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Transforming Word

Bible institute, Zagreb, 2010, 119 pages

Published by the Bible Institute in Zagreb, the book *Transforming Word* is the first of three translated volumes of the one-volume Bible commentary. This edition is a translation of the Bible commentary that originally bears the title *Transforming Word: One-Volume Commentary of the Bible*, and it is the result of the work of a scientific community within the Stone-Campbell restoration movement which has lasted for almost a decade. Even though this volume comes from the tradition of the Restoration movement, the editors did not force their methods on the authors, nor did they censor their interpretations and conclusions, and this contributes to the theological credibility of this commentary.

The book contains thirteen articles which offer an introduction into understanding the background of the Old and New Testaments, particular groups of books in the Bible (Pentateuch, Prophets, Wisdom Books, etc.) and contemporary contexts. The foreword of the book introduces readers to the theological background from which the authors of the articles come from, and clarifies the approach and goals of writing. Also, the reader is introduced to the way this collection has been edited and the method of using abbreviations, then the foreword finishes with a short note about biblical languages, an acknowledgement of those who contributed to the publishing of the book and a call for the study of the Scriptures.

The first article, "Introduction to the Pentateuch," considers the textual questions present in studying the Pentateuch, the structure of the Pentateuch and literary techniques, genres and stories which the Pentateuch shares with other traditions of its time. The article speaks about the literary structure, authorship and time of writing of the Pentateuch as well as theological implications of theological statements which the Pentateuch introduces. The second article, "Introduction into Wisdom and Poetic Literature," considers the parallels between Israel's wisdom and the wisdom of the ancient Middle East as well as the influence of the pluralistic nature of the world in its comprehension and interpretation. The article also briefly explains the modern theological understanding of poetic literature which can be found in the Psalms and the Song of Songs.

The third article, "The Gospels and Acts," introduces the reader to the characteristics of the canonical gospels, the question of authorship, the timing of creation and their mutual relationship. Luke's gospel is considered together with the book of Acts because both documents have a common author, similarity in the prologue and common theological themes. The fourth article, "Biblical Canons,"

considers the establishment of the canon of the Old and New Testaments in a way in which the author does not go from the beginning to the end chronologically, but starts at the end of the event and works back. The study of the establishment of the New Testament canon starts in the 6th century and finishes with Marcion, while the history of the development of the Old Testament canon is explained from the 3rd century and finishes with an overview of the Qumran scrolls.

The fifth article, "Israel in the Ancient Middle East," introduces the reader to the world in which Israel came into existence, introducing the reader to the writing and literature, politics, wars, agriculture, commerce and production, architecture, art, music, science and math of the surrounding nations and how all that affected the life, culture and identity of Israel. The sixth article, "Greco-Roman Background of the New Testament," introduces the reader to the time, customs and world in which Christianity came into existence and expanded, and in that way offers a better insight into understanding the message of the New Testament.

"Archeology and the Bible" is the title of the seventh chapter which deals with the question of how much archeology confirms or disputes the Bible. The author offers a short overview of the relationship between archeology and the Bible and suggests an appropriate way in which archeology should affect Bible reading. Also, the author, based on archaeological proof, considers the appearance and population of the Israelites in Canaan. The eighth article, "The Gospel According to Old Testament Prophecy," talks about the nomenclature, task and function of Israel's prophets, the material found in the prophetic books, the development and order of the prophetic books and the standard by which it is possible to discern a false prophet from a true one. The article also briefly displays religious themes which pervade the prophetic books.

The article, "Theology of the Old Testament," talks about the main theological themes of the Old Testament, such as: creation, promises to the ancestors, the exodus, wandering in the desert, the Covenant, the Law, conquest, inheriting the land and David's covenant. In the second part, the article introduces the reader to the basic approaches to Old Testament theology: the dogmatic, Christological, covenantal and confessional approaches of writing the theology of the Old Testament. The tenth article, "Theology of the New Testament," presents a condensed overview of Jesus' life and teachings based on Peter's sermon in Acts 10, and in the second part, the article presents a brief history of New Testament theology by explaining five different approaches to explaining the theology of the New Testament: dogmatism, ecclesiology, "sacred history", anthropology and Christology.

The last three articles deal with the theme of Christianity and the Bible in a contemporary context; so the eleventh article, "Bible and Literature," considers the place and role of the Bible in literature; the twelfth article, "Religion and

Science,” considers the contemporary relationship between religion and science; and the thirteenth article called “The Bible and Music” considers the relationship between the Bible and music, contemplating the function, sounds and form of music, and addressing music in the Old and New Testaments as well as the development of music in church worship throughout history.

Articles in this book are divided in the following way: some articles offer an *introduction* to a certain theme, some point out the *theological background* of a certain theme, while some articles deal with a theme connected to *historical* or *contemporary* contexts. Articles are written in a manner that has quality and is informative, and most offer the reader additional reading for further study.

The Book *Transforming Word* is a modest book as far as the number of pages, but its greatness is in its content because it encompasses and introduces one into a broad range of theological themes which are normally hard to find in one place. With its content, this volume offers a useful foundation for an introduction into studying the Old and New Testaments, and it certainly represents an ideal help for the academic community as well as for lay believers and for any serious students of the Bible. For, as the editors themselves point out, “We wrote bearing in mind the reader, in order to help him in engaging in the biblical text with greater understanding and commitment”.

Considering the fact that Protestant theological publishing in the Republic of Croatia is still starting out and is distinctly lacking, this volume (as well as any other theological book coming from the Protestant academic community) represents a great contribution to the theological thought in this area. There is no doubt that this book will be helpful to many people and a blessing in studying the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, the second and third volumes of this commentary which will offer an introduction and commentaries for every biblical book, are eagerly awaited.

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Translated by Daniel Jambrek

Matthias Flacius Illyricus

**How to Understand the Sacred Scriptures from Clavis Scripturae
sacrae** (translated by Wade R. Johnston)

Saginaw, Michigan, Magdeburg Press, 2011, 118 pages

One of the most important works of the great man of the German (and Croatian) Reformation, Matthias Flacius Illyricus, is definitely *Clavis Scripturae sacrae*, one of the fundamental works of biblical hermeneutics. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and far into the eighteenth century, it was one of the theo-