

distances himself from "literalists" who accept six consecutive twenty-four-hour creation days, the creation of all major life forms during that one week, and Noah's Flood as responsible for the geological layers. He prefers creationism "in a broader sense": simply believing that God created life for a purpose, adding that biblical chronology is not the issue. He admits that this "may create problems for Biblical interpretation," (22) but considers such problems relatively unimportant, noting that creationism in the broad sense is very widely accepted, as though popularity brought it closer to truth. Juxtapose this with his penetrating essay describing the common trend of originally Christian universities drifting into Christianity "in a broad sense" (115) and soon merging with secular philosophy.

Johnson does not plainly reveal his own view of earth history. Indeed a "progressive creation" scenario, which he seems to favor, is as difficult to defend as "theistic evolution," which he rejects as a contradiction in terms. Like many Christians daunted by apparent radiometric verdicts, he seems to offer a compromise view, neither evolution over long ages nor straight biblical creation and flood, but long ages of creations and catastrophes.

Johnson describes how rival factions of evolutionists continue to coexist because of their strong agreement on points which they hold in common, namely, faith in naturalism and hatred of creationism. He believes that schisms among Darwinists will soon reach such a crisis as to cause the demise of Darwinism. But the current trend in the world is toward "unity," as he notes in his chapter on orthodoxy. A more credible prediction concerning popular views of earth history may be neither the overthrow of Darwinism nor wide acceptance of biblical creation, but a continuing shift toward a worldview more "theistic" than at present, as he hopes, but also retaining some form of Darwinism (perhaps as "God-directed evolution") in amalgamation with progressive creation events (perhaps in six steps to seem biblical) in the coming world religion. The controversy is indeed marching toward its climax. Christians are attempting to unify and thereby increase their cultural influence, while intelligent design has become a defining issue.

Johnson has given us insightful essays that are "subversive" in our evolution-dominated culture. It remains for another author to offer a radically biblical view of earth history. I recommend this book for the reader who wishes to understand in more detail some of the complexity of the current debate over Darwinism.

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Kee, Howard Clark. *To Every Nation Under Heaven: The Acts of the Apostles. The New Testament in Context.* Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997. vi + 361 pp. Paperback, \$24.00.

The importance of the book of Acts to the canon generally and the understanding of the NT particularly cannot be overestimated. It is indeed the main source from which we gain canonical knowledge of the origin, growth, and development of the neophyte Christian church. In this commentary on Acts, Kee lists several excellent reasons why it is unique among the NT documents (1). Noteworthy is his proposal that Acts is distinctive in the degree to which it

employs literary modes and methods of communication that were dominant in the Greco-Roman world. Also distinctive is the degree to which it reports the involvement of the early Christians with the first-century Jewish and Roman authorities. Though I concur with Kee, there is another distinctive which he omits. The book serves as an invaluable bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles, without which we would be bereft of vital information concerning the gestation and early development of Christianity.

Kee's introductory chapter deals with material preliminary to discussion of the text itself. Rather than attempting to tabulate and evaluate current scholarship on Acts, Kee opted to highlight certain distinctive features of the history of its interpretation. Concerning whether Acts should be regarded as history, Kee begins discussion with the Greco-Roman period, when there was no normative model for writing history. He traces the development of understanding history to the modern period, when the aim in historical inquiry has come to be objective evidence in some absolute sense rather than presentation of sensitive perception of the claims the historian is seeking to convey to the reader. Now the primary issue in analysis of a historical report is not how a reported event actually occurred but what meaning the report is seeking to convey. As an advocate of the latter concept of historiography, Kee's focus is on the meaning of Acts in its historical context rather than its objective historical factuality. His stated aim is to consider various facets of the context in which the writer and his initial readers lived and thought: the religious assumptions, the political framework and structures of power, and above all, the sociocultural features of the author and the first readers. Since the author is seeking to show how the claims concerning God, Jesus, and the divine purpose for God's new people have been disclosed, and how their effective power has been operative in the careers and message of Jesus and the apostles, especially Paul, he views the material in Luke-Acts as "apologetic historiography."

Though not conclusively, he dates Acts to the latter part of the first century if the author was a companion of Paul, and to the second century if the author was using and enhancing eyewitness sources. Missing from his argumentation are discussion and explanation of the absence of reference to Paul's execution and its implications for dating. However, the discussion of the literary types found in Acts, the use of the Septuagint, and the theology of Acts is informative.

Discussion of the text is divided into six sections: Prelude: Promise Transition (1:1-26); Launching of the Inclusive Community (2:1-5:42); Initial Shaping of the New Community (6:1-8:40); World Mission of the New Community: Launching and Confirmation (9:1-15:41); Outreach to the Greek World (16:1-20:38); and Arrest of Paul and the Outreach to the Center of the Roman World (21:1-28:31). Selected portions of texts are discussed, and significant items are addressed in excursuses. Kee notes that the outreach to be performed by the apostles is "specifically announced by Jesus: 'in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth'" (35). Missing, however, is recognition of this statement as the theme of the work and discussion of its implications for the outreach agenda. If Acts 1:8 is the theme of Acts, and since his work is titled *To Every Nation Under Heaven*, why did Kee not discuss this passage? This lack is surprising, as is the lack of adequate treatment of the voyage to Rome in the context of a message to the nations.

