



Vanguard  
Journal of  
Theology &  
Ministry

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# *Vanguard Journal of Theology and Ministry*



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## ABOUT US

The Vanguard Journal of Theology and Ministry (VJTM) is an open-access journal dedicated to publishing the scholarly works of students, scholars, and practitioners. It is based out of Vanguard College, an evangelical Bible college affiliated with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) in Edmonton, Alberta. Issues are published once a year and are peer-reviewed in a double-blind process. The VJTM welcomes original scholarship in the fields of theology and applied ministry.

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James MacKnight, Editor  
Hilary Warnock, Editor  
Karina Dunn, Library Director

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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1 - Editorial

## FEATURE

3 – Alumni Author Spotlight

4 – *A hope and a future* (Creative Submission: Painting)

## CREATIVE

6 – Valedictory Speech for the Class of 2022 (Speech)

*Favour Adeleye*

9 – Letter to My Past Self (Reflective Essay)

*Jon Engler*

14 – The Other Brother (Prose)

*Anonymous*

## ARTICLES

16 – The Wind of the Spirit in the Local Church

*Brenda Rehaluk, BTh, MA*

23 – Is Depression a Sin? A Psychological Perspective on Church Models of Mental Illness

*Aidan Ross, BTh (in progress)*

28 – JESUS IS COMING SOON: Toward Revisioning Pentecostal Eschatology for Postmodern Ministry and Mission

*Rev. Stephen Williams, MTS*

## REVIEWS

40 – The Acts of the Apostles through the centuries (Book Review)

*Rev. Stephen Williams, MTS*

## *A Note from the Editors*



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It has truly been an honour to watch and be a part of VJTM coming into existence. This issue marks our second publication out of what will hopefully be many, as well as a time of transition for our journal team. Having now published both issues of our inaugural volume, the journal team finds itself on the cusp of a new stage in the journal's life. We have finished the work needed to establish the basics of a journal, including all the policies and practices that make a journal possible. Now we can begin to move into maintenance and improvement, and take VJTM to new places of journal publishing. May this next season be a time of growth guided by a new breath of the Holy Spirit.

As stated, the goals of the Vanguard Journal of Theology and Ministry (VJTM) are to:

- ∞ provide students the opportunity to contribute their perspective to academic discussion
- ∞ encourage pastors and practitioners to engage in theological and scholarly discussion
- ∞ promote the integration of theological study with applied ministry experience

In most developed fields, the “vanguard” of best practice on the subject is led by people engaging in scholarly dialogue on topics in the field. This “scholarly forum” is made up of avenues through which writers can publish their thinking and findings after being vetted and improved by a regulatory body associated with the publisher. In this way, the scholarly publisher acts as a check to make sure the information being published is high-quality. This is what differentiates the scholarly forum from the general public forum seen on social media and other avenues, which may include inaccurate information and thus cannot be considered a reliable source for guiding a field. Book publishing is one such scholarly avenue, and journal publishing, such as VJTM, is another.

Through this method of responsible publishing, the scholarly forum provides an avenue for those in the field to both participate in and stay abreast of new developments. When new practices and creative solutions are discovered, they can be shared in the scholarly forum so that other scholars, practitioners, and students can benefit. In this way the scholarly forum can simply be considered an institution for sharing knowledge.

It is the conviction of VJTM that the church can and should participate in the scholarly forum, and that it will be greatly aided in its mission by doing so. Generally speaking, the church does have a scholarly forum that academics participate in, including publications such as books and journal articles. However, these scholarly resources are mainly consumed by the community of scholars. While being excellent and complex sources of information, pastors and lay believers may regard such resources to be confusing at best, and at worst, simply unnecessary. As a result, after graduation, many pastors and church leaders never pick up an academic journal again. In the same way, pastors and Christian practitioners go about their everyday ministry, continually improving their practice, discovering new theological applications, and coming up with creative solutions to common problems, but never have the opportunity to share their valuable insights with the larger church. In this way, a gap exists between academic theology and applied ministry.

VJTM believes that both scholars and practitioners have valuable insights to share, and the church will be greatly improved if they can be convinced to share their thoughts with one another

through formal methods of dialogue, such as in the scholarly forum. To this end, we invite scholars, pastor/practitioners, and students to contribute their thoughts to our open-access journal, so that all have the opportunity to share, learn, and be improved in the process. We believe that God can and does move through this process, and that, in this way, academic publishing can function as an act of worship.

We recognize that there are barriers inherent in the publishing process for those who are not familiar with the world of scholarship. This unfamiliarity does not mean that they do not have valuable insights to share. VJTM is committed to reducing these barriers so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute. Our identity as an open-access journal is integral to our vision of allowing every writer the opportunity to contribute their insights to the scholarly forum, and for every reader to benefit from the thoughts of others.

VJTM remains rooted in our affiliation with Vanguard College and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, participating in the College's mission to "develop and mobilize Spirit empowered leaders to be fruitful in God's mission." We also welcome participants to the academic conversation that are not affiliated with Vanguard College or the PAOC, but still desire to engage with the intersection of theology and applied ministry within their field or denomination.

In this issue, our authors explore the "momentum" of the church for both the past and the future, touching on topics such as revisioning Pentecostal eschatology, examining the church's stance on mental illness, and using insights of the early church as a model for modern missions. Such reflection allows us to use the past to inform the future, so that we may be continually improving from both the insights and mistakes of Christians in years gone by. Through such reflection within a forum of responsible, scholarly publishing that values both academic and practical insights, we can collectively form the "vanguard" of theology and ministry.

*"Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you" Deuteronomy 32:7, NIV*

*"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that ... we might have hope" Romans 15:4, NIV*

We have separated our inaugural volume into two issues this year in order to present the first issue at Vanguard College's 75th anniversary celebration while still releasing this regularly scheduled issue in September. This would not have been possible without the incredible contributions of the following individuals: Kaylee Craig, Joshua VanZandbeek, Daniel Zander, Joel Bornau, and Kayla Muth. Thank you for the time and energy you contributed to the development of this journal in a variety of ways over the last year, and especially over the last few weeks.

We would also like to thank all our peer reviewers, without whom we would not have succeeded in including pastor/practitioner articles in this issue. You know who you are! Scholarship cannot thrive without the invaluable feedback you provide to one another.

Finally, thank you, readers! We hope that you find inspiration and motivation in these pages. As this publication becomes part of the past, use it to inform your future.

Cayla Thorlakson, Interim Editor in Chief

Karina Dunn, Library Director

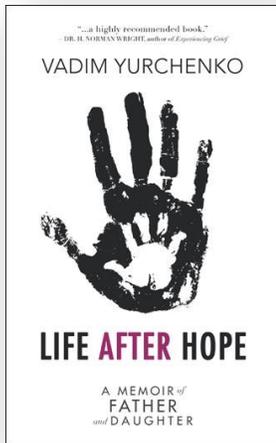
James MacKnight, Editor

Hilary Warnock, Editor

# VANGUARD COLLEGE ALUMNI

## AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

*Featuring titles published within the last year by Vanguard College Alumni!*

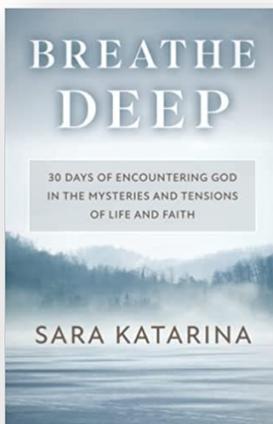
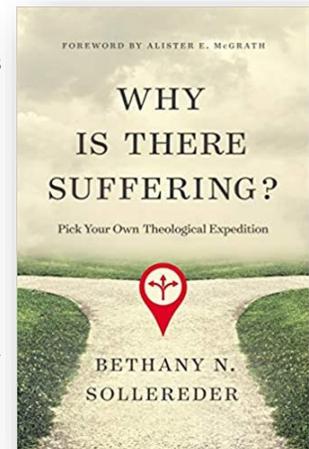


A spiritual travelogue through one of the darkest valleys of parenthood, this book is about a young father's journey of experiencing the unexpected loss of his daughter. Born prematurely, Eleni Hope developed a chronic lung disease that left her with no chance at survival. Through the pangs of grief, unanswered questions, and shattered dreams, the father struggles to find meaning in the tragic circumstances of his daughter's life. Refusing to settle for a life with no Hope, he and his wife discover a new kind of reality- Life After Hope

**Vadim Yurchenko** (class of 2013), is a pastor at Evangel Downtown in British Columbia and adjunct faculty at Vanguard College. He and his wife Mary have three children. To follow more of their journey, visit [www.reimaginehope.com](http://www.reimaginehope.com)

Similar to a 'choose-your-own-adventure' novel, readers will face multiple possibilities regarding suffering and its theological explanations and have to make choices about which one they find most plausible. Each decision will lead to further complexities and new choices, helping readers see how theological choices lead to certain conclusions. This book does not offer final answers. Instead, it introduces the "theological" possibilities, both Christian and non-Christian, that readers can explore and wrestle with so they can make informed decisions about their own beliefs.

