae olim fuerat habitatio Jebuseorum (placed them into the vault where earlier the Jebusites lived). The whole island was believed, however, to have been colonised by the tribe of the Jebusites after they had been driven out by King David from Palestine (Walker, Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, 299, note 2).
28. Alexander the Monk, Encomium of Barnabas 547–549, informs us, for example, that the cave was ‘five stadia away from the city’.
final part of this chapter, we will attempt to read the text from another perspective, one that also better fits the purpose of our recent study.

The Commission of John Mark

In the second half of this chapter we will read the *Acts of Barnabas* from the point of view of John Mark, the inscribed author of the text, who also narrates the story in the first person. As Lipsius already remarked, there is relatively little told about Barnabas’ actual ‘deeds’ in this book. Although the death and burial of the apostle forms beyond doubt an important concern of the author, we found in the previous section that it hardly provides the key for the interpretation of the whole text. One has to notice that much of the narrative is focused on the person of the inscribed author John Mark. Not only is the whole book written from his narrative perspective, but also chapters 1–6 with chapters 24–26 contain a frame where he is the protagonist. John Mark speaks here in the first person singular, and this frame constitutes roughly a third of the whole text. His figure is rather in the centre of the controversy between Barnabas and Paul (chs. 7–10). In the rest of the book, most of the events are told in the plural ‘we’, including the founding of churches, consecration of bishops (ch. 17), and instruction of local leaders (ch. 22).

It is logical to suggest that a certain version of the *Acts of Mark* served as a source for the *Acts of Barnabas*. That hypothetical version seems to be lost. The longer *Acts of Mark* is most probably dependent on the *Acts of Barnabas*, and the shorter *Martyrdom of Mark* which

31. Lipsius, ‘Acten des Barnabas’, 286. He identifies the recurring theme of Bariesus’ stirring up the Jews against Barnabas (an echo of *Acts* 13.6–12) as the basis of the missionary story on Cyprus, and calls the report on the rest of Barnabas’ deeds ‘extremely scanty’ (ausserordentlich dürftig).

32. Lipsius, ‘Acten des Barnabas’, 287, finds that the ‘remarkable connection’ between Barnabas and the *Gospel of Matthew* and the ‘closer identification’ of his manner of death and place of burial form the ‘really characteristic content’ of the narrative.

33. In Bonnet’s edition, 80 lines out of 253.

predates the *Acts of Barnabas* basically agrees with it only in that Mark was in Alexandria. We have to notice that in most of the passages related to John Mark in our text, the figure of Barnabas is also presupposed. One could perhaps speak about the ‘Acts of Barnabas and John Mark’. If we now concentrate on those parts of the narrative which are centred around the figure of John Mark, we can easily notice that the theme of his commission is foremost in them. The following passages pertain directly to the subject of our study:

Since from the end of the parousia of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the unwearied, the philanthropic, the mighty, the Shepherd, the Teacher, the Physician, I beheld and saw the unspeakable, holy, and blameless mystery of the Christians who hold the hope in holiness and who have been sealed; and since I have zealously served it, I, John, have deemed it necessary to give account of the mysteries which I have heard and seen. I was accompanying the holy apostles Barnabas and Paul, being formerly a servant of Cyril, the high-priest of Zeus, but now having received the gift of the Holy Spirit through Paul, Barnabas, and Silas, who are worthy of the calling, and who baptized me in Iconium (chs. 1–2).

35. The *Martyrdom of Mark* is dated back to the middle of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century by Lipsius, ‘Acten des Markus’, 345. We have two (published) Greek recensions from a Parisian and a Vatican codex (see the Bibliography).


37. It is difficult to translate ἀπὸ τῆς καθόδου τῆς […] παρουσίας. Walker, ‘Acts of Barnabas’, 293, renders it literally ‘from the descent of the presence’, which does not help us further. Bonnet (in the critical apparatus) suggests that τῆς καθόδου might be superfluous. In Patristic Greek, the word καθόδος in itself can mean the descent or incarnation of Jesus (Lampe, *Lexicon*, 690). ‘Parousy’ certainly means here the period of Jesus’ ministry until his ascension. The preface is an imitation of the beginning of the Gospel of Luke and of Acts (Luke 1.1–4 and Acts 1.1–8), which are also referring back to the earthly ministry of Jesus.

38. The word ἐφαρμακεύων is an echo of Revelation 7.1–8: ‘And I saw another angel rising from the East who hold the living seal of God and cried […]’, “do not damage the earth […] until I seal the servants of our God on their foreheads”, etc.’. Later ὑφαρμακεύω was a usual word for baptism; cf. Lampe, *Lexicon*, 1355, s.v. C; Yseabert, *Baptismal Terminology*, 391–421.

39. Or: ‘served him’, that is, Jesus. Even then the expression means service among the Christians. A claim for John serving Jesus during his ministry is hardly reconcilable with the context (especially chs. 2 and 3).
After I was baptized, I saw in a vision a man standing clothed in white raiment, and he said to me: ‘Take courage, John, because your name will be changed to Mark, and your glory will be proclaimed in all the world. And the darkness that was in you has departed from you, and you have been given understanding to know the mysteries of God (ch. 3).’

When I saw the vision, becoming greatly terrified, I went to the feet of Barnabas, and related to him the mysteries that I had seen and heard from that man. The apostle Paul was not present when I reported the mysteries. Barnabas said to me: ‘Do not reveal the sign that you have seen. For the Lord appeared also to me last night and said, “Take courage, for as you have given your soul for my name to die and be excluded from your people, so also you shall be made perfect. Moreover, as for the servant who is with you, take him also with yourself [plural]; for he has certain mysteries”. Now, my child, keep to yourself the words that you have seen and heard; for a time will come for you to reveal [them]’. (ch. 4)

After I was instructed in these things by him, we remained in Iconium for many days; for there was a holy and pious man, who also entertained us, whose house also Paul had sanctified. From there, we came to Seleucia, and after staying three days sailed away to Cyprus; and I was ministering to them until we had gone round all Cyprus. Setting sail from Cyprus we landed in Perge of Pamphylia. Then I stayed there about two months, wishing to sail to the regions of the West, but the Holy Spirit did not allow me. Turning back, I again sought the apostles, and on learning that they were in Antioch, I went to them (ch. 5).

In Antioch, I found Paul in bed from the toil of the journey. When he saw me, he was exceedingly grieved because of my delaying in Pamphylia. Barnabas came and entreated him, and he tasted bread, and took a little of it. They preached the word of the Lord, and enlightened many Jews and Greeks. I only attended to them, and did not dare to approach Paul, because he held that I spent much time in

41. The ‘holy and pious man’ entertaining Paul and his companions in Iconium might be identical with Onesiphorus in the Acts of Paul and Thecla 2. However, we do not see enough reason to suggest that the author of the Acts of Barnabas used the Acts of Paul and Thecla. Cf. note 5 above.
Pamphylia, and was quite enraged against me. I gave repentance on my knees on the ground to Paul, and he would not endure it. Although I remained for three weeks in entreaty and prayer on my knees, I was unable to prevail on him about myself; for his great grievance against me was on account of my keeping several parchments in Pamphylia (ch. 6).

Now great dissension arose between them. Barnabas urged me also to accompany them, because I was their servant from the beginning, and was serving them in all Cyprus until they came to Perga of Pamphylia; and I there had remained many days. But Paul cried out against Barnabas, saying, ‘It is impossible that this one may come with us’. Those who were with us there urged me to accompany them, because there was a vow upon me to follow them to the end. Thus, Paul said to Barnabas, ‘If you want to take with you John, who is also called Mark, go another way; for he shall not come with us’. Barnabas coming to himself, said, ‘The grace of God does not abandon the one who has once served the Gospel and journeyed with us. If, therefore, this be agreeable to you, Father Paul, I take him and go’. Paul answered, ‘Go in the grace of Christ, and so we in the power of the Spirit’ (ch. 8).

(In chs. 24–5 John Mark steals the ashes of Barnabas, buries them in a cave, and escapes from ‘the Jews’.)

Coming to the shore, we found an Egyptian ship, and after embarking in it, we landed in Alexandria. I remained there teaching the word of the Lord to brothers who came to me, enlightening them, and preaching what I had been taught by the apostles of Christ, who also baptized me in the name of Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost; who also changed my name into Mark in the water of baptism, by which also I hope to bring many to the glory of God through His grace. Because to Him is due honour and everlasting glory. Amen (ch. 26).

This is the narrative frame of the book, which consists essentially of the commission story of John Mark. From the perspective of John

43. Or: ‘he did not refuse it’. The middle voice of ἀνέχω can mean both (see Lampe, _Lexicon_, 137). Paul is shown, however, as rather unrelenting in the whole episode.

44. Or: ‘the rest of the parchments’, ‘the major parchments’ (τοὺς πλέιους μεμβράνας). We do not know about this affair from other sources. The motif is reminiscent of 2 _Timothy_ 4.13. The objects in question are parchment codices (_membranae_); cf. Gamble, _Books_, 51–2, 64–5.
Mark’s commission, we can divide the text into the following episodes: (a) prologue and conversion to Christianity; (b) the revelation of mysteries; (c) commission for the apostolic mission with Barnabas; (d) first journeys with Paul and Barnabas; (e) conflict with Paul; [(f) the ‘Acts of Barnabas’ proper, rounded off by the stealing and burying of the ashes;] and (g) ministry in Alexandria. Below we will have a closer look at each of these episodes.

(a) The prologue of the book, which also contains the remarks on John Mark’s conversion to Christianity, clearly imitates the opening verses of the Gospel of Luke (and to a lesser degree the beginning of Acts). Both prologues consist of two parts, the first beginning with ἐπειδήπερ (since, after), the second with the personal pronoun ‘I’ (καὶμοι, ἐγώ), and claim the competence of the author who ‘followed’ (παρακολούθεω, συνακολούθεω) the events. The imitation of the Lucan prologue already clearly shows that pseudo-Mark wants to (re)write a piece of biblical history. Whereas the Acts of Titus (ch. 2) depicts its hero as an eyewitness to Jesus’ ministry and death in Jerusalem, the Acts of Barnabas situates John Mark in the institutional framework of the early Church. He is not an eyewitness to Jesus’ ministry, but rather to the ‘mysteries of the Christians’.

The conversion of John Mark is told as part of the prologue. Given that the prologue carefully imitates the Lucan writings, it is remarkable that the conversion story itself contradicts the information of Acts 12 (esp. verses 12 and 15), where we read that John Mark and

45. What παρακολούθεω in Luke 1.3 means remains ambiguous. Moessner, ‘Eyewitnesses’, 122, after examining the occurrences of the verb in Josephus concludes that ‘Luke is either presenting himself as a contemporary who stayed actively informed about Jesus and his followers […] or as one who […] has an immediate comprehension or valuation of their significance’.

46. Other parallel expressions include ‘servant’ and ‘serve’ (ὑπηρέτης, δουλεῖω), which Luke applies to the apostolic generation, but John Mark to himself; ‘write’ and ‘expound’ (γράφω, ἔξηγέωμαι); ‘eyewitnesses and servants of the word’ and ‘the Christians who devoutly preserve the hope’.

47. This is in accordance with the witness of Papias (Eusebius, Church History 3.39.15), who claimed John Mark’s authorship for the Gospel of Mark, but denied that he would have ‘heard’ or ‘followed’ Jesus: οὖτε γὰρ ἠκούσε τοῦ κυρίου, οὐτε παρακολούθησαν αὐτῷ. A similar passage is found in Megethios, see Lipsius, ‘Acten des Markus’, 328, note 1.
his mother Mary lived in Jerusalem and their house was a meeting-
point of the Jesus-followers. This suggests that they were Jews who
from an early time belonged to the Christian community of Jerusalem.
The *Acts of Barnabas*, however, places the baptism of John Mark into
the context of the first Pauline mission in Iconium (reported also in
*Acts* 14.1–7), and makes him a servant of a high-priest of Zeus. Our
text relies here on a tradition that was obviously independent from the
canonical *Acts*. In the patristic tradition, John Mark is a Levite from
Jerusalem who amputated his thumb to become ineligible for the
priestly service⁴⁸. With some assimilation to the conversion story of
Paul one could have made John Mark easily the agent of the Jewish
high-priests. But whence did the tradition come that he was the ser-
vant of Cyrillus, the high-priest of Zeus?

A survey of the whole book shows that pagan temple-servants are
typical figures of the social world of the *Acts of Barnabas*. In Crom-
mautica, the first stage of the second ministry on Cyprus (ch. 14),
Barnabas and his group are entertained by two temple-servants, Ti-
mon and Ariston. Timon is healed, and soon we find him in the com-
pany of Heraclius, the to-be bishop of Cyprus (chs. 16–7). A third
temple servant, Rhodon, appears in Palaia Paphus (ch. 18). If we now
look at the finishing chapters, we will find precisely these three per-
sons, Timon, Rhodon, and Ariston, as the companions of John Mark
when stealing and burying the ashes of Barnabas and sailing to Alex-
andria. Thus with John Mark, there is a tight group of four temple-
servants in the *Acts of Barnabas*, who convert to Christianity, bury
the remains of the apostle, and continue missionary work in Alexan-
dria. Although they occasionally appear in the company of Cypriote
clergymen, they themselves do not seem to have been leading figures
in the history of the Church of Cyprus. They might have had, how-
ever, more importance in Alexandria. We can conclude that the figure
of John Mark in the *Acts of Barnabas* is coloured by Cypriote local
tradition—perhaps with Alexandrian ties—about the four temple-ser-

⁴⁸. A witness from the fourth century is the prologue to the *Gospel of Mark* in
the Codex aureus: *sacerdotium in Israel agens secundum carnem Levita* […],
*denique amputasse sibi post fidem pollicem dicitur ut sacerdotio reprobus habe-
retur* (quoted in Lipsius, ‘Acten des Markus’, 325, note 1; cf. ibidem, 326, note 1
and p. 327, note 1).
vants who were converted by Barnabas. This tradition is singular (no ἵεροδοῦλοι are found in the other apostolic Acts) and unrelated to the political controversies (discussed earlier in this chapter) of the fourth and fifth centuries⁴⁹.

(b) The baptism of John Mark by Paul, Barnabas, and Silas is not the final seal on his commission (as with Paul in Acts 9), but rather the first step. It is immediately followed by a vision, in which he receives the name Mark. The man in a white stole who appears to him is meant to be an angel rather than Jesus⁵⁰, who is explicitly named in the visions of Barnabas and Paul (chs. 4 and 10). In the Martyrdom of Mark it is Jesus himself who appears to Mark, on this and other occasions⁵¹. The difference is significant because it once again shows that our text makes no effort to elevate John Mark to the rank of an apostle either by making him an eyewitness to Jesus’ life and death⁵² (as Titus in his Acts) or by epiphanies (as Paul the canonical Acts⁵³). John Mark remains an ideal figure of the second generation, initiated to the ‘mysteries’ of Christianity as a religious system⁵⁴, rather than being one of the founders. It seems likely that the ‘mysteries of God’ mentioned in this vision are the same as the ‘mysteries of the Christians’ in the prologue. What the ‘mysteries’ exactly are is a difficult question. They have probably less to do with specific doctrines (such as not

⁴⁹. The reminiscence of pagan cults on Cyprus is typical of the book: cf. chapters 16, 18, 20–1; Lipsius, ‘Acten des Barnabas’, 287–8. Although Hackett, Church of Cyprus, 11, thinks that the cult of Zeus (Jupiter) on Cyprus—in which even human sacrifice occurred—was extinct by the time of Epiphanius the Great, bishop of Salamis (Constantia) from 368 or 369 (ibidem, 304), in rural areas pagan rites might well have survived until the time of the Acts of Barnabas; cf. note 12 above, and the discussion of the ἵεροδοῦλοι below.


⁵¹. Chapter 2 of the Parisian, chapter 3 of the Vatican text. The content of the revelation is different. In chapter 8 of both texts Jesus converses with Mark before his death.

⁵². Cf. the prologue of the book; notes 37 and 39 above.

⁵³. Paul’s argumentation in his own epistles is similar, cf. Galatians 1.15–17 and 1 Corinthians 15.1–8; pp. 46 and 84 above.

⁵⁴. The expressions τὸ ἐν σοὶ σκότος παρηλθὲν and ἐδόθη σοι σύνεσις πρὸς τὸ γνῶναι κτλ. belong to the language of conversion that is attested in Acts 26.18; cf. p. 83, note 81 above.
mentioned in the book) than with the life and institutions of the Church. They perhaps included the apostolic ‘know-how’ of mission and church-founding, as mentioned in chapter 22, where John Mark himself participates in the instruction of the new bishop Heraclides on ‘how to proclaim the gospel of God, and establish churches and officials in them’.

(c) As the next episode shows, one of the narrative functions of the revelation is to qualify John Mark as a co-worker of the apostles. It is in this sense that Barnabas calls the revelation a ‘sign’ (δύναμις). Barnabas is told in a vision to take John Mark with him because ‘he has certain mysteries’. He commands John Mark to keep them until the appropriate time comes to reveal them. We can only speculate what time is meant. If we want to find it within the context of the story, it might refer to the preaching of John Mark in Alexandria (ch. 26), although there he is said to speak what he learned ‘from the apostles of Christ’. This also calls our attention to the complexity of John’s figure in the book. On the one hand, there is a tendency to subordinate him to Paul and Barnabas. On the other hand, there is a tendency to emancipate him from this role.

(d) Such an autonomous act is his staying in Perge, with the plan to embark on a missionary journey to the West on his own. This plan is not known either from the canonical Acts (whose itinerary is otherwise followed), or from earlier traditions on John Mark. Had he gone to the Western parts and founded churches there, he would have managed to emancipate himself from the position of an apprentice to that of an apostle. But the rules of the narrative do not allow him to do that. Until the end of the story he has to remain the faithful (and inferior) companion of Barnabas, the admiring student and chronicler,

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55. Lipsius, Acten des Barnabas, 290, note 3, suggests the mysteries of Mark are ‘specielle Anweisungen in Betreff seines künftigen Lehrberufs’.
56. The later Acts of Mark (ch. 8) probably took it from the Acts of Barnabas: ‘The most holy apostle Mark wanted to reach the Western parts of the Galls, but he did not execute this [plan] because of divine revelation’. This motif is basically different from Mark being the ‘translator’ of Peter in Rome (Eusebius, Church History 3.39.15).
similar to the figures of Luke, Baruch, and Damis.\(^{57}\) Therefore, an echo of Acts 16.6 is used as a *deus ex machina* to keep him on the correct track: ‘But the Holy Spirit did not allow me’\(^{58}\).

(e) Already in the commission story of Paul in Acts 9 we have seen that a hero can have two patrons. In that case, however, Ananias and Barnabas helped Paul at two different stages of his career. In the *Acts of Barnabas* it is Paul, Barnabas and Titus who baptise John Mark in Iconium, and soon he finds himself involved in the conflict of two of his patrons, Paul and Barnabas. That he is bound to Barnabas by stronger ties is clear already from chapter 4, where Paul is absent when John Mark relates his heavenly revelation.

It is remarkable how many details the text supplies about the conflict of the two apostles; this is the best elaborated episode in the whole book. The person of John Mark becomes quite important in this conflict. He is depicted as ultimately humble, creeping on his knees before Paul, who is shown, in turn, as a crotchety old fellow, lying in bed and refusing food, unrelenting because of a few books, crying out against his fellow apostle in public, and finally turning up his nose and departing from his co-workers. The public sentiment in the Antiochian church also supports John Mark and Barnabas, who are evidently the positive heroes of the episode.

The figures of Paul and Barnabas are drawn according to the ‘iconographical’ rules of the tradition. Barnabas is not the patron of Paul any more (as in Acts 9), but rather his disciple, calling him ‘father’ (three times in chs. 8–9) and serving him when he lies in bed after the tiresome journey (ch. 6). It means that even from the Cypriote point of view Paul stands higher in the hierarchy, and while claiming that Barnabas was more gentlemanly in character, his subordinate position among the saints is not denied.

The two heavenly visions that occur to Paul in this episode fulfil multiple purposes. (1) They justify Paul’s behaviour in two respects: the first vision (ch. 7) confirms that he had to go to Jerusalem, while


\(^{58}\) There Paul and his companions were ‘forbidden by the Holy Spirit’ (κωλυθέντες υπό τοῦ ἐγκύου πνεύματος) to preach in Asia.
the second (ch. 10) explains the separation from Barnabas: ‘Do not force Barnabas not to go to Cyprus’. (2) The second vision states that Barnabas’ ministry on Cyprus is necessitated by divine provision: ‘For there it has been prepared for him to enlighten many people’. (3) The second vision at the same time serves as a conclusion to the conflict episode, sealing the farewell of the two apostles.

Such a peaceful and ‘pneumatic’ settling of the conflict is important also for John Mark. After all, he did not cause a schism between the two leaders of the early Christian missions to the West, but rather his figure smoothly fitted into the scenario written by God. After his emancipatory efforts in Perge, he is shown (especially by his spectacular mea culpa before Paul) to accept his subordinate position, from now on as a co-worker on the side of Barnabas, rather than an apprentice, until he will be let on his own in the final chapters of the book.

(f) The stealing and burial of the ashes of Barnabas has already been discussed in the previous section. After the death of the apostle, John Mark evidently assumes the leadership in the team, which seems to consist basically of the other converted temple-servants, Timon, Rhodon, and Ariston. It is remarkable that he does not become a successor of Barnabas in any sense. When his master dies, he provides for an appropriate burial of the remains, and by the same act he separates himself from his master and from the whole Cyprus tradition.