Kee's excursus on prayer is informative. I concur with his thesis that in Acts prayer is more than a pious exercise. It is indeed an instrument for decision-making and action. He is also correct that in Acts prayer is viewed as the setting for the celebration and broad exercise of the shared life of the new community. I find it rather interesting, however, that while he notes the male dominance evident in 1:12-26, especially vv. 15-16 (40), he devotes only one sentence to gender inclusiveness, which is clearly the point of 1:12-14.

Discussion of Pentecost is also enlightening. Kee notes that in prophetic tradition fire is the symbol of God's judgment, which is to involve the purging of God's people by a "spirit of burning." He suggests that the fiery tongues depict the divine presence that became accessible through the Holy Spirit. He further sees in the event the divine enabling of the apostles through the Spirit to begin interpretation of the good news about Jesus to people of other ethnic and linguistic groups. In accordance with the facts and in keeping with the theme of his work, Kee sees the potential for this worldwide outreach of the gospel very evident in the list of ethnic and geographic groupings present in Jerusalem for Pentecost. He also notes the two distinctive uses the author makes of the term "Jews." The first dominates chapters 1-8, while the second is evident in chapter 18 and beyond. Kee believes that it is imperative for the reader to understand this distinction in order to comprehend the meaning of the various passages.

Kee presents an excursus on the name of Jesus in Acts (63). In Lukan usage, unlike contemporary usage, a name is more than an arbitrary label: It connotes identity and authority. It is against this background that the usage of the name "Jesus" is to be understood. This name embodies transforming power to renew the people of God and has at least four functions in Acts. It is the basis of community identity, the instrument of healing, the focus of preaching and teaching, as well as the object of preaching, which leads to martyrdom. As such, it was integral to the mission and identity of the leadership of the new community as depicted in Acts.

Kee notes the skillful introduction of Saul of Tarsus in the account of the stoning of Stephen. He comments on the ravaging persecution that he initiated, but fails to mention the implications of that event for the theme of Acts. Indeed, this persecution initiates fulfillment of Acts 1:8 and the beginning of spreading the gospel to "every nation under heaven." To his credit, he mentions this dimension at the end of the Samaritan initiative (109), but fails to see it for what it is, a forced beginning and not a planned, systematic implementation of the Lord's commission. Kee correctly views the pericope of the Ethiopian eunuch as further description of the spread of the gospel. He speaks, however, of the "ethnic origin of the Ethiopian." If he is implying that the eunuch was black, why does he not say so?

Part 3 of the book looks at the launching and confirming of the world mission of the new Christian community. It begins with discussion of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who was to have a key role in this mission. In an excursus Kee raises three historical questions that challenge the veracity of the account. He later does something similar by stating that neither Saul nor his companions comprehended the divine communication (17). This is a direct contradiction of the account, and even of the Greek usage, which indicates that Saul had comprehension.

Kee must be commended for his recognition of the diversity of the leadership of the early church. He correctly identifies Simon as a black and acknowledges the fact that Christian leadership included more than Palestinian Jews. Here early Christianity is shown to be ahead of some contemporary expressions of the Christian faith, which still have struggles on this issue. The openness of the early Christians to the leading of the Holy Spirit is not only striking; it is the very thing that drove their worship and opened the way for Saul's worldwide ministry.

I see his rationale for John Mark's return from the first missionary journey (165-166) as speculative. There is no evidence to support his view of Mark's conservative stance.

Those who accept Lukan authorship of Acts and see the "we" passages as supportive will find Kee's review of recent literature on the subject and endorsement of their conclusions as interesting. Kee uses archaeology to demonstrate that Luke's portrayal of Acts 14:8, where Paul and Barnabas are viewed as gods, is accurate. The assumption of the Greco-Roman world was that those who performed public miracles, as Paul had done, were indeed gods in human form. Also demonstrating this point are the excursuses on Roman citizenship, house churches, Athens, Epicurean and Stoic philosophy, Corinth, and Ephesus, among others (see 200-235).

All told, this is an informative and thought-provoking volume, which reflects serious research. I enthusiastically recommend it for pastors, college and seminary professors, and even the thoughtful lay reader.

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Macchia, Stephen A. *Becoming a Healthy Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. 239 pp. Hardcover, \$16.99.

Stephen Macchia is president of Vision New England, the largest regional church-renewal association in the country, and also serves on the executive committee of the National Association of Evangelicals. In this capacity he has studied hundreds of New England churches, testing the principles that he enunciates in this book. *Becoming a Healthy Church* is another book in a growing repertoire of publications on church health. In fact, church health has become the center of investigation in many church-growth circles in recent years. The seminal book in this area is Christian Schwarz's *Natural Church Development*. In fact, no review would be complete without comparison to this work.

Macchia's main argument is similar to all such books: Creating a healthy church should be the focus of all congregations. Macchia's research methodology appears to be that he devised ten characteristics of a healthy church out of his own experience, and then tested them on over 8,000 people at a convention, following that up with personal on-site visits to churches that further confirmed his findings. He lists several helpful sources for each of the healthy characteristics as notes to each chapter, but there are no references to other studies of church health, such as Schwarz's research.

Although Macchia suggests ten characteristics of healthy churches, he recognizes that there are additional possibilities. Schwarz, on the other hand,