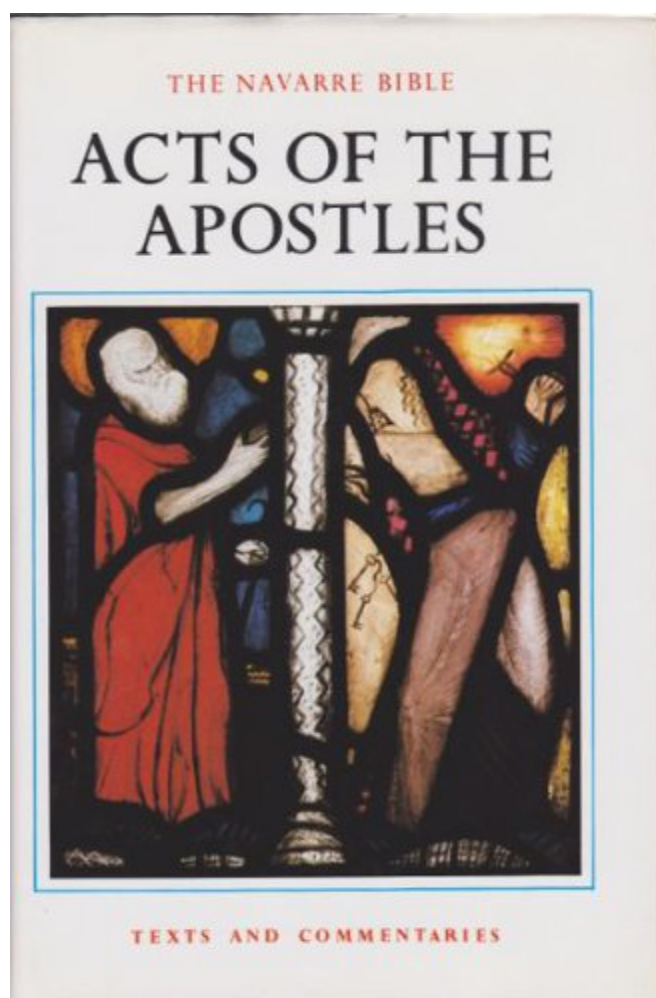


The Navarre Bible: The Acts of the Apostles in the Revised Standard Version and New Vulgate / with a commentary by members of the Faculty of Theology, University of Navarre

José María Casciaro, José Morales, Javier Rodríguez Martínez, Tomás Belda, Gonzalo Aranda, Santiago Ausín, Pedro Hípola, Klaus Limburg, James Gavigan, Brian McCarthy, Thomas McGovern, Michael Adams

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THE NAVARRE BIBLE

The Acts of the Apostles

in the Revised Standard Version and New Vulgate
with a commentary by members of the
Faculty of Theology of the University of Navarre



FOUR COURTS PRESS

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Preface

In providing both undergraduate and postgraduate education, and in the research it carries out, a university is ultimately an institution at the service of society. It was with this service in mind that the theology faculty of the University of Navarre embarked on the project of preparing a translation and commentary of the Bible accessible to a wide readership—a project entrusted to it by the apostolic zeal of the University's founder and first chancellor, Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer.

Monsignor Escrivá did not live to see the publication of the first volume, the Gospel according to St Matthew; but he must, from heaven, continue to bless and promote our work, for the volumes, the first of which appeared in 1976, have been well received and widely read.

This edition of the Bible avoids many scholarly questions, discussion of which would over-extend the text and would be of no assistance to the immense majority of readers; these questions are avoided, but they have been taken into account.

The Spanish edition contains a new Spanish translation made from the original texts, always taking note of the Church's official Latin text, which is now that of the New Vulgate, a revision of the venerable Latin Vulgate of St Jerome: on 25 April 1979 Pope John Paul II, by the Apostolic Constitution *Scripturarum thesaurus*, promulgated the *editio typica prior* of the New Vulgate as the new official text; the *editio typica altera*, issued in 1986, is the Latin version used in this edition. For the English edition of this book we consider ourselves fortunate in having the Revised Standard Version as the translation of Scripture and wish to record our appreciation for permission to use that text, an integral part of which are the RSV notes, which are indicated by superior letters.

