

The Acts of the Apostles is the historic illustration of the duty undertaken and of the promise enjoyed. Here the philosophy of missions teaches by examples. From first to last this book is the record of His working who only doeth wondrous things. Here is a period of history covering about thirty or forty years, the average lifetime of a generation, as if to show us what one generation of disciples can do toward a world's evangelization when the all-powerful captain of the Lord's host leads, and His "everywhere" and "always" presence is their confidence and support.

The book opens with Pentecost—a miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit which in a moment removes the impassable barrier of unknown languages and enables each man to hear in his own tongue the wonderful works of God. If Babel's confusion of tongues was a miracle, surely the reversal of Babel—the resolving of that confusion into order—is a counter miracle, and the record of that wonder working of God at the very beginning of that book is highly significant. The book of the Acts stands in the New Testament as the book of Joshua does in the Old. The latter is the account of the wars of Israel against the Canaanites; the former of the wars of the Church against the enemies of God; and in both the introduction is the record of a stupendous miracle. Jericho's walls fall without a blow struck or an engine of war employed; on the day of Pentecost the walls of strange speech instantaneously fall, and make representatives of the farthest cardinal points at once open to the message of the gospel. Can any thoughtful reader overlook the purport and purpose of that miracle? It stands at the very door of the history, like a sentinel at a gate, or a signal flag flying from a turret. It is the interpreter of the whole Book. The Acts of the Apostles are the acts of the Holy Ghost—of Jesus by the Holy Ghost. He is displaying that omnipotence and exhibiting that omnipresence, and the perpetuity of that power and presence is to be the warrant for the perpetuity of Christian missions and the inspiration and encouragement of them.

With profound and solemn conviction we record once more our testimony, after more than a quarter of a century of the study of missionary history and biography, that only from a divine point of view can the mystery of missions be interpreted or the significance of missions be appreciated. Higher up than the level of the most self-denying heroism must we get to command this true horizon; and our constant effort with tongue and pen is to awaken and arouse sluggish believers to behold this march of God and fall into line under His leadership and take up the march with Him.

What He did in the times of the Acts He has been doing in later years. How did modern missions begin as a general movement in the Church? God separated and sent forth such men as Plutschau and John Eliot, Schwartz and Kiernander, Ziegenbalg and Zinzendorf,