

The Book of Acts

(NT6320)



**“ You shall be
My witnesses . . .
unto the ends of
the Earth”**

**Prof. David H.
Warren**

Amridge

University

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Introduction to Acts

The Book of Acts

Question: **Can we rely on its history?**

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« For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted »

A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Law and Society in the New Testament* (publ. in 1963), p. 189.

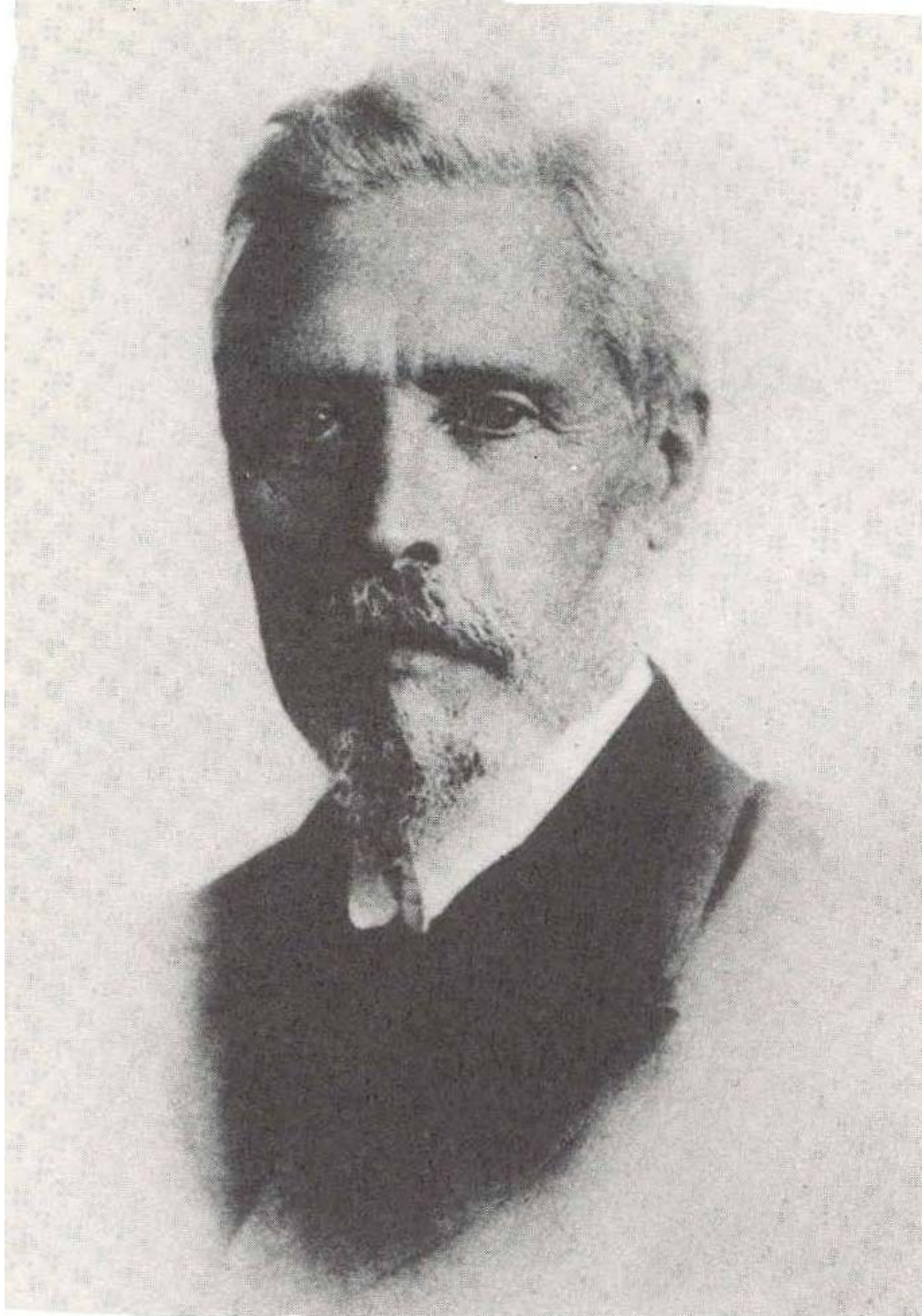
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Question: **Can we rely on its history?**

« The numerous small features—features not really necessary for the actual course of action, and yet which fit so well there [i.e., in the Book of Acts]—are internal witnesses for his [i.e., Luke's] reliability. »

Theodor Mommsen in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 2 (1901): 87.

Sir William M. Ramsay
(1851–1939)



Ramsay's **early** opinion about Acts

« I had read a good deal of modern criticism about the book [i.e., the Book of Acts] and dutifully accepted the current opinion that it was written during the second half of the second century by an author who wished to influence the minds of people in his own time by a highly wrought and imaginative description of the early Church. . . . »

Ramsay's **early** opinion about Acts cont.