**Bethany Sollereeder** (class of 2007), is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Oxford and regularly writes for journals and popular publications including *Christian Century* and *BioLogos.org*.



*Breathe Deep* seeks to help you go deeper with God by making you more aware of His presence already in your midst. It provides you with the space to ask tough questions and encourages you to live in the tensions of life and faith through poetry, reflection and prayer. Life is beautiful and messy, it is full of hope and sorrow. Living in these tensions can be difficult, but you do not have to do it alone. What is stopping you from finding God in your questions and doubts?

**Sara Katarina** (Kate Wiens, class of 2022) has a Bachelor of Theology in Children's and Family ministry, minoring in Intercultural Studies. She loves asking tough questions and uncovering the answers. For her, the joy is in the process of finding an answer, not in the answer itself. She is also always up for a good conversation about any topic.

Have you graduated from Vanguard College and recently published a book?

We'd love to feature it in our next issue. Please send an email to [vjtm@vanguardcollege.com](mailto:vjtm@vanguardcollege.com)

## Creative Submission: Painting



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### a hope and a future

Giselle Denis, Vanguard College Alumni, 2022

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A hope and a future

My art is about Hope.

The trees represent the strong towers of leadership in the professors giving, teaching, and passing on their knowledge and wisdom to the students.

The stream is the reflection of each person's journey seeing who they were, who they are now, and who they are becoming.

The flowers represent the beautiful growth each person here is experiencing.

I called it, 'A hope and a future' from the verse in Jeremiah.

This college is a place to learn, to grow, and part of your journey into discovering your place in this world.

A reminder to work hard, stay focused, but also tender and open to all the surprises that God may have for you around every corner.

Plant your feet firmly in the ground on God's Word and watch Him do amazing things with your life.



#### ARTIST BIO

Giselle Denis graduated from Vanguard College in 2002 with a Bachelor of Theology, Music Ministries Major. She paints Hope. Her art is about life and people. She paints nature in an impressionist style using bright, bold colours and textures. She is the performance painter at the Fairmont Hotel Macdonald in Edmonton, Canada and the Raffles Hotel in Dubai. Her live painting provides a gateway of opportunity to connect with people and present her creative process for them to enjoy.

[www.giselledenis.com](http://www.giselledenis.com)

@giselledenisfineart



Denis, A hope and a future



In commemoration of the Vanguard 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary May 2022.  
This painting is available to view in the Vanguard College Main Office.

## Valedictory Speech 2022

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Favour Adeleye, Vanguard College Alumni.<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

I just want to start by saying thank you. First to God, for existence and this wonderful thing we call life. But next, to my fellow graduates, who have voted for me to give the valedictory speech. Thank you to the faculty and staff who have worked hard for the past year, or four, or more, so that we can call ourselves graduates today.

“It is finished”

Incredible isn't it. When we set out on this journey it seemed like it would take forever. Admittedly some of us have been here longer than others, but we can all agree that it wasn't easy. We have survived what felt like demanding deadlines, anxiety-inducing assignments, and projects past our perceived pedigree. With all the difficulty though, we have experienced what we never thought we would find here.

### Calling

Some of us set foot in Vanguard back in September of 2018, not knowing what we would do come April 2022. We signed up for a school experience, you know a solid education. Maybe we would even get a job in ministry after. Or at least be eligible to do graduate work. Thankfully we received both, a solid education and equipping for ministry.

However, between projects and paperwork there were experiences.

Retreats, where we felt the Holy Spirit's presence. Chapels, where we felt the direction of our lives shifting towards God. Classes where our understanding of God was forever changed. The way we saw people and ourselves would never be the same. There were discussions with professors between classes that have set us on the path we find ourselves today.

I feel so blessed to say that I have seen the Holy Spirit move in your lives during our time at Vanguard, to witness you, my fellow graduates, find that call.

We have also found key relationships during our time at Vanguard.

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<sup>1</sup> Favour Adeleye is a recent alumnus of Vanguard College in the Pastoral Care and Counselling Program. He is passionate about seeing people's relationships transformed by the love of Jesus. He currently works as a Youth Outreach Worker with the Salvation Army.



## Relationship

Quick story: I still remember our first year-pastoral, serve week trip where we went to Banff to minister. We were sleeping on the floor in a church, but we were excited to be doing practical ministry. As we were waiting for sleep to hit and talking about girls we liked, my friend said he liked this girl. We laughed thinking that he would never work up the nerve to ask her out. But then we encouraged him to pray about it and shoot his shot.

They're now married and expecting their first child. None of us that night expected that such a deep relationship would be found during our time here but this and so many other valuable relationships have been made.

For some of us, we've made life-long friends. Some of us have found mentors in professors or other staff. Their input has been a guiding light inside and outside of school. I know we'll be forever grateful for them seeing qualities in us that we never saw in ourselves. Not only did they identify those qualities, but they developed them in us.

One of my favourite examples is our Homiletics class; most of us were so nervous giving that first presentation. But now I think of my classmates in our Expository Presentation class, and everyone gave brilliant sermons. I think of friends who not only grew in their preaching skills but found a passion for public speaking. It's amazing to think that this was all found in our unassuming Bible college.

As we go forward though, I want to encourage you. I know there are still so many unknowns and even after all we've found and experienced, we know that God has much more in store for us.

## Three Encouragements

I want to encourage you in three ways. My first encouragement is to remember and practice what you've learned at Vanguard.

Let's remember the spiritual foundation that's been laid for us. Hebrews 6:1 and 3 says,

So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. ... And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.

As we go into the world and its culture, we'll be hit with all sorts of new trends on how to live and how to do ministry, and there will be temptation to put secondary issues in the place of God. But let's not forget the basics. Do you remember the disciplines from Spiritual Formation? I'll be honest, I forgot some of them too. Here's a brief reminder: The personal disciplines are prayer, fasting, meditation, studying Scripture, simplicity, solitude, submission, and service. These will build up our inner lives. And with corporate disciplines we'll remain connected to the body of believers. Through confession, worship, guidance, and what we're doing right now, celebration! Keeping these basic practices will help us remain steadfast in our faith.

This passage in Hebrews encourages us to press forward in our understanding, to keep learning from our great teacher, but let's not forget to practice what we have learned.

The second encouragement I want to give you is to continue your outreach, regardless of where you work or live.

Matthew 28:18-20 calls us to go to all nations and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them the commands of God. We are empowered to fulfill this call, knowing that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth, and that He is with us! Regardless of where we are and what we do, we are to carry out this mission.

All we have learned at Vanguard, academic and otherwise, has been for the sake of equipping us for this mission. We didn't learn to prepare Bible Studies, devotionals, sermons, presentations, and research papers just for ourselves. Our training, Christ's presence, and the power we receive through the Holy Spirit is for carrying out this mission!

While I know most of us are planning to enter ministry jobs, I know that some of us are called to other workplaces. You might not work full-time at a church, but you are the Church, and you bring Christ wherever you go.

Our faith is not only in what we do on Sundays, or how much time we spend at church, or how many years we spent at Vanguard. Our calling doesn't stop after we graduate.

Real calling is lived out daily.

Every day, we must let our lives testify of Christ so that even if people never come to a church service, or read the Bible, they will be able to see Christ in us.

The third encouragement I want to give you is to remember that you are loved! 1 Jn 4:16a says "We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love".

During Minister's gathering earlier this year, I felt God speaking His love to me. And I want to speak that love to you too. You are loved! In ministry we can easily focus on what we are expected to do next, letting our relationship with God become monotonous work. We complicate our relationship with Him, thinking His love is like ours, needing reason and keeping record of wrongs. In this striving we can lose sight of the one who loves us regardless of our successes and failures. Take time each day to reflect on God's love and let your actions flow out of His love for you.

### **Final Exhortation (Conclusion)**

Finally, I wanted to congratulate you all! You have decided that this is what your life is about! As the writer of Hebrews says, "Anyone who wants to come to God must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him". Committing thousands of hours, and tens of thousands of dollars, to achieve what you have today is admirable. You have not taken God's provision for granted.

In making Him the center of your lives, you are glorifying Him. And when God is glorified, we are glorified with Him too (Romans 8:17). Let us continue to glorify God by loving Him with our whole being: All our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength.

Thank you.

## Reflective Essay



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# Letter to My Past Self: A Pastoral Reflective Seven Years After Graduation

Jon Engler, Alumni of Vanguard College.<sup>1</sup>

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### Letter to My Past Self: A Pastoral Reflective Seven Years After Graduation

Dear Jon...

The day is April 25th. You've just come home from a full evening at the Bible College Graduation Banquet. By this time tomorrow night, you will no longer be just 'Jon Engler'. Instead, you'll be 'Jon Engler – Bachelor of Arts in Theology with a Music Major.'

What an achievement! Four years of long classes, ministry trips, and grueling bus commutes in -45 wind-chill have all led up to this special weekend. No more papers; no more exams; no more four-figure bills for tuition. You're free!