The introductions and notes have been prepared on the basis of the same criteria. In the notes (which are the most characteristic feature of this Bible, at least in its English version), along with scriptural and ascetical explanations we have sought to offer a general exposition of Christian doctrine—not of course a systematic exposition, for we follow the thread of the scriptural text. We have also tried to explain and connect certain biblical passages by reference to others, conscious that Sacred Scripture is ultimately one single entity; but, to avoid tiring the reader, most of the cross-references are given in the form of marginal notes (the marginal notes in this edition are, then, those of the Navarre Bible, not the RSV). The commentaries contained in the notes are the result of looking

up thousands of sources (sometimes reflected in explicit references given in our text)—documents of the Magisterium, exegesis by Fathers and Doctors of the Church, works by important spiritual writers (usually saints, of every period) and writings of the founder of our University. It would have been impertinent of us to comment on the Holy Bible using our own expertise alone. Besides, a basic principle of exegesis is that Scripture should be interpreted in the context of Sacred Tradition and under the guidance of the Magisterium.

From the very beginning of our work our system has been to entrust each volume to a committee which then works as a team. However, the general editor of this edition takes ultimate responsibility for what it contains.

It is our pleasant duty to express our gratitude to the present chancellor of the University of Navarre, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo y Diez de Sollano, for his continued support and encouragement, and for reminding us of the good our work can do for the Church and for souls.

“Since Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with its divine authorship in mind,”¹ we pray to the Holy Spirit to help us in our work and to help our readers derive spiritual benefit from it. We also pray Mary, our Mother, Seat of Wisdom, and St Joseph, our Father and Lord, to intercede that this sowing of the Word of God may produce holiness of life in the souls of many Christians.

1 Vatican Council II, Dogm. Const. *Dei Verbum*, 12.

The History of the New Testament Text*

THE INSPIRED TEXT OF THE BIBLE AND THE MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

The sacred books inspired by God which contain supernatural revelation are listed in the “canon” of Scripture fixed by the Church. These books were written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, the languages of their various human authors. The text of the Bible which has come down to us is substantially the same as that written by these inspired writers (prophets, evangelists etc.), as can be demonstrated by the normal procedures used by scholars.

Biblical scholarship has also contributed and is still contributing to improving that text, that is to say, eradicating errors and defective corrections which found their way into the text in the course of time due to manuscripts having to be constantly copied and recopied by hand prior to the invention of printing.

All the books of the New Testament were written in Greek, which was the lingua franca of the Mediterranean countries from the time of Alexander the Great onwards (fourth to third centuries B.C.). The only non-Greek original—an Aramaic or Hebrew text of St Matthew’s Gospel—has not survived. The original manuscripts of the New Testament were lost quite early on, the reason being that the papyrus on which they were written normally had a life-span of not more than 200 years. We know that as early as the middle of the second century none of these manuscripts was still extant. They were not used, for example, in the controversy against the heretic Marcion: this controversy hinged on which texts were authentic and which not, indicating that the original text had already disappeared. The original text was conserved in the form of copies, and very early on more and more copies came to be made. In addition to papyrus, leather was also used as a writing material, but a real breakthrough came with the development of *parchment* or vellum. In the second century parchment began to be made or at least sold commercially in the city of Pergamon, from which it took its name. Initially texts were copied on to rolls of parchment; later they began to be produced in book form, as “codexes”; this book form meant that the text was easier to access and it also had the advantage of saving parchment. Parchments dating from the fourth century are still in existence.

*This essay is one of introductory essays in different volumes of the Navarre Bible (see p. 12); taken together these essays (which do not necessarily refer to the particular volumes in which they appear) form a short general introduction to Sacred Scripture.

The oldest papyrus New Testament text still extant contains some verses of St John's Gospel (18:31-33, 37-38) and has been dated *c.* A.D. 125.

The documentary sources of the New Testament fall into three groups:

a) *Greek copies* According to a 1976 survey there are over 5,000 texts extant:

- 88 papyrus fragments;
- 274 manuscripts written in capitals (that is, each letter is separate and there are no accents);
- 2795 manuscripts written in lower case letters (that is, the letters in each word are linked); and
- 2209 lectionaries for public liturgical use.

New copies are continually being discovered. The catalogue published by K. Aland in 1963 listed 4869, whereas the 1976 count was 5366. This means that no other document of antiquity compares with the New Testament as far as historico-critical verification of the text is concerned. In no other instance does the number of extant manuscripts exceed the thousand mark.

b) *Early translations* These comprise some 4,000 documents containing partial or complete translations of the New Testament. They were made for liturgical, catechetical, theological and other purposes, keeping pace with the spread of the Gospel among new peoples. The most important translations are those made into Latin (from the second century onwards, described generically as the *Vetus Latina* version; these were translations made prior to St Jerome's Vulgate); Syriac (second to third centuries, the most important Syriac version being that called the *Peshitta*, which is fifth century); Coptic (third century); Armenian (fourth century), Ethiopian, Slav, Gothic (fourth century) and Arabic.

In ancient times translations were made in a very literal way—almost word for word; for this very reason these early translations have special importance as far as establishing the history of the text is concerned: they maintain the "shape", as it were, as well as the content of the originals from which they were made; originals were located in regions which each had its own distinct culture and therefore a translation made in one region can often be used as a check on the completeness of a version made in another; the range of translations can also help in the choice of a better reading in cases of doubt.

c) *Quotations from the New Testament in the works of ecclesiastical writers* These quotations are, as it were, indirect witnesses to the correct text and are of very considerable value where they corroborate the direct witness of the Greek manuscripts. On the basis of these quotations, which are scattered over a wide range of theological texts and biblical commentaries, it is possible to reconstruct virtually the entire New Testament text, Greek and Latin. The text used by these authors is usually older than that in most of the manuscripts that have come down to us, thereby allowing us to check which biblical text was in use in any particular period or region. In the case of fragments quoted in

sermons, it has to be remembered that the writers were usually quoting from memory. In all other cases the quotations usually follow an available text word for word. The Fathers of the Church who most extensively cite the New Testament in Greek or Latin are Origen, St John Chrysostom, St Cyril, St Jerome, St Cyprian, St Hilary and St Augustine.

PAPYRI AND CODEXES

Almost one hundred New Testament papyri have so far come to light; all of them are Egyptian, preserved by the extremely dry climate of that country. They began to be discovered in the nineteenth century and—due to their antiquity—they are of tremendous value for establishing the authentic text. The most remarkable of these papyri are:

a) three papyri in the Chester Beatty collection (housed in Dublin) known as p⁴⁵, p⁴⁶ and p⁴⁷. These are portions of second-century documents which originally contained the Gospels, the epistles of St Paul and Revelation, respectively. The first shows that very early on the four Gospels had already been brought together into one single collection. The second papyrus is one hundred and fifty years older than any other source of the Pauline text.

b) The Roberts or Rylands Papyrus (p⁵²). Dating from c. 125, and containing some verses of chapter 18 of St John's Gospel, this was decisive in disproving rationalist theses arguing for a later date for this Gospel.

c) The Bodmer Papyrus II (p⁶⁶). This contains most of St John's Gospel (1:1-14:26) and was written around the year 200.

The extant papyri fill the gap in sources between the original text and later manuscripts. They constitute, therefore, a quite unique source of documentation for establishing the career of the New Testament text. Thus, historico-literary scholarship combines with faith to show that we do possess the original revealed text of the New Testament in a form which is unanimously accepted to be much more than merely "substantial".

The most important Greek codexes of the New Testament are:

a) the Codex Vaticanus (B, or 03). This is the most valuable of all because of its antiquity. It is a copy made in Egypt in the fourth century, containing all the Old Testament (in the Septuagint version) and all the New Testament except for some chapters of Hebrews; the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon; and Revelation. It is housed in the Vatican Library.

b) the Codex Sinaiticus (S, or 01). Written in the fourth century from an Egyptian MS, this contains the Old and New Testaments, except for some pages. It was discovered in 1844 in the monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai. It is housed in the British Library.

c) the Codex Alexandrinus (A, or 02). Written in the fifth century, this contains virtually the entire Old and New Testaments. It is in the British Library.

d) Codex Ephraemi (C, or 04). Egyptian in origin, this was written in the fifth century. In the middle ages it was salvaged from a "palimpsest" (a recycled

parchment from which text has been erased and which is then reused: by means of chemicals the older text can be recovered). It contains the entire New Testament and fragments of the Old Testament. It is housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

e) the Codex Bezae or Cambridge Codex (D, or 05). Written in the West in the sixth century, this contains the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles in Greek and Latin. It is in the Cambridge University Library.

f) the Codex Claromontanus (D^p, or 06). Written in the sixth century, this contains the epistles of St Paul in Greek and Latin and is kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

TEXTUAL VARIATIONS AND RULES OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Two kinds of variations frequently found in biblical texts are:

a) Involuntary variations introduced by copyists. These are material errors arising from misreading or mishearing on the part of the copyist. Mistakes of this type occur in all ages and consist of omissions (of letters, syllables, words and phrases), additions and changes, or are due to the copyist mixing up similar sounds when taking down dictation.

b) Variations consciously made by educated copyists. These occur when copyists “correct” the text from which they are working, thinking that it contains an error, or else introduce a variant reading which in their opinion is more correct. These variations are “linguistic”, where the copyist replaces one word with another; or “doctrinal” where he changes the text to adapt it to the mentality of the reader—for example, by eliminating in Luke 2:33-48 the reference to Joseph being the father of Jesus (the heretic Marcion suppressed in St Luke’s Gospel and in the epistles of St Paul everything which he regarded as Judaizing falsification of the text). Almost all these “corrections” were made in the second century and early third century.