« . . . His object was not to present a trustworthy picture of facts in the period of about A.D. 50, but to produce a certain effect on his own time by setting forth a carefully coloured account of events and persons of that older period. He wrote for his contemporaries, not for truth. . . . »

Ramsay's **early** opinion about Acts cont.

« . . . He cared nought for geographical or historical surroundings of the period A.D. 30 to 60. He thought only of the period A.D. 160–180, and how he might paint the heroes of old times in situations that should touch the conscience of his contemporaries. »

Sir William M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (publ. 1915), pp. 37–38

Ramsay's **later** opinion about Acts

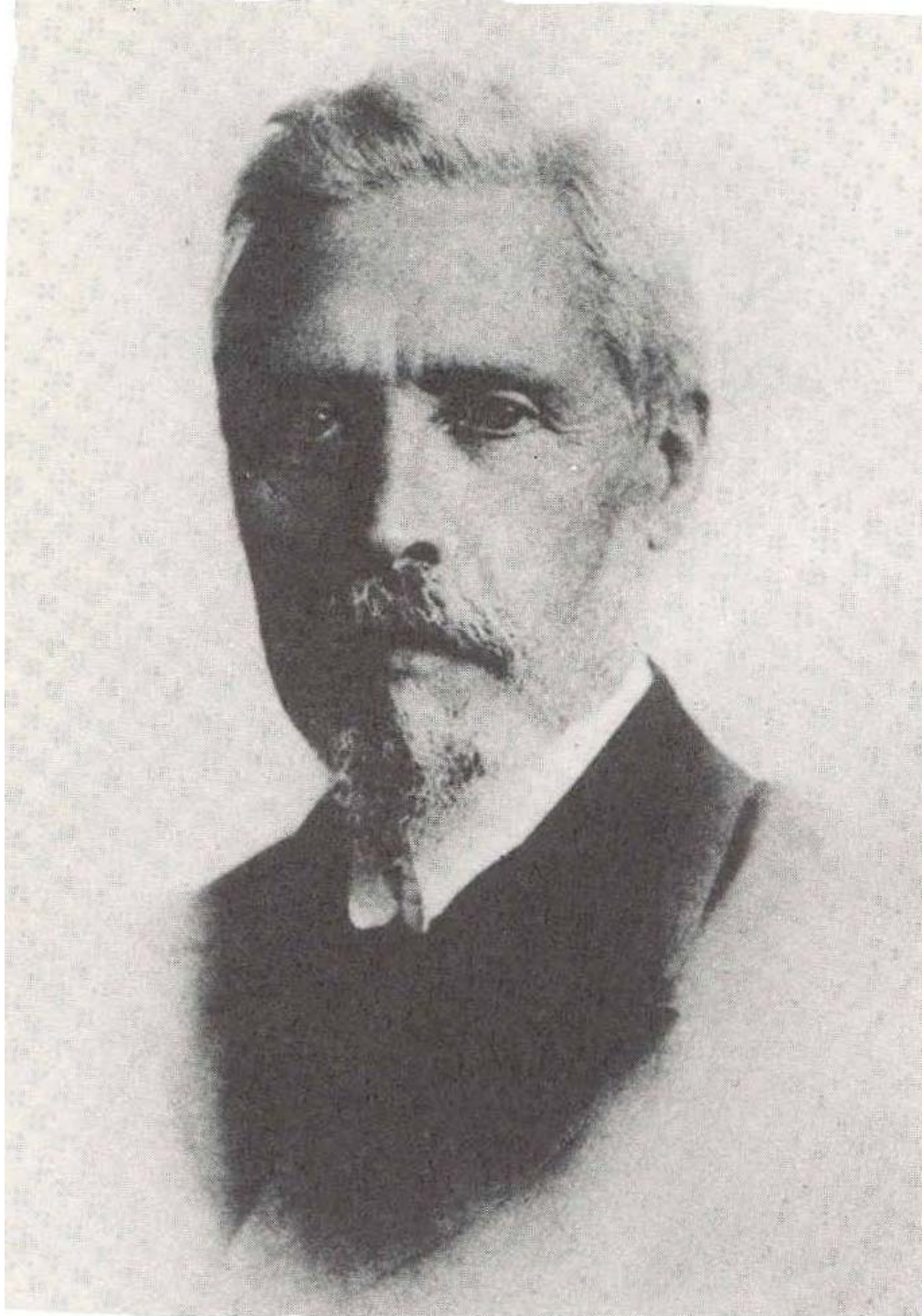
« The more I have studied the narrative of the Acts, and the more I have learned year after year about Graeco-Roman society and thoughts and fashions, and organization in those provinces, the more I admire and the better I understand. I set out to look for truth on the borderland where Greece and Asia meet, and found it here [i.e., in the Book of Acts]. . . . »

Ramsay's **later** opinion about Acts cont.