(g) With his group John Mark sails to Alexandria, and begins to teach (διδάσκων) there. One has to notice, however, that there is no mention of any real missionary activity in Alexandria. John Mark teaches only the brothers he already finds there, ‘enlightening’ them, and ‘preaching’ whatever he ‘learned from the apostles of Christ’. He is explicitly less than an apostle even at the end of the story: a witness to the apostolic teaching—rather than to the life and death of Jesus.

Conclusions

The figure of John Mark seems to have been downgraded consciously in the Acts of Barnabas. There is a tradition behind the text in which he is commissioned as an apostle and entrusted with ‘mysteries’
(whatever these actually meant) in a heavenly revelation. The tradition that John Mark introduced Christianity to Alexandria is attested at least from the early fourth century:

It is told about Mark that he was sent to Egypt and preached the Gospel (which he also wrote down) for the first time there, and founded the first church in Alexandria itself 59.

This tradition is elaborated in the Martyrdom of Mark and the Acts of Mark. It is also remarkable that the Acts of Barnabas never identifies John Mark with the writer or the gospel wearing his name, but pays much attention to the Gospel of Matthew, referring to the ties between its author and Barnabas.

Thus our text treats the tradition about Mark in an ambivalent way. First, it introduces a lengthy commission narrative about him. (Let us notice that there is no commission story about Barnabas in the book.) In this story it is emphasised several times that he was entrusted with ‘mysteries’ and that he planned to pursue his own mission to the West. In the notable conflict episode, however, he totally surrenders to Paul and is happy to continue his career as the co-worker of Barnabas. After doing the services of a faithful disciple of Barnabas, he ends up in Alexandria as the mouthpiece of the apostles.

The reason for this odd treatment of his figure is probably that the legendary material about Mark was used to fill up the thin tradition about Barnabas. The lively figure of the student in the book is intended to emphasise the somewhat light figure of his master, but not allowed to overshadow it. It is also possible that certain deeds which earlier tradition attributed to Mark are simply told about Barnabas here. We have some clues to suggest that. (1) Barnabas is martyred in a similar way as Mark in his Martyrdom; both are dragged by the neck, and then their bodies are burned 60. (2) The healing of Timon is attributed to Mark in his Acts 61. (3) Another interesting issue is Barnabas’ use of the precious roll. It is (unfortunately for our thesis) not mentioned in the Marcan Acts known to us. But there is another

59. Eusebius, Church History 2.16.1.
60. Martyrdom of Mark 9–10.
61. Acts of Mark 15, cf. Acts of Barnabas 15. Since Timon is not mentioned in the Martyrdom, the similarity can be explained also the other way around: a healing by Barnabas was later attributed to Mark.
point where the two traditions can be compared. In chapter 22 of his Acts, Barnabas unfolds the roll of the Gospel of Matthew and teaches from it. In earlier tradition (see the quote from Eusebius above) Mark preaches the gospel that he also wrote down. Consequently, the use of the notable book in the Acts of Barnabas (and the silence about Mark being the writer of a Gospel) might be also a sign of the blending of the two traditions—which in this book happens to the benefit of Barnabas and at the expense of Mark.

Another important aspect of the commission of John Mark is his original job as a pagan temple-servant, along with his appearance in the company of another three Christians with that background (Mark being the leader of the group). At this point the book represents a new development of the institutional type of commission. Not only does an individual become integrated into the institutional frameworks of a community, but several individuals associated with a Greco-Roman institution are converted and find their place in Christianity as a group.

Can the story be interpreted as the collective conversion of Cypriote temple-servants into Christian clergy, or even as the transformation of a Greco-Roman religious institution into a Christian one? Although there is no direct evidence to prove that, still we have a few analogies and hints.

62. Although the codex was more widespread in Early Christianity, there are arguments for identifying this book as a roll. (1) The Acts of Barnabas uses two words for books. The Latin membranae meant a parchment codex (note 44 above); the Greek βιβλος designated a papyrus sheet or roll, later any kind of book. The books held by John Mark in Pamphylia (ch. 6) are membranae; Barnabas’ book is βιβλος (ch. 22). The differentiation implies that the latter is not a (parchment) codex. (2) A distinction between βιβλία (rolls?) and membranae is found in 2 Timothy 4.13, on which Acts of Barnabas 6 probably relies. (3) When Barnabas opens the book in ch. 22, ἐναπτύσσω is used, the term for unfolding a roll (Liddel and Scott, Lexicon, 118a). (4) The roll appears in early Christian literature in a similar context. In the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus opens the scroll of Isaiah (ἐναπτύσσεις τὸ βιβλίον), reads from it, rolls it up, and begins to speak (ἠρέσσετα λέγειν, Luke 4.17–21). This scene may have inspired our text: Barnabas opens the Gospel (ἐναπτύσσεις τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) and begins to teach (ἠρέσσετα διδάσκειν). Another example is found in the Acts of Peter 20: when Peter finds someone reading the Gospel, he rolls up the book. Cf. Revelation 5.1ff; Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs 12.
The conversion of a coherent group of Hellenic rhetoricians is known from Alexandria at the time of the *Acts of Barnabas*. This group, known as the *philoponoi*, became actively engaged in missionary activity among the pagan population of the city. Conversions at that time were often connected (as a reason as well as a consequence) with the destruction of pagan temples. The *philoponoi* themselves actively took part in the demolishing of a temple of Isis. The pagan temples were not necessarily demolished to the ground, and ‘temple conversions’ around the time of the *Acts of Barnabas* may have well meant the reconstruction of the place for Christian use. Even the pagan rites might have been continued with some Christian adjustment and reinterpretation.

The episode about the μερός δρόμος at Curium (ch. 19) may fit into the context of the temple conversions. The motif of the apostle’s destroying a pagan sanctuary with his words is known from the *Acts of Paul* 5 (Papyrus Heidelberg 37–9), the *Acts of John* 42–7, the *Acts of Titus* 9, and the Coptic *Acts of Philip*. Notwithstanding our passage, there are no victims in those stories; the only one in the *Acts of John* is raised and converted. There are at least three similar episodes in Pseudo-Prochorus, which is dated tentatively to the 5th century, when the *Acts of Barnabas* was also written. In this book, John destroys pagan sanctuaries on two occasions, first the temple of Artemis in Ephesus (a parallel to *Acts of John* 42–7 mentioned above), and later the temple of Apollon on Patmus. The former...

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63. Their story is mainly known from the *Vita Severi* by Zachariah of Mytilene, himself a *philoponos*; cf. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, vol 2, 1–51. The events reported took place at the time of the emperor Zeno (p. 14), when also the independence of the Cypriote church was reconfirmed (cf. above in this Chapter).


65. Deichmann, ‘Frühchristliche Kirchen’ 115–36, lists a great number of ‘converted temples’ (*gewandelte Heiligtümer*) all over the Mediterranean (unfortunately none from Cyprus). Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, vol 2, 378, writes: ‘The work may only have entailed knocking out walls to add the apses for the altar, reliquary, and *diakonikon*, and furnishing the interior suitably with cut marble slabs’.


68. See p. 172 above.

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episode is especially interesting for us. It elaborates on the much earlier *Acts of John* 42–7 (mentioned above), but contains several new motifs. *Pseudo-Prochorus* uses the same adjective (μικρός) for the temple of Artemis70 as the *Acts of Barnabas* for the notable δρόμος. The word is attested as a name for pagan temples in the same century71. Before finally destroying the temple, John also calls about an earthquake, which kills eight hundred persons. This reminds the reader of the death of ‘many people’ at Curium after Barnabas ‘rebuked the place’. The place described in the *Acts of Barnabas* is known to us from excavations. There was a monumental temple-complex of Apollo one and a half miles to the west of the city, and a stadium near the temple beside the road72. Both of our texts may reflect actual aggression against the remnants of pagan cults in the fifth century, or the ‘abominable’ (μικρός) places, as they call them.

In conclusion, the religious situation of the fifth century makes it plausible that a group of pagan temple personnel converts and continues its career as a team of Christian missionaries. The group-cohesion and the missionary zeal of the Alexandrian philoponoi provides a good parallel. The *Acts of Barnabas* probably made John Mark the leading figure of this team because tradition held he was a Jewish temple servant73. In one of the typical Lucan summaries of the canonical *Acts* we read: ‘The word of God grew and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly; also a large multitude of the priests (πολλοί τε ὑγροὶ τῶν ἱερέων) were obedient to the faith’74. Although the group of the Cypriote temple-servants was certainly important at one time (it also formed the local basis of the ministry of

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73. Cf. note 48 above.
74. *Acts* 6.7. Josephus provides some background here: In *Against Apion* 2.108 (cf. 2.119) he writes about four tribes of priests each with over 5000 members. (One may compare this to the data of the *Letter of Aristeas* 95 about 700 priests and many other persons on duty at one time in the temple.) In *Jewish War* 2.409–10, Josephus reports a schism on the issue of the sacrifice for the emperor. It also happened that the high-priests confiscated the tithe due to the lower priesthood (*Antiquities* 20.181).
Barnabas, see ch. 1475, they never became the leading force in the Cypriote church, as the subordinate position of John Mark in the story shows.

In sum, this late example of commission in the apostolic Acts tells us about a game of power related to religious institutions. The realities of contemporary church politics—namely, the tendency of centralisation around a few important patriarchates (like the Roman administrative centre Antioch) and the struggle for independence of communities with less power and influence (like the Church of Cyprus)—presents itself in the legendary narratives. The account of the conflict in Antioch might be read as a miniature imitation of the lengthy controversies at the ecumenical councils76. It is against this background that the figure of John Mark is drawn. During his commission story he tries to find his place in a changing network of religious institutions; between pagan and Christian offices on the one hand, and personal emancipation and Church hierarchy on the other hand.

75. ‘[A]nd going to the place called Crommautica we found Timon and Ariston the temple servants, by whom we were also entertained’.

76. Perhaps of the Council of Ephesus itself, where the Cypriote delegates were fighting for their independence. Cf. Hackett, Church of Cyprus, 16–21.

The Acts of Titus is similar to the Acts of Barnabas in several aspects: age, length, purpose, and compositional technique. Written in Greek some time between the fifth and seventh centuries, the Acts of Titus is preserved in two epitomes. It elaborates on ecclesiastical traditions from the canonical Acts and the Acts of Paul, and embellishes the figure of Titus, the saint of the island, with Cretan colours. The inscribed author of the Acts of Titus, ‘Zenas the Lawyer’, is a biblical person—just as John Mark in the Acts of Barnabas. This time, however, the biographer remains in the background. There is no mention of him apart from the preface, and there are no ‘we passages’ in the text, either. The position of the protagonist is unchallenged in the narrative, and his commission is told in much detail.

According to his Acts, Titus stemmed from the lineage of Minos, the mythological king of Crete. At the age of twenty, while devoutly studying ‘Homer and the other philosophers’, he heard a voice: ‘Titus, you must depart from here and save your soul, for this learning will be of no benefit for you’. He waited nine years for a confirmation of the voice, and finally he was commanded in a vision to read the book of the Hebrews. He took up Isaiah, and read the following verse: ‘Return to me, many islands. The Lord saves Israel with everlasting

1. The text has been edited by Halkin, ‘La légende crétoise de Saint Tite’. An English translation has been published by Pervo, ‘Acts of Titus’, 467–473.
2. We can only roughly date the text. On the one hand, it presupposes the metropolitan organisation of Crete in the early fifth century. On the other hand, it was used by Andrew of Crete in the seventh. Cf. Lipsius, ‘Acten des Titus’, 403; James, ‘Acts of Titus’, 555; Halkin, ‘La légende crétoise’, 242; Castelfranchi, ‘Crete’ 208; Pervo, ‘Acts of Titus’, 457. The extant texts are probably epitomes of a longer writing, cf. James, ibidem, Halkin, ibidem, Pervo, ibidem and 468, note 82.
3. Ζηνᾶς ὁ νομικός (Zenas the lawyer) is known from Titus 3.13, where Paul is told to have sent him to Titus, together with Luke.
salvation. The proconsul of Crete happened to be the uncle of Titus, and when he heard of ‘Christ the Master’ he sent Titus to Jerusalem. Titus witnessed the ministry and death of Jesus, and became a believer.

After some allusions to the Lucan Acts and the Acts of Paul, we learn that ‘St Titus was ordained by the apostles and sent with Paul to teach and ordain whomever Paul might desire’. Then we read about Titus’ ministry, first on the side of Paul, and after the death of the latter with other Pauline disciples: Timothy and Luke. The book further contains details about the saint’s diet, his marvellous deeds, and his correspondence. It reports his peaceful and wondrous death, and the miracles at his tomb. Finally it gives a chronology of his life.

The similarities with the commission of John Mark in the Acts of Barnabas are remarkable. In our typology we can classify both as ‘institutional’ commission stories. Like John Mark (who was a pagan temple-servant of Zeus before his conversion), Titus comes from a Greek background. Both of them receive heavenly revelations, and the apostles lay their hands on them. They join the Pauline circle (in Antioch, although this is not explicit in the Acts of Titus), and spend years as the companions of Paul (and of Barnabas, in the case of John Mark). After the death of Barnabas and Paul, respectively they engage in missionary activity on their own. In both writings, much emphasis falls on the institutional organisation of Christianity. John Mark and Titus ordain bishops under the supervision of Barnabas and Paul, and Titus also ordains bishops on his own.

The differences between the two commission stories are also evident. In the Acts of Barnabas John Mark is a chronicler and companion, a figure similar to Baruch, Luke, or Damis, who receives an un-

4. A combination of Isaiah 41.1 and 45.17. The mention of the islands in Isaiah is understood in the text as a reference to Crete.
5. Acts of Titus 4, probably containing an allusion to the canonical Titus 1.5–9 where Paul (the inscribed author) instructs Titus about the ordination of elders and bishops.
6. We read about John Mark’s baptism (Acts of Barnabas 1) and Titus’ ordination (ἐφηροτοπείται, Acts of Titus 4).
8. In Jeremiah, the canonical Acts, and the Life of Apollonius of Tyana, respectively.
usual amount of attention—at least as compared to his function. Thus the narrative of the book becomes bipolar, a story of Barnabas and John Mark, the latter figure remaining subordinate, however, to the end. In contrast, the Acts of Titus is the most complete biography among the apostolic Acts examined in this study. It follows the life of its hero from his youth until his death, which is a common practice in Greco-Roman biographies. The Acts of Titus, or at least the hypothetical longer text from which the epitomes were made, drew on a number of biographical topoi. Commission appears in an elaborated biographical framework in this writing, and yields the conclusion that the later form of the apostolic Acts assimilated the virtues of the genre of bios.

The Acts of Titus as Biography

That the Acts of Titus was intended to be a biography is made clear by the preface:

Zenas the Lawyer, whom the holy apostle Paul mentions, is the one who wrote his [Titus’] biography (τὸ βιοῦ), the content of which is as follows.

Since the term biographia was coined by Damascius only in the late fifth or early sixth century, in antiquity bios (or the Latin vita) was the word which designated the genre of biography. Other two keywords belonging to biographical literature are found soon after these lines towards the beginning of the text: ‘descent’ (γένος) and ‘education’ (παιδεία). This encourages us to compare our text to an example of the mature form of Greek biography, a text of approximately the same length and relatively close in date to the Acts of Titus. We will use for this purpose one of the bioi by Diogenes Laertius, namely, the Life of

9. Cf. the definition of Momigliano, Greek Biography, 11. This is not necessarily true of Jewish and Christian texts with a biographical character, where birth, or death, or both are often neglected.


11. Momigliano, Greek Biography, 12; Görgemanns and Berschin, ‘Biographic’, 682.
Epimenides, another famous native of Crete. In the epistle to Titus, the Pauline author calls Epimenides a Cretan ‘prophet’, and cites his hexameter about the Cretan morals. Since we have discussed the biography of Epimenides in some detail earlier, for the time being we restrict ourselves to pointing out the most important similarities with the Acts of Titus. If we look at the whole work of Diogenes Laertius, we can see that—apart from the two books dedicated to Plato (Book 3) and Epicurus (Book 10)—most of his biographies are of approximately the same length as the extant versions of the Acts of Titus (or the Acts of Barnabas). The technique applied to achieve this size was also basically the same: abridgement. Diogenes Laertius wrote mainly by combining excerpts from existing biographical works. Similarly to Suetonius and other biographers, he made use of some recurring rubrics (topoi) when compiling his vitae. The narratives on Epimenides (chs. 109–112 of Diogenes Laertius’ Book 1) and Titus can be summarised under the following categories:

(a) descent (γένος): Epimenides was the son of Phaestius or Dosadias; he was a Cretan from Cnossus (109). Titus was a descendant of Minos, the king of Crete (ch. 1).

(b) appearance (εἴδος): Epimenides had long hair, which was not a typical Cretan style (109). Titus’ resting on ‘coarse cloths and sheepskin’ perhaps belongs to this category (ch. 7).

12. Titus 1.12, ‘It was one of them, their very own prophet, who said, “Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons” (Κρήτες ἄει ψεύσται, κοκᾶ θηρία, γαστέρες ἀργαί)’.


15. The Greek terms between parentheses are generally used in the scholarly tradition.

16. ἄνεπαύετο ἐπὶ κιλίκιον καὶ κωδίον. Cilicium occurs frequently in hagiography and ascetic literature (as A. Hilhorst suggests to me). The coarse fabric was originally made of Cilician goat’s hair, and used for sails and mats (Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, 951; Sophocles, Lexicon, 664). Here, as well, it means some kind of mat, cf. ἐπὶ κιλίκιον ἐξισθλῶν ἐκφυόν, Georgius Monachus, Chronicon 590.1.4. The monks produced cilicium, cf. Pachomius, Epistles 8 (Lefort, Pachomiana Latina, 96–7). Cf. Innocent III, De miseria condicionis humane 38.
(c) youth and education (παιδεία): Epimenides tended the sheep of his father and had a fifty-seven year long sleep in a cave (109–10). Titus read the classic authors in his youth but then was turned to the Hebrew Bible by two subsequent visions. He saw the ministry and death of Jesus (chs. 1–2).

(d) acts (πράξεις): Epimenides purified Athens from the pestilence (110–11). Titus first accompanied Paul, then himself wrought miracles and ordained bishops (chs. 3–9).

(e) writings and correspondence (συγγράμματα): Diogenes refers to a considerable bulk of literary work by Epimenides. He quotes Epimenides’ letter to Solon (111–2). Titus ‘constantly sang and gave praise to God’, although he is not explicitly said to have written hymns. He wrote letters to Dionysius the Areopagite\(^1\) and others (ch. 10).

(f) dietary habits: Epimenides received food from the Nymphs, kept it in a cow’s hoof, ate small portions which were entirely absorbed in his body, and was never seen to eat (114)\(^1\). Titus ate only garden vegetables (ch. 7)\(^1\).

(g) death: Epimenides died on returning from Athens at the age of 175 or 199 (111). Titus died at the age of 94 peacefully in his home (ch. 10).

(h) veneration of the hero: Cretans are said (114–5) to have sacrificed to Epimenides as to a god. The Spartans also claim to guard his

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17. Dionysios Areopagites, converted by Paul in Athens according to Acts 17.34, is the fictive author of a collection of theological treatises written around the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries AD, containing a lengthy letter to Titus. Cf. Touwaide, ‘Pseudo-Dionysios Areopagites’, 647.

18. Theophrastus (c. 371–287 BC), *Opinions of Natural Philosophers* 7.12.1, warned that only those parts of squill are edible which Epimenides used to eat, and that are also named after him. This plant (οξάλια or urginea maritima, a sort of onion) was known for its use in purification rituals (Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1610). Thus, Epimenides’ assumed diet reflects his function as a cult reformer, cf. point (d) above.

19. Titus’ diet ἐκ λαχάνων ἡπαίων (of garden vegetables) may reflect an influence of the Epimenides tradition, or an application of Romans 12.1,21. It is interesting to note that neither of the two strict diets described in the Bible, those of the Nazirites (*Numbers* 6.1–4) and John the Baptist (*Mark* 1.6), were vegetarian. One can readily attribute Titus’ assumed eating habits to the practice of the monks, cf. pp. 160f. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 2, also depicts his hero as a vegetarian.
body. Wondrous healings are reported (ch. 11) to have occurred on the tomb of Titus.

(i) chronology: Chronological data on Epimenides are distributed over the whole text of Diogenes. The Acts of Titus ends (ch. 12) with the chronology of the life of Titus.

(j) persons by the same name (διώνυμοι): Diogenes lists two other well-known men called Epimenides.

Although Diogenes Laertius largely varied his rubrics, and did not use them as consistently as earlier Suetonius, the above mentioned categories can be called typical of his book. We did not put commission into a separate rubric. Although the biographies by Diogenes Laertius contain several commission narratives, they are mostly integrated into the account of ‘youth and education’ (παιδεία) . The foregoing comparison should be evaluated from two different—although interconnected—perspectives: (a) the literary form and structure of the book, and (b) the commission narratives themselves.

(a) The Acts of Titus assumed a Greco-Roman biographical form. The earlier Acts can be considered as biographical writings primarily in the sense of the ‘prophetic’ or ‘ideal’ biographies of Jewish and Near Eastern literature. They are lacking either the provenance and youth of the protagonist, or his death, concentrating basically on his ‘acts’ (πράξεως). The Acts of Titus, in contrast, gives a brief account of the whole career of their hero from his youth to his death. The idea of martyrdom, typical of all the previous Acts, is missing from the text. There are no flagellations, chains, stoning, lynching, tortures and spectacular execution, which were stock material in the earlier Acts. Here the hero comes from a high social stance, and remains there throughout his life. He receives a classical education (ch. 1), and he is a nephew and a delegate of the governor of Crete (ch. 2) and brother-in-law of another governor, Rustillus, whom he also converts to Christianity and foretells his consulship (ch. 5). He convinces a deputy of the emperor to build a Christian sanctuary instead of a pagan one, and supervises the works himself (ch. 9). What we have here is

20. The biography of Zeno (7.1), for example, begins with γενος, ειδος, dietary habits, παιδεία, and ουγγρομαι. Cf. Leo, Biographie, 37–84, esp. 39–41, 49.