But you're also nervous – very nervous. Now that the challenge of Bible College is over, you're wondering about the next challenge: A challenge known as 'real life'. You're only 21 years old. Where do you go from here?

As you reflect on your impending post-college future, I want to give you some contrasts to consider. Contrast is a powerful tool to inspire intentionality in one's relationship with God and journey through ministry. Consider this example from Proverbs: "The inexperienced one believes anything, but the sensible one watches his steps" (Prov. 14:15, HSCB, emphasis added).

As I think about the contrasts in Proverbs, and about the contrasts I have witnessed between past college life and present ministry life, I want to share with you three 'ministry contrasts' that have had a deep impact on my own journey. Take these contrasts to heart, Jon. They will serve you well once your tassel is flipped...

#### ***Contrast #1: The Outer Spotlight vs. The Inner Substance***

The past four years, Jon, you've been somewhat of an on-campus celebrity. You've always thrived in front of an audience, whether it's a megachurch crowd on a choir trip, or a few close friends in the student lounge. The attention is exhilarating...no, life-giving!

You live for the days when you get to MC an all-school event; or conduct a choir warm-up; or lead worship for 200 students in chapel, backed by an 'all-star' band that you've handpicked from the

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Engler is a pastor, worship leader, and graduate of Vanguard College (2015). Originally from the Edmonton area, he now serves as the Worship Pastor at EAG Church in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, USA.



very best talent on campus. You don't know how you would ever survive without your self-built platform.

That's because your platform is an idol.

Your identity and security are fully invested in how many leadership opportunities you can snag from week to week. Your whole life revolves around looking to advance from one level of 'ministry stardom' to the next. You have milked your Bible College platform for every drop of validation you can squeeze out of it.

But come Monday, that platform will be gone.

Your musical 'reign' will be over. The students who used to "ooh" and "ahh" over your talent and charisma will inevitably leave your social circle, and the college will be filled in by new students who have never heard of you. Before long, the 'legend' of Jon Engler will be little more than another "1" x 2" thumbnail on a homogenous alumni photo board.

And what then?

Listen closely: You must never base your identity on the emotional drug of visible ministry. Rather, your identity must be founded in Christ. You must shed your love of the spotlight and prioritize the inner life of substance, consistency, and security that Christ alone can provide.

See Jon, the spotlight never stays fixed in one place. Just as quickly as it found you, it will one day abandon you on a whim, leaving you alone in the shadows.

Your college friends also will face this same post-college "struggle in the shadows". By God's grace, some of your friends will use this struggle to bolster their relationship with Jesus. They will allow Him to build new levels of substance, depth, and integrity into their lives. They will "seek to live a quiet life" with the sole goal of knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection – their former platform now counted as loss for His sake (1 Thess. 4:11; Phil. 3:7; HSCB).

For others, however, the loss of the college spotlight will reveal major spiritual fault lines. You will never suspect these students of one day abandoning Christ; some of them have even been your most admired role models. But despite the spiritual exuberance they show outwardly, these people are battling an inner war – a war that can stay hidden for only so long. Left alone to their own thoughts, and without a public platform to incentivize their spirituality, their relationship with God will ultimately suffocate.

Do not anchor your identity in the spotlight, Jon. Instead, anchor your identity in the substance of Christ. Challenge yourself: Does Christ reign supreme at the center of everything you are? Is He truly your Lord and Master? Or is He merely a token that you name-drop as needed to win people's admiration? How you wrestle through those questions will determine whether your faith is sustained or shattered in the shadows.

### ***Contrast #2: The Spectacular Rush vs. The Steady Flow***

Each week of the past eight semesters, Jon, you have had the privilege of a spoon-fed spiritual meal plan: Church on Sunday; main chapel on Tuesday; casual chapel on Thursday; and plenty of ministry trips, prayer times, and theology classes in-between. The spiritual climate at college is like Mom's home cooking: Always there to feed you, and easily taken for granted.

But once you leave home, you'll leave Mom's cooking, too. Your meals won't prepare themselves; you must take charge of your health and not settle for the drive-thru when you don't feel like cooking.

The same principle applies to your walk with Jesus. After four years of enjoying a prepackaged spiritual climate, the loss of that climate will hit you hard. No longer do you have the luxury of a Tuesday chapel to get your weekly scheduled spiritual high. Instead, your relationship with God now depends less on corporate ritual and more on individual ownership. You must now advance beyond 'presuming the spectacular rush' into 'pursuing the steady flow', choosing to worship, wait, and seek the Lord daily – regardless of whether you feel anything or not.

Jon, will you seek God at home the same way you sought Him in chapel? Will you worship with the same intensity and fervor that you did on those choir trips? Will you dive into the Bible of your own accord and not just for a theology paper?

Don't try to recreate the spiritual rush of yesterday's chapels. Instead, mature in the 'steady flow' of Christ's fellowship today – and God will give you a spiritual vitality that will last long after you leave Bible College.

### ***Contrast #3: The Selfish Dream vs. The Sanctified Destiny***

The Bible College Dream is an idealized four-year checklist that nearly every student wishes to attain to some degree (including you, Jon). The dream typically goes like this:

- 1st Year: Assert yourself out of the gate as a future ministry star. Strive to achieve that coveted 1st Year Rep spot on Student Council, and you'll be set up for the future.

Uber-hip clothes and a Hebrew tattoo will go a long way to increasing your chances.

- 2nd Year: Assuming you're available, get to work on your 'ring before spring' by dating one of the best-looking girls on campus. You'll know she's a committed Christian because she also attends Bible College (duh!) and always raises her hands in chapel (double duh!). She also has over 1,000 social media followers, so dating her will give you far more leverage than what you would have if you were an inferior, lower-tier single.

- 3rd Year: Use your 'campus-celebrity-status' to score a high-profile internship at a megachurch. This will bode well for your student council presidential campaign.

- 4th Year: Kick off your swansong as the Student Council President. Propose to your girlfriend during a hipster photoshoot. Graduate with a 4.0 GPA and get hired as a well-paid staff pastor at the megachurch where you did your internship. Mission accomplished! You have officially lived out the Bible College Dream!

On the surface, the Bible College Dream seems perfectly harmless. At its core, however, the Bible College Dream is just one more variant of the human dream. It's the idolatrous craving to acquire more opportunities, absorb more accolades, and ascend one more rung on the ladder of success – only to discover that the ladder is a hamster wheel in disguise. To chase the dream is to chase many dangers: delusion, isolation, cynicism, burnout, and ultimate resistance to the sanctified destiny that God has prepared for us (Eph. 2:10).

Jon, suppose I told you that seven years from now, you would find yourself still single, serving a small church in an obscure American town, in the middle of a turbulent pandemic. And what if I told

you that this revitalization project would be one of the most precious ministry assignments you've ever had in your life?

Truthfully, you might throw a temper tantrum...because you're still addicted to your dream. You're consumed with achieving your 'big break' and doing everything you can to avoid such an obscure scenario. You esteem yourself to be above that level of ministry – so much so that you don't even want to be ordained. You think that pursuing the dream of Christian 'stardom' will fulfill you, enliven you, and set you on a path to endless validation.

But you'll soon learn that your selfish dream is no match for the sanctified destiny that God wants you to discover.

Very soon, Jon, you will come across other people who are further 'ahead' in their dream. Their position on the ladder may appear enviable at first...but you will see and hear the price they had to pay to get there. Many of them had to sacrifice reputation, family, and even character to make it this far – which is not far at all in comparison to all the other 'hotshots' ahead of them.

At the same time that you see the emptiness of the selfish dream, you will also discover the joy of the sanctified destiny. God in His wisdom will set you up with some 'unimpressive' ministry opportunities – a missions trip one year, a ragtag Baptist youth camp the next year, and a small town ministry setting the year after that.

And in those obscure settings, Jon, you'll see God move in ways that you never thought you would see.

You'll minister at a foreign outpost where a clinically dead child was miraculously resurrected just weeks before your visit; you'll see a cynical camp bully be transformed literally overnight by the power of the Holy Spirit; and your dream to 'make it big' as a worship leader will be replaced by a newfound passion for church revitalization.

Jon, God wants to give you a holy destiny that far outshines your broken dreams. His destiny for you is not marred by your selfish thoughts and impure motives; rather, His destiny is a sanctified destiny, designed by your Creator, who has made you for His glory and equipped you fully for every assignment He will put in front of you.

But Jon, before that destiny can be realized, you must die to yourself, and surrender your dream to the words of Christ: "If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will find it" (Matt. 16:24-25, HCSB, emphasis added).

### ***Conclusion***

Jon, I know you're feeling awfully anxious about graduation. You're really wrestling with these different contrasts that I've shared with you. 'How do I become unattached from the spotlight? How do I move on from the spiritual rush that I enjoyed every week for four years? And how painful will it be to give up my dream?'

Don't let these contrasts psych you out, Jon. Instead, just step back and realize that each contrast contains a common thread: Focus on Jesus.

Do you want to develop your inner substance? Focus on Jesus, even when the spotlight leaves you in obscurity.