« . . . You may press the words of Luke in a degree beyond any other historian's, and they stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment, provided always that the critic knows the subject and does not go beyond the limits of science and of justice. »

Sir William M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (publ. 1915), p. 89

Sir William M. Ramsay
(1851–1939)



What does this phrase mean?

Acts 16:6, “the region of Phrygia and Galatia.”

Acts 18:23, “the region of Galatia and Phrygia.”

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Acts 18:23, “the region of Galatia and Phrygia.”

Ramsay showed that they were indeed a *single* region.

The **Historicity** of the Book of Acts

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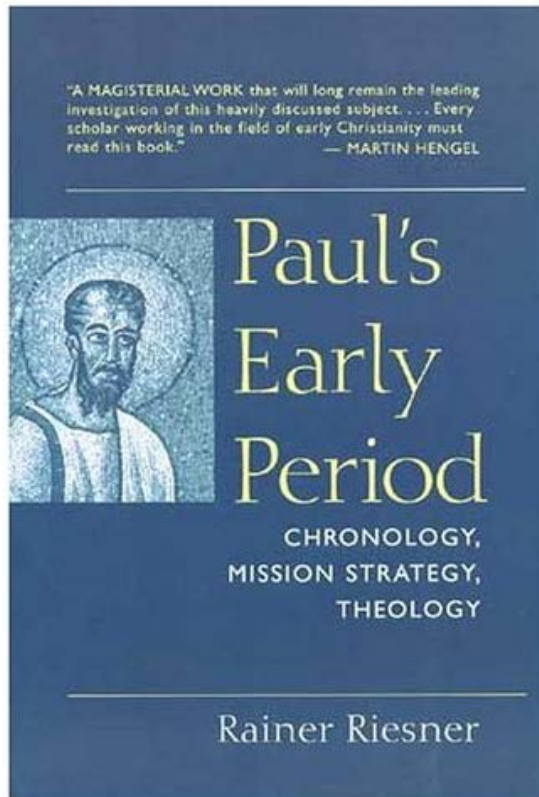
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- (3) **Rainer Riesner**, *Paul's Early Period* (diss., written in 1991, publ. in English in 1998)

Riesner's judgment about Acts



« It is especially striking, however, that by far the highest concentration of specific or detailed pieces of information regarding time . . . are found in the we-passages. »

Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period* (English translation, publ. 1998), p. 324

Riesner's judgment about Acts

« The analysis of the individual pieces of chronological information in Acts thus supports the conclusions of those who consider the we-passages to be, in one way or another, eyewitness recollections. »

Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period* (English translation, publ. 1998), p. 325



Prof. Rainer Riesner

What is the verdict?



F. F. Bruce

« Now, all these evidences of accuracy are not accidental. A man whose accuracy can be demonstrated in matters where we are able to test it is likely to be accurate even where the means of testing him are not available. Accuracy is a habit of mind, and we know from happy (or unhappy) . . . »

What is the verdict?



F. F. Bruce

« . . . experience that some people are habitually accurate just as others can be depended upon to be inaccurate. Luke's record entitles him to be regarded as a writer of habitual accuracy. »

F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (5th rev. ed., publ. 1994), p. 90

When was Acts written?

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Adolf Harnack

Luke's failure to tell us about the verdict of Paul's appeal to the Roman emperor (Acts 25:12) or about Paul's death is proof that neither has yet taken place when he finishes his book.

Adolf Harnack, *Date of Acts and of the Synoptic Gospels* (English translation, publ. 1911), pp. 93–99

When was Acts written?

also before Harnack

« Of these events [which Luke records] the most important in this connexion is the death of S. Paul. (a) It seems incredible that if S. Luke had known it, he should not have mentioned it. »

Richard B. Rackham, *The Acts of Apostles: An Exposition* (publ. 1901), p. li

When was Acts written?

also before
Harnack



J. W. McGarvey

« That the narrative here closes without telling the reader whether Paul was liberated or put to death, is held to be conclusive proof that neither had taken place when the last word of the book was written. »

J. W. McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts of Apostles* (publ. 1892), vol. 1, p. xxiv

When was Acts written?

« Yet, artistic and powerful as the conclusion is, it is strange that Luke has not told us explicitly what the result of Paul's appeal was. . . . »

F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (1st ed., publ. 1951), p. 481



**Frederick Fyvie
Bruce**

When was Acts written?

« . . . it would be more satisfactory to suppose that he wrote no more because he knew no more—because he completed his book at the end of the two years of *ver.* 30, probably early in A.D. 62. »



**Frederick Fyvie
Bruce**

F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (1st ed., publ. 1951), p. 481

The **Western Text** of Acts

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Acts 8:24, Simon “did not stop weeping copiously” as he repented before Peter

Acts 18:3, Paul and Aquila belonged to the same tribe (i.e., Benjamin, Phil 3:5)

Acts 19:9, Paul lectured daily in the hall of Tyrannus “from the fifth hour to the tenth”

