turns to his hearers and exhorts them to take action" (143). Guthrie believes that each of the two types of discourse, which he calls "genres", develops with a momentum of its own, but that semantic overlap between the two enables them to work together to serve the author's general purpose.

Guthrie points out certain weaknesses in Vanhoye's argument for an overarching chiastic structure, yet Guthrie's work does not supersede Vanhoye's, and appears to do less than justice to the skilful smoothness with which the author of Hebrews makes his transitions. Guthrie's argument, however, though necessarily technical, is clearly and cogently presented, with the help of no less than 35 diagrams. It is therefore particularly unfortunate that the book is marred by a regrettable number of misprints and other minor errors.

P.E.

Johnson, Luke Timothy: **The Acts of the Apostles.** "Sacra Pagina, vol 5." Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 1992. xvi + 569 pp. $29.99. ISBN 0-8146-5807-5.

Polhill, John: **Acts.** "The New American Commentary," vol. 26. Nashville: Broadman Press 1992. 574 pp. $27.99. ISBN 0-8054-0126-1.

The New American Commentary (NAC) series takes its name from the nineteenth-century series "An American Commentary," which was "authored and edited by scholars committed to the infallibility of Scripture." The authors of the NAC similarly "affirm the divine inspiration, inerrancy, complete truthfulness, and full authority of the Bible" (editors' preface). That the authors work within such a framework will commend this series to some translators and will suggest possible limitations in its usefulness to others.

One wonders, however, what words such as "complete truthfulness" mean in light of statements by Polhill such as, "It [the story of Ananias and Sapphira] is part and parcel of Luke's ideal portrait of the early church in Acts" (161) and "Luke depicted it as a unique period..." (161). Or again, "...but one would assume from Paul's Thessalonian correspondence that his initial ministry in Thessalonica was of a somewhat longer duration" [than the time suggested in Acts] (360) and "[Paul's letters] would indicate a more extensive Gentile witness than one might gather from Luke's highly compressed account" (360, n 49).

The "Sacra Pagina" authors, on the other hand, are not committed to a narrow view of inspiration; and this difference is reflected in these two commentaries. Concerning the speeches in Acts, for example, Polhill writes, "Suffice it to say, the speeches...are suited to their various contexts; and one need not doubt that Luke based them on reliable traditions and indeed succeeded in giving the 'general purport of what was actually said' " (46-47). On the same topic, Johnson states, "the historian can see that Luke's creative scope was most ample, simply because he was unconstrained either by narrative precedent or wealth of information. Whatever historical basis there is to his account must be found at the level of substance and pattern rather than at the level of detail or specific incident" (4). Johnson also states, "We are more confident that Luke got his 'world' right than that he got exactly right the sequence or meaning or character of events that form the substance of his narrative...As in the Gospel, he creatively shapes his vignettes

in imitation of biblical models or motifs, and in conscious appropriation of Hellenistic literary and social tropes" (5).

This reviewer finds Johnson's commentary, which places Acts securely in the world of first-century literature, to be the more convincing of the two in dealing with historical issues. Polhill sometimes becomes bogged down in defense of the historical accuracy of Luke's account. To suggest, for example, as Polhill does on Acts 15.14-18, that Luke may have provided the Septuagint text of Amos 9.11-12 for his Gentile readers does not take seriously the fact that James' argument is based on the Septuagint and not on the Masoretic Text. Since Polhill is compelled to square the accounts in Galatians 2 with Acts 15, he understands Paul to say what he clearly does not say in Galatians. Johnson, on the other hand, writes (270),

> The critical historian need reject absolutely neither the account in Acts nor in Galatians. Both sources are partial and tendentious. Both can be used with care to make a firm if finite statement about early Christianity... We have by this point learned enough about the character of Hellenistic historiography and apologetics to approach this story confidently in terms of its literary fashioning...our author is concerned less with "what happened" than with "what should have happened"...we are able to engage the author's narrative perspective and thereby engage a quality of narrative "truth" which is not confined to referential accuracy."

Fortunately for translators, one's understanding of inspiration and historical reliability rarely has a direct bearing on how one translates *Acts*. For that reason, both of these volumes are useful for translators.

The NAC prints the text of the NIV (with which Polhill sometimes disagrees), and provides a brief overview of each section followed by verse-by-verse commentary. NAC has references to secondary literature in footnotes, but it has no separate bibliography. "Sacra Pagina" provides a rather literal translation by the author, followed by brief notes on each verse regarding details of text, word meanings, grammatical constructions, etc., followed by a section called "Interpretation," which provides a very helpful overview of the section. Each section ends with a brief bibliography of five to ten entries.

If translators must choose between the two, the format of Johnson's commentary makes it easier to retrieve information most directly related to translation. Translators will also find it worthwhile to consult his translation. Johnson, for example, does not discuss the translation of *kata* to *auto* in his commentary on 14.1, as Polhill does, but his translation "in the same way" clearly indicates his interpretation. This translation contains some fresh insights such as "empire" as a political term instead of "world" in 11.28; 17.6; 24.5. Johnson's translation also uses short, simple sentences (almost too choppy at times), which second-language speakers of English may appreciate. However, the translation should not be read without consulting the notes. See 8.26, where the commentary suggests that the final sentence is the author's aside to the reader, but the translation does not reflect this viewpoint.

ROGER L. OMANSON