

the story, each one with a unique lesson for the reader.

The ninth chapter of the book is dedicated to what is probably the most interesting aspect for Christians, and that is mentoring people in a church environment. In this chapter, the author sidetracks from his usual narrative style and offers a systematic examination of important aspects of Christian mentoring. We are again reminded that the first and most important thing is to be mindful of our own walk with God. Rest, task delegation, sleep, physical health and prayer are all important parts of maintaining an altogether healthy approach. The second key aspect is family life, and we are urged to take heed of this very important part of our lives. "We need to be careful that the urgent does not push out the important" are the words of the author pertaining to family. Cranston then proceeds to describe Christian leadership with two distinct images: one of a bridge builder and the other of a servant. He finishes the chapter with a few interesting stories of leaders confronting illness, death and suffering, lying down for the reader a Christian perspective on these hard but part-of-life topics. The final chapter is a short recap of his important mentoring experiences and pointers along with some practical practices in mentoring, both negative and positive.

David Cranston certainly proves to have something to say about mentoring. A lifelong experience in medicine and lay Christian ministry make up for a good background if one is to speak about the many benefits of mentoring. In this interesting and instructive book, the author has included personal revelations on the topic along with historical and biblical lessons, and quoted wisdom from great Christian and secular minds. The book is short and easy to read, and undoubtedly comes opportunely for those that understand the importance of the many lessons we have learned and have yet to learn from others, as well as offering our own knowledge and experience to those in need of it. The book is sure to inspire those in leadership positions to think hard about the legacy they will leave behind and their involvement in the development and empowerment of those that are to succeed them.

*Filip Grujić*

Asamoah-Gyadu J. KWABENA

**Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context**

Regnum Books, Oxford, 2013, 194 pages.

The book *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* attempts to offer a description of African Pentecostalism from within. It is well known that the Pentecostal movement emphasizes the work of the Holy

Spirit in the church, particularly baptism and the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. Throughout his book, Asamoah-Gyadu, a prolific African Pentecostal scholar, proves that the particularities of the Pentecostal movement worldwide are also present in the case of African Pentecostalism: (1) the authority of the Bible; (2) the centrality of the cross; (3) regeneration as the way to Christian salvation; (4) a call to holiness (2). He carefully manages to integrate the African Pentecostal movement into the global movement of contemporary Pentecostalism. At the same time, the author, being conscious of the contribution the African understanding of Pentecostalism could bring to the wider Pentecostal community, insists on the specificities of the African Pentecostal movement. These particularities are developed throughout the nine chapters of the book. I consider the specificities of African Pentecostalism of utmost importance for the non-African Pentecostal reader.

The first chapter of the book, *Clothed with Power: Spirit-Inspired Renewal and Christianity in Africa*, establishes perhaps the most important contribution of African Pentecostalism particularly to the current European context. Asamoah-Gyadu introduces the notion of “pneumatic Christianity” in order to speak of the “pneumatic existence” of the African Pentecostal church as “an existential reality with eschatological implications” (4). When he mentions “existential reality”, he refers especially to three main features of African Pentecostalism: (1) the accent on personal transformation; (2) the experience of the Holy Spirit in worship, both heartfelt and body-felt; (3) the interventionist character of the charismatic theology through healing, deliverance, and prayer (6). This pneumatic manifestation of the Pentecostal movement comes as a solution to the problem of traditional worship that no longer meets the needs of the people. The author gives an example of this reality in the exodus of people from traditional churches in Ghana (12-13). Hence, the African Pentecostal movement is a needs-oriented movement, one that seeks God’s continuing presence in the world, and does that by seeking the Spirit’s activity.