21. As in 2.48, 6.20–1, 7.2–3. For Greek paideia in hagiography, see pp. 204ff below.
the life of a notable person, a public career of a Roman *vir illustris*
brought to completion.

The consideration of other details, however, will make the relation of our text to Greco-Roman biography appear as more complex. First of all, we have to be aware that it is basically the public activity of the apostle that is reported by his Acts. The remarks on diet and sleeping do not add up to a characterisation of private life (*vita domestica, interior ac familiaris vita*), as for example, in Paulinus’ biography of Ambrose. Although the appearance of the rubric of ἀπόστασις is remarkable, it is basically told from the point of view of the conversion and commission of the hero. The *Acts of Titus* depicts personality in terms of its importance for the community, in which it complies with early Christian biographical tradition:

[Suetonius or Plutarch] wants to show a given person as he actually was, no matter whether good or bad. The Christian biographer, in contrast, [...] ‘omits all the traits from the portrait of his hero that make out his being in its particularity. For him, these are accidental and unimportant’. He depicts an ideal life, an ideal development, as a model for others.

The *Acts of Titus*, even if it assimilates a Greco-Roman pattern, does not abandon the tradition of the ideal biography. One has to note that the portrait of Epimenides (together with other lives by Diogenes Laertius) also exhibits much resemblance to the ideal (prophetic) biographies. The two texts therefore witness to a stage of development where the life of a philosopher and the life of an apostle is seen in very similar terms by their biographers. In fact, there is even more realism in the figure of Titus, while Epimenides remains in a mythological distance.

(b) The commission narratives of the heroes are crucial in both stories. They give the impetus to the public career of both heroes and the driving force of the biographical narratives. After his miraculous dream, Epimenides is known as ‘the most beloved by the gods’, and it is for this reason that the Athenians call him to purify their city. Titus’ revelations and visit to Jerusalem leads up to his ordination by the

apostles, and his missionary activity on the side of Paul. But the commission stories themselves are considerably different, which can be made clear by referring back to our basic threefold typology. On the one hand, Epimenides’ commission is best called philosophical, being basically the affair of the individual and the gods. His activity in Athens might be called prophetic. Titus’ commission, on the other hand, is clearly institutional. His belonging to the formations of Early Christianity is underscored by the narrative, and his legitimacy finally comes from the ordination by the apostles. This highlights another important difference between the philosophers’ lives by Diogenes Laertius and the *Acts of Titus*. Diogenes Laertius (like the early Christian biographies) often strives to create ideal biographies of the Greek heroes, and (unlike Suetonius or Plutarch) occasionally neglects realistic traits of his figures in this process. His protagonists are nevertheless established as emancipated individuals in his narrative world. In the *Acts of Titus*, in contrast, the hero receives his personality through integration into the institutional framework of Christianity.

*Tolle lege*

There are other important literary parallels as well that help us to understand various aspects of Titus’ commission. We will first focus on the hero’s turning away from the classic authors and his turning to the Hebrew Scriptures as ordered by the subsequent heavenly revelations. Independently from each other, both motifs occur in early Christian literature.

 Appropriately to his social rank, Titus is depicted as a young man widely read in the canon of Greco-Roman education. He studied ‘the poems and dramas of Homer and other philosophers’. A heavenly voice, however, warned him that this education (παιδεία) does not serve his benefit and he has to depart from it in order to save his soul. A similar turning away from the Greek authors occurs in the autobiographical accounts attributed to Clement of Rome. According to the *Pseudo-Clementines* (4th century AD), young Clement in his doubts begins to visit the schools of the philosophers, but he does not find

there anything else than ‘the setting up and refutation of doctrines, and controversies, contests, and the art of syllogisms and the invention of premises’25. Then, similarly to Titus, he receives reports about Jesus and travels to Judea. But notwithstanding the Acts of Titus, he meets there only the apostles rather than Jesus26. On his listening to the preaching of Barnabas, he disapproves of the philosophers’ mocking Barnabas because of his uneducated style27.

Augustine in his Confessions (c. 397 AD) also denies the use of the classics in education28. He criticises Homer for depicting Jupiter as ‘thunderer and adulterer’, transferring human traits to the gods rather than divine ones to humans and Terence for stimulating immoral conduct. In conclusion, he says:

But what is this to me, o True Life, my God, that when I was reciting I was applauded above many of my contemporaries and fellow-students? Behold, is not all this smoke and wind? Your praises, Lord, your praises might have supported the offshoot of my heart through your Scriptures, and I would not have been dragged away by the vanity of the crooks as an ugly prey to the birds. There are namely more than one ways to sacrifice to the fallen angels.

Although the bitterest of these utterances about the ‘crooks’ and ‘sacrifice to the fallen angels’ might be references to the Manicheans to whom Augustine later attached himself, the tenor of the sentences—as in the Acts of Titus—is that the reading of Scriptures is useful for the youth, while the reading of the classics is seductive and dangerous. In sum, the same anti-intellectual tendency, a turning away from classical education is discernable in the Pseudo-Clementines, Augustine, and the Acts of Titus. We have to conclude that the readership of the Acts of Titus is to be sought among the educated of the time who had similar conflicts of whether or not they should read the classical authors. The social setting of the Acts of Titus is different from the

27. Homilies 1.10.1.
28. Confessions 1.16–7, cf. 13–4. In Confessions 3.4.8, Augustine quotes Colossians 2.8–9: Videte, ne quis uos decipiat per philosophiam et inanem seductionem secundum traditionem hominum [etc.].
one generally attributed to the earlier Acts. The commission of Titus, as far as his departure from the classics if considered, could have been a paradigm for educated higher-class individuals who happened to hesitate between pagan philosophy and Christianity.

There is, however, an important difference between the accounts of Clement and Augustine, on the one hand, and the Acts of Titus, on the other hand. The former two texts present their heroes struggling for a solution among their spiritual conflicts, and then consciously deciding to depart from the classic authors. In the Acts of Titus this is commanded, in contrast, by the heavenly voice, in order that Titus might save his soul. Here the rejection of the Greek authors is not the result of spiritual seeking, but rather is demanded by divine authority. As for the motif of the heavenly voice, it is likely to have been invented on the analogy of the following episode, where Titus is told to read the book of the Hebrews.

The first revelation is followed by a period of nine years when Titus is waiting for the heavenly voice to speak again. His hesitation may imply that he continued his old way of education or that he retreated to meditate or pray. Frequently in the commission narratives, the hero has to wait for a subsequent revelation in order to receive a straightforward command from the divinity. The narrative function of this interlude is also to give emphasis to the following episode.

The role that Jewish Scripture plays in Titus’ commission is not without its parallels in late antiquity. Dio Chrysostom (c. 40–112 AD) quotes Homer, Euripides, and Herodotus in his autobiographical account of his commission to philosophy. The relation between the ancient authors and divine oracle is rather complex in this story, but

30. Cf. the context of conversion from Hellenism to Christianity in the Acts of Barnabas; pp. 193f above. For the problem of Greek paideia in hagiography, see Rubenson, ‘Philosophy and Simplicity’, who examines eight biographies (different from the ones discussed above) and identifies three types of dealing with paideia (133–6): (1) omission of the subject; (2) rejection and withdrawal from Greek paideia (as in our narratives); and (3) using paideia as the foundation upon which Christian knowledge and piety can build.
31. 1 Samuel 3.2–15, Acts 9.1–19; Diogenes Laertius, Lives 6.20–1, 7.2–3. For a discussion of subsequent visions, see pp. 228f below.
still the basic pattern remains the same. After his banishment from Rome, Italy, and his native Bithynia, Dio contemplated the texts of the classics. ‘Bearing in mind all these things’ he decides to consult the god in his temple, and receives the order to continue the very thing he was doing (i.e. roaming) until he would go ‘to the furthest part of the world’. Then Dio turns to Homer:

I remembered that Odysseus, after so much straying, did not murmur at wandering again and carrying an oar—as advised by the dead Teiresias—until he would meet people who did not know the sea even by hearsay. And should I not do so if the god commands me?

This passage contains an indirect quotation of *Odyssey* 11.119–34, where Odysseus consults the spirit of Teiresias the Theban diviner. Dio does not actually open a book, but this would be also difficult in his situation—nevertheless, earlier in the narrative he directly quotes from Homer and other authors. In Greco-Roman antiquity, Homer was consulted for oracles in a similar way as was the Bible by Jews and Christians. In the case of Dio, the god’s behest corresponds to Teiresias’ oracle, and this evokes the Homeric passage. Previously to the oracle, Dio is already engaged in meditating over the classics, as Augustine already read the Bible before he heard the famous *tolle lege*.

The pattern appears also in the biographies by Diogenes Laertius (3rd century AD). About Zeno of Citium (333–261 BC) we read:

When he consulted the oracle about what he should do in order to attain the best life, the god answered that he should be in contact with the dead. When he understood what this meant, he read the ancient authors. […] While carrying purple from Phoenicia to Piraeus, he was shipwrecked. He went up to Athens—he was then thirty—and sat down in a bookstore. As he was reading the second book of Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* and found pleasure in it, he asked where such men can be found. Just at the right moment Crates passed by, and the bookseller pointed to him and said, ‘Follow that man’. From that time on he studied with Crates.

33. Examples are quoted by van der Horst, ‘Sacred Books’, 162–6. For the sacred status of Homeric literature in Neoplatonism, see Alexander, ‘Homer’, 141.


35. τέλειοι προσόντες τοῖς νεκροῖς. The verb expresses (defiling) contact with the dead and sexual contact (Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1669).
In this story the divine will to read the book is communicated in two ways. First, the oracle bids Zeno to read the ancient authors. Then the shipwreck—a most important tool of divine guidance in antiquity—takes him to Athens, where he hits upon the *Memorabilia* by Xenophon. Although the passage he reads is not explicitly specified, it is clear that it was the teaching of Socrates, as expounded in the dialogues of the second book of the *Memorabilia*, that compelled Zeno to become a student of philosophy.

The reading or hearing of biblical passages plays a crucial role in some early Christian biographies. In Athanasius’ *Life of Antony*, the hero, while contemplating how the apostles followed Jesus in the gospels and sold their possessions in *Acts*, enters a church and hears the citation from *Matthew*: ‘If you wish to be perfect, go, sell all your possessions, give [it] to the poor, come, follow me, and you will have treasure in heaven’. In the *Life of Saint Martin* by Sulpicius Severus (end of the 4th century), the hero’s adversary is defeated when a member of the congregation randomly opens the Bible during a worship and reads out a verse from *Psalms*: ‘Out of the mouths of infants and sucklings you have perfected your praise because of your enemies, so that you may destroy the enemy and the defender’. The last word of the passage (*defensorem*) agrees with the name of Martin’s adversary, called Defensor, and this gives the clue to reject him, and to appoint Martin bishop. Similarly to these examples of biblio-
mancy, Titus reads a randomly selected Bible verse, which he understands as God’s message.

The closest parallel to the heavenly command to read the ‘Book of the Hebrews’ is the well known *tolle lege* episode of Augustine’s *Confessions*. Although the influence of bibliomantic practices in our text is possible, it remains a peculiarity that both Augustine and Titus open the Scriptures on divine command. In the case of Augustine, the command itself comes from overhearing the children’s play in the neighbouring garden. This particular pattern of commission consists of a divine command which directs the hero to the consultation of books. In other words, these stories legitimate bibliomancy by a preceding heavenly voice, vision, or oracle. Augustine in his distress contemplates biblical passages, as Dio meditated over Homer, Euripides and Herodotus: ‘And you, Lord, how long? How long, Lord, will you be angry forever? Do not remember our iniquities of old.’ In this state of mind he hears the voice of a child: *Tolle lege, tolle lege.* Suddenly he remembers the case of Antony’s hearing the quotation from Matthew, and this helps him interpret the voice as a command to open the Scriptures and read the first verse he finds there: ‘Not in devouring and drunkenness, not in lechery and shamelessness, not in quarrelling and rivalry; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no providence for the flesh in desires.’

It is difficult to say why this specific passage appealed in such a way to Augustine that ‘all shadows of doubt disappeared from his heart’. In those years (in his early thirties) he was in a stage of mental struggle rather than of carnal licentiousness, which—according to his perhaps exaggerating account—characterised his adolescence. At this point we have to mention the helper-figure in the story, Augustine’s friend Alypius, who was being introduced to Christianity

43. Cf. note 37 above.
44. For ‘bibliomancy’, see note 37 above. For *Confessions* in that context, see van der Horst, ‘Sacred Books’, 152–5.
45. The episode we are talking about is *Confessions* 8.12.
46. *Et tu, domine, usquequo* (Psalm 6.4)? *Usquequo, domine, irasceris in finem* (Psalm 79.5)? *Ne memor fueris iniquitatum nostrarum antiquarum* (Psalm 79.8).
48. Cf. *Confessions* 8.7.17
at the same time. Together they studied the subject of conversion, meditating over models as Paul or Antony. The soil was well prepared for Augustine’s conversion, and almost any biblical passage would have had the same effect on him in the given situation. Bibliomancy occurs here in an institutionalised context, where the reaction of the individual is guaranteed by the socio-psychological framework. The best proof of this is that when Alypius hears of Augustine’s experience, he reads one verse further and also ‘converts’, following his friend ‘without any hesitant delay’ (sine ulla turbulenta cunctatione).

Is the conversion of Titus in his Acts also the result of such a systematic preparation? The present form of the text does not provide us with any clue. The book that is used for bibliomancy must be, of course, that ‘of the Hebrews’, since Titus’ conversion is projected back to Jesus’ lifetime. The actual passage consists of two quotations from Deutero-Isaiah: ‘Return to me, many islands: the Lord saves Israel with everlasting salvation’. The particular verse sought out is to be interpreted similarly as the biblical passage in the Life of Saint Martin (see above). We can observe an important distinction here. On the one hand, Dio’s Homeric quotation as well as Antony and Augustine’s texts are more easily applicable to the hero’s situation on a literal level, by drawing a parallel between their personal conflicts and Odysseus’ obedience to the gods in continuing his wanderings, the command to the young man to give his riches to the poor, and Paul’s warning against dissipating life, respectively. In the case of Martin and Titus, on the other hand, the oracle is interpreted with the help of formal coincidences, namely, that Martin’s adversary is called Defensor and that Titus comes from an island.

In the Acts of Titus, bibliomancy also serves to legitimise the churches of Crete, proving that heavenly revelation urged for the Christianisation of the island from the earlier times. The sending of Titus as an envoy of the governor to Jerusalem demonstrates that the Roman administration of the island took official measures toward in-

50. Cf. Confessions 8.2ff
51. Isaiah 41.1 and 45.17. This was not necessarily intended in an earlier version as a ‘frame’ (implying the verses between) as Pervo, ‘Acts of Titus’, 466, note 61, suggests. The combination of clauses taken from different contexts is not unusual in ancient (biblical) interpretation.
Introducing the new cult from the earliest times of its formation. The journey to Jerusalem and the observation (from a distance) of the life and death of ‘Christ the Master’\(^{52}\) might imply the spirituality of pilgrimage in the author’s time. It is interesting that while neither the Acts of Paul nor the Acts of Barnabas took interest in representing Paul, Barnabas, or John Mark as eyewitnesses to Jesus’ life and death, the Acts of Titus assumes its necessity in order to establish the hero’s authority. Nevertheless, Titus the eyewitness is featured throughout the book as subordinate to Paul. Cretan tradition seems uninterested in challenging the positions of Paul in the narrative—as the Cypriote stories on Barnabas did.

**Conclusions**

We can call the commission of Titus institutional in more than one way: It integrates its hero into the institutional frameworks of the apostolic Church, the life of the higher classes, and Roman politics. And in this way it also establishes the official status of Christianity. The commission of Titus is a cult-narrative which tells the initiation of a cultic hero and thus explains the introduction of a new cult. The pattern is found in Hellenistic Egypt in the so called Zoilus-letter, where the hero writes that Sarapis had more than once ordered him in a dream to sail over to Apollonius [the minister of Ptolemy II] and tell him that a temple of Sarapis must be built and a priest established in the Greek quarter of the city\(^ {53}\). Among the other apostolic Acts, the Acts of Thomas relates that the apostle converted kings to Christianity\(^ {54}\). Sometimes it is the rulers themselves who are commanded by the divinity to introduce the new religion. A good example from dynastic Egypt is the cultic reform of Pharaoh Ikhnaton, who introduced the worship of Aton the new solar god and built the new capital Akhetaton (Tell el-Amarna)\(^ {55}\). Among Christian biographies we can quote

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54. *Acts of Thomas* 16, 26 (Gundaphoros), 170 (Misdaius).
55. Breasted, *Eighteenth Dynasty*, 390–1. An inscription in the tomb of the vizier Ramose (translation in Breasted, *Eighteenth Dynasty*, 389) suggests that the new faith was revealed to Ikhnaton by the god Re.
Eusebius’ account of how the visions of Constantine the Great prepared his reforms introducing Christianity as an imperial cult\textsuperscript{56}, including the transfer of the capital to Constantinople, which marked his ‘own transformation from a Western to an Eastern ruler’\textsuperscript{57}. In this context we have to understand the ‘renewal of the islands’ in the \textit{Acts of Titus} as a political program. This agenda is fulfilled when the apostle Titus, member of the local higher class, establishes Christianity on Crete in cooperation with proconsuls and relying on the permission and support of emperors.

To sum up, the commission of Titus in his Acts follows established literary patterns better than does any of the previously discussed texts. We can observe here (1) the structure of Greco-Roman biography, (2) the influence of Christian biographies, (3) an established tradition of conversion in hagiography, making use of bibliomancy (perfectly embodied by the \textit{Confessions} of Augustine)\textsuperscript{58}, and (4) the pattern of introducing new cults, especially as formulated in Eastern traditions. The institutional form of commission is brought to perfection in this text, which projects the positive reception of Christianity by the Greco-Roman higher class back to the lifetime of Jesus, and presents the introduction of the new cult as the concern of the political establishment of that age. Commission becomes political fiction when a Roman proconsul sends an envoy to Palestine to learn from Jesus, or a Christian sanctuary is built from imperial money under Trajan.

56. Eusebius, \textit{Life of Constantine} 1.28–9. For the visions, see recently Cameron, ‘Vita Constantini’, 158–63; idem, ‘Form and Meaning’. Eusebius compares Constantine to Moses, and assigns to him a key role in salvation history.


58. Possidius in his \textit{Life of Augustine} 11.5, writing around 435, asserts that Augustine’s books were translated into Greek. An imitation of the \textit{tolle lege} episode probably occurs in Mark the Deacon’s \textit{Life of Porphyry of Gaza} 45. Although these witnesses are subject to criticism (cf. Courcelle, \textit{Les Confession}, 202), the \textit{Acts of Titus} may provide one more piece of evidence of Augustine’s influence in the East. However, it is also possible that the author of the \textit{Acts of Titus} elaborated on the same topos as the Latin authors did without having read them, using the \textit{Life of Antony} or another Greek source as his model.
10. Morphology

In the Introduction, I gave a preliminary form-critical description of commission with the help of its constant elements, whereas in the first two chapters I completed this with a number of literary critical observations. In this chapter, we turn our attention to both the dramatic relations between the characters and the dramaturgical function of the commission episode in the larger narrative context. The latter aspect also provides a criterion for the closer definition of commission stories. We have talked about ‘commission’ only in such stories where the hero enters into the service of the deity and receives a life-long task; that is, we anchored commission into a biographical framework. In the last two chapters of the book, we will systematise both aspects of apostolic commission stories: their inner organisations as well as their functioning in the larger literary and social frameworks.

First, we will elaborate on the inner dramatic structure of commission. I will use various commission passages discussed in the previous chapters to examine what I call the ‘sujet’ of commission. I distinguish the sujet from the narrative ‘plot’, the latter referring to the (hypothetical) sequence of the narrated events. At the examination of the sujet, I will draw on the narratological insights of three theoreticians. First, as already the title of this chapter suggests, I will rely on the narrative theory of V.J. Propp as explicated in his famous *Morphology of the Folktale*. It is important to note that I will use Propp’s methodology rather than his results. Propp’s morphology has too often been applied as a ready-made universal narrative scheme, which it is not intended to be. What we will borrow from Propp is the definition of the sujet as the complex of motifs. The sujet is not a static scheme, but rather a variable organisation of motifs, where newer motifs can integrate into an existing sujet, or different sujets may
form combinations with each other\(^1\). As for the definition of motifs, for different reasons we do not stick to Propp’s ideas, who examined the ‘functions of the characters’, and thereby identified a limited number of constant elements\(^2\). First, the genre of the apostolic Acts is different from that of the folktale. Second, we have to keep in mind that the commission stories, which we examine, are parts of larger narratives rather than being rounded-off tales themselves. Therefore, the sujets that we describe are also incomplete as compared, for example, to the sujet of a folktale. Third, the small size of the corpus does not enable us to completely break down motifs into elementary ‘functions’. Finally, we have a narratological reason not to slavishly follow Propp’s approach. The sole concentration on ‘actions’ is not completely justifiable. Persons and objects in a narrative function also in other ways, for example, by their symbolic content, or more generally, by all kinds of intertextual references.

Propp found that the thirty-one functions he identified in the Russian folktale fall into seven ‘spheres of activities’\(^3\): those of the antagonist\(^4\), the donor, the helper, the princess (sought-for person), the dispatcher, the hero, and the false hero. Three of these spheres of action correspond to the basic roles in commission stories that we identified at the beginning of our study\(^5\): sender (comparable to the donor as well as the dispatcher), hero (commissioned person), and helper.