Another common source of variations is the introduction into the text of words, phrases or short paragraphs, which were only marginal notes on the parent text: the new copyist, in doubt, would incorporate these notes into his text.

In the case of the New Testament, most of these variant readings have been identified, thanks to the large number of manuscripts which have come down, thus allowing the correct text to be established. This work of textual criticism has been carried out by scholars—evidencing the veneration which Christians in all ages have shown the sacred texts. The Fathers of the Church led the way in this work of textual criticism aimed at eliminating errors introduced by copyists and translators. St Irenaeus (A.D. 140-202), for example, was very familiar with the age and quality of the texts available to him and was able to identify the source of the textual corruptions he encountered. Allowing for the technical limitations of the time, some Fathers of the Church—particularly Origen and St Jerome—were as competent at textual criticism as modern scholars.

No one extant codex reproduces the original text of the New Testament with total fidelity. Therefore, every existing document—papyrus, codex etc.—has importance for scholars engaged in textual criticism because examination of the entire range of documents allows a text to be reconstructed which is an improvement on any one manuscript on its own. This reconstruction of the text is a particularly laborious aspect of the work of textual criticism, which is therefore both a science and an art because it aims at building up objective knowledge of the text and yet is very dependent on the alertness of the individual scholar. In other words, there is a limit to the absolute, invariable rules that can be devised for work in this field, a limit which has to be overcome by the experience and expertise of the scholars involved.

Despite all these difficulties, certain *basic principles of textual criticism* have been established which act as general criteria when it comes to clearing up doubts raised by the variants which are discovered. These principles are *external* and *internal*. The external principles are derived from the various aspects of documentary evidence and the weight assigned to each. The internal principles derive from experience and are used to complement the external ones.

The *external* principles are these:

a) That reading is to be preferred which is supported by better codexes and by more diverse codexes. However, mere quantitative support is insufficient.

b) The influence of parallel texts should be taken into account, as also the influence of the Septuagint in the case of quotations from the Old Testament, and preference is to be given to that reading which least coincides with those sources, on the grounds that attempts may have been made to harmonize the codex with those sources.

c) Where there are a number of different readings, their relationship one to another should be studied, because once a “correction” is made to a text, the copyist may have omitted to make further changes necessitated by the initial change (for example, agreement between subject and verb).

The *internal* principles are these:

a) The more difficult reading is the more reliable, because copyists tend to clarify and simplify ideas.

b) The shorter reading is to be preferred, given the tendency for marginal notes to be imported into the text, thereby lengthening it.

c) That reading is authentic which best explains the presence of other readings when the latter seem likely to be a correction, clarification or obvious error with respect to the former.

d) Only in extreme cases is “conjecture” permissible—that is, any correction of the text which is unsupported by documentary proof. A sound conjecture should be clear itself and helpful in clarifying a false reading or false readings of the text.

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THE NAVARRE BIBLE

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Navarre Bible, an edition of Sacred Scripture prepared by members of the Faculty of Theology of Navarre University, consists of the New Vulgate, the Revised Standard Version, and commentaries. The commentaries provide explanations of the doctrinal and practical meaning of the scriptural text, drawing on a rich variety of sources—Church documents, the exegesis of Fathers and Doctors, and the works of prominent spiritual writers, particularly the Venerable J. Escrivá, who initiated the Navarre Bible project.

“We heartily and strongly recommend this splendid volume [St Mark]. It is just what so many have been waiting for” Wm. G. Most, *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*.

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“It is refreshing to come across a non-technical commentary which . . . seeks to expound the Word of God according to the accumulated wisdom of the Church. Most people desiring to understand better the scriptures are looking for something that will deepen their reverence for the Word of God, help them apply it to their daily lives, and move them to prayer” Stephen Langridge, *Faith Magazine*.

The cover design, by Jarlath Hayes, incorporates
Rhoda opens the door to St Peter (1934)
by Wilhelmina Margaret Geddes (1887-1955),
courtesy of the Ulster Museum, Belfast.

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