## Engler, Letter to my Past Self

Do you want to experience steady flow in your relationship with God? Focus on Jesus, no matter the spiritual highs and lows that you may or may not feel from day to day.

Do you want to live out God's sanctified destiny? Focus on Jesus, and don't be afraid to give up your own selfish dream for something gloriously better.

Your graduation is in less than 24 hours. Receive this exhortation from Hebrews as you leave college and enter the future:

Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God's throne" (Heb. 12:1-2).

Just a few hours left, Jon. Now turn out the light and rest well. You've got a big day tomorrow...

## Creative Submission: Prose



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### I am the older brother.

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I don't know how many moments I had spoken that statement, etched it into my burrowed, ever working forehead and wore it like a name tag that says, "Hello my name is..."

Hello my name is:

Perfectionist, legalist, slave, guilt driven, ever judging and critiquing and ever fearful of the Fathers wrath. Ever comparing, and ever in torment of the fear of failing, the fear of becoming...

Becoming.  
The younger brother.

The Brother with the 'legit testimony', the one whom I secretly envy for having a rock bottom experience upon which God mightily plucked him from that pig pen miry mud. A testimony that is tempting in charisma, and yet a testimony one wouldn't dare hope for, for fear of that kind of exposure, that kind of failure, that kind of *helplessness*.

But also that kind of grace. Mercy. Forgiveness.  
It must be nice to not have to desperately work for it and fall into it instead.

Sometimes, the thought crosses your mind that perhaps it *would* have been better to choose the rebellious side. Perhaps grace *does* increase all the more when sin increases, and just possibly might actually be worth the intense driving fear of failure that forces your hand on the plough day in and day out with no turning back.

Perhaps.

Perhaps true grace would be worth sacrificing all of our pompous deeds, your bloated reputation of the 'good kid' that represents your fathers hands, but not his heart.

Perhaps.

But the choice is not one you could possibly make. Intimacy with the Father isn't really all *that* far away. If you just work a little harder, obey with an ounce more of clarity and hasten your urgency up a notch, then maybe you could feel his embrace.

Maybe.

Oh, but YOU asked for grace. You asked for intimacy. You asked for that embrace that every other wild eyed, late night fireside testimony entails.

Until that moment when the story flips.

Anonymous, I am the older brother.

And in a mere moment, *you* are the one flailing and at the point of surrender, *you* are the one with nothing to give and nothing to use to cover up what *must* be hidden for fear.  
And you didn't *choose* to be living this narrative, or *choose* to be the one in a state of utter weakness and helplessness.

He chose it. He chose *you*.  
He chose you first, *above* the fruit of your labour, the harvest of your own crop.  
He longed for you to come to him, *not just what your calloused hands could offer as a sacrifice*.

*But you wouldn't come empty handed.*

So, he stripped you of your pompous gifts, and left you bare, naked, helpless.  
So there was nothing more to fill up your arms in replace of His.

You weren't the one that squandered off not only the money, but the honour of your father's well-kept name, the legacy of your families hard working reputation.

You weren't *that* one.

You were the one that questioned His intimacy. You were the one that questioned if His arms could really open to you. You were the one that asked why there was no celebration in your name, why the calf hadn't been slaughtered for you, after your whole life of dedication?

*Oh Child it has. You just didn't accept it.*

*"Son, ALL I have is yours!"*

Yet you couldn't believe Him.  
So He had to show you *instead*.

Showed you how to see the sweet face of grace, where before only achievement and striving reigned.

He pulled your clenching white knuckles off the plough so that they may open to his ever-reaching arms.

*He humbled you. He brought down your pride, with tender loving mercy and grace, and he exposed all your innermost thoughts for the world to see.*  
*He took your twisted perceptions of "Those who have been given much, much will be asked of" and he turned it around to, "Yes. Now I have given you much grace. Now you have let me give you much love, much mercy. And now, and only now, are you able to see with the eyes that can possibly do the same.*

Yes, you are right. Maybe this wasn't your fault. Maybe this wasn't your choice.

And yet, maybe his whole desire was for us to have a heart like the younger brother, who can actually accept the open arms of a father reaching wide.

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#### ARTIST BIO

Author is a Vanguard College alumnus that wrestles with accepting the ways that things have always been done and seeking to live life in a way that challenges cultural norms. They do this by living cross culturally here in Canada and sharing the ways and life of Jesus with youth from various religious and cultural backgrounds. They have chosen to remain anonymous to protect those youth and this ministry.

## The Wind of the Spirit in the Local Church



Brenda Rehaluk, Vanguard College Alumni.<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper describes the work of the Holy Spirit in empowering local and global missions, and asserts that this was the momentum experienced by the early church in the book of Acts (Acts 2). It examines how the Holy Spirit's presence in the early church can create the same momentum and empowering work that is needed today in both local and global missions. The paper is introduced with a brief historical review of the manifestations of the breath and wind of YHWH in both the Old and New Testaments. The next three sections describe the work of the Spirit's empowerment of the local church in three specific areas. The first area looks at the roles of the local church in enacting the commission, evaluating, and holding fast to truth in the public square. The second area connects the local church with equipping and training global workers. The third area continues the work of the Spirit in building relationships and sending out local and global workers. The disciples' momentum was impelled by the local rushing mighty wind of the Spirit, which then created a global movement. For this to happen in the local church today, there must be room for the working and manifestation of the Holy Spirit to transform lives. In conclusion, an invitation is given to the reader today, as it was when Christ was born: Is there any room for the Holy Spirit to work in the local church? The wind and power of the Spirit demonstrated in the book of Acts will empower the local church's roles, responsibilities, and relationships to be effective in missions locally and globally.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Local church, Holy Spirit, breath of YHWH, global missions, church roles, church responsibilities, church relationships*

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In the early church, the wind of the Holy Spirit created an unstoppable momentum that spread throughout the world. As Walvoord (1991) put it, the “power, invisibility, immaterial nature, and sovereign purpose of wind in creation have their counterpart in the work of the Holy Spirit” (p. 24). Wind is mentioned often in Scripture, from Genesis 8:1 to Revelation 7. However, three specific mentions that stand out are John 3:8, Acts 2:1-2, and 2 Peter 1:21, which refer to the wind driving the ship (Walvoord, 1991, p. 24). This paper examines the topic mainly through discussion of Christopher Wright's (2010) book, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, alongside references to Scripture and biblical scholarly reviews. How can the effects of the Holy Spirit's presence in the early church create the same momentum today in the local church and global missions? I contend that the wind and power of the Spirit demonstrated in the book of Acts will empower the local church's roles, responsibilities, and relationships to be effective in missions locally and globally.

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<sup>1</sup> Brenda Rehaluk is the Pastoral Care pastor at Claresholm Pentecostal Assembly in Black Diamond, Alberta. She is an alumnus of Vanguard College, holds a Master of Arts in Leadership, and is passionate about serving the Lord in missions locally and abroad.



Lesslie Newbigin (1995) argues that mission “is something that is done by the Spirit, who is himself the witness, who changes the world and the church, who always goes before the church in its missionary journey” (p. 56). Paul the Apostle declared, “my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2:4-5, KJV). The work of the Holy Spirit is a matter of words or deeds empowered by the liberating presence of the Spirit (Costas, 1983, p. 92).

### **YHWH Breathes on the Church**

Wright (2010) states that the “Spirit of YHWH has a major role in the Old Testament (Ps. 104:30),” but “only once in relation to the life-giving power of God within the whole created order” (p. 208). In the Old Testament, in Psalms 104:30 (and referring to Genesis 1:2) the word for Spirit is the Hebrew word *ruach* (רוּחַ; Strong's: 7307) meaning breath, wind, or spirit. In the New Testament, in Acts 2:2 the Greek word for wind, *pnóe* (πνοή; Strong's: 4157) means blowing, wind, or breath. Another Greek word, *pnéō*, is the verb form of the same root, and means ‘to breathe hard’ (πνέω; Strong's: 4154).

When the Spirit breathed on individuals it created action: (a) Simeon “came in the Spirit (Luke 2:27, NASB) into the temple” (Menzie's, 2004, p. 141). (b) Then “Jesus was led up by the Spirit (Matt. 4:1) into the wilderness” (Menzie's, 2004, p. 141). (c) Following Acts 2:2 “Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, ‘Behold three men are looking for you’” (Acts 10:19-20). (d) Finally, Paul had a vision of the people from Macedonia calling him to come and help them (Acts 16:9). Menzie's (2004) notes, “whether it be John in his mother's womb, Jesus at the Jordan, or the disciples at Pentecost, the Spirit comes upon them all...and as such empower them to carry out their divinely appointed tasks” (p. 177).