2. Propp, *Morphology*, 21, trans. L. Scott, adapted. ‘Function is understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action. […] Functions of characters serve as the invariable, constant elements of the tale, independently of by whom and how they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of the tale. The number of functions known to the folktale is limited’.


4. Drawing on the English translation, literary critics talk about ‘villain’, whereas Propp himself uses the word ‘antagonist’ (антагонист) or ‘saboteur’ (вредитель). He clearly applies a Marxist vocabulary, evoking the irreconcilable antagonism of social classes as well as the image of the saboteur who undermines the stability of the communist state and the proper functioning of planned economy.

5. See p. 22 above.
Later developments of Propp’s theory are also relevant for the understanding of the roles of the commission stories. Let us consider the actantial model of A.-J. Greimas. Greimas, analysing Propp’s theory of the folktale and Souriau’s theory of drama, came to the conclusion that the core of both narrative structures is the relation between the categories of subject and object, which can be expressed as ‘desire’ or ‘quest’\(^6\). There are two other pairs of ‘actants’ in Greimas’ model: sender and receiver (their relation is expressed as ‘communication’)\(^7\); helper and opponent\(^8\). Greimas immediately offers two applications of the model: ancient philosophy and Marxism. This is the philosopher’s story:

Thus, with great simplification, it could be said that for a learned philosopher of the classical age the relationship of desire would be specified, by a semic investment, as the desire of knowing, and the actants of his drama of knowledge would be distributed more or less in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Actant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>philosopher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sender</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiver</td>
<td>mankind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opponent</td>
<td>matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helper</td>
<td>mind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is not difficult to apply this model to the apostolic Acts. The apostle (subject) desires salvation (object), which is offered by God (sender) to mankind (receiver). This is hindered by Satan (opponent) and promoted by the Church (helper)\(^9\). The idea of commission (although not mentioned by that name) is structurally inherent to Greimas’ model. In the folktale, the father of the princess (sought-for person)

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7. Greimas, *Structural Semantics*, 203–5. The original terminology is *destinateur* and *destinataire*, referring to the sender and addressee of a letter.
9. Greimas, *Structural Semantics*, 208. It is also interesting to note his Marxist ‘militant’ scenario, and compare it to the Marxist terminology of Propp himself (note 4 above): Subject: man; Object: classless society; Sender: history; Receiver: mankind; Opponent: bourgeois class; Helper: working class.
10. Cf. the application of the scheme to the *Gospel of John* by Stibbe, ‘Return to Sender’.
commissions the prince to find and rescue her. Similarly, God commissions the philosopher, history commissions the Marxist activist, and the economic system commissions the entrepreneur. Greimas’ interpretation of modern ideologies provides examples of how the idea of commission functions in post-enlightenment, European thought.

In the analysis of the plot of apostolic commission, I will not slavishly follow Greimas’ own application of the model to the theme of philosophy. The a priori reduction of the commission stories to bipolar oppositions of six actants would unnecessarily confine our investigation. However, the narratological analyses of Propp and Greimas can serve as promising starting points for the interpretation of the sujet of apostolic commission stories.

A third approach to narrative structures has to be added at this point. R.C. Schank developed the model of ‘scripts’ for the purpose of Artificial Intelligence research. Scripts are intended to model episodic memory. It is not necessary to discuss the notion of episodic memory in much detail now. Let it suffice that this model describes the narrative organisation of information, as opposed to ‘semantic’ or ‘hierarchical’ memory, which explains the storing of purely lexical data. Episodic memory makes use of scripts: ‘Some episodes are reminiscent of others. As economy measure in the storage of episodes, when enough of them are alike they are remembered in terms of a standardized generalized episode which we will call a script.’ Schank’s scripts are in fact narrative sujets, as it were, of shorter ‘stories’ taken from everyday life. Schank described a script as a series of elementary actions. Their explanatory power lies largely in the fact that the occurrence of a motif belonging to a script evokes (‘triggers’) the rest of the script.

I will elaborate on this model in order to complete the dramatic model based on the works of Propp and Greimas. Commission, too, can be described as a ‘script’, and a number of other scripts can be

14. Originally, Schank and Abelson, *Scripts*, 11–7, used the notion of ‘primitive acts’ that represent ‘the meaning of sentences’.
identified in biblical literature; for example, the exodus script, the gospel script, or the martyrdom script. These scripts describe, instead of stories of everyday life, abstract narrative thought patterns that are implemented (actualised) in different literary contexts. The model of scripts will be adapted in the following way: I will collect an array of typical motifs, and then attempt to describe the rules according to which they can follow (evoke or trigger) each other. In this manner, we do not receive a static list of constant elements, but rather a dynamic array of motifs which combine in different ways as to yield variations of the commission script. I also propose a shorthand reference to motifs. In this system, the name of the motif is followed by three components between square brackets: subject, object, and indirect object.

\textit{motif [subject, object, indirect object]}

Let us now proceed with the analysis of the motifs of apostolic commission. How can one acquire a list of motifs? Propp’s motifs are formal abstractions from the more elementary ‘functions of the characters’. Since I do not examine the functions of the characters exhaustively (neither do I describe, as Schank, every sentence with the help of ‘primitive acts’), I have to take a different approach. I examine a number of narrative patterns within commission stories that may contain one or more motifs. Thus, a higher level of abstraction is involved in the process; namely, the selection of significant narrative patterns. Many narrative patterns have already been discussed at some length, as for example, commission–protest–reassurance, the defeat of the hero, or legitimating by the authorities. Now I will investigate others: villainy, sortes, epiphany, vision, sickness and healing, and the role of helper figures.


Villainy

Villainy is the element in Propp’s sujet by which ‘the actual movement of the tale is created’\textsuperscript{17}. In the context of biblical narratives, it frequently occurs before the commission of a prophet, when either a foreign enemy attacks Israel or the people turn away from God. The prophet is then called to restore Israel to its original state\textsuperscript{18}. In the apostolic commission stories, the motif occurs in the commission of Paul in all the three Lucan versions (\textit{Acts} 9, 22, 26), and in the \textit{Acts of Peter}. To the former we can add Paul’s autobiographical account in \textit{Galatians} 1.13–4.

Paul’s commission in \textit{Acts} (and \textit{Galatians} 1) provides an interesting example of villainy. Here Paul himself is first the antagonist and then the hero. The defeat of the antagonist and the commission of the hero are the same event. The hero’s task, of course, cannot be here to defeat the antagonist. The antagonist is defeated already during the commission story itself, on the Damascus road and the transient (liminal\textsuperscript{19}) period of Paul’s blindness and prayers. The description is \textit{persecute} [hero, addressee]. ‘Addressee’ is a standard actant of the commission stories, and denotes those to whom the commissioner sends the hero.

Villainy occurs in one of the apostolic Acts that we did not discuss earlier in detail\textsuperscript{20}. In the \textit{Acts of Peter} 5 Jesus sends Peter to Rome because Simon Magus has appeared there and gained respect among the Christians. Chapter 4 relates Simon’s arrival at Rome, how he denounced Paul and the Christians as deceivers, and won over to himself everyone except a presbyter and two women. Simon’s activity does not directly harm the people of Rome, but rather it is an indirect attack on Jesus, as becomes clear from his words: ‘his power has perverted all those who believed in me’. The description of the motif is therefore: \textit{mislead} [antagonist, addressee].

\textsuperscript{17} Morphology, 30.
\textsuperscript{18} Baltzer, \textit{Biographie der Propheten}, 29, 64, 112–3, 193–7, and passim.
\textsuperscript{19} For liminality, see p. 235, note 95 below.
\textsuperscript{20} Cf. p. 24 above.
In both variations\textsuperscript{21}, villainy contains an element of conflict whereby it creates tension. The antagonist and the addressee in \textit{mislead} and the hero in \textit{persecute} get into a position that contradicts their functions. The addressee is not supposed to associate with the antagonist, and the hero is not supposed to persecute the addressee. The result is a complete exchange of the narrative roles. The antagonist assumes the role of the hero, but the hero acts as an antagonist. A structural displacement, as it were, occurs in the sujet. This tension naturally moves the plot forward and launches a sequence of motifs that restores the integrity of the narrative functions.

\textbf{Sortes: ‘Apostolic Lottery’ and Sacred Books}

Whereas the aforementioned two motifs use dramatic conflict to initiate the course of events, commission stories more frequently begin with some kind of \textit{deus ex machina}. The deity can launch the story in different ways, of which we can discern two categories in our texts: (1) in epiphanies the deity breaks directly upon human reality, whereas (2) different methods of divination serve as more indirect ways of governing the events. There is also a difference between these categories with regard to their function in the sujet. Epiphanies (discussed in the next section) may occur at various points of the narrative, often as a reaction to the already developed conflict. Divination, in turn, is a typical mode of creating conflict at the beginning.

Out of the different methods that ancient people utilised to learn the will of the deity, we have already dealt with the random opening of (sacred) books\textsuperscript{22}. It was used in Christian biographical literature from the fourth century onwards. Among the apostolic commission stories, we find it in the \textit{Acts of Titus}\textsuperscript{23}. In this narrative, the commission of the hero is tied up with his conversion. His task requires him to change first his basic set of beliefs.

\textsuperscript{21} For a list of motifs and their variations, see pp. 244f below. The name ‘motif’ will be used also for a given variation of a motif. Villainy is the only motif whose variations include different actions (persecute, mislead); otherwise, different subjects and objects will characterise variations.

\textsuperscript{22} Cf. pp. 204–211 above.

\textsuperscript{23} Cf. ibidem.
A typical beginning of the apostolic Acts is the division of the missionary fields. Among the texts that we discussed hitherto, this is found in the Acts of Thomas 1 and the Acts of Philip 8, but it also occurs in many other apostolic Acts. The motif has several variations. Sometimes Jesus himself assigns the missionary fields to the apostles (Acts of Philip24 and the Arabic Preaching of Andrew25), but more often, the apostles divide the world among themselves. In the latter type we often read about the ‘casting of lots’26. In the Preaching of Philip, Jesus himself commands the disciples, ‘Now cast lots among each other, and divide the world into twelve parts’27. Subsequently the texts report that ‘the lot fell’ on a given apostle to go to a certain country28. This may occur with or without the explicit mentioning of the casting of lots. We also read about ‘allotted places’29. In some Johannine Acts, the episode is situated after Pentecost, and Peter exhorts


25. Smith Lewis, Mythological Acts, 1. ‘And when the disciples went out into the world to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven, the Lord appeared unto them, and spake unto them, saying thus: “Peace be unto you, O my brethren, and my beloved, heirs of the Kingdom. Know that I will never separate myself from you, I will strengthen you”. And He turned to Matthias and commanded him to go to the city of the Cannibals; and Andrew his brother was to pass to Lydda to preach in it, he and his disciple Philemon, the son of Philip; “for I have many people in it whom I have chosen”’.

26. Martyrium Andraei prius 2 (Bonnet, Acta apostolorum, vol 2/1, 46); Acts of Andrew and Matthias 1 (MacDonald, Acts of Andrew, 70); Syriac History of Mār Matthew and Mār Andrew (Wright, Apocryphal Acts, vol 1, 102, trans. vol 2, 93); Pseudo-Prochorus (Zahn, Acta Joannis, 5); Arabic Travels of John (Smith Smith Lewis, Mythological Acts, 38, parallel with Pseudo-Prochorus); Coptic and Arabic Preaching of Philip (von Lemm, ‘Koptische Apostelacten’, 170 and Smith Lewis, op.cit., 60); Arabic Preaching of Simon (Smith Lewis, op.cit., 115).


28. The typical terms are ἐκληρόθη, (κατὰ χάληρον) ἔλαχεν, ἄπεκληρος ὑπάρχει. Cf. the Arabic version in Smith Lewis, Mythological Acts, 60: ‘Behold now, cast lots among yourselves, and make the world into twelve lots, that ye may go forth and preach in it’.

the disciples to divide the world. In other cases, the episode occurs between Jesus’ resurrection and ascent to heaven, and Jesus exhorts the disciples.

Although we cannot decide with certainty when the motif of dividing the world by lottery emerged (see below), in early Christian literature its earliest extant witness is probably the Acts of Thomas. There it occurs in a rather simple form in both the Greek and the Syriac texts. There is no introductory exhortation, and no direct mention of the act of casting lots. We can discern that in the Arabic Preaching of Thomas the exhortation appears (Jesus orders the disciples to divide the world), but the rest of the episode is reported similarly to the Greek and Syriac Acts of Thomas. The casting of lots is not mentioned in the Acts of Philip either. There (in the Greek text) Jesus himself divides the world, and afterwards the text uses the expression ‘lot’, but not with the technical expression ‘fell’ (ἐλαξίων). Therefore, it seems that the ‘lot’ of the apostles was the primary idea, and it was only later that the actual ‘casting of lots’ appeared in the texts. This variation first occurs in texts about John and Andrew,

30. Pseudo-Prochorus (Zahn, Acta Joannis, 3–5); Arabic Travels of John (Smith Lewis, Mythological Acts, 37); Syriac History of John (Wright, Apocryphal Acts, vol 1, 5 and vol 2, 4; Arabic Story of John (Smith Lewis, op.cit., 157).

31. The scene often takes place on the Mount of Olives, as in Acts 1.12. In the Preaching of Philip Jesus commands the casting of lots (see note 27 above); in the Arabic Preaching of Thomas he commands the disciples, ‘Assemble and divide the world into twelve portions and let each one of you go to his portion’ (Smith Lewis, Mythological Acts, 80). The Martyrdom of Saint Mark paraphrases Matthew 28.18–20 (ibidem, 147). Cf. the Arabic Preaching of Simon and Preaching of Thaddeus (ibidem, 115 and 120, respectively).


33. Smith Lewis, Mythological Acts, 80.

34. In the Syriac Didascalia apostolorum (3rd century) the apostles divide the whole world into twelve parts, but they do not cast lots. Cf. Vööbus (ed), Didascalia, vol 2, 229 and idem (trans) Didascalia vol 2, 212; for the date see ibidem, vol 1, 23. Eusebius, Church History 3.1, writes that Thomas, Andrew, and John received (ἐλαξίων) Parthia, Scythia, and Asia, respectively. The verb ἐλαξίων with accusative means simply ‘obtain as one’s portion’, without an explicit reference to the casting of lots; Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, 1022b (I). The tradition
namely, in *Pseudo-Prochorus* and the *Martyrium prius*, and in both instances it is coupled with Peter’s central position. In the later versions, it found its way by analogy into the stories of other apostles.

The casting of lots and Peter’s prominent role resemble the first two chapters of the canonical *Acts*, where we read about the election of Matthias as an apostle by casting lots, the gathering of the apostles, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and Peter’s Pentecost address. Scholars have emphasised the influence of the beginning of *Acts* on the apocryphal division episodes. There are, however, also weak points of this theory. In *Acts* we do not read about the division of the missionary fields, and in the *Acts of Thomas*, where the motif occurs among the apostolic Acts for the first time, both the act of casting lots and the prominent role of Peter are missing. We want to point out other possible sources of this motif.

The division of the earth as well as the idea that these parts are inherited by ‘lot’ have close parallels in the division of Canaan in *Joshua* 13–21. The actual ‘casting of lots’ occurs in *Joshua* 18.10, but it was probably a secondary addition to the already existing geographical description of the land. A closely related idea is one’s favourable ‘lot’, ‘allotment’, and ‘inheritance’, which frequently occur in *Psalms*. The oracle of the lot is a well-known metaphor in the

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36. Also described in *Numbers* 32.33–42 and *Deuteronomy* 3.12–17.


38. *Psalms* 16.6 (15.6 LXX), 78.55 (77.55), 135.12 (134.12), 136.22 (135.22). In *Psalms* one speaks of ?l? rather than h?l?, the latter being the proper term for
Dead Sea Scrolls. The occurrence of the motif, however, is not restricted to Jewish literature. In the *Iliad* as well in Akkadian and Hittite mythology, the gods cast lots to distribute the regions of the world among each other. The division of land into κλήρον is reported several times in classical Greek literature. Finally, we have seen that the description of the territory of one’s mission (Zuständigkeitsbereich) was an essential part already in the Egyptian and Old Testament commission passages.

Consequently, the motif of the division of land and the talk about one’s ‘inheritance’ or ‘lot’ is much earlier than the lottery episode of *Acts* 1.23–26. In *Acts*, too we read about the ‘share’ (κλήρον) of the saints quite independently from the casting of lots. Its stereotyped occurrence in commission texts as well as the classical Greek usage of the motif are likely to have served as the sources of the division episodes in the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Acts of Philip*. As in the *Book of Joshua*, the actual casting of lots was probably a secondary addition to the list of missionary fields. The lottery episode in *Acts* 1.23–6 provided an excellent analogy, which influenced the description of the division of lands in the *Martyrium Andreeae prius*, the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*, *Pseudo-Prochorus*, and the later versions of the apostolic *Acts*. In this phase, other elements in *Acts* 1–2, such as the exhortation by Jesus or Peter and the location of the scene on the Mount of Olives, were also added to the description of the episode.

In the *Acts of Thomas* 1 and *Acts of Philip* 8, as in most Hebrew and Greek parallels, the central issue is the ‘inheritance’ or ‘share’ of the hero rather than the actual technique of allotting the lands. The division of lands is attributed either to Jesus (*Acts of Philip*) or to the community of the apostles (*Acts of Thomas*). In both texts, as in many the share received by lot. Cf. *Prayer of Enosh* (4Q369). For Saul’s election by lot, see p. 35 above.

39. Lange, ‘Determination of Fate’; cf. note 38 above.
parallels, the hero immediately protests against the allotted task. We have analysed this narrative pattern at the discussion of the commission of Thomas. This means that the division episode is also a source of conflict in the sujet, similarly to the variations of villainy previously discussed. The nature of the conflict is similar as in that case, namely, the actants are out of place in the actantial structure. The hero does not want to play the role of a hero. It seems that one basic aspect of commission stories is the negotiation of the narrative functions; that is, the deciding of the question who will play which role.

Epiphanies on the Road and on the Sea

Divine epiphany, the appearance of a deity to a human, is such a widespread phenomenon of pre-modern Western culture, that we can hardly undertake even a partial discussion of it. As far as the narrative function of epiphany is concerned, either it launches the story, or it occurs as a reaction of the deity to a conflict situation that is already present in the sujet. We will deal with two aspects of epiphany in our texts: (1) the place and time of the epiphany, and (2) the shape in which the deity appears.

Let us first see in which forms the sender appears in our commission stories. On the Damascus road, Paul sees a flashing light; in the Acts of John, Jesus appears in different human shapes (boy, handsome man, bearded man, young lad, giant, short man), and as a voice above the cross of light; Philip in his Acts sees him in the form of an eagle; in the Acts of Peter and the Twelve he assumes the figure of a physician; John Mark in the Acts of Barnabas sees a man clothed in white raiment. In other cases, we read only that ‘Jesus appeared’ to the hero, without a closer identification of the form (i.e., in Paul’s temple vision and in the Acts of Thomas). Finally, in the Acts of Titus the hero only

44. Graf, ‘Epiphanie’, defines it as ‘the appearance of a deity, as manifested in a spontaneous vision, in an actual ritual event (ecstasy), or in a narrative’. Since the Homeric hymns, epiphany has fixed parts: the superhuman size of the deity, the accompanying light and divine fragrance; and human reaction of fear, which the deity tries to dissolve. This narrative scheme, Graf claims, persisted throughout ancient literature, including the New Testament. For an examination of Paul’s Damascus vision in the framework of ancient epiphanies, see Brenk, ‘Greek Epiphanies’.
hears heavenly voices but sees no figures. This is an astonishing diversity, which suggests that no canonised form of Jesus’ epiphanies existed in Early Christianity. The ‘polymorphous Jesus’ is not a theoretical speculation of particular texts, but rather an empirical reality of early Christian literature. In some cases, the texts pick out and combine traditional Jewish and Christian motifs: light, cross, angelic figures, shining robe. Most forms of epiphany correspond to Greco-Roman patterns. At certain times, one even suspects an interpretatio Christiana of other cults: such are the figures of the eagle or the physician Lithargoel.

In addition to detecting the cultural and mythological roots of the various forms of epiphany, one also cannot overlook their symbolic values within the narrative plots themselves. The fight of the eagle and the snake, the latter representing false belief in the Acts of Philip, was emblematic in antiquity. The motif was popular in art, and later (from about the 4th century BC) it became the visual symbol


47. Cf. Versnel, ‘Epiphany’. On p. 53, he concludes that when an ancient man saw a god, ‘sometimes he saw a god, sometimes a human shape, sometimes a phantom, sometimes an animal form, sometimes he had an hallucination of light or a vision of bliss and sometimes he did not see anything at all but was none the less aware of the divine presence’.

48. This could happen in the form of transferring the attributes of deities to Christ (Herzog ‘Asklepios’, 798b; Detschew, ‘Apollon’, 530a; cf. the art of the Roman catacombs). Another possibility was the reinterpretation of gods as demons that revealed destructive powers; cf. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, vol 1, 99–108, at 107.

49. For the eagle, see pp. 149ff and below. For Lithargoel as Asclepius, see Schenke, ‘Acts of Peter and the Twelve’, 419; Molinari, *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*, 139.

50. *Acts of Philip* 8.4.6–10 (G), 13.1.11–2, etc.

of the future that was revealed to the seer\textsuperscript{52}. This symbolism is further elaborated in the \textit{Acts of Philip} when Jesus assumes the role of a physician. This is, in Greek religion, the function of Asclepius, wearing the form of a snake\textsuperscript{53}. Thus, the victorious deity takes over the functions of the defeated one. In the representation of the sujet, we have only limited tools to describe these metaphorical connections. They contain references to myths (that is, other sujets) and ideas outside the text, and therefore belong to the intertextual aspects, which were discussed in connection with the individual passages.

Let us turn our attention to the place of the epiphanies in the commission stories of the apostolic \textit{Acts}. Jesus appears to Paul on the road before Damascus and in the Jerusalem temple\textsuperscript{54}; to John on the road near Miletus and on the sea (of Galilee?)\textsuperscript{55}; to Philip on a road in the desert\textsuperscript{56}; and to Peter and the twelve twice at city-gates\textsuperscript{57}. In some cases the place of the epiphany is not indicated. The Saviour appears to Thomas at night, John Mark sees a vision after his baptism, and of Titus’ visions we learn neither the place nor the time (only that the second one followed the first after nine years)\textsuperscript{58}. First, we can see that the majority of epiphanies (of which the place is indicated) occur during a journey: on the road, at sea, or at the city-gates. We find similar scenes in the earlier literary tradition. The epiphanies of Thutmose IV and King Saul, as well as Epimenides’ long sleep, occur on the road. Dio Chrysostom receives his call to philosophy when he is banished\textsuperscript{59}. Sea voyage is also a recurrent theme of the commission stories\textsuperscript{60}. However, comparison with other literatures also demonstrates an important difference. Whereas in our early Christian texts

\textsuperscript{52} Schmidt, ‘Adler und Schlange’, 64–5. The motif also appears on two synagogues and a Jewish religious school in the fifth and sixth centuries AD; cf. Turnheim, ‘Eagle and Snake’, 106–7.

\textsuperscript{53} Cf. Fauth, ‘Asklepios’, at 644–5. For a healing by Asclepius see below in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Acts} 9.3, 22.6, 26.16 and \textit{Acts} 22.17–8.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Acts of John} 18 and \textit{Acts of John} 88, 113.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Acts of Philip} 3.5.1–3 (ἐν τῇ ἐρημίᾳ); cf. 3.4.1 (αἰτᾷ τὴν ὄδην).

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Acts of Peter and the Twelve} 2.10, 8.4–15; cf. 6.27–34.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Acts of Thomas} 1; \textit{Acts of Barnabas} 4; \textit{Acts of Titus} 1.

\textsuperscript{59} Thutmose IV: 29f; Saul: 34ff; Epimenides: 47f; Dio Chrysostom: 49f.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Acts of John} 88, 113; \textit{Acts of Thomas} 3; \textit{Acts of Peter and the Twelve}; \textit{Acts of Barnabas} 5, 26; cf. \textit{Acts of Titus} 2 and p. 37 above.
the sender immediately communicates with the hero on the road or at sea, in other religious contexts usually a third party is involved in the process. Communication between the sender and the hero is often connected to a sacred place and a religious institution. Thus, the Egyptian heroes appear in an audience hall, and the Greek ones consult an oracle\textsuperscript{61}. Among the apostolic commission stories, only one epiphany occurs in a cultic building, namely, Paul’s vision in the Jerusalem temple\textsuperscript{62}.

The commission stories of the apostolic Acts suggest that God was immediately available to the apostles at any place. This is an important aspect of the mobility of the Christian mission. Especially in the later Acts, however, divine presence is claimed to be bound to particular spots, including sanctuaries founded by the apostles\textsuperscript{63} and their burial places\textsuperscript{64}. The itinerant heroes of the Christian tradition become the originators of the settled forms of worship\textsuperscript{65}.

\textsuperscript{61} For example, pp. 11–14, 26–33, 49f, 207f. In Homer and later Greek and Roman epic, the gods often communicate directly with the heroes.

\textsuperscript{62} The Lucan Acts takes an intense interest in the Jerusalem temple. Nevertheless, only one version of Paul’s commission story refers to the temple.

\textsuperscript{63} Acts of Titus 9, Acts of Barnabas 17, 20, 22.

\textsuperscript{64} Acts of Titus 11; cf. Acts of Barnabas 25 (pp. 177–182 above).

\textsuperscript{65} The classical formulation of ‘wandering radicalism’ comes from G. Theißen, ‘Wanderradikalismus’. Recently in Religion, 328, he writes about ‘wandering charismatics’ (Wandercharismatiker) who urged people to follow Jesus, leave their houses and households, break with their family and parents, and live without work and possessions. In Jesusbewegung, 14, he also described the cooperation of the itinerants and the local churches (Ortsgemeinden) that gave them ‘social and material support’. Crossan, Christianity, presents a complex analysis of that cooperation. He finds that itinerants offered healing in exchange for food (330), and whereas itinerants criticised the householders (355–61), the local churches developed strategies to control the itinerants, as we read in the Didache (363–82). From many respects, the protagonists of the apostolic Acts are idealised itinerant charismatics, whose authority is beyond the control of the local churches. That the issue of itineracy did not diminish after the first century, is exemplified by the controversies of the ascetics in the fourth century, cf. pp. 158–167 above. For a sharp criticism of Theißen’s itineracy hypothesis, see recently Arnal, Village Scribes, 67–95.
Twofold, Threefold, and Double Vision

Dreams and visions are found throughout ancient literature, and play an important role in commission stories. In addition, we find in our texts different combinations of visions: twofold, threefold, and double visions. The question can be raised why we deal with visions under a separate heading once we have already discussed epiphany. Visions, whereas they often contain epiphanies, include also various other sorts of experiences that surpass the limits of everyday perception. For example, Paul, sitting in the house of Simon in Damascus, sees Ananias in a vision coming to him and healing him. At other times, the heroes hear heavenly voices instructing them, or see angels and other messengers. We speak of twofold and threefold vision when a person sees more than one vision subsequently and about double visions when two persons see visions about the same subject at the same time. During the discussion of individual passages, we have already talked about the visions that occurred in them. In this section, we will consider the specific complexes of visions that we have just introduced.

In two of the narratives relating Paul’s commission in *Acts*, we find a sequence of visions. In both versions, the second vision is implied by the first one: ‘Go to Damascus, there you will be told what to do’. Similarly, in the *Acts of John* 18, the hero is sent to Ephesus by a vision, and he receives a second revelation on the road. In chapters 88–9 there is a threefold sequence, although without strong causality.

66. We cannot formulate an exhaustive definition of vision at this place. Goodman, ‘Visions’, 282, defines it as ‘a religious experience that involves seeing, and frequently, the other senses as well. The quality of the experience suggests that the content of the perception is real, a direct, unmediated contact with a nonordinary aspect of reality that is external and independent of the perceiver’. Dreams, according to her, may also qualify as visionary experiences. From these she distinguishes hallucination, which is delusion and occurs with mentally ill persons. We use the term in a broad sense, and qualify visions only from a narrative perspective, rather than from biological, anthropological, or psychiatric points of views. For examples of ‘symbolic synesthesia’ in Christian and Greco-Roman visions, see Meyer, ‘Light and Voice’, 30–3; add *Acts of Peter* 5, *visa mihi est vox humana de caelo dicens*.


The brothers first glimpse Jesus on the sea, then see him helping them to carry the boat onto the shore, and finally observe him in two different shapes, as they want to follow him. In his autobiographical account (ch. 113), John relates several subsequent and intensifying visions of Jesus. The same applies to the rest of the gospel cycle in chapters 87–105. In the *Acts of Thomas*, Jesus appears to Thomas first at night, and later as his master (owner) on the marketplace. The *Acts of Titus*, again, provides an excellent case of twofold vision. The first vision urges Titus to stop reading Greek literature, whereas the second instructs him to open the Hebrew Scriptures.

These narratives describe commission as the result of multiple encounters with the sender, and suggest that commission is a complicated progress rather than an isolated event. Similar narrative structures occur in many other texts discussed earlier in the book69. This justifies also our attempt to describe the sujet of commission as a coherent cluster of motifs within biographical narratives. Are there typical narrative functions that one can associate with the subsequent visions? We have already seen that earlier visions may serve as preparations for later ones. At a closer look we can identify a pattern in which the first vision serves to defeat and punish the hero, forcing him to abandon his previous way of life, whereas the second serves his healing and his beginning of service of the deity. Paul is defeated because he is a persecutor of the Church, John because he wants to get married70, and Titus is warned because he seeks salvation in the Greek authors. Later Paul is healed, John is healed and presented with a higher vision, and Titus is directed to the Hebrew Scriptures. At other times, as with Thomas (and the prophet Jonah) subsequent visions appear within the scheme of commission–protest–reassurance71, and serve to break down gradually the resistance of the hero. In this case,

69. Examples include Rekhmire, Saul (cf. *1 Samuel* 10.10 and 11.6–7), Jonah, Zeno of Citium, and Dio Chrysostom, all discussed in Chapters 2 and 9 (pp. 204–211) above. Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.20–1, *Judges* 6.11–7.14, *1 Samuel* 3.2–15, *Ezechiel* 1–3. Finally, there is a similar structure in some fairy-tales, when the hero has to accomplish subsequent tasks, each implying the next one. This often assumes the form of backtracking: the hero cannot do the tasks, until he finds the solution of the last task.

70. In the autobiographical narrative of *Acts of John* 113.

71. For further examples, see pp. 120–125 above.
the enforcing of the divine will is coupled with consolation and promises.

In general, one can say that two sorts of visions evoke the occurrence of a subsequent vision: (1) if the deity defeats the hero, because to this only a new intervention of the deity can provide a sufficient remedy; and (2) if a vision is followed by the hero’s protest, because the sender has to enforce divine will. It is important to notice that these narrative structures may also occur within a single visionary episode. This is probably the more primitive literary form, whereas the introduction of a series of visions is due to a more elaborated narrative technique. At the same time, it emphasises the antagonistic traits in the relation of the sender and the hero in the commission story.

Double visions constitute the other important pattern examined in this section. Double visions occur in various sorts of ancient texts. These are ‘parallel revelations that occur to two (groups of) persons, but serve one and the same goal’72. The ‘goal’ of the double vision can be war, love, and healing, but also initiation and commission. Some of the healings also occur within a commission narrative. In Greco-Roman literature, we can mention first the well-known last book of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, which relates the healing of Lucius (he regains his human shape) and his initiation to the cult of Isis73. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1381 contains the healing of an Egyptian scribe, which, at a closer look, proves to be a commission narrative (see below).

As for the apostolic Acts, among Wikenhauser’s texts we find the *Acts of John*, the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Acts of Andrew*, and the *Acts of Barnabas*. In the *Acts of John* 18, as we have mentioned above, there is a twofold vision about John’s commission. Alternatively one may add to them Lycomedes’ vision about Cleopatra’s healing in the next chapter, and regard this complex as a double vision. In that case, the

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73. To Wikenhauser’s three passages add a fourth one in 11.6.
narrative complex will focus on the healing rather than John’s commi-
nission. The problem can be resolved if we assume that a vision
originally focusing on John’s commission received a double function
in the present form of the text. As for the Acts of Thomas 29–34, it
does not have to do with Thomas’ commission; thus we can exclude it
from our investigation. We will return to the Acts of Barnabas later.
An additional early Christian passage is found in Eusebius’ Church
History 6.11.1–2 about the ordination of Narcissus as bishop of Jeru-

Now let us examine the double visions that occur in our commis-
sion narratives in more detail. The double vision of Paul and Ananias
in Acts 9.10–6 provides an especially interesting occurrence of the
pattern, where double vision has a sophisticated narrative function as
well. Ananias’ vision stands in the centre of the whole commission
narrative of Acts 9. It is connected to the individual scenes of the epi-
sode by a series of narrative flashbacks and prolepses (see Diagram 1
below). First, it makes up an organic unit with Saul’s vision of
Ananias and the healing episode (thick arrows): Jesus reports Paul’s
vision to Ananias, which in turn contains a reference to the later event
of Paul’s healing. The healing episode itself contains a report of
Ananias’ vision, by which this inner chain of cross-references re-
turns to itself. There are also flashbacks and prolepses within this in-
nner circle to earlier and later events of the story (thin arrows). The
vision of Ananias contains an anticipation of Saul’s future role as Je-
sus’ ‘chosen instrument’, thereby to the reports of his activity in Da-

74. Cf. p. 93 note 13. There is a similar case in the Acts of Peter 5, where first
Jesus sends Peter to Rome in a vision, later captain Theon is warned to esteem
Peter higher than the rest of the passengers, finally Theon converts, and Peter
baptises him. Although the two visions result in Theon’s baptism, it is not their
primary goal.

75. For the text see pp. 59f above.

76. Acts 9.17, ‘the Lord has sent me’.

77. Acts 9.17, ‘Jesus who appeared to you on your way here’.
Ananias’ vision evidently forms the centre of the whole chain of references that permeate the narrative texture of the episode. At a closer look, it appears that the structure of the episode applies an especially sophisticated variation of the double vision. This is achieved by inserting Saul’s second vision into Ananias’ one. In this inserted vision of Saul, Ananias himself appears as a character. Ananias is not only told what he would do later, but it is shown to him through the vision of Saul, the third party involved. Jesus’ narrative voice holds together the whole complex: he appears to Ananias, reports Saul’s second vision, and foretells his healing. Jesus thus functions in that frame as an omniscient narrator, able to report Saul’s thoughts. Saul can see the future about Ananias, and Jesus can see that Saul can see the future and appears to Ananias to tell this to him. So complex are the effects of this brilliant ‘vision in the vision’ composition! This is, indeed, an especially concentrated moment in the narrative, when the characters’ thoughts, lives, and futures are mirrored in each other’s minds, or even better, where people are made each other’s thoughts for a moment.

In the Acts of John 88–9, John and James can see Jesus in two different forms at the same time. Whereas this evidently qualifies as a case of polymorphy, it is difficult to decide whether it is a double vision. The first question is whether we talk about two visions, or only

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78. That these cross-references contain a number of contradictions has been observed at the discussion of this passage earlier in this book, pp. 63ff.
one appearance before two persons. If we suppose there are two visions, another difficulty is related to the ‘common goal’. Although the call of the brothers as Jesus’ disciples undoubtedly sets a common purpose before them, this is not manifested in a particular encounter or common affair as in other double visions. What is missing here is the dynamics of bringing together different people (enemies, people unknown to each other, or belonging to different ranks) for a common goal. From the dramatic point of view, the polymorphic visions seen by John and James rather serve to give individual faces to the initially undistinguished couple of characters.

Jesus appears to another pair of siblings in the Acts of Philip: Philip and Mariamne. Mariamne here receives the task of accompanying and supporting Philip in his mission. The narrative does not explain how Jesus communicated with the siblings. First, ‘Mariamne speaks with the Saviour about Philip’. Then, without an explicit reference to the change of the addressee, Jesus begins to speak to the disciples in plural, but Philip is evidently one of the listeners. Finally, Jesus speaks only with Philip. Like Paul’s commission in Acts 9, the recipients of the visions are the commissioned hero and the helper figures. This is the case also in the Acts of Barnabas (chs. 3–4), where Barnabas (together with Paul and Silas) appears as John Mark’s helper at his commission. After his baptism, John Mark sees a vision at night promising him ‘knowledge of mysteries’, and at the same time, Barnabas has a vision in which John Mark’s role is mentioned. Here double vision serves as a confirmation of the hero’s call.

We can conclude that the combination of more than one vision in different forms was a well-known literary device in Early Christianity. Whereas twofold and threefold series of visions are found in the Jewish literary tradition as well as in Greco-Roman texts, the more

80. For the question, what their relation symbolises see pp. 100f, also the following chapter.
82. Acts of Philip 8.2, lines 8–9 (G) and 8.5–7 (G).
83. Acts of Philip 8.7, lines 1–2 (G).
84. Acts of Philip 8.8–14 (G).
85. According to Acts of Philip 8.3, Bartholomew and John are also sent with Philip and Mariamne.
sophisticated pattern of double vision was probably adapted from Hellenistic models.

**Sickness and Healing**

Whereas usually it is the apostles who work miracles in these books, in certain instances the apostle himself is healed from sickness at his commission. In some cases, one can speak of sickness and healing only figuratively. When Thomas complains of ‘bodily weakness’, this is a well-known excuse from the commission stories of the Jewish Scriptures. Philip also finds his lot ‘rude’, and he ‘murmurs and weeps’, or, as Mariamne says, ‘he is in pain’. In these narratives, sickness and healing are figurative expressions of the hero’s protest and the sender’s breaking down his resistance. In other stories, the figurative use of healing refers to conversion. Titus is commanded to abandon the Greek philosophers ‘to save (or heal) his soul’ (τὴν ψυχὴν σου σῶσαι). This is implicit also in John Mark’s conversion and commission. Earlier (τὸ πρὶν), he was the servant of the high priest of Zeus, but now (νῦν δὲ), he receives the grace of the Spirit.

In certain commission narratives, the sender first afflicts the hero with sickness, and later heals him. Paul (Saul) was blinded when he was approaching Damascus with the plan to arrest the people ‘of the Way’. Jesus’ question during the epiphany, ‘Why are you persecuting me?’ suggests that Paul’s blindness is divine punishment. His heal-

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86. A double dream occurs in Augustine, *The City of God* 18.18; for a modern version of the story see Lang et al., ‘Dreams’, 32.
88. Cf. pp. 120f.
92. *2 Maccabees* 3 and *4 Maccabees* 4 are often quoted parallels; cf. Windisch, ‘Christusepiphanie’, 1–9. These texts relate the legend that Heliodorus or Apollonius went to Jerusalem at the command of King Seleucus to confiscate the treasures of the temple, but were stopped by a revelation. The former text writes about a fearful horseman, the latter about ‘angels on horseback with lightning flashing from their weapons’ (περιαστράπτοντες τοῖς ὀξύοις, cf. Acts 9.3, 22.6).
ing from blindness was a complex process, which is suggested especially by Acts 9. In the Acts of John 113, the hero recalls that Jesus ‘prepared a bodily sickness’ for him and ‘mutilated him’. Later we learn that John was blinded, from which he was also cured. It has been suggested that Paul’s sickness and healing describe an initiation rite, which can be equally stated of the Acts of John. The state of blindness that both heroes undergo evidently forms a stage of liminality. The experience of suffering, or death and resurrection, was essential in Greco-Roman mysteries as well as in the Christian tradition. In connection with John’s blindness, one has to mention that initiation in tribal cultures is often a rite connected to marriage. Notwithstanding those rituals, John’s initiation prepares him for living without marriage. Meals completed the initiations to the cults of Isis and Mithras. The symbolism of darkness and light can be called omnipresent. Blindness as the punishment of the gods and the subsequent miraculous healing are attested at multiple places. The general occurrence of these motifs in religionsgeschichtliche parallels,

In the Greek tradition, lightning sometimes meant punishment, but at other times it made people holy; cf. Rohde, *Psyche*, vol 1, 320–2.

93. Cf. p. 110, note 78.


95. ‘Liminality’ comes from limes (threshold). Turner, *Ritual Process*, 94–113, built on the ideas of A. van Gennep, and suggested that during transformative rituals the initiate must strip away the old identity: the period in which the individual is naked of self, neither fully in one category nor in another, is the liminal state. Cf. Myerhoff et al., ‘Rites of Passage’, 382–3.


however, raises the question whether there are texts where the motif of commission is also significant.

Tradition holds that the lyric poet Stesichorus (7–6th century BC) in his *Helena* wrote unfavourably about the goddess, who consequently blinded him as a punishment\(^{101}\). Stesichorus realised from whom the blow came, and wrote his *Palinodia* praising Helena, whereupon he was able to see again\(^{102}\). In this story, the hero is struck with blindness because he hurt the deity (as did Paul), and is healed when he is willing to serve her. We can speak of commission only in a limited sense here since even though the hero steps into the service of the deity to accomplish a specific task, there is no reference to his life-long commitment to Helena.

The commission narrative of the Egyptian scribe Nechautis is preserved on Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1381\(^{103}\). It forms a preface to a historical account about Pharaoh Mencheres’ establishing the cult of Imouethes or Imhotep\(^ {104}\). Only the beginning of the historical account is extant. The events related in the preface take place in Memphis under the reign of Nectanebo (reigned until 341 BC), the last Pharaoh\(^ {105}\). The worship of Imhotep had decayed and his temple was largely deserted, when the king—undertaking the restoration of the worship—entrusted Nechautis, who was his ‘archidicastes’, with examining a roll. ‘Nechautis conducted his researches with much strenuousness, and brought the list to the king after spending only two days instead of thirty upon the inquiry’. From the subsequent lines, we learn that the king renewed the cult of Imhotep/Asclepius. Nechautis undertook the translation of the whole book, but he advanced slowly. The narrative shifts to the first person at this point, and remains so until the end.

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\(^{101}\) Plato, *Phaedrus* 243a–b; Isocrates, *Helenae encomium* 64; Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 3.19.13–3.20.1; *Suda* s.v. Στειχορος.


\(^{103}\) 2nd century AD; published and translated by Grenfell and Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol 11, 221–34.

\(^{104}\) Menkaura is Mencheres, who built the third of the Gîza pyramids. The god is mentioned in the text also as Imouthes son of Ptah, or Asclepius son of Hephaestus.

\(^{105}\) Cf. pp. 31f above.
of the preface. For three years, the scribe has completely abandoned his work on the book. When suddenly both he and his mother are struck with serious illness, Nechautis petitions the god:

I quickly hastened to the helper of the human race, and he, being again disposed to pity, listened to me, and displayed still more effectively his peculiar clemency, which, as I am intending to recount his terrible powers, I will substantiate.

Imhotep/Asclepius appears to mother and son in a vision:

Suddenly she perceived—it was no dream or sleep, for her eyes were open immovably, though not seeing clearly, for a divine and terrifying vision came to her, easily preventing her from observing the god himself or his servants, whichever it was. In any case there was some one whose height was more than human, clothed in shining raiment and carrying in his left hand a book, who after merely regarding me [sic] two or three times from head to foot disappeared.

Nechautis sees the same vision at the same time, and both of them are healed. The scribe realises that the god wants him to finish the translation of the book:

After these pains in my side had ceased and the god had given me yet another assuaging cure, I proclaimed his benefits. But when we had again besought his favours by sacrifices to the best of our ability, he demanded through the priest who serves him in the ceremonies the fulfilment of the promise long ago announced to him, and we, although knowing ourselves to be debtors in neither sacrifices nor votive offering, nevertheless supplicated him again with them. But when he said repeatedly that he cared not for these but for what had been previously promised, I was at a loss and with difficulty, since I disparaged it, felt the divine obligation of the composition.

The scribe rounds off his prologue by referring to his accurate philological work and praising the deity. In Nechautis’ preface, similar to the previously examined stories, sickness and healing prepare the hero for the service of the deity. Although there is no explicit mention that sickness is divine punishment, Imhotep/Asclepius clearly uses it for his goals. The description of the epiphany is elaborated in much de-
tail, resembling the scene of Lucius’ initiation in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*.

Another healing story has been mentioned earlier in Chapter 2. In 258 or 257 BC, Zoilus of Aspendus wrote a petition to Apollonius, the finance minister of Ptolemy II, in which he related the following story. At an earlier time, he did service to Sarapis on behalf of Apollonius and the king. On several occasions, the deity ordered him in dreams (χρηματίζειν πλεονάζεις ἐν τοῖς ὑπνοίς) to sail over to Apollonius and tell him that a temple of Sarapis must be built and a priest established in the Greek quarter of a city (the name of the city is lost), and sacrifices must be performed on behalf of the minister and the king (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν). When Zoilus begged Sarapis to excuse him the god struck him with a grave illness (εἰς ἄρωστίαν μὲ περιέβαλεν μεγάλην), whereupon Zoilus promised that he would continue the service (ὑπομενώ τὴν λειτουργίαν) and comply with his command. Meanwhile someone began to build a sanctuary in Cnidus, but the deity commanded him to stop. Zoilus travelled to Alexandria, but he hesitated (ὁμνέω) to mention the issue to Apollonius. Then he fell back into the illness for four months, so that he was not able to return to Apollonius.

Therefore, you are doing well, o Apollonius, if you follow the commands of the god so that Sarapis would show himself merciful to you, and make you much greater and more famous than the king, and also heal your body. Do not be afraid that the costs would mean a great expense for you. On the contrary, everything will be very advantageous to you, because I will jointly supervise all these works.

We do not know whether Zoilus’ petition was successful, and Apollonius provided the costs of the new sanctuary. The words that Zoilus uses to describe his relation to Sarapis, θεραπεύω (line 3) and λειτουργία (line 11), and the fact that he performs this service on behalf of the king and his minister, suggest that he was a priest of Sarapis (Osiris). He must have been in a leading position, since he was accountable to the finance minister (lines 15–8). In this letter, he uses a very similar literary pattern as Nechautis did a century earlier when

he prefaced the translation of the book about the cult of Imho-tep/Asclepius. Sickness and healing are in both cases the irrefutable signs of the will of the deity. If the god wanted to have a book translated, or a new sanctuary built, he struck one of the high priests with grave illness. It seems that this was a powerful argument in the hands of religious leaders in order to prove that they were acting at the behest of the deity. The motif was certainly known in the 2nd century AD, since Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1381, containing the story of Nechautis, was copied at that time. If the Acts of John was revised in Alexandria at the beginning of the third century, the author could rely on this motif when describing John’s commission in chapter 113.

Did Apuleius, writing in the 2nd century, use the same pattern when he related the initiation of Lucius as a priest of Isis and Osiris? At the beginning of the Metamorphoses, Lucius is transformed into the shape of an ass when his lover smears him with a magic ointment to make him younger. After a series of adventures that constitute the bulk of the book, Lucius invokes Isis who appears to him in an epiphany. The goddess promises him deliverance from his misery, but at the same time she declares that Lucius will be bound to her for life: ‘the rest of your life’s course is pledged to me until the very limit of your last breath’ 108. After his healing, Lucius is initiated as a priest of Isis, and later of Osiris. As in the previous example, the goddess uses the hero’s malady to render him to her service. The hero undergoes a complex process of initiation, which Nock compares to the entry into a Christian monastic community 109. The motif of a lifelong commitment that was not explicit in the stories of Stesichorus, Nechautis, and Zoilus, is central to this narrative.

We have good reasons to believe that John’s blindness and healing in the Acts of John 113 are connected to the same tradition that appears in the above-mentioned texts, although it seems more difficult to argue this in the case of Paul. The Acts of John was probably influenced by the Egyptian cultic legends and emerging Neo-Platonism. Could Luke draw on the same traditions when writing chapter 9 of his

108. Apuleius, Metamorphoses 11.6, mihi reliqua vitae tuae curricula adus-que terminos ultimi spiritus vadata.
Acts? If a legend of Paul’s conversion (Paulusnovelle)\textsuperscript{110} ever circulated, it might have come in contact with the above-mentioned traditions\textsuperscript{111}. A peculiarity of early Christian narratives is the explicit figurative meaning of the hero’s sickness. In the commission stories of Paul and John, healing from blindness leads to the true vision of God\textsuperscript{112}. Thus, sickness and healing not only attest to the power of the deity, but also symbolise the transformation of the senses that is necessary for the hero in order to fulfil his task. The achievement of early Christian literature was the integration of the motif of sickness and healing into its own biographical model of divine commission.

**Helper Figures**

Helpers appear in nearly all of the commission narratives, and they fulfil multiple roles. They often mediate between the sender and the hero. The helper can heal, comfort, and advise the hero, or integrate him into an institutional order.

In Paul’s commission, there are two helpers, Ananias and Barnabas, and also three groups of people fulfilling the same role, namely, the travellers on the Damascus road, the disciples of Damascus, and the disciples of Jerusalem\textsuperscript{113}. Ananias and Barnabas play different roles as helpers. The former mediates between Jesus and Paul, the latter between Paul and the leaders in Jerusalem. Both of them are members of the local communities, and their acts contribute to the institutional character of Christianity in these narratives. John, on the contrary, has only companions, but no real helpers. In the *Acts of John* 18, there is a group of disciples escorting him to Ephesus. In chapter 88 he is with his brother James, who is an ambivalent duplicate of his

\textsuperscript{110} Cf. p. 65, note 15 above.

\textsuperscript{111} The specific use of darkness and light in *Acts* 26 is a closely related problem, see pp. 77–86 above.

\textsuperscript{112} For Paul’s healing, see especially *Acts* 26.18: ἐπιστρέψας ἀπὸ σκότους εἰς φῶς καὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ Σατανᾶ ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν. Hamm, ‘Paul’s Blindness’, 71, concludes that here ‘Paul’s own experience of loss and recovery of physical vision is transmuted to a metaphor describing the end-time mission of Israel, Jesus, and Paul’.

\textsuperscript{113} The travellers (as helpers) and Ananias appear in *Acts* 9 and 22, Barnabas and the disciples only in *Acts* 9.
rather than a helper. In the *Acts of Thomas*, the merchant Abbanes plays the role of a helper. His figure proves that the narrative function of the helper is to be understood from the sender’s point of view rather than from the hero’s one. The helper serves the interest of the sender, even against the hero’s will, if necessary. Abbanes is also a dialogue partner of Thomas, asking him about his craftsmanship. This is a crucial moment for the interpretation of Thomas’ commission, as well as of the whole book\(^ {114}\). In the *Acts of Philip 8*, the role of the helpers is to comfort and strengthen the hero. Jesus appoints Mariamne, Bartholomew, and John as companions (see above). There are also animals that accompany Philip: the leopard and the kid. The eagle is a special sort of a helper because in the end it turns out to be Jesus himself\(^ {115}\).

In the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*, we find a number of helpers: the sailors (1.16–26), the people on the dock (2.1–6), the merchant (2.10–6.26), the old man (6.33–7.19), and the physician (8.14 to the end). The merchant and the physician are identified as Lithargoel, who (like the eagle in the *Acts of Philip*) is identified with Jesus in the end. All these figures help the disciples toward their destination, the city of Habitation. In this text, the journey of the disciples symbolises the process of commission itself. Thus, when people transport them or provide them with information about different places, they actually take part in commissioning them, as Ananias and Abbanes do in the stories of Paul and Thomas, respectively.

In *Acts of Barnabas*, John Mark has three helpers: Paul, Barnabas, and Silas, who baptise him after his conversion (ch. 2). In his commission, the greatest role is played by Barnabas, who is also directed in a vision to take John Mark as a companion with him (ch. 4). The debate of Barnabas and Paul in Antioch is a central theme of this narrative (chs. 6–10), and thus helpers represent the power conflicts within the institution\(^ {116}\). In the *Acts of Titus*, the governor of Crete (Titus’ uncle) sends the protagonist to Jerusalem (ch. 2). After listening to the teaching of Peter, he is ordained by the apostles (ch. 4). The helpers are embodying institutions in this narrative, even more

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directly than in Acts 9. Titus is converted by two heavenly visions, but
he is commissioned by the state and the Church, the former repre-
sented by the governor and the latter by the apostles.\(^{117}\)

The different roles played by the helper figures in the commis-
sion stories can be grouped into the following categories: (1) assistant,
playing a minor role as Paul’s travelling companions; (2) instructor, a
teacher, conversation partner, or associate who helps the hero realise
his call; (3) healer; and (4) authoriser, appointing the hero as member
of a community or official of an institution. In the latter role, the
helper represents the actant ‘authority’. At other times, as in the Acts
of Philip and the Acts of Peter and the Twelve, the helper is ultimately
identified with the sender. Helpers may appear in all kinds of com-
mission narratives, but their role is especially crucial in stories be-
longing to the institutional type. The few examples where we find no
helper figures in the texts, the Acts of John and Paul’s commission in
Acts 26, show clear traces of the philosophical model, where the true
knowledge of the sender is the main purpose of the commission.\(^{118}\)

The Sujet of Commission

The description of the sujet of the commission narratives consists of
two parts. First, we will map out the relations between the actants
(synchronic or actantal structure)\(^ {119}\). Second, we will outline the sujet
as a series of motifs (diachronic or episodic structure). The following
diagram describes the relations of the actants of the commission nar-
ratives:

\(^{117}\) See pp. 202 and 211ff above.

\(^{118}\) Helpers with an instructive function might appear also in the philosophi-
cal call stories, as, for example, Chaerephon in Plato’s Apology or the bookseller
in Zeno’s call. Diogenes Laertius, Lives 7.2. Cf. pp. 11–14 and p. 207 above, re-
spectively.

\(^{119}\) This can be called also the semantic description of the sujet.
The diagram shows a hierarchical disposition, which is typical of the ideological structure of the commission narratives. This hierarchy is bipolar; most commission stories imply a dualistic world-view. On the top of the hierarchy, there are the sender and his opponent, the false sender. The presence of the false sender is not always explicit. According to Acts 22.18, Paul has to release ‘the people and the nations’ from ‘the power of Satan’ (τὴς ἐξουσίας τοῦ Σατανᾶ). The heroes’ fight against the power of Satan is an important motif in the Acts of John and the Acts of Thomas\textsuperscript{120} as well, but it is not mentioned in the respective commission stories. When Jesus commissions Philip in his Acts, he talks about the serpent, ‘the arch-enemy’, whom the inhabitants of the city Opheorymos worship\textsuperscript{121}. In the commission of John Mark (in the Acts of Barnabas), the false sender is Zeus, whom John Mark served as a temple-servant.

In the same narrative, one may identify Zeus’ high priest, Cyril-lus, as the false helper. The high priests of Acts 9 function rather as the false authority, an institution supporting the antagonist. It is remarkable that in this narrative the antagonist turns out to be the hero, and the false sender is in fact the true sender as represented by the false authority. As we have seen above, in Acts 22 the false sender is identified as Satan. This implies that Paul’s persecuting the disciples was Satan’s will, and the false authority (the high priests) represented

\textsuperscript{120}. Acts of John 54, 63, 69, 70, 84 (θεοῦ ἔχθρος Σατανᾶς). Especially dualistic passages are found in chs. 98 and 114. In the Acts of Thomas see chs. 32 and 160.

\textsuperscript{121}. Acts of Philip 8.4 (G), ὁ παλαιὸς ἔχθρος, line 17.
Satan’s power. In the Acts of Titus, the Greek poets (or ‘philosophers’) are explicitly identified as false authorities, but not associated with a false sender.

In the earlier part of this chapter, we have seen the typical modes of interactions between the actants. The arrows in the diagram show that all communication is ultimately directed toward the addressee: healing, conversion, and baptism from the hero (this is the ‘TASK’, the actual object of all communication in the sujet), misleading and persecute from the false hero. The addressee is thus the central actant in the semantic structure of commission. But it becomes also immediately clear that the hero participates in the largest number of interactions. This is not unexpected, for he is the protagonist of the narrative. With few exceptions, communication occurs downwards. The actants on the bottom line seldom say anything to the actants above them, except that they protest against their fates. Occasionally the helpers approach the sender on behalf of the hero, as Mariamne does on behalf of Philip. The helper might also advocate the hero before the authority, as Barnabas does on behalf of Paul in Acts 9 and on behalf of John Mark in the Acts of Barnabas\(^{122}\).

The sujet of commission can be described in a diachronic scheme as well. This diachronic description is based on the actantial structure outlined above. The difference is that it is organised along the actions rather than the actants, and it is indexed by the actants instead of the actions\(^{123}\). First, we will prepare a list of the motifs, and then describe how they can combine into sujets.

I. Villainy
   1. The hero persecutes the addressee.
   2. The antagonist misleads the addressee.
   3. The false authority misleads the hero.

II. Sortes
   1. The hero receives his TASK by lot.
   2. The hero receives his TASK from a book.

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\(^{122}\) Paul: p. 62; Barnabas: pp. 190f.

\(^{123}\) Translated into the level of narrative analysis, this means: narrative plots emerge from the interaction of characters, whereas characters are built up from their actions.
III. **Assignment**
1. The sender assigns the TASK to the hero.
2. The sender assigns the helper to assist the hero.

IV. **Defeat**
1. The sender defeats the antagonist.
2. The hero defeats the antagonist.
3. The sender defeats the hero.

V. **Conversion**
1. The hero converts from the false sender to the true sender.
2. The addressee converts from the false sender to the true sender.

VI. **Protest**
1. The hero protests against the TASK.
2. The helper protests against the assignment.

VII. **Advocacy**
1. The helper advocates the hero before the sender.
2. The helper advocates the hero before the authority.

VIII. **Exhortation**
1. The sender exhorts the hero.
2. The sender exhorts the helper.
3. The helper exhorts the hero.
4. The hero exhorts the addressee.

IX. **Healing**
1. The sender heals the hero.
2. The helper heals the hero.
3. The hero heals the addressee.

X. **Baptism**
1. The helper baptises the hero.
2. The hero baptises the addressee.

XI. **Authorisation**
1. The authority authorises the hero.
2. The false authority authorises the antagonist.

Although the above list offers a comprehensive presentation of the motifs of the commission narratives, it does not yet provide us with a satisfactory diachronic description of the sujet. We still have to give the rules how these motifs can be connected to each other. A few remarks and refinements are also needed. Epiphany has been excluded
from the list, because it indicates only that communication occurs between a divine and a human being. The actual narrative motif behind epiphany is always one of defeat, healing, assignment, or exhortation. Further, the variations of the motifs often differ from each other only in the subject and/or the object: Defeat 1–3, Protest 1–2, Advocacy 1–2, Exhortation 1–4, Healing 1–3, Baptism 1–2, Authorisation 1–2. These variations can be indicated with the help of the denotation that I proposed at the beginning of the Chapter 124. For the sake of brevity, at this time I do not mark all three of subject, object and indirect object, but only as many of them as needed for the clear differentiation: defeat [sender, antagonist], protest [hero], etc. As for sortes, its two variations are irrelevant as far as the sujet is concerned.

Every motif in the sujet evokes other motifs. If we can define the possible connections between the motifs, then the possible variations of the sujet can be traced back from the list of motifs. For example, villainy [antagonist, addressee] implies defeat, namely [sender, antagonist] or [hero, antagonist]. If one opts for the hero as subject, this must be preceded by either sortes or assignment. But villainy [antagonist, addressee] can also imply exhortation [hero, addressee] and then conversion [addressee]. This leads us back to the necessity of sortes or assignment. Not only villainy, but also sortes and assignment can begin the sujet. Whereas villainy and sortes always come at the first position, assignment may occur only later (as a consequence of villainy, and a necessary antecedent of defeat). Villainy may be preceded by the authorisation of the antagonist by the false authority. The rest of the motifs never occur at the first place. These three (or four) motifs represent the theme of ‘conflict generation’ in the sujet.

Defeat [sender, hero] is always followed by one or more of assignment [sender, helper], conversion [hero], advocacy, exhortation, healing. The sujet of the commission story can never be tragic. The hero is always helped out of the trouble, and in case the helper her/himself is at loss, the sender intervenes. If the antagonist has to be defeated, that can be done either by the hero or directly by the sender. Further, protest is always preceded by sortes or assignment, and followed by the same motifs as defeat. These motifs, defeat, conversion, protest, advocacy, exhortation, and healing, together can be called the

124. See p. 217 above.
theme of ‘conflict handling’. They provide an immediate answer to the conflict caused by villainy, sortes, or assignment.

_Baptism_ [helper, hero] and _authorisation_ [authority, hero] define the hero’s relation to the existing institutional frameworks. Together, they can be called the theme of ‘normalisation’, the adapting of the conflict situation to existing norms. Finally, a number of motifs are repeated in two variations, first with the hero, then with the addressee as the object: _exhortation, healing, and baptism_. The two variations of _conversion_ (with two different subjects) also belong to this group. These four motifs make up the theme of ‘recursion’. They apply the same pattern to the addressee that has already worked with the hero. This is an important aspect of commission stories, the hero serving as a model for the addressee.

It is not necessary to trace all possible combinations of the motifs at this place. The examples given illustrate how the theory works. More important is the identification of the four major themes (groups of motifs) within the sujet: sc. conflict generation, conflict handling, normalisation, and recursion. The sequence of the four themes shows how the sujet of the commission tries to answer a specific need that is formulated during ‘conflict generation’. The conflict of the commission narrative always represents the social, historical, cultural, and anthropological problem of _being called_ as experienced and formulated by (the members of) the communities who transmitted, authored, and read the narratives. The sujet of commission does not provide an absolute conclusion or a satisfying solution of this conflict in the narrative. It launches a new course of events, rather than bringing the plot to equilibrium. As a reaction to the conflict generated, the commission story advances a pattern that will be repeated over again in the subsequent narrative. It answers the problem by prolonging rather than solving it.

**Conclusions**

In this chapter, we have analysed a variety of narrative patterns, motifs, and themes. With the help of the analysis of the significant pat-

125. This is a broad interpretation of the _Sitz im Leben_ of commission, relying on the idea of intertextuality as proposed in the Introduction.
terns, we identified a set of motifs, which were organised into four major themes. The sujet of commission has been described with the help of an actantial and an episodic diagram.

It is notable, however, that these diagrams by no means give the essence of the analyses offered in the foregoing sections and chapters. The actantial diagram cannot replace a detailed analysis of the multifaceted relations between characters, objects and scenes, and the episodic description of the sujet does not eliminate the need for a detailed narrative analysis of the motifs. The plot cannot be reduced to the sujet and cannot be deduced from it because the symbolic and metaphoric contents of the story emerge from the cultural intertextures in which the narratives are told, edited, written, copied, and retold. Nevertheless, the sujet helps us to recognise some dramatic laws of narratives, which can then be studied in their actual literary appearances.
11. Retrospects and Prospects

Which literary models did apostolic commission stories follow? What is the biographical ideal that these stories promote? What are the problems and conflicts that these narratives address at the individual, social, historical, cultural, and anthropological levels? In this last chapter we will try to give a tentative answer to these questions.

The Literary Models of Apostolic Commission

Whereas Chapters 1 and 2 attempted to survey a large circle of commission texts in various literatures, I will now establish fewer but more concrete connections between apostolic commission stories and their literary environment. It is not my intent to cover all possible scribal-intertextual aspects of these texts (echoes, allusions, citations, reframings, etc.)\(^1\), but rather to survey the major literary patterns that the apostolic commission stories possibly borrowed from previous literature. I will rely on the discussion of the individual passages and motifs earlier in this book.

That narratives of the Jewish Scriptures influenced the commission of Paul in the Lucan Acts is beyond dispute\(^2\). Although the parallels extend to all the three versions, they use different traditions. The portrait of the young Saul and his commission story in Acts 9 draw on the appointment of King Saul in 1 Samuel 9–11, borrowing a typically institutional concept of divine commission. The narrative of Paul’s trial makes use of the biography of Jeremiah, and Acts 22 alludes to

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1. ‘Scribal intertexture’ delimits the problem of intertextuality to the connection between written texts. ‘Oral-scribal intertexture’ was introduced by Robbins, Tapestry, 97.
the temple vision of Isaiah, both focusing on the conflict between the prophet and his community. Acts 26 contains fragmented allusions, rather than a systematic imitation of any passage of the Jewish Scriptures.

Knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures cannot be automatically assumed with all of the apostolic Acts. For example, there is no reference to them in the Acts of Peter and the Twelve, and the Acts of John contains only a few allusions\(^3\). P. Lalleman called attention to three possible points of contact\(^4\): John’s character is drawn with allusions to the figures of Moses and Elijah; the language of Wisdom (Sapientia Solomonis) can be detected at several points in chapters 94–102 and 109; and a typically Jewish speech about God is found in chapters 18–86, 106–8, and 110–5. There are numerous references to the Jewish Scriptures in the Acts of Thomas\(^5\) and the Acts of Philip\(^6\). Because of their date and place of origin, one may assume knowledge of the (Greek) Christian canon with the Acts of Barnabas and the Acts of Titus, although the former does not refer to any specific passage of the Jewish Scriptures. In the Acts of Titus, the ‘Book of the Hebrews’ is the means of Titus’ conversion, and a programmatic prophecy is de-

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3. Junod and Kaestli, Acta Iohannis, vol 2, 891, list altogether four citations of Jewish Scriptures in the main text of the Acts of John: Exodus 33.23 (ch. 90), Psalms 62.13 (ch. 113), Proverbs 62.13 (ibidem), Wisdom 15.3 (ch. 109). If we deduct the passages from Psalms and Proverbs, both probably quoted after Matthew 16.27 or Romans 2.6, we are left with two instances. One is ἀρχομένη εἰς τὰ ὁπλίθη (ch. 90) perhaps alluding to ὁμηρά τὰ ὁπλίθη μου (Exodus 33.23); the other one is μνημόνευσας (ch. 109) possibly quoting ῶριζα ἀνανασάς in Wisdom 15.3. The first passage is found in the context of the gospel section. The parallel between Acts of John 90 and Exodus 24 and 32–4, proposed by Fossum (cited in Jakab, ‘Actes de Jean’, 312) is probably due to the connection of both texts with the transfiguration scene of the gospels (Matthew 17.1–13 and parallels).


rived from Deutero-Isaiah. In the apostolic commission stories we can identify the following narrative patterns of Jewish Scriptures: the idea of ‘lots’ appears in the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Acts of Philip*; and John Mark’s rushing to Barnabas after his night vision may imitate the visions of the child Samuel who asked the priest Eli about their meaning. The sequence of commission, protest, and reassurance occurs most clearly in the *Acts of Thomas*; it is alluded to in the *Acts of Philip*, and perhaps in *Acts* 22 and 26. The apostolic Acts apply this motif rarely as compared to its regular appearance in the commission stories of the Jewish Scriptures. In sum, substantial dependence on the Jewish Scriptures is demonstrable in the Lucan *Acts*, whereas it is limited to a few cases in the other apostolic commission stories.

A number of scholars have favoured the idea of a close relation between the apocryphal Acts and the Greek novels. This thesis has been extended to the Lucan *Acts* as well. Opinions divide, however, what this relation actually means. Did the novels exert an influence, in particular, on the literary pattern of commission in the apostolic Acts? We have seen that the novels often talk about the gods’ wrath, their protection, commands to the heroes, and the heroes themselves are deified. Do these motifs add up to a story of man’s salvation (as Kerényi and Merkelbach suggested), or is the ‘divine apparatus’ of

7. *Acts of Titus* 1 quotes Isaiah 41.1 and 45.17 verbatim from the Septuagint: ἐγέρσανες θεὸς με νήσοι [πόλλας ...] Ἰσραήλ σῴζεται ὑπὸ κυρίου σωτηρίαν αἰώνιον. This programmatic quote is to be compared with *Acts* 1.8. For oracles with a similar function in the novels, see pp. 51ff above.


13. In her much quoted book, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten*, R. Söder found a ‘close relationship’ (181), but also concluded that her findings ‘speak against the origin of the apocryphal Acts from the novel, almost excluding it’ (185). Bremmer, ‘Apocryphal Acts, 175, claims that ‘the authors of the *Acts of John* and *Acts of Paul*, at least, had read the contemporary novels and taken from them part of their inspiration’.


15. Cf. p. 53 above.
the novels ‘a literary device to give the plot a sense of direction, purpose, and eventual closure, rather than a statement of belief intended to instruct its readers in the ways of god?’

This is not the place to undertake a thorough investigation of such a complex subject. It is important to notice that the two approaches are not wholly incompatible. That which is a model of divine salvation from the religious point of view, is realised as a literary device of plot motivation in the actual text. Commission, however, implies more than the general theme of providence and salvation; it presupposes that the hero is called to the service of a deity. This can be isolated in the novels as the motif of the protagonist’s becoming a priest. Two types of this motif can be immediately identified. To the first group belongs priesthood as a temporary duty of the protagonist, possibly as a measure to shelter the heroine until she can be reunited with the hero. Chariclea and Theagenes’ priestly service is a temporary duty, and Apollonius’ wife quits priesthood when she is reunited with her husband. The second group comprises episodes where the protagonist is initiated as the final act of the novel. This sort of conclusion is found in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* and Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*.

In the apostolic Acts, commission always means a call to a permanent service, the appearance of a new and final goal in the protagonist’s life. Only the latter form of priestly service in the novels can be compared to this, where Apuleius and Heliodorus’ protagonists are initiated into a life-long service of the deity. A basic difference yet remains with regard to the place of commission within the narrative. In the apostolic Acts, commission normally stands at the beginning of the plot, and it launches, rather than concludes, the story. Whereas in the novels initiation into a cult means a stage of completion and stability, the apostolic commission stories generate, handle, and institutionalise conflict rather than resolve it. In sum, the narrative function of commission (if one calls the initiation of Lucius and similar epi-

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19. *History of Apollonius King of Tyre* 49.
sodes by that name) is quite different in the apostolic Acts than in the ancient novels.

We will now turn to the connections between the apostolic Acts and Greco-Roman philosophical tradition. We have used two types of texts in our study; first, biographies and texts with a biographical character, and then, theoretical treatises. The connection between the apostolic Acts and the philosophers’ biographies has received little attention in previous scholarship\textsuperscript{20}. We found that in Acts Luke drew on the Cynic ideal of divine call, which was formulated also by Epictetus, and Luke possibly alluded to Plato’s *Apology* in presenting Paul’s trial\textsuperscript{21}. When narrating Paul’s commission story, he used philosophical models especially in Acts 26. Here, in addition to parallels with Epictetus, Luke uses motifs which we detected with Livy, Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, and Diogenes Laertius. In the same passage he probably quotes Euripides\textsuperscript{22}. John’s commission story in the *Acts of John* 88–9 and 113 probably drew on Plato’s *Symposium*, and contains considerable similarities with Plotinus’ *Enneads*. I argued that the *Acts of John* (at least the relevant chapters) were written under the influence of emerging Neo-Platonism in Alexandria at the beginning of the third century. Finally, the *Acts of Titus* uses a structure similar to Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives*, and applies the standard topoi of ancient biography. The connection between the apostolic Acts and the above-mentioned philosophical traditions raises the question of the educational level and (consequently) the social location of the authors and readers of those texts. The problem is complex, and its discussion requires a thorough examination of the texts rather than the analysis of select passages, as in our study.

That the apostolic Acts were ‘für das Volk bestimmt’\textsuperscript{23} is an old generalisation that is no longer tenable. Texts written (just to talk


\textsuperscript{21} See pp. 11–23 above.

\textsuperscript{22} Cf. p. 82, note 72 above. Van der Horst, ‘Drohung und Mord’, 265, suggests that in Acts 9.1 Luke also cites Greek authors.

\textsuperscript{23} Söder, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten*, 186, ‘written for the lower classes’. At the same time, Söder (ibidem) maintained that the novels were written for educated readers.
about the ‘major’ Acts) in as distant places as Rome, Asia Minor, Syria, and Alexandria\textsuperscript{24}, by and for Christians speaking different languages and living in different cultural contexts, can hardly be anchored to a stereotypical social location. If one takes into account all the texts that we discussed in this book, it is even more imperative to look for specific social and cultural contexts in each case. The texts are also different from each other in terms of literary quality. Again, concentrating on the major Acts, one finds that the style of the Acts of Andrew (excluding the Acts of Andrew and Matthias) is ‘well educated’, whereas the rest of the (major) apostolic Acts is mostly ‘simple’ and ‘unsophisticated’. Even at their best they are lacking rhetorical skill and do not meet the classical standards of syntax\textsuperscript{25}. Stylistic observations alone, however, provide an unstable ground for describing the social context of the apocryphal Acts, because most of these texts came down to us fragmentarily and through a complicated transmission, including translations, rearrangements and epitomisation.

Another possibility to establish the social setting of these texts is literary analysis. Studies of the social worlds of the major apostolic Acts suggest that the upper class is widely represented in them\textsuperscript{26}. Shall we situate then these writings (despite their stylistic defects) in an upper class milieu? Without attempting to resolve this dilemma completely—a problem that involves the whole issue of the social setting(s) of early Christianity—we suggest that a non-elite authorship and an elite narrative world are not necessarily irreconcilable. Already Pervo demonstrated Luke’s strong ambitions to depict Paul as an equal partner of the higher class, portraying him as a ‘VIP’, by which the author embodied the ambitions rather than the actual social

\textsuperscript{24} Diversity characterises the history of research. Recently Bremmer, ‘Apocryphal Acts’, 152–9 argues that all of the major Acts except the Acts of Thomas were written in Asia Minor.


\textsuperscript{26} For Luke, see Malherbe, Paul, 150; Pervo (below); Neyrey (below). For the apocryphal Acts, see Bremmer, ‘Women’, 53–4; ‘Acts of Peter’, 5–6; ‘Apocryphal Acts’, 164–70.
standing of himself and his implied readers. We may add that Christians regarded their movement as one of ultimate historical importance. Most early Christian narratives, beginning with the gospels, tell stories about emperors, kings, and governors, and this tradition is continued in the apostolic Acts. It is therefore not improbable that the elevated social milieu of the Acts often reflects political fiction rather than social reality.

These examples may illustrate the complexity of the issue. Again, the best strategy seems to be to avoid generalisations as far as the cultural and social location of the apostolic Acts is concerned. Consequently, differentiation is desirable when we approach the question of which Greek literary sources the authors of these texts could use. On the basis of his commission narratives, we can conclude that Luke was acquainted with many Cynic topoi (represented in the texts of Epictetus, Dio Chrysostom, and the later compilation of Diogenes Laertius), and a few elements of rhetorical composition. Obvious sources of such knowledge were the Cynics themselves whose speeches he probably attended. Stories of moral conversion (the one we quoted from Livy) and divine call may have come from the same source as well as from Christian tradition.

The fact that Luke imitated the compositional techniques of historians, using prefaces and prosopopoeiae (speeches written for historical personages) indicates that he read classical texts at least at


the level of the grammar school. In this educational context, one can also expect knowledge of the trial of Socrates. It is more difficult to talk about the education of the author(s) of the Acts of John. We found an appropriate setting for the philosophical thoughts of the book in Alexandria. Eusebius in his Church History provides us with some detail about the intellectual life of Alexandrian Christians at the beginning of the third century. He mentions not only that Origen studied with Ammonius Saccas, the founder of Neo-Platonism, but also that he gave catechesis (in addition to his work as grammaticus), and these lectures were attended also by non-Christians, many of whom converted and became martyrs. Eusebius quotes a letter by Origen, where Origen himself reports that he had listeners who were versed in Greek philosophy. In that milieu, it is not difficult to situate the author of Acts of

31. In Hellenistic primary schools pupils learned writing and reading on the texts of Homer and Euripides. In the grammar school, they read mainly Homer, Euripides, Menander, and Demosthenes, but also historians: Herodotus, Xenophon, Hellanicus, and, above all, Thucydides. Latin texts were first used under Augustus: Virgil, Cicero, Sallust, Terence (Marrou, Education, 153, 162–4; Barrow, Education, 80). Morgan, Literary Education, 90–151, provides an inspiring study of how literature was actually read at school. In his exercises for the ‘grammar school’, Theon of Alexandria (1st century AD), Progymnasmata 86ff, takes many examples from Herodotus and Thucydides, and prescribes the composition of prosopopoeiae (115.12–118.6). Cf. Cribiore, Gymnastics, 178–80; 192–205; 225–38; Hezser, Jewish Literacy, 90–109.

32. Scholars have often remarked that Luke alludes to Socrates when he reports Paul’s debates with the philosophers in Athens (Acts 17); O’Neill, Theology of Acts, 160–71. Lucian, Passing of Peregrinus 12, reports that the Christians (whom he depicts as rather single minded) called Peregrinus, when he was in prison, ‘the new Socrates’. For Socrates with the second and third century Fathers, see Döring, Exemplum Socratis, 143–61. For the imitation of Socrates in Eusebius’ Life of Origen 6.3.7, see Cox, Biography, 87.

33. We also have an important source regarding the end of the second century: Clement of Alexandria, Instructor 2–3, provides us with substantial information about the everyday life of the rich Christians of Alexandria; cf. Jakab, Ecclesia Alexandrina, 257–292.

34. Cf. p. 117 above.


36. Origenes’ asceticism (philosopher’s life, φιλοσοφοφειν) provoked much admiration (6.8), not to talk about his self-castration. The latter ideal might have played a role in the Johannine tradition, cf. p. 110, note 78.
John 88–9 and 113, who could have visited the schools of Origen and Ammonius Saccas at the same time. The composite (and fragmentary) character of the text warns us against extending this hypothesis to the rest of the book. The narrative parts of the Acts of John could have been composed at a different place (in Asia Minor?37) in a different educational milieu. As for the Acts of Titus, its author, a Cretan cleric of the fifth century, was well acquainted with the biographical patterns used by the then already numerous hagiographic texts. He could easily mould whatever he found and invented into a tidy bios of his hero.

Next we consider the mutual dependence among the apostolic Acts. This is a very complex issue, which is tied up with the problem of the dating of these texts. As was the case with the use of philosophical passages, it is often impossible to decide whether an author used a specific text as a primary source, or was influenced by it through one or more intermediary stages. Sometimes one cannot decide which of two texts used the other one; often a hypothetical common source provides a further alternative. In addition to that, many texts were lost, and the textual relations of the extant witnesses are often uncertain. Rather than citing the controversial results of previous scholarship38, I will depart from the (more or less) undisputed premises, and focus comparison on the commission narratives themselves. Initially I assume that any of the Acts could use any other that was written before it. Therefore, the first task is to sketch the plausible temporal sequence of the books. No one ever challenged the premise

that the Lucan Acts was the first in this series. Therefore, all of the other apostolic Acts may have used it as a source. The temporal sequence of the five ‘major’ Acts has not yet been definitively established. Therefore, we can depart from the premise that any of them could use any other of them. We examined three of the later Acts in this book: the Acts of Philip (fourth century), the Acts of Barnabas (fifth century) and the Acts of Titus (fifth to seventh century). The position of the Acts of Peter and the Twelve is ambiguous. Some date it as early as the second century, whereas we concluded that in its present form it dates from the middle of the fourth century, being approximately a contemporary of the Acts of Philip.

In the commission of John in his Acts, we find two motifs of the Lucan Acts: the heavenly voice on the road, and John’s blindness and healing. Both motifs may have come independently from other sources as well. The Acts of Thomas makes no self-evident use of earlier apostolic commission stories. One may mention that it begins with the gathering of the apostles in Jerusalem, which is described also by Luke, and I assumed that it was the first of the apostolic Acts that related the division of the missionary fields. The Acts of Philip probably used the Lucan Acts in depicting the relation of Philip and the other apostles and drew on the Acts of Thomas in reporting the division of the world among the apostles. With the Acts of Peter and

39. Consider, however, the puzzle of the Western text of Acts, especially as preserved in Codex Bezae. The substantial textual variations of Acts either imply a second edition by the author, or otherwise they witness a remarkable fluidity of the text of this book in the second century. For the former, see Metzger, Textual Commentary, 260–4; for the latter, Birdsell, ‘Three Centuries’ xvii–xviii. Strange, The Text of Acts, 186–9, suggests that both the Western and ‘non-Western’ versions were edited from the unpublished (and unfinished) Lucan text as late as the second half of the second century. For some possible connections between the Western text of Acts and the Acts of Paul, see Czachesz, ‘Acts of Paul’.

40. Except perhaps for the Acts of Thomas, which was likely the last of the ‘major’ Acts, dated unanimously to the third century; cf. p. 119, note 1 above.


45. Cf. pp. 136f and 223 above, respectively.
the Twelve it shares the motif of the apostles’ commission to heal people, which is symbolised in both texts by an ‘unguent box’ that Jesus gave the apostles⁴⁶. The Acts of Peter and the Twelve otherwise did not use elements of the commission narratives of other apostolic Acts. The Acts of Barnabas and the Acts of Titus are indebted to the Lucan Acts. Both elaborate on episodes of the Lucan book, and pay much attention to the relations of the commissioned hero and the apostles. One important result of this brief survey is that none of the commission stories in the books examined is a direct imitation or emulation of an earlier apostolic commission story. This does not mean that the authors of the individual Acts did not know earlier commission stories. They applied this genre, however, with considerable freedom. The development of commission stories in the given texts is due to the creative combination of the inherited motifs and the use of different literary models.

Finally, a number of other literary traditions contributed to the development of commission narratives in our texts. Egyptian examples certainly exerted an (indirect) influence on the idea of divine commission in the apostolic Acts⁴⁷. This includes elements as the institutional and hierarchical structure of commission, as well as a god striking the hero with illness. Similar motifs of cultic legends appear in the Zoilus letter and the preface of Nechautis, and may have influenced the commission narratives of the Acts of John if it was revised in Alexandria. Further, the Acts of Philip perhaps relied on the Gospel of Mary when depicting the figure of Mariamne. However, it could derive the character from other texts as well⁴⁸. Early monastic literature shaped the Acts of Peter and the Twelve⁴⁹. In the case of the later Acts, one cannot neglect the growing number of Christian biographies. The use of bibliomancy in the Acts of Titus probably comes from that literary tradition⁵⁰.

In sum, the apostolic Acts did not take the pattern of commission narrative from a single source. The concept was influenced by differ-

⁴⁷. Cf. pp. 31ff above.
⁴⁸. Cf. p. 147 above.
ent literary models, which were themselves interconnected by a variety of intertextual aspects. The latter applies to the relation of the apostolic commission narratives. Instead of counting with a single linear tradition, we have to assume that the apostolic Acts were influenced by earlier Acts as well as other literary models. None of them relied exclusively on the commission stories of the previous Acts.

Apostolic Commission Stories as Biographical Models

An important function of ancient biographies was that they served as examples and models. They were examples and models in a twofold sense. First, often explicitly declared by the author, they were lessons for posterity, positive examples to be imitated, or negative ones to be avoided. Second, rather implicitly, they represented actual concerns of a person or a community. These two aspects were interrelated. The problems and interests of an author or the author’s community motivated the selection of a given genre and hero. In this last section of our study, we will sum up and organise what we have already told to a great part on this subject in connection with individual texts and the sujet of apostolic commission.

Let us begin with the observation that the apostles as biographical heroes first emerged in a stage of advanced institutionalisation of the Church. The earliest apostolic commission story preserved is that of Paul in the Lucan Acts. Especially if we compare Acts 9 with Paul’s autobiographical account in Galatians 1 and 2, it becomes clear that Luke (or his sources) added an elaborate institutional backdrop to the original story as communicated by Paul. We can come to a similar conclusion if we compare Acts 9 to the remaining two versions in the Lucan book, which are reported as Paul’s recollections in the story. To do justice to Luke, it cannot be excluded that already Paul himself changed his story during his lifetime. Precisely the analysis of Galatians shows that he had—or better, he felt he had—reasons to define himself and his call more and more independently from the Jerusalem church and its hierarchy. The last version of his call in Acts

resembles Paul’s own story much better than the first one. This does not change the fact that the first apostolic commission story of early Christian literature is similar to an Egyptian commission narrative, the purpose of which was to integrate the hero into a universal hierarchy. Therefore, the Lucan commission stories of Paul offer a dynamic biographical model. While biblical scholarship has often regarded the Lucan Acts as a literary manifesto of Frühkatholizismus, the analysis of the commission narratives suggests that its protagonist proceeds on a path of emancipation from the Christian institutional hierarchy presented by Luke.

Can we read the Lucan account as mirroring an actual problem of his time, the end of the first century AD? One should not overlook the warning of social-science criticism, that the personality of early Christians, like Mediterranean persons of the time, was basically group-oriented. We would read the Lucan narrative anachronistically if we populated his church with freelance Christian intellectuals. The Lucan Paul—similarly to the Paul of the epistles—finds his identity in his divine call to the Gentiles, in other words, as a founder and acknowledged leader of Christian churches in Asia Minor and the Aegean region. Jesus’ disciples do not reach the utmost borders of the oikouμένη in Acts, notwithstanding the theological program of the author. As Pervo remarked, ‘none of the audience of Acts 1.8 came any closer to Rome than Caesarea Maritima’. This also corresponds to the division of the missionary fields between Paul and Peter as described by Paul in Galatians 2.9. The Lucan Acts witnesses a division within Christianity, or better, a vivid interaction between groups

54. Acts 1.8, ‘you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ (εἰς Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἐκ τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ ἐκ τῆς Σαμαρίας καὶ ἐξ οὗτοι προς τὰ ἐως τῆς γῆς).
55. Pervo, Profit with Delight, 129.
rather than the emergence of a single institutional body. The book concentrates so strongly on Paul that it is very likely the author regarded this figure as a paradigm. The three versions of Paul’s commission can be read as an expression of the changing self-definition of Lucan Christians; initial identification within existing institutional frames, and then a continuous realisation of the group’s own divine call, that is, its independence as a stream of Christianity. A more detailed analysis of Acts would be needed to say more about the identity of this group.