The pneumatic focus of African Pentecostalism finds its clearest display in the worship of the church (chapter two). The understanding of worship, its character, and its manifest is profoundly shaped by the pneumatic factor. Consequently, worship is no longer understood and practiced as merely an inward experience of God or as something static. Rather, worship is “an encounter with the living and transforming God” (18). Because of this encounter between the divine and the human, worship bears with it “signs of the Spirit”: glossolalia and the manifestation of the spiritual gifts. When the divine and the human encounter each other in worship, something supernatural must happen: healing, deliverance, glory to the needy, prophecies, glossolalia, etc. Hence, according to the author’s understanding, the key factor of the tremendous expansion of African Pentecostalism

is precisely the charismatic nature of Pentecostal worship (33). People do not need a dry and cold denominationalism. Rather, they need a movement that can meet their needs – and that is the movement of the Spirit. Thus, Pentecostalism is “a protest movement against dry denominationalism” (25).

One of the parts of worship is prayer which is dealt with in chapter three. As expected, the pneumatic factor is a decisive one in the African Pentecostal understanding of prayer. The author uses the example of a weekly prayer service called “Jericho Hour”, “a place where giant solutions await your giant problems” (36). The titles of the books published on the theme of prayer offer a hint regarding the African Pentecostal understanding of prayer: *Goliath Can Fall*, *Goliath Killing Prayers*, *How to Overcome Every Giant of Your Life*, or *Victory in Spite of Opposition*. Moreover, one of the prayers mentioned in the book says, “Lord, expose the Goliath of my life and prepare me for battle against him in the name of Jesus; Holy Ghost, show me clearly the weapon in my hand for slaying my Goliath in the name of Jesus” (46). The author names this strategy “Goliath hermeneutics”. The presupposition behind this strategy is that, in the African traditional culture, things do not happen by chance. Rather, there is an entire system of influences (evil) in one’s life. Consequently, true prayer needs to pay attention to the warfare in which it is spoken: “Prayer is understood to have the power to stir the supernatural by decimating the powers of evil and releasing the anointing of the Spirit” (35). Hence, African Pentecostal prayer meets the needy in his/her realm, paying attention to the whole of life, to spiritual warfare, and being expressed in this realm as an interventionist strategy.

The doctrine of the church is addressed in chapter four, as expected, from a fresh angle. Asamoah-Gyadu starts by posing a question: How can this *charismata pneumatika* ecclesiology be understood “against the backdrop of the biblical material on the relationship between the Spirit and the church?” (59). The issue at stake here is the relationship between the clergy and the lay people. The author cleverly uses the democratization of the religious experience by appealing to the so-called “12/70 paradigm shift” which represents “a caution against the monopoly of the power of God,” and thus “a democratization of ministry” (68). He furthermore writes of the Spirit, the giver of life, who gives life to the stones, i.e., to Christians (Ephesians 4) (69-71). Moreover, the anointing of the Spirit is not restricted to the clergy, but it spreads over the whole church. This both directs each Christian to a personal encounter and relationship with the Spirit and increases the personal responsibility of each Christian both in ministry and in daily devotion to God.

Chapter five opens a discussion on Christian giving. From the beginning, the author wants to make the reader conscious of the African subculture that exists within contemporary Pentecostalism in Africa. This subculture is based

on the principle of sowing and reaping. It is commonly believed that the practice of giving stimulates a divine response to human desire – called “transactional giving” (82). The matter is so serious that the non-fulfillment of this provokes generational curses: “... non-tithing Christians are worse than armed robbers; armed robbers steal from human beings but non-tithers steal from God” (88). It is strongly believed that the theology and practice of tithing determines God to a specific kind of relationship towards the one who tithes: benevolence, generosity, etc. Hence, the theology of tithing is linked directly to the theology of prosperity (89). Asamoah-Gyadu carefully balances the African Pentecostal understanding of tithing using the “Christological hermeneutics” in giving: “the fulfillment of our obligations to God must not be made contingent upon whether or not he acts in our favor;” there is a danger of seeing blessing in terms of material only or of treating God like a “customer service point” (99-100). The author dedicates all of chapter six to the issue of prosperity, and he diligently uses the *theologia crucis* to balance the *theologia gloriae* (105-115). At the end of the chapter, he briefly mentions several features of the so-called “African revolution”: (1) the authority of the Word of God, (2) the weightiness of sin, (3) the graciousness of Christ, (4) the vitality of faith, and (5) the spiritual nature of the church (115).

Chapter seven addresses the theology of anointing as a sacrament in Pentecostalism. Again, the titles of the books published by Eastwood Anaba are suggestive: *The Oil of Influence* and *Extra Oil* (121). The interventionist strategy from the understanding of prayer is an important factor in the understanding of the sacrament of anointing. There is a threefold usage of anointing: (1) for healing the sick person, (2) for fortification against evil, and effective ministry, and (3) for success and prosperity to be realized (123). The theology of anointing goes hand in hand with prosperity, and is directed towards the needs of the people. This understanding is also balanced by the previous chapter, *Calvary to Pentecost: The Cross and Prosperity*.

The African Pentecostal understanding of the Lord’s Supper (chapter eight) has, as its foundation, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament. This starting point opens the sacrament to the supernatural, the divine. In this way, the Holy Communion is no longer something symbolic, but rather is a “source of healing, breakthrough, and general empowerment” (147). The believer is no longer withdrawn into the timelessness of the symbolism of bread and wine, into some kind of metaphysical remembrance of a historical fact, but rather is open to divine intervention, communication, and surprises: “The Pentecostal spirit is a way of being that is radically flourishing, and committed to creating, broadening, and deepening new possibilities for life” (148). Hence, the interventionist character of African Pentecostalism is well preserved here also. What is truly important is what taking part in the Holy Communion accomplishes. From this perspective,

the African Pentecostal Holy Communion is a “miracle meal”.

The last chapter of the book deals with the status of the Bible among African Pentecostal churches and its use in preaching. The author finds the growth of the Christian movement in Africa indebted to the status of the Bible as a sacred book. The seriousness with which the passages of the Bible are treated determines the expansion of the Pentecostal movement throughout Africa. Asamoah-Gyadu considers the failure of treating the Bible as sacred in the West as the main cause both in favor of relativism and of the exclusion of the Christian faith from the public square: “If the Bible has lost its place as the source of guidance for public life and morality in the West, it did so by first losing its status as more than a sacred book, through a process of biblical relativism and gradual demystification” (166). The Pentecostals in Africa consider the Bible a “sacred book of sacred power”, and this seems to be one of the secrets of their growth (163).

I read the book with a European mind, an Eastern European mind, not expecting to be challenged too much by its message. It is now clear to me that in the same way the Pentecostal movement in Africa is interventionist in its character, so is this book. It is meant to challenge, to provoke to action, to get the reader out of his/her own comfortable realm of existence, and to expose him/her to what the Spirit is doing in Africa. As Pentecostals, both Romanians and Croatians, we are to some degree exposed to the reality of the Spirit. For instance, there is an influence of the African perspective in Croatia through John Mulinde who has visited the country several times already, and this can be seen in the communities he attended. Though this is the case, more profoundly, the book introduces the reader to African Pentecostalism with its particularities. It challenges not merely the intellect (doctrine), but the heart and soul of the reader (praxis).

*Beneamin Mocan*

Editors: Esther Chung-Kim and Todd R. Hains.

**Reformation Commentary On Scripture: New Testament VI – Acts**  
IVP Academic, Downers Grove, 2014, pp. 430.

As part of the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture* series, in February 2014, InterVarsity Press published a volume by the title: *New Testament Vol. VI – Acts*. After the wonderful series of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* which in 29 volumes gathered the commentaries of the Scriptures of the church fathers and other leaders of the early church, InterVarsity Press has begun another project called *Reformation Commentary on Scripture* (RCS) which will, in 28 volumes, enrich our understanding of how some well-known and maybe some lesser known reformers interpreted and understood the Scriptures which, in turn, shaped the