For the church to experience the fullness of the Spirit's breath, the organized church must make room for the Spirit to be a participant - as it was in Acts 2:22. This is the only Scripture in the Bible that puts signs, miracles, and wonders in the same verse as an outflowing of Acts 2:2. The breath of God blew upon those gathered in the upper room and “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with different tongues, as the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak out” (Acts 2:1-4). Consequently, the manifested breath of the Spirit empowered the local gathered community members with the charismatic gift of other languages as a witness to other nations (Acts 2:8; 1 Cor. 14:21-25). Similarly, Wright (2010) states “the risen Jesus...commands the Spirit, breathes the Spirit, and sends the Spirit to empower his disciples for mission (Luke 24:49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8)” (p. 208). The Word of God, as Wright (2010) states, “is the perfect missionary, bearing fruit entirely as God plans,” which is “God's purposeful sending, accomplishing God's ultimate desire” (p. 208). The gift of other tongues demonstrates the Spirit's desire and empowerment to use the local spirit-filled community to witness to foreigners and to empower those going out to global communities.

Less than six months into the Azusa Street revival, reports of what the Lord was doing had spread far and wide (Synan, 2001, pp. 71-72). Specifically, Thomas B. Barratt recalled “being overcome by a burden for global evangelism, and preaching and praying in divinely given languages after being baptized in the Holy Spirit” (Synan, 2001, pp. 71-72). His testimony revealed the prevailing spirit of “Pentecostalism to evangelize the world” (Synan, 2001, p. 71), the “most noteworthy of which was the Mukti (‘Salvation’) revival in India (1905-7)”. This revival took place at the Mukti Mission under the guidance of the famous Brahmin Christian woman Pandita Ramabai, her daughter Manoramabai, and the former Methodist Episcopal missionary Minnie Abrams (Wonsuk et al., 2014, pp. 14-15; Synan, 2001, pp. 84-85).

Wonsuk et al. (2014) observe that this move of the Holy Spirit resulted in

[a] revival lasted for a year and a half and resulted in 1,100 baptisms at Ramabai's school, confessions of sins and repentances, prolonged prayer meetings, speaking in tongues, and the witnessing of some seven hundred of these young women in teams going into the surrounding areas, about a hundred going out daily, sometimes for as long as a month at a time. (pp. 14-15)

In this way, the Spirit empowered the gathered community by the wind of his manifestation through the church in many languages, in signs and wonders as witnessed in India as it was in Acts. Peter declared the Word in Acts 2:14-47 to call all to salvation, quoting from Joel 2:28-32. In short, the book of Acts is "where you find people moving in spontaneous obedience as they are propelled by the fresh wind of the Spirit" (Cymbala, 1997, p. 150). The next section examines the role of the local church in global missions.

### **Roles of the Local Church**

The Spirit empowers the local church to "reaffirm [its] conviction of the truth of the gospel" and teach the gathered community how to "build [their] whole lives upon it" (Wright, 2010, p. 281). The truth must still go out even in this post-modern era, as it is the church's mission to declare that the Bible "makes sense of life, the universe, and everything" (Wright, 2010, p. 281). Conversely, the gospel also "tells the bad news as it really is, and it declares what God and God alone has done for the redemption of all our bad stories" (Wright, 2010, p. 281). The work of the Spirit empowers the church to declare the truth to all as part of its Great Commission to a world without any hope or knowledge of the saving power of Christ. Peter states, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

The remarkable story of God's mission is stated in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life". Thus, when the local body aligns more closely in purpose, mission, and direction by the work of the Spirit, they should also become more like Christ and complete his mandate. This mandate is expressed in Luke 4:18-19: "He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (KJV). Hence, the local church is to fulfill its commission by sending disciples out, both locally and globally, who bring the manifest power of the Spirit according to Acts 2:22 to preach salvation, heal the sick, and set the captive free.

Additionally, "we are called to the role of the prophet, not just of the chaplain" (Wright, 2010, p. 271). Thus, the role of the church in the sending out is "not simply to put a veneer of uncritical blessing on whatever social or economic (or military) enterprises take place in the public arena," which "was one of the distortions Christendom generated" (Wright, 2010, p. 271). Moreover, "the people of God are called to maintain a critical distance and to speak on behalf of" the Christ and the Word (Wright, 2010, p. 271). In humility, the church must "offer the voice of evaluation, of critique or approval, according to the standards we learn in God's own revelation" (Wright, 2010, p. 271). The role of the church is to "renounce evil and hold fast to what is good," and that requires our "minds and hearts" to be able to "recognize the difference" (Wright, 2010, p. 271).

According to Acts 2:37, the Spirit empowered the disciples with boldness of speech in the midst of persecution: "Now when they heard this they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what are we to do?'" (NASB). Wright (2010) insists that "the church collectively can still perform this prophetic function in the public square," although it may

cause resistance even from some appointed chaplains of the marketplace (p. 271). In other words, the local church needs to “recover the voice of biblical engagement” in our communities and the “courage needed to go with it” (Wright, 2010, p. 271). The reaction in your community may not be as severe as Stephen’s experience in Acts 7:54, nevertheless, speaking the truth will cause a reaction.

Wright (2010) presents the following questions: (a) “Where are the saints who will actually live as saints—God’s different people, God’s counterculture—in the public square?” and (b) “Where are those who see their mission as God’s people to live and work and witness in the marketplace, and pay the cost of doing so?” (p. 236). In this way, the empowerment of the Spirit through the roles of the local church is essential for the church to fulfill its commission, which is to evaluate and speak the truth in boldness while holding fast to moral integrity and Christian distinctiveness (Wright, 2010, p. 236). Hence, according to both the book of Acts and the wind of the Spirit, the disciples went out and turned the world upside down. Let us go out like them, empowered by the Holy Spirit so the world around us will see that the local and global church has the answer to their spiritual and physical needs.

### **Responsibilities of the Local Church**

According to the Apostle Paul, God gave his church pastors and teachers “to equip the saints for works of service” (Eph. 4:12; cf. Acts 2:2 16:9). The term “works of service” does not just refer to Christian activity. Rather, Wright (2010) argues that “God did not invent the church to support the clergy,” and that “this turned right upside down is one of the commonest misconceptions of the church that sadly still cripples its effectiveness” (p. 272). In other words, “the pastor goes to church on Sunday to support the people in their ministry” which is the mission “outside the walls of the church, in the world, being salt and light in the marketplace” (Wright, 2010, p. 272). This equipping and training is not only for the local marketplace, but also beyond, in supporting and training those who are sent out by the power of the Spirit to missions locally and globally. This is shown in Acts 10:19-20: “while Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said three men are looking for you, but get up go,” and in Paul’s vision of the Macedonia call in Acts 16:9.

Menzies (2004) states, “whether it be John in his mother’s womb, Jesus at the Jordan, or the disciples at Pentecost, the Spirit comes upon them all...and as such empowers them to carry out their divinely appointed tasks” (p. 177). It is imperative for global workers sent out from the local body to maintain interconnectedness through prayer, financial support, and training. If disconnected, then they would feel like a hand or arm severed from the human body. According to Acts 4:31-32, after the place was shaken and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, “all the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had” (NIV). The unity described in Acts 4:31-32 follows the description of the apostles being full of power in the Spirit in Acts 4:33: “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all.” The Spirit empowered the unity of the disciples in sharing and supporting one another.

Wright (2010) argues that support for fellow workers is part of the local church’s responsibility (p. 220), as stated in 3 John 8: “Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.” He continues, “Paul argues this strongly in 1 Corinthians 9 [pointing to] ... churches that do not adequately provide for the needs of mission partners” then claim “their missionaries are ‘living by faith’” (Wright, 2010, p. 220). This is both “hypocritical” and “a matter of ‘obedience to the gospel of Christ’ (2 Cor. 9:12-14)” (Wright, 2010, p. 220). Therefore, Wright (2010) argues for us to “work together for the truth” including “all of us, the sent and the senders” (p. 220). However, “the church that is sent into the world is ... already in the world” (Wright, 2010, p. 266) Therefore, through the work of the Spirit, the local church must see its mission “as something that happens in and for that public world” (Wright, 2010, p. 266).

On the contrary, Vanderwerf (2011) argues that if we apply sending language of mission to everything the church does in the world, “the apostolic task (what the Son was sent to accomplish, what the Spirit was sent to empower, the foundational work that the 12 and Paul were called, prepared, and sent to do) is blurred” (p. 16). The responsibility of the gathered church is to fulfill the Great Commission and reach one’s neighbour, but the context of this sending is further than your next-door neighbour (Stetzer, 2013, para. 14). In Acts 1:8 we see the people going “out” from Jerusalem, rather than bringing the nations “up” to Jerusalem (Stetzer, 2013, para. 15). Stetzer (2013) argues that, as “living agents of God’s mission,” we cannot take “John 20:21 in isolation without also remembering Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8” (para. 23).

In all this, it is contended that “Luke consistently portrays the Spirit as the source of prophetic inspiration, which ... empowers God’s people for effective service” (Menzies, 2004, p. 44). Thus, the Spirit’s empowering for mission is, in essence, empowerment for witnesses to take up the prophetic vocation to the nations to which [the disciples were] called” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; Menzies, 2004, p. 174). Paul made it his ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that he would not build on someone else’s foundation (Rom. 15:20). In the same way, the church’s mission statement must include reaching people where the gospel has not been heard, both locally and globally.