In the commission stories of the Acts of John and the Acts of Thomas, institution does not appear as a central problem. The heroes of these Acts do not seek their legitimacy from other apostles. Nevertheless, both texts depict an apostolic community, to which the hero belongs. John is presented as superior to his fellow apostles. The commission story of Acts of John 88–9 is unique among the apostolic Acts as far as it reports Jesus’ call of John as a disciple, similarly as the synoptic gospels do. He is privileged by an especially intimate relation with Jesus, which culminates in the revelation of the cross of light. Consequently, the community of the Acts of John traces back its origins to John’s pre-Easter experience. Or, to put it more consistently with the thought-world of the Acts of John56, the commission stories of the apostle identify an ideal Christianity that originated with John’s call as Jesus’ disciple, was legitimated through the intimate relation of John to Jesus, and its position did not change essentially with Jesus’ ascent to heaven.

In the Acts of Thomas, the role of the other apostles is reduced to a plain list of names. Thomas does not have any interaction with them. The text narrates Thomas’ protest as a conflict between him and Jesus. We can conclude that the group of the Acts of Thomas understood itself as an equal partner of other Christian streams, and its relation to them did not play a major role in its self-definition.

In the Acts of Philip, the hero appears as a somewhat marginal figure among the apostles, first seeking their confirmation, and then rebelling against his allotted missionary field. This ambivalence is apparent also in his identity. He is an amalgam of Philip the disciple

56. In the Acts of John, there is no incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 98f, esp. note 33.
and Philip the Hellenist. It is remarkable that, beside other apostles, he is supported by the female figure of Mariamne, who had a leading role in Gnostic tradition. As we concluded, Mariamne is an alter ego of Philip. Mystical and speculative elements are not missing from his commission story. It is enough to think about Jesus’ appearance to Philip in the form of an eagle, or his cosmological explanations to him. The group of the Acts of Philip, therefore, may have understood itself as an eccentric stream marginally related to an established institutional church. Whereas it seeks the proximity of what it accepts as unquestioned apostolic authority, it retains a mystical and speculative tradition.

Hitherto, we have found only Thomas and Philip rebelling against their allotments. It is interesting to quote Pseudo-Prochorus, who provides a similar picture of John. According to this episode, the apostles cast lots and John received Asia. He ‘suffered this ill’, he ‘sighed three times’, ‘wept’, then ‘fell on his face, and prostrated himself’ before all the apostles. This self-humiliation of John before his fellow apostles is rather surprising when we compare it to the assumed superiority of the protagonist in the Acts of John. Even Philip in his Acts, who seeks legitimacy from the apostles, does not prostrate himself before them. Pseudo-Prochorus dissolves the tension immediately. Peter reproaches John, but he does this by reminding John of his distinguished position among the apostles: ‘We all regard you as our father’. John repents, and returns the compliment by calling Peter ‘father’. This small scene shows that in some traditions John was not elevated above the other apostles, but rather his status was subject to negotiation. The episode preserved the stamp of an elaborate interaction between different streams of Early Christi-

58. Zahn, Acta Ioannis, 5, line 13, βαρέως ἔνεμεν περὶ τοῦτου. Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, 308, give instances for βαρέως φέρειν followed by the accusative or ἐπὶ with dative.
61. The Arabic version of the story completely eliminates the self-humiliation of John, see Smith Lewis, Mythological Acts, 38.
anity, and provides an adjustment to the picture gained from the *Acts of John*.

Although the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* represents the apostles as a close-knit group, almost as a collective person, it nevertheless contains an episode that shows John as Jesus’ intimate, in the role of a mediator. This Johannine reminiscence—especially if we attribute the passage to the final redactor of the text—can be important for the reconstruction of the group behind the book. A further affinity can be discovered between the way of perfection that is described in metaphorical terms in both writings. However, the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*—at least in its present form—stresses the unity of the ‘twelve’ rather than depicting their mutual relations. This only confirms our proposal that it is the document of a coenobite (Pachomian) monastic community.

A twofold purpose characterises the commission stories of the later apostolic Acts, represented in our book by the *Acts of Barnabas* and the *Acts of Titus*. On the one hand, they endow a given territorial church (that of Cyprus or Crete, respectively) with as much apostolicity as possible. On the other hand, they claim as much independence for themselves as possible. This is not achieved, however, through a combination of institutional and mystical elements, as in the *Acts of Philip* and partly in the *Acts of John*. Their strategy is rather to manipulate institutional relations. If we labelled the *Acts of Titus* as ‘political fiction’, the same is true, although to a lesser degree, of the *Acts of Barnabas*. The difference between them is the scale of political operations. Whereas the *Acts of Titus* lets the Roman political elite engage in the life of primitive Christianity, the *Acts of Barnabas* elaborates on Church political conflicts of the same period. Both efforts gained much inspiration from the Lucan *Acts*.

The *Acts of Titus* resourcefully balances the subordinate position of its hero to Paul and the apostles by presenting him as an eyewitness to Jesus’ ministry and death. The leaders of Crete were, the text suggests, Jesus’ followers, and Titus was commissioned by God and supported by the local hierarchy long before any Christian missionary set his foot on the island. The *Acts of Barnabas* interestingly inverts the succession of Barnabas and Paul, presenting the latter as an older per-

son and a higher authority. It is in line with the plan that I have suggested above. For Cyprus, it pays to subordinate Barnabas to Paul, who has a higher stance in the hierarchy of the saints. It is not their purpose to undermine the authority of Paul, but rather to prove that he acknowledged Barnabas as an equal and approved of his mission to Cyprus. Barnabas, in turn, becomes the mentor of John Mark, his faithful companion and chronicler. I have already analysed their mutual relation, and suggested that the *Acts of Barnabas* used Marcan tradition to enhance Barnabas’ reputation.

The apostolic commission stories served as models for the self-definition of their respective communities. They provided aetiological explanations of the norms, values, and theological systems of those groups. This was a complex phenomenon. Traditions were reread and rewritten by different communities and later generations. As this happened, the new readers interpreted their situation with the help of the traditions handed down to them, whereas their own problems left their imprints on the texts. The narratives also meant biographical models for the individual. The life of the members of those groups was based on a combination of group loyalties and individuality, of institutional ties and mystical (speculative) elements of thought. How these interests are reflected in the texts, or better, how the texts served to cope with such situations, is difficult to say. We certainly cannot apply the above-mentioned patterns automatically to the lives of the individuals. The text did not necessarily mean the same for the individual as it meant for the community as a whole. As Christians reread these stories later in their own frames, they drew on the (sub)cultural and anthropological levels of the texts (rather than the actual social and historical ones), and read them in their own ways as biographical models, assigning to them new social and historical references.

The sujet of the commission narratives, described in the previous chapter, belongs to the cultural and anthropological layer of the texts that offered possibilities of social and historical actualisations of the stories from time to time. At the same time, the use of commission narratives as biographical models was certainly predetermined by the political and sociological themes inherent in the narratives. The sujet

63. This line of thought proceeds from the notion of intertextuality sketched in the Introduction, pp. 3ff.
of commission offered patterns to channel the basic conflicts of human life. Whereas the sujet describes a general thought-pattern, the actual ways of conflict-handling vary between the different texts. The mystical Christians of the *Acts of John* followed life-strategies different from the ambitious middle-class of the Lucan *Acts*, or the Pachomian monks of the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*. Yet our texts witness a recurring biographical pattern in all those Christian groups, namely, the pattern of divine commission. Within the limits of that general sujet, people found variations that corresponded to the aetiological traditions of their communities.

Since we have already analysed the narratives in much detail, a few examples suffice to illustrate the idea. Lucan Christians (the term designates at this time readers who found the Lucan text appropriate to reflect on their problems) thought about themselves as converted from darkness to light, wounded and healed by God, sent out as engaged missionaries to the world, and established as loyal members of the apostolic Church. They probably found their Ananias or Barnabas to help them integrate into the Church. They may have ambitiously tried to find their ways in Roman society, and became increasingly conscious of their own assigned task in the world. Johannine Christians emphasised, in turn, their call to spiritual growth in an intimate relation with Jesus. They valued the ideal of chastity, and experienced conflicts regarding their sexual desires. They remembered that Jesus struck John with blindness for his disobedience, but he also healed him, and gave him a higher vision of reality. Further, Thomasine Christians may have thought about themselves as rebels against the will of Jesus, who captured them as slaves, and sent them out to the world as his representatives or twin brothers. They were also called to spiritual growth, but this implied a more active role than the ideal of the Johannine stream. Their active life-strategy was symbolised by the work of an architect.

Finally, we can observe that the apostolic commission stories rarely promote a prophetic world-view. They do not demand the hero to confront his community. On the level of a social-historical reading, this suggests that these texts were not the documents of revolutionary

64. By ‘aetiological traditions’, I mean traditions that explain the origins, goals, and *raison d’être* of a community.
movements. Their groups either went along with the given social frameworks, or withdrew into isolation. They may have been reformists, who hoped to exert an influence on society, but they were not revolutionists attempting to turn it upside down. Perhaps the only exception is Paul’s commission story in *Acts* 22, where he is opposed by his fellow Jews, and—in the larger narrative context—his conservative fellow-Christians. It would be a mistake, however, to generalise this finding in view of the apostolic Acts. First, because the three types of institutional, prophetic, and philosophical commission are always represented in combinations rather than in isolation. Second, because a study of the social rhetoric of the apostolic Acts must be built on the analysis of the texts in their entirety.

**General Conclusions**

It is time to draw the general conclusions of our study of apostolic commission narratives. Divine commission is a literary pattern that presented itself in different cultural contexts. It probably has anthropological roots, which we did not explore in this study. Thus, commission narratives in early Christian literature did not arise in isolation, nor did they follow only patterns of the Jewish Scriptures. Rather they combined elements of Jewish literature, Greco-Roman biographies, philosophical traditions, novels, cultic legends, gospel traditions, and the emerging Christian biographies. Egyptian and Near Eastern traditions influenced them mainly with the mediation of Jewish literature, Greek novels, and cultic legends. Later apostolic Acts derived motifs from earlier ones, but this did not assume the form of direct imitation.

During an initial survey of commission in various literary traditions, we could establish a threefold social typology of commission narratives: institutional, prophetic, and philosophical. In Paul’s commission in the Lucan *Acts* we could clearly identify all the three types. This author made the most extensive use of Jewish Scriptures. He also drew substantially on the tradition of divine call in contemporary Cynic philosophy. The subsequent appearance of the threefold typology in the commission stories of this text can be interpreted as a witness to the formation of a new group within Early Christianity. The commission stories of the apostolic Acts from the second to the fourth
centuries attest a broad plurality of Christian formations. In these texts, the interactions of the hero with the other apostles symbolise the links that the respective groups maintained with other Christian groups. In all those texts, there is an element of mysticism, which in some cases can be associated with the influence of Platonic texts or Gnostic writings. The commission stories of the heroes provide a combination of these institutional and mystical elements. In the *Acts of John*, we could identify an imitation of Plato’s *Symposium*, used as a program of spiritual perfection. This urges a subtle investigation of the social and cultural milieu of the early apocryphal Acts, and a careful application of the traditional labels ‘popular’ and ‘uneducated’. The *Acts of Philip* and the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve*, although scholarly tradition excluded them from the circle of the ‘major Acts’, belong to the same literary and cultural milieu, as far as it can be judged from the study of their commission narratives. Whereas the *Acts of Philip* otherwise draws substantially on the earlier Acts, its commission stories are genuine compositions, reflecting the ideal of a pluriform Christianity. The *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* originated in the milieu of coenobite monasticism. All of the Acts from the second to the fourth centuries contain a mystical model of Christian self-definition. The Acts of the fifth century, of which we examined the *Acts of Barnabas* and the *Acts of Titus*, concentrate rather on institutional themes, both using the Lucan *Acts* as a model. They provide political propaganda for local churches, in a twofold effort to establish their authority in apostolic tradition on the one hand, and maintain their independence on the other hand. The *Acts of Titus* makes use of the topoi of the Christian biographies, as well as of Greco-Roman biographical tradition.

In addition to the social-historical perspective, we analysed the use of the commission narratives on a social-anthropological level. We delineated the sujet of commission, suggesting that it provided a narrative framework of self-definition for early Christians. We suggested that commission stories describe the interaction of the five agents of sender, helper, authority, hero, and addressee, together with their negative counterparts. An episodic description of the sujet showed how commission serves to generate and handle conflict. The local variations of this model provided a biographical system of coordinates for the members of different Christian communities.
Many questions have been raised in this study that await further investigation. These include the textual history of the *Acts of John*, the cultural settings of several apostolic Acts, the intertextual relations of the texts, and a broader analysis of the narrative pattern of commission in late antiquity and beyond. Whereas my primary purpose was to give a literary analysis of commission narratives in the apostolic Acts, I have often engaged in historical-critical issues. In literary criticism, alternative readings are possible, and indeed, desirable. They can coexist peacefully even within the same book. In historical issues, on the contrary, alternative solutions most often completely exclude each other. Therefore, the suggestions that I made in connection with the textual reconstruction and historical setting of texts will probably be subject to more intense criticism than my literary critical interpretations. We have to realise, however, that historical explanations and literary interpretations are strongly bound to each other. For example, my literary examinations of the *Acts of John* and the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* necessarily prompted new theories with regard to their historical settings. I hope that this study will provoke not only critical remarks on individual points, but also complex literary and historical interpretations of the apostolic Acts.
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SAMENVATTING

Eerdere onderzoeken van opdrachtverhalen (commission stories) in vroegechristelijke literatuur waren beperkt tot de vier canonieke evangeliën en Lucas’ Handelingen. Deze studies werden door vormanalyse van joodse geschreven en de literatuur van het Nabije Oosten ingegeven. In ons onderzoek is het terrein in vier richtingen uitgebreid: (1) de studie dekt ook de niet-canonieke Handelingen, (2) tekstuele parallellen omvatten niet alleen teksten uit het Nabije Oosten en joodse literatuur maar ook teksten uit verschillende gebieden van Grieks-Romeinse literatuur en het vroege christendom, (3) literairkritische benaderingen worden gebruikt om meerdere aspecten van opdrachtverhalen te analyseren, o.a. retorica, narratie, plot, sociale en cognitieve structuren, (4) het geven van een opdracht wordt als een centraal onderdeel van biografische verhalen beschouwd.


Hoofdstuk 2 biedt een overzicht van opdrachtverhalen in de literatuur van de Oudheid en er wordt een drievoudige typologie van de sociale structuur (texture) van opdrachtverhalen gepresenteerd. Het eerste type wordt ‘institutioneel’ genoemd, waarvan de typische voorbeelden komen uit de biografieën van dynastisch Egypte. De hoofdfiguur wordt in deze teksten in een bestaande institutionele hiërarchie geïntegreerd. Het tweede type wordt ‘profetisch’ genoemd, omdat vele van de roepingen van de profeten in de joodse geschreven tot dit type horen. Het centrale probleem van deze teksten is het conflict tussen het individu en de gemeenschap. Het derde type wordt ‘filosofisch’ genoemd. In de filosofische opdrachtverhalen wordt de hoofdfiguur geroepen tot een intieme relatie met de godheid, waarvoor hij de wereld verlaat.

Hoofdstuk 3 behandelt de drie versies van Paulus’ bekering in het canonieke Boek van Handelingen (hoofdstukken 9, 22, 26). Concepten van antieke retorica worden gebouwd, vooral bij de analyse van de laatste twee teksten. De toepassing van de in Hoofdstuk 2 uitgewerkte sociologische typologie leidt ertoe dat de drie versies als uitdrukkingen van de wisselende zelf-definitie van een groep christenen worden gezien. Deze groep heeft
zich in het begin binnen het bestaande institutionele kader geïdentificeerd maar heeft toen zijn eigen roeping gevonden als een stroming van het christendom. Dit hoofdstuk wordt gevolgd door een appendix over Paulus’ bekering in de apocriefe Handelingen van Paulus.

In Hoofdstuk 4 gaat het om de Handelingen van Johannes. De drie opdrachtverhalen van dit boek laten zich niet makkelijk systematiseren vanwege het fragmentarisch karakter van deze Handelingen. We suggere- ren dat de eerste tekst (hoofdstuk 18), die een scherpzinnige beschrijving van Johannes’ opdracht biedt, het begin vormde van een vroegere versie van de Handelingen van Johannes, terwijl de derde tekst (hoofdstuk 113) tot de conclusie van het boek hoorde. Het tweede verhaal (hoofdstukken 88-89) en zijn bredere context (hoofdstukken 87-105) imiteren het Symposium van Plato, en beschrijven een programma van spirituele perfectie. Hetzelfde programma speelt ook in het derde verhaal een rol. ‘Apofatisme’ en andere elementen van neoplatonisme zijn zowel in het tweede als in het derde verhaal te identificeren. Dit leidt tot de hypothese, dat de redevoe- ringen van de Handelingen van Johannes tot de narratieve tekstdelen rond 200 in Alexandrië werden toegevoegd.

Hoofdstuk 5 analyseert het begin van de Handelingen van Thomas (hoofdstukken 1-3). Drie onderwerpen worden in de roeping van Thomas besproken: het oudtestamentische motief van protest en nederlaag van een profeet; verkoop tot slavernij (een typisch motief van de Griekse roman), en vakmanschap als een metafoor van perfectie en redding.

Hoofdstuk 6 onderzoekt de Handelingen van Philippus. De held van deze teksten wordt beschreven als een enigszins marginale figuur in het gezelschap van de apostelen. In hoofdstuk 3 verzoekt Philippus de apostelen om hem als apostel te erkennen, terwijl hij in hoofdstuk 8 protesteert tegen het aan hem uitgedeelde werkgebied. Het is opmerkelijk dat hij door Mariamne wordt begeleid, een vrouw die in de gnostische overlevering een belangrijke functie heeft. In de Handelingen van Philippus, is Mariamne een bemiddelaar tussen Philippus en Jezus, maar zij is ook het alter ego van de held. Mariamne representeert o.a. de kracht waarmee Philippus zieken kan genezen. Achter dit hoofdstuk bevindt zich een appendix over de aedelaar als een afbeelding van God/Jezus in de Paraleipomena Jeremiou en de Handelingen van Philippus.

In Hoofdstuk 7 gaat het om de koptische Handelingen van Petrus en de twaalf apostelen. Volgens onze interpretatie, kreeg deze tekst zijn laatste redactie door de monniken van Pachomius in de vierde eeuw. Het boek
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behandelt verschillende problemen van het leven van de monniken die in de Regulae Pachomii en de Vita Pachomii op een soortgelijk manier worden besproken. Sociale spanningen binnen de monastieke beweging zijn in het boek eveneens op te sporen. De Handelingen van Petrus en de twaalf apostelen is vergelijkbaar met de Handelingen van Johannes voor zover beide teksten beschrijven een programma van spirituele perfectie. In de Handelingen van Petrus en de twaalf apostelen dit is voltooid door de middelen van een georganiseerd ascetisch gezelschap.

Hoofdstuk 8 analyseert de Handelingen van Barnabas, waarin de roeping van Johannes Marcus wordt beschreven. Wij suggereren dat het boek tradities bevat die vroeger over Marcus werden overgeleverd, maar later werden gebruikt om de schrale traditie over de persoon van Barnabas aan te vullen. Het boek getuigt van de (collectieve) bekering tot het christendom van de dienaren van Griekse tempels op Cyprus. Een goede parallel met dit verschijnsel is de bekering van een groep retorici (philophonoi genoemd) in Alexandrië in de vijfde eeuw. Marcus werd waarschijnlijk als de leider van de bekeerde cultische dienaren beschreven omdat vroegere christelijke tradities hem voor zijn bekering voor een dienaar van de tempel in Jeruzalem hielden.

Hoofdstuk 9 behandelt de bekering van Titus in zijn Handelingen. Dit verhaal gebruikt verschillende literaire patronen van de late Oudheid: de structuur van Grieks-Romeinse biografieën, een hagiografisch patroon van bekering, dat o.a. in Augustinus’ Confessiones voorkomt, en verhalen over de inleiding van nieuwe religieuze culten. Deze tekst is een perfect voorbeeld van het institutionele type van opdrachtverhalen. De Handelingen van Titus projecteert de positieve ontvangst van het christendom door de Griekse en Romeinse maatschappelijke elite terug naar de tijd van Jezus en beschrijft de introductie van de nieuwe cultus als een verworvenheid van de regering van deze tijd. Het opdrachtverhaal wordt ‘political fiction’ als een Romeinse proconsul een envoi uitzendt naar Palestina om zich over de werkzaamheid van Jezus te laten informeren, of als onder keizer Traianus een christelijke kerk met de hulp van statelijke middelen wordt gebouwd.

De laatste twee hoofdstukken bieden een systematische interpretatie van de opdrachtverhalen. Hoofdstuk 9 behandelt een aantal typische motieven van de teksten. De structuur van de opdrachtverhalen van de apostelen wordt met behulp van twee diagrammen beschreven. Het eerste (semantische) diagram toont de onderlinge relaties van de belangrijke dramatis personae, terwijl het tweede (diachronische) diagram een lijst van elementaire
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acties bevat die als grondslagen van de opdrachtverhalen fungeren. Hoofdstuk 10 bestaat uit twee delen, waarvan het eerste een overzicht biedt van de intertekstuele relaties tussen de bestudeerde teksten en andere literatuur, terwijl het tweede deel een interpretatie biedt van de bestudeerde teksten t.o.v. hun maatschappelijke modellen van religie. Geconcludeerd wordt dat de teksten mogelijkheden bieden van zelf-definitie óf binnen de instituties óf daarbuiten, terwijl een belangrijke type, dat we als profetisch beschreven hebben (waarin de hoofdfiguur zich tegenover de instituties definieert), alleen in Lucas’ Handelingen is te vinden.