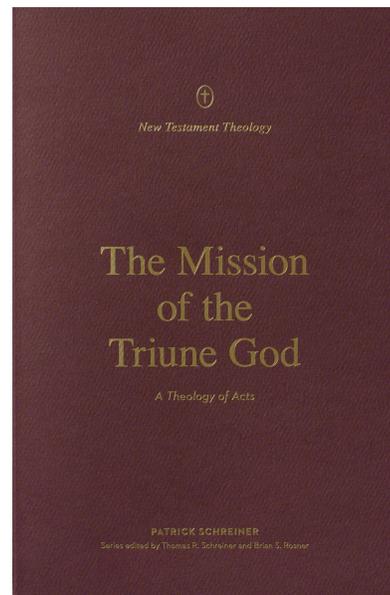


Schreiner, Patrick. *The Mission of the Triune God: A Theology of Acts*. New Testament Theology. Crossway, 2022.

Reviewed by Anthony Witten, IMB Field Personnel, Asia

In *The Mission of the Triune God: A Theology of Acts*, Patrick Schreiner helps readers see that Acts is a unique book in the Bible. It serves as both “a *transitional* and a *programmatic* book” (author’s emphasis, 21). Acts is transitional in that it documents events that are not intended to be repeated in the foundation of the new covenant church. It is programmatic in that it “provides guidance for the church in every age” (21). This guidance is based upon the truth that the Spirit at work in Acts is the same Spirit at work in churches today. Schreiner asserts that “Luke tells these stories so the future church can emulate the virtuous acts and avoid the shameful ones” (25).

Schreiner identifies God as the main character of Acts. He also locates seven theological aims that run throughout the narrative: “(1) *God the Father* orchestrates; (2) through *Christ*, who lives and rules; and (3) through the empowering *Spirit*; (4) causing the *word* to multiply; (5) bringing *salvation* to all; (6) forming the *church*; which (7) *witnesses* to the end of the earth” (author’s emphases, 26). In seven chapters, he takes an identified aim and traces its development throughout the book. Each chapter is concise, clear, and helpful in seeing how Acts is telling a comprehensive narrative of the gospel spreading globally.



The conclusion of the book is key as Schreiner ties all these aims together to show what God through Luke intended to communicate to all believers. He relates that the abrupt ending of the book “compels readers to ask about their own role in the narrative” (149). He then asserts how Acts is to be viewed as a programmatic book. He explains, “it encourages the church to press on in its own agency as it is compelled by divine agency. God is building his church. Therefore, the church must welcome all, speak of salvation in Jesus’ name, and witness to the ends of the earth” (149).

Missionaries may benefit from reading this book by being reminded God is the primary actor in our missions endeavors. Yes, we labor and strive to evangelize, disciple, plant churches and train leaders, but God is the one doing the work. As Paul stated: “On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me” (1 Cor 15:10). Ultimately, the advancement of the gospel depends on God, not us.

Missionaries can also find encouragement in their own personal Bible study through reading this book. Too often, missionaries are tempted to approach Acts is like a playbook for missions. Schreiner acknowledges that Acts does serve a programmatic end, but it is not to be mimicked because the recorded events are foundational and not necessarily repeatable. Rather, missionaries should be driven to the text to find encouragement to endure in their missions activities. We can also find comfort in the truth that the Spirit is working ahead of us. We should also find correction from the Lord when our motives and practices are not aligned with his in the advancement of the gospel.

While many books on Acts have been written, *The Mission of the Triune God* stands out for its clear and concise treatment of the theological themes of the book. It is fewer than 155 pages. Some may prefer a more thorough treatment of the subject, but this work achieves its purposes of pointing the reader to the text of Acts and more importantly to the divine author of the mission we are graciously called to participate in. I recommend this book to you for your spiritual edification and vocational equipping.