### **Relationships of the Local Church**

Hastings (2012) argues that the “Spirit’s utterance” and simultaneous “breathing action” is “the relationship between the commission and the action of Jesus, [which] reveals the correspondence between ‘the sentness of Jesus and his people’ and the coming of the Spirit to dwell within and among them.” Wright also sees this illustrated in the life and ministry of both Jesus and Paul (p. 275): In Acts 10:36–38, Peter summarizes Jesus’ ministry as engaging both the telling of the good news and the doing of good acts. Similarly, in Romans 15:18-19 Paul reflects,

I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done [emphasis added]— by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God.

The result of breaking this relationship between saying and doing is that, in our evangelistic efforts, we are now sometimes perceived as “those who talk a lot but whose lives do not support what they say” (Wright, 2010, p. 275). Hence, Wright (2010) notes that “lack of integrity in this area has been identified by various researchers as the major obstacle to the acceptance of the message of the gospel” p. 275). Let us now look at the relationships within the local church.

According to Vanderwerf (2011), “it is helpful to consider local churches in three dimensions of relationship. Believers in local churches, individually and corporately, relate upwardly to God, inwardly to each other, and outwardly with those who are not believers” (p. 11). Today, “many missional churches speak more of unserved peoples rather than unreached peoples” (Stetzer, 2009, para 13). As a result, they engage in delivering justice rather than focusing on the delivery of “the gospel regardless of anyone’s status in a culture” (Stetzer, 2009, para. 13). Therefore, if we are following in the steps of Jesus, we must present a “holistic (or wholistic) mission” (Wright, 2010, p. 275). On the other hand, the term “missional” has “trended toward a personal obligation to personal settings, rather than toward a global obligation to advance God’s kingdom among all the nations” (Stetzer, 2009, para. 7). James states it practically: “Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?” (Jas. 2:15-16). Thus, as representatives of Jesus Christ

who are responsible for His commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself,” (Mark 12:31) let us combine our faith with action to bring a holistic message to advance the kingdom of God.

This missional impulse has resulted “in believers moved only to minister in their own Jerusalems with no mind toward their Judeas, Samarias, and uttermost parts of the earth” (Stetzer, 2009, para. 8). However, Christ “calls people from all tongues, tribes, and nations,” so we must go outside of our own tribe to avoid losing “the vital connection all believers share” and the vision “for the communion of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:26; Stetzer, 2009, para. 15). For this reason, if the church is serious about being missional and loving its neighbours, it will obey Christ’s command “to make disciples of all nations” through the Spirit’s empowerment (Stetzer, 2009, para. 19). This is one of the reasons for sending out members from the local church to global missions. Local church members need to experience the Spirit both in salvation and in God’s missionary field: the “world.” Let us be filled with the Holy Ghost fire by the wind of the Spirit, according to Acts 2:2, and be sent out to the global mission field to be changed forever.

## Conclusion

The momentum of the wind of the Spirit in the early church informs how a local church can be empowered to do missions locally and globally today. First, the breath of YHWH was the momentum of the early church in disciplining nations. It is the same wind of the Spirit in the early church that impelled both local and global missions as seen in the book of Acts. In the same manner, the Spirit empowered the disciples in the charismatic gifts of other tongues, signs, miracles, and wonders, which are imperative to the integrity of preaching the gospel. The Spirit’s work in empowering the local church’s roles, responsibilities, and relationships to missions, both locally and globally, can be examined in terms of three areas: The first area focuses on the roles of the local church in enacting the commission, evaluating, and holding fast to truth in the public square. The second area connects the local church with training and equipping global workers. The third area continues the work of the Spirit in building relationships and in sending out local and global workers.

The disciples’ momentum was impelled by the rushing, mighty wind of the Spirit locally, which then created a global movement. The active work of the Spirit is imperative to the local church. Therefore, the wind and power of the Spirit demonstrated in the book of Acts will empower the local church’s roles, responsibilities, and relationships to be effective in missions locally and globally. The local church is invited to participate in the work of the Spirit, which is essential for equipping, training, empowering, and connecting all members of the body of Christ both locally and globally. The local church is also challenged to make room for a fresh wind of the Spirit to breathe new life in its local church community and in disciplining all nations through local and global missions.

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# Is Depression A Sin?

## A Psychological Perspective on Church Models Of Mental Illness



Aidan Ross, Vanguard College Student.<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper is about the perspectives on depression from different models and how they affect congregants. The paper will answer the question “is depression a sin?” It will be using the Christian psychological perspective to argue that depression is not a sin. This article will go over what the different perspectives are and how they are helpful or harmful. It will then go on to argue depression is out of control and not desired by those who experience depression. Those who experience depression also do not have an equivalent to sin; personal sin does not cause depression. Final argument will be to help those in the church and urge them that depression is meant to help us grow closer to God. By understanding the question “is depression a sin?” We can discover how to help struggling congregants and destroy unhealthy models.*

**KEYWORDS:** *depression, mental illness, psychology, church models*

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It cannot be seen, it is not heard, and is hidden away behind the veil of the skull: Depression. Churches today and in the past have been dealing with congregants that experience depression, but sometimes the church's responses are harmful. The real underlying question of the church's harmful response: Is depression a sin? Psychological views of depression have different perspectives than that of church models. Research says that depression cannot be fully controlled by those who experience it. Another argument is looking at whether depression correlates to a person's sin. Finally, depression and its hardships can be used to bring that person closer to God. Overall, Christian psychological research on depression points toward depression not being a sin. Depression is not a sin as it is a sickness that is out of the person's control. Depression can be used to bring them closer to God.

### Depression Perspectives

The view suggesting that depression is a sin is generally straightforward. Different parties believe that sin equates to depression while others do not. Traditional church models and some modern models view depression as a sin. There is even literature out there providing arguments to support this claim such as “a book aimed at lay Christians in which he stated that one cause of depression might be sin” (Sorenson, 2012, p. 344). Watts, Nye, and Savage (2002) also say that “there have been historical changes in the ways people handle emotional problems. The cultural norm used to be to suffer in silence” (p. 166). Alternatively, Scrutton (2011) makes an interesting case in saying that depression is voluntary. This can be helpful to understand the depressed experience, however, she does not include extreme cases of depression in this thought process (p. 2). Her claims are intriguing, and the overall stance taken in her book is a helpful way to look at depression. Scrutton (2011) claims that depression is a sin, but not in the traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Aidan Ross is currently a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Bachelor of Theology (Youth Ministry) student at Vanguard College who hopes to one day disciple youth wherever God leads him.



“guilty” manner (p. 3). She says that sin is a byword for human brokenness that does not imply guilt, moral responsibility, or the power to do otherwise, but simply points to the Christian belief that depression is not part of the fullness of life that God desires for God’s creatures (Scrutton, 2011, p. 3). Labeling depression as a sin, stemming from the fallen world, demonstrates that it is not of the kingdom of God, therefore He does not want it (John 16:33). The article also says that depression is not an individual sin, but a result of society:

A second [reason] is that sin should be understood primarily in a corporate rather than individual sense, and that depression is often caused by oppressive and dysteleological social structures. On this account, understanding depression in terms of sin does not impute blame to the person with depression. (Scrutton, 2011, p. 3)

Overall, even through the perspective of calling depression a sin, it is not original sin, but a result of a fallen world. Depression is a sickness that is not voluntarily obtained, therefore providing evidence that depression is not a sin.

### **Depression Cannot Be Controlled**

One simple, but strong point is that those who have depression cannot fully control it. The question of whether depression is a sin, can be answered through psychology. *Grace for the Afflicted* by Matthew S. Stanford (2017) goes over classifying different mental and neurological disorders for holistic care and approach in ministry. Stanford (2017) defines mental disorders as the “results from a complex interaction of biological (nature) and environmental (nurture) factors” (p. 35). This can also be supported from solely medical perspectives as gene makeup has been researched to prove influence or cause of depression. Genes cannot be picked by the person experiencing depression but simply received from their parents. This can cause a multitude of imbalances neurologically which affect the person's mental health (Cai, et al., 2020, para 6). Genetics not only affect neurological processes but also affect one's natural reaction to environments, in some ways a person's brain can overreact to a situation causing effects of depression (Saveanu & Nemeroff, 2017, p. 60). Also, it can be considered that traumatic experiences affect mental health leading to depression that are not onset by those who have it. Overall, the consensus is that those who are clinically depressed cannot control whether they have depression or not.

### **Depression Does Not Correlate to Individual Sin**

The second argument for depression not being a sin is that a person’s sin does not correlate to depression. Those who commit the same sin as those who have depression do not automatically get depression. Sorenson (2012) research shows how people draw from the biblical perfectionism which states we must eradicate all sin from our life (p. 349). This is not a helpful view as Sorenson (2012) makes the point that if someone is aware of continuous sin, they would try to eliminate that sin (p. 349). Someone with depression would desire to get rid of their sin to finally feel better but this is impossible as sin is consistent on earth (Sorenson, 2012, p. 349). This is unachievable, making someone with depression even more discouraged about recovery or being a participant in a church. This furthers the point that no one can achieve the perfect model of a Christian that churches hold for their members. Scrutton (2015b) points out that people with depression do not have greater sins than someone who do not have depression (p. 8). She also makes the point that those with depression and have consistent sin habits, their sins may stem from past trauma and problems that also have onset their depression (Scrutton, 2015b, p. 8). Naturally at first when you compare two people and their sins are similar, you would not notice anything extremely different about their composure. But below the surface one person can be

struggling with depression even though outwards their sin and face value are the same. It would be helpful to see more research done on the correlation between people who have depression and those who do not and their sins. This would help provide evidence for the theory that an individual's sin does not equal someone's depression. By doing so the church can gain a better understanding of the correlation between sin and depression. Once again depression is not caused by sin, as people who do not have depression experience and participate in the same sin as those who do.

### **Depression Can Bring People Closer to God**

The final answer to the question of whether “depression is a sin” is that depression and its hardships can be used to bring someone closer to God. Stating that depression is meant to bring us closer to God is declaring the opposite of what sin does. Sin pulls us away from God and ruins our relationship with him. It is also stated in scripture the position God has in our lives and the care he seeks for us; common depictions of being a healer, fortress, or safe place. It states in Psalm 25:16-18 (NIV) “Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish. Look on my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins”. This is also demonstrated in Lamentations where people also were experiencing depression; many people can relate with as it states God's heart for those people (Lamentations 3). Scrutton (2015a) explains three perspectives on depression: spiritual illness, spiritual health, and potentially transformative (p. 275).

First of the three perspectives is spiritual illness which is the idea that mental illness is in concordance with sin (Scrutton, 2015, p. 275). Scrutton scratches out spiritual illness but makes strong arguments for both spiritual health and potentially transformative perspectives. Spiritual health is the view of depression being part of those who have mental illness as a journey with God (Scrutton, 2015a, p. 277). The potentially transformative view is that those with depression do have negative effects but can use it to still strive to be closer to God (Scrutton, 2015a, p. 280). Scrutton's (2015a) potentially transformative view is a helpful viewpoint for those who are depressed. This keeps the perspective in check, but also offers a chance for those who are struggling to grow, and “maintains that depression is inherently bad (in the sense of undesirable) and refuses to idealize the suffering that accompanies it” (p. 282). This understanding should push churches to guide followers to grow with Christ instead of disapproving of them. “[The church] exacerbate the depressed person's feelings of blame, lead to judgmental and alienating behaviors on the part of communities who might otherwise be a source of support, and induce apathy in relation to social injustice” (Scrutton, 2015a, p. 12). Those who might need the most help are being pushed away. On the contrary to church models Sorenson (2012) calls for the church model to change creating a safe environment for churches to guide the congregant and demonstrate God's love to those congregants who are suffering (p. 350). Previous results of holistic care and their positivity have been proven by psychiatrists that look at a multitude of resources from multiple church settings, such as Pargament and Lomax (2013) that demonstrate how people seek churches first for help and are more likely to get help from professionals when in a caring environment (p. 27). This can be helpful to heal these congregants as walking with God has scientifically proven to help those with mental illness (Lomax, 2013, p. 27). Christ can use our times of need to bring us closer to him, taking the bad and making it good. Depression is not a sin as it can be used to bring us closer to God.

### **Conclusion**

Depression is viewed as a sin in some Churches and is considered bad or undesirable. On the contrary, as many Christian psychologists point out, depression cannot be a sin. Those who experience depression do not decide if they want depression. Those with depression do not commit sins that correlate with their mental condition. Being closer to God can be found through the struggle of depression. The need to address this topic is pertinent, as many pastors are leading their parishioners to thinking they are helpless sinners, when in fact they are not, and need more help navigating life just like everyone else. Depression, the monster hiding behind the veil, is not in fact a beast, but just another obstacle of life that some people need help with. This is not a result of their human downfall, but of a broken world.

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# JESUS IS COMING SOON: Toward Revisioning Pentecostal Eschatology for Postmodern Ministry and Mission



Stephen Williams, Vanguard College Alumnus.<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** *Pentecostal spirituality cannot be rightly understood without properly placing eschatology at the center of its message and the true focus of the movement. The proposed essay will seek to explore early Pentecostal eschatology, seek to understand its role in shaping the movement's spirituality and missional motivations by way of a historical-theological investigation. By tracing eschatological antecedents, examining the beliefs of its early leaders, and consulting early newsletters and secondary scholarly sources, this writer will then explore early Pentecostal eschatology and the implications of those eschatological beliefs. I will then propose a re-visioning of Pentecostal eschatology that may be more compatible with the ethos of Pentecostalism in missionally engaging a postmodern Western context and attempt to flesh out implications and applications for ministry and mission for today's church. The research will conclude that early Pentecostal eschatology, influenced by premillennialism and the Latter Rain Covenant, fuelled fervent global missionary efforts. The adoption of fundamentalist dispensational occurring in the mid 20th century produced an escapism mentality rather than one of responsibility to society. However, that system presented a truncated gospel, incompatibility with Pentecostal theology, and is unsuitable for mission in a postmodern context. The proposal to embrace an eschatology of the inaugurated Kingdom of God as proleptic anticipation, was found to offer a more biblically faithful holistic gospel, compatibility with both a Pentecostal ethos, and with postmodern culture.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Pentecostal Theology, Eschatology, Dispensationalism, Kingdom of God, Postmodernism*

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## **Part I: Antecedents, Leaders, and Letters: Exploring Early Pentecostal Eschatology, Spirituality, and Mission**

To the casual observer, Pentecostal spirituality appears obsessed with speaking in tongues or other charismatic phenomena. While these operations of the Holy Spirit have been given a place of primacy within the movement and much scholarly ink has been spilled defending and articulating its distinct pneumatology, Pentecostal spirituality cannot be rightly understood without properly placing eschatology at the center of its message and the true focus of the movement. This essay aims to explore early Pentecostal eschatology and seek to understand its role in shaping the movement's spirituality and missional motivations by way of a historical-theological investigation. By tracing eschatological antecedents, examining the beliefs of early leaders, and consulting early newsletters

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Stephen Williams is an alumnus of Vanguard College and Tyndale Seminary. He has served in Pastoral ministry in the Maritimes, ABNWT, and the WOD. He currently serves as an adjunct instructor for Master's College and Seminary, Peterborough, ON.



and secondary scholarly sources, this writer will then explore early Pentecostal eschatology and the implications of those eschatological beliefs. I will then propose a re-visioning of Pentecostal eschatology that may be more compatible with the ethos of Pentecostalism in missionally engaging a postmodern Western context and attempt to flesh out implications and applications for ministry and mission in today's church.

### **The Antecedents of Early Pentecostal Eschatology: Postmillennial Currents and the Rise of Premillennialism**

The late Walter Hollenweger notes that the Pentecostal movement emerged "in an atmosphere of fervent expectation of the second coming of Jesus."<sup>2</sup> That expectation, however, was not created in a vacuum. Significant historical and theological factors created the fertile soil for such an eschatological expectation. Vinson Synan notes that the French Revolution of the 1780's sparked apocalyptic images akin to the Book of Revelation and created a renewed interest in biblical prophecy.<sup>3</sup> Donald Dayton asserts that millennialist currents ran through American revivalism, citing as an example the Great Awakenings of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and Jonathan Edward's contribution to the expectancy of a literal millennium. Postmillennial in outlook, Edward's views would influence millennial thinking for the next century.<sup>4</sup>

With postmillennialism as the dominant current in the new optimistic America, Methodism and its focus on "perfectionist soteriology" under John Wesley would find soil for his optimistic social vision.<sup>5</sup> Significant for the development of Pentecostal eschatology was the doctrine of John Fletcher. His doctrine of dispensations divided history into three periods: the dispensations of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. It was the dispensation of the Spirit that promised Christ's second coming. His scheme is significant since it served as a bridge for dispensationalism<sup>6</sup> and resonates with Pentecostalism.

Though dispensational schemes can be found in the writings of William Cave (1633-1713) and Pierre Poiret (1646-1719), John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) is considered "the real developer of dispensational hermeneutics and theology."<sup>7</sup> Darby argued that salvation history is divided into seven periods or dispensations and taught a unique *two-phase return* view that harmonized Christ's imminent return.<sup>8</sup> At the end of the church age (the age of grace), God would take up his church in a 'secret rapture,' the Tribulation would follow, and the unfulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament would unfold to Israel.<sup>9</sup> His eschatology also provided a cosmic, geo-political end-times scheme. An unfortunate feature of this end-times scheme was that it reinforced the doctrine of cessationism. Darby's eschatological scheme influenced George Duffield, William Trotter, William Blackstone, Charles. H. Mackintosh,<sup>10</sup> James Brookes, G. Campbell Morgan, Harry Ironside, A.C Gaebelein, and C.I Scofield. With the publication of Scofield's Reference Bible in 1909, fundamental dispensationalism

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1972), 415.

<sup>3</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 21.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 153.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 150.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>8</sup> L. Thomas Holdcroft, *Eschatology: A Futurist View* (Abbotsford: CeeTeC Publishing, 2001), 59.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Althouse, "Left Behind," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13.2 (2005), 196.

<sup>10</sup> L. Thomas Holdcroft, *Eschatology: A Futurist View*, 59-60.

became widely adopted and reinforced in fundamentalist circles through churches and Bible institutes.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Relationship Between Dispensationalism and Pentecostals: Early Adaptations**

David Kentie notes that “Pentecostals did not fully embrace an ardent dispensationalism,”<sup>12</sup> but rather it was, according to Donald Dayton, “one of the several nineteenth-century sources of modern Pentecostal thought.”<sup>13</sup> It is asserted that Classical/Fundamental Dispensationalism replaced the Latter Rain motif as the dominant eschatological vision within Pentecostalism.<sup>14</sup> Christopher J. Richmann, and Douglas Jacobson provide historical research that indicates that a current of premillennial dispensationalism ran strongly among early Pentecostal pioneers with what I call a “Pentecostal twist!”

### **Martin Wells Knapp**

Martin Wells Knapp (1953-1911) provides us with an intersection of Holiness and Pentecostal thought. His publication, “*Lighting Bolts from Pentecostal Skies*,” in 1898 utilized Pentecostal terminology to speak of judgment, punishment, and the purification of the church.<sup>15</sup> Knapp believed that the church was more holy and evangelistic when expecting Christ's imminent return, whereas postmillennialism pushed His return too far into the distant future and made room for humanity's spiritual and moral progress. Knapp adapted Darby's model of historical dispensations and asserted that the Pentecostal Period began with Acts 2 and ended with the rapture. Significant for Pentecostal eschatology was his assertion that only those who experienced Pentecostal baptism, which he understood as sanctification, would be raptured and escape the tribulation. He also believed that premillennialism was the better eschatological option since it was 1) in harmony with Scripture, 2) provided an incentive for holiness, 3) promoted watchfulness, 4) was a warning to others, and 5) rejected human optimism. Significant was Knapp's connection between Pentecostal experience and the imminent return of Jesus, giving premillennialism an important place in Pentecostal doctrine.<sup>16</sup>

### **Charles Fox Parham**

Though Charles Parham (1873-1929) has been commonly noted for his doctrine that glossolalia is the initial evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, one cannot overlook his influence on early Pentecostal eschatology. Parham's theology was greatly concerned with the grand narrative of history, and he believed that he was living at the cusp of the most significant turning in all time. The age of grace was about to end, and Christ's appearing was soon. Prior to His coming, a great worldwide revival and Spirit Baptism with tongues were preparation for that global campaign. But Spirit Baptism was not only for the foreign missionary effort. Like Knapp, Parham held that Spirit Baptism was important for avoiding the wrath of the end times, as only those who were sealed through the Baptism in the Holy Spirit would become part of either “the Redemption,” “the Bride,” or the “Man-Child,”<sup>17</sup> and this belief added intensity to his teaching on the subject. He also insisted, like Knapp, that postmillennialism was unscriptural and counterproductive. Thus, the activity of the

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<sup>11</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study in the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997), 111-115.

<sup>12</sup> David Kentie, *Kingdom-Now*, (MTS Thesis: Tyndale Seminary, 2015), 54.

<sup>13</sup> Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1987), 145.

<sup>14</sup> See Althouse, “*Left Behind*,” 190.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher J. Richmann, *Sanctification, Ecstasy, and War: The Development of American Pentecostal Eschatology, 1898-1950* (MA Thesis: Luther Seminary, 2009), 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> Douglas Jacobson, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), 35-37; 43

Holy Spirit signaled the last days, promised escape from tribulation, and the sign of tongues not only was a sign of the sealing of the believer for escape but was a tool for the evangelization of the world.<sup>18</sup>

### **William J. Seymour**

Both Knapp and Parham significantly influenced William Seymour (1870-1922) as he attended Knapp's school in Cincinnati, Ohio and Parham's school in Topeka, Kansas.<sup>19</sup> Richmann's examination of Seymour's published sermons reveal some of Seymour's eschatological convictions. For Seymour, Christ's return was soon and imminent, and one's expectancy of His return served as a gauge of spirituality. Like Knapp and Parham, he believed that Spirit Baptism admitted those who experienced it into the "Bride of Christ." This group would escape God's wrath and partake of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Those not Spirit Baptized would endure the tribulation likely to face martyrdom. Seymour preached:

Dearly beloved, the only people that will meet our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and go with Him into the marriage supper of the Lamb, are the wise virgins—not only saved and sanctified, with pure and clean hearts but having the baptism with the Holy Ghost. The others we find will not be prepared. They have some oil in their lamps but they have not the double portion of His Spirit.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, Spirit Baptism was of eschatological significance since it provided the empowerment needed for the church's missionary activity and signaled Christ's return.<sup>21</sup>

### **William Durham**

An early Pentecostal leader known for the "Finished Work" doctrine later adopted by the Assemblies of God and Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, echoes the "Pentecostal twist" or adaptation of dispensational views. Like Seymour and Parham, Durham believed that Spirit Baptism prepared believers for the rapture. An excerpt from *The Pentecostal Testimony* out of Chicago in 1910 sums it up well:

*A portion of the cold formal church will have enough life to be saved but will pass through the tribulation. The third class is those who are yielding themselves wholly to God and are sealed unto the day of redemption. These are living the overcoming life and will constitute the reigning force in the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ. They are the pre-tribulation rapture saints who will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*<sup>22</sup>

Douglas Jacobson also notes that Durham believed that "the baptism of the Holy Spirit placed God's seal on the believer; it put a lock on the believer's heart that prevented any future fall from grace, thereby rendering salvation permanent."<sup>23</sup>

### **D. Wesley Myland**

D. Wesley Myland (1858-1943) authored the work that many early Pentecostals would claim as one of the most articulate expressions of faith.<sup>24</sup> Myland's work "*The Latter Rain Covenant*," published in 1910, implied a dispensational view of history and taught that the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 was the *former rain* and the outpouring of the Spirit experienced at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 13-15.

<sup>19</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. *Azusa Street Mission & Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 33, 46-47.

<sup>20</sup> William Seymour, "Receive Ye the Holy Ghost," *Sermon Index.net*  
<http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=39712>

<sup>21</sup> Richmann, *Sanctification, Ecstasy, and War: The Development of American Pentecostal Eschatology*, 22.

<sup>22</sup> William Durham, *Pentecostal Testimony* Vol.1, No.5 (Chicago, Ill. July 1, 1910), 4.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas Jacobson, *Thinking in the Spirit*, 158.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 23.

was the *latter rain*. Myland derived his latter rain covenantal eschatology from Deuteronomy 11:10-21 and applied the OT passage prophetically to God's actions in the grand scheme of history, believing that "just as the physical latter rain prepares the final crops for harvest, the spiritual latter rain ripens the spiritual crop."<sup>25</sup> Like his predecessors, he too ascribed eschatological significance to Spirit Baptism, believing that those who received the experience became members of the Bride of Christ, who would escape tribulation through the Rapture. Myland's work was so influential that it became part of the mainstream eschatological view in the decades that followed.<sup>26</sup>

### Applying Pentecostal Eschatology: Eschatological Themes in Early Newsletters

The aforementioned leaders' eschatological views and their impact on Pentecostal spirituality can be easily detected in early Pentecostal newsletters. Walter Hollenweger notes that the titles of many early publications were in an eschatological orientation such as "The Bridal Call," "The Last Trump," "The Midnight Cry," "The End-Time Messenger," and the "Bridegroom Messenger."<sup>27</sup> Concerning the premillennial orientation of the movement, in a section titled "Jesus is Coming Soon," the *Apostolic Messenger* states, "It seems clear from many Scriptures that Jesus will come again *before* the millennium..."<sup>28</sup> Regarding holiness, the first edition of the *Apostolic Faith* reports that those affected by the revival made restitution, reconciled relationships, forsook alcohol and crime, and left behind sexual immorality.<sup>29</sup> The soon return of Jesus served to provide both hope for the righteous and a warning to the wicked: "Jesus is coming soon. Hear it, cities, and prepare to burn; hear it, ye sinners, and prepare to die; hear it, ye righteous, and prepare to rise."<sup>30</sup> The belief that Spirit Baptism created the remnant called "the Bride of Christ" provided the strident motivation to seek the experience. This is encapsulated well in Volume 1, Number 1 of the *Apostolic Messenger*<sup>31</sup> and in the following excerpt from *Living Waters*:

The prophetic Scriptures and the signs of the times all tell us that Jesus is Coming Soon...We believe that God is preparing His people as quickly as possible to meet the Soon Coming Bridegroom. We must all have oil in our vessels with our Lamps to gain admittance to the Marriage, Matt 25. Every student of the Word knows that "oil" in the Scriptures is symbolic of the Spirit, and if it means anything at all, it means the fullness of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost.<sup>32</sup>

Because early Pentecostals understood this outpouring of the Spirit as a signal of the last worldwide revival before Jