

Book Review



Mittelstadt, M.W. & Courtney, C. H. (eds.). (2021) *Canadian Pentecostal Reader: The First Generation of Pentecostal Voices in Canada (1907–1925)*

Cleveland, TN, USA: CPT Press. 507 pp, ISBN: 1953358080

Pentecostals are people of story. We gravitate to the narrative account of the early church in Acts, giving it a special place in our theology. We prioritize the testimony of what God has done and is doing. We see ourselves as part of God's ongoing story. Yet, we do not know the story of our Pentecostal movement in Canada very well. This is not entirely surprising as writings from these early years have been difficult to access, and because of the nature of these early writings.

To begin with the nature of these writings, Mittelstadt and Courtney note how early Canadian Pentecostals were not focused on preserving history for future generations. Yes, they were eager to testify of what God was doing, and they wrote many newsletters sharing their testimonies, but this was not out of a concern for preserving history. It was about announcing the imminent return of Christ. Time was short and so they did not think of recording lengthy histories for future generations. Still, these early newsletters contain a rich account of the early years of our movement.

As to the issue of accessibility, these early writings have now been made accessible in the *Canadian Pentecostal Reader*. Mittelstadt and Courtney have gathered these early writings into one volume. Their aim in making these writings widely accessible is not to bring us back to some golden era, but to provide us with the texts that can help us understand things the way they were, to understand the story of our movement. They have reproduced all early Pentecostal writing from 1907–1925, except for *The Canadian Pentecostal Testimony*, an official publication from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, as it can be found online. 1907 marks the first publication in Canada and 1925 serves as a natural ending point for this collection because this is when eastern and western Pentecostal groups came together under the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada's (PAOC) 1919 charter.

The book is organized around geography and publication dates. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction from the editors on the people and their publication, as well as suggested reading for more information. Then they reproduce the primary sources, intentionally including the dimensions and layout of the original publications so that the reader has in mind what the original copies would have looked like.

The first chapter takes us to East End Mission in Toronto. It is necessary to begin with Ellen and James Hebden, and their newsletter *The Promise*, because their ministry influenced many subsequent leaders in the Canadian Pentecostal movement. Chapter two stays in Toronto but jumps forward to the 1924 magazine *The Gospel of Sunshine* produced by Willard and Christine Peirce. Next we move to Winnipeg. Chapter three focuses on the Argue family, reproducing the *Apostolic Messenger* from 1908 and *The Revival Broadcast* from 1923. Chapter four reproduces the surviving copies of Frank Small's *Living Waters* from 1918–1924.

Chapter five returns east to Ottawa where we read *The Good Report* published by R.E. McAlister, H.E. Randall, and H.K. Lawler which includes theological and doctrinal discussions. Then we move through Western Canada, first stopping in Saskatoon to read the *Saskatchewan Revival News* published by O.J. Lovik (chapter five) before making it to British Columbia, where we find Margaret Peden and Ella Andrews' *The Good News Bulletin* from New Westminster in chapter seven, and H.B. Taylor's *The Pyramid Temple Bulletin* in Vancouver.

This is then followed by a bibliography on further resources—that look at this early period of Pentecostalism in Canada—organized around six categories: (1) periodicals from 1907–1925; (2) reference

works; (3) histories; (4) related books, chapters, and articles; (5) theses and dissertations; and (6) the digital archives and databases the editors used in compiling this volume.

One drawback of this volume is the lack of an index. If you are wanting to use this book for research purposes, the editors recommend purchasing it in electronic format. It is helpful to be able to search through the early writings for certain topics or the use of certain Scriptures. However, early Pentecostals did not always cite Scripture when quoting or paraphrasing it, which makes some Scripture references more difficult to search. An index would have also been beneficial to see at a glance key issues, concepts, people, or Scriptures, that are prominent across all of these early writings from across Canada.

Still, this book is a great resource. These early Canadian Pentecostal writings have much to offer readers today. They include a variety of writing including testimonies, historical and biographical accounts, theological discussions, and devotional materials. Through studying these early accounts of our movement we can learn early Canadian methods, philosophies and worldviews, and biblical justifications for faith and practice. We can even see their theology and practices change as they wrestle through different doctrinal disputes. I highly recommend this book for both research purposes and devotional use. One can gain a great understanding of the story of our movement's early years while also being stirred toward a fresh move of God in our day.

Reviewed By:

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