

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).

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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

course of the Reformation. This huge project truly accomplishes what it claims: it brings to us “a wealth of Reformation-era commentary on Scripture that is largely unknown and for the most part unavailable in English.” Once all 28 volumes (13 on the Old Testament and 15 on the New Testament) are published, another layer of church history will be uncovered and made known to the wider public. No doubt, this effort will in turn open some new horizons and start some new reactions and reflections among scholars, but also among lay Christians.

Volume VI of the New Testament commentary is dedicated to the Book of Acts. In terms of the outline, the book starts with “A Guide to Using this Commentary” (pp. xvii–xviii) which helps the reader become familiar with the way the commentary is formed and structured. After that follows a “General Introduction” (pp. xix–xlii) which introduces readers to the *goals* of the RCS which are defined as: a) renewing contemporary biblical interpretation; b) strengthening contemporary preaching; c) deepening understanding of the Reformation and; d) advancing Christian scholarship and *perspectives and parameters* of the RCS such as the chronology of the Reformation which this commentary follows, confessions which are included and represented in this book; the *format* of the book in which editors explain some technical issues, questions and challenges they encountered in producing this work; and the importance and impact of both lay and learned culture on the course of the Reformation. Furthermore, the “General Introduction” introduces readers to the historical context of the Reformation, different patterns of the Reformation, schools of exegesis that were used then, and ends with a brief note on how reformers read and understood the role and position of the Scriptures. The “General Introduction” is followed by “Introduction to Acts” (pp. xliii–lxiii) in which we are introduced to the general approach of the reformers to the book of Acts, how they understood the relationship between Scripture and tradition which is summarized in the famous *sola scriptura* creed, and which theological topics were particularly informative and significant for the reformers, such as the office of the Word, the sacrament of baptism, the communal way of life, and the topic of suffering. Also, readers are acquainted with which commentaries are included in this volume, why they are included and their characteristics. After that, follows a “Commentary on Acts” (pp. 1–371) which is formed according to the following pattern: each portion of Acts starts with a biblical text and general overview which identifies the key exegetical, theological and pastoral concerns of the Reformation writers arising from a particular pericope. Each pericope is further divided into smaller groups of verses with a topical heading for each group of Scripture after which follow reformers’ comments. Reformers’ comments are also introduced with a topical heading which summarize the essence of each individual comment. These features help modern readers to enter into the heart of the Reformation era comment. Each comment is introduced by the name of the commentator and ends

with a title of the original work translated into English. Footnotes are also used in order to help the reader explore the background and text in further detail. This pattern is followed throughout the section. The rest of the book includes “Time-line of the Reformation” (pp. 373–382), “Biographical Sketches of Reformation-Era Figures and Works” (pp. 383–406), “Sources for Biographical Sketches” (p. 407), as well as “Bibliography” (pp. 408–411), “Author and Writings Index” (pp. 414–425), and “Scripture Index” (pp. 426–430). The book also contains two maps: “Map of the Mediterranean at the Time of the Acts of the Apostles” (pp. lxiv–lxv) and “Map of Europe at the Time of the Reformation” (p. 372).

Speaking from today’s perspective, the book of Acts has always been a challenging book because it has been viewed upon as a model for church life and ministry. Like no other book in the New Testament, Acts provides insight into how the early church lived, ministered and worshiped God. However, the challenging question then and today was and is *how much* of the book of Acts is normative and mandatory, and *how much* is just informative and nonobligatory? Desiderius Erasmus, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Johann Spangenberg, John Donne, Peter Walpot, Rudolf Gwalther and others have tried to deal with that and other questions in their own times. These and other people mentioned in this volume were people of their “own time”, and from today’s perspective, their commentaries and observations may appear to us as false, superficial, misguided or incomplete, but we need to understand our past and learn from it in order to gain a better understanding of *who* and *what* we are today. In all that, we must not forget that we are also people of “our time”, prone to make the same mistakes and failures. Accordingly, this book is a great reminder that Christianity did not start “with us”, and the diversity of theologies and understandings that were present among reformers in their understanding of Acts teaches us that the biblical text is not always easy to interpret correctly. However, this book will help us to understand better, not only *what* they were saying, but also *why*.

This book is a thoughtful product of quality scholarship, and this is reflected in every page of the book. In its effort to discover and combine in one place how various reformers understood the book of Acts, this book truly bridges the gap between “us” and “them”, and between “us” and the first generation of Christians. Through this book, we have access and opportunity to stop at one point in the time-line of history and observe how the book of Acts shaped and formed the life and ministry of the church. Church historians will have the greatest benefit from this book, and also New Testament scholars. However, this well written and informative book can also be beneficial for any lay person who would like to know more about the Reformation and particularly about the book of Acts in reformers’ writings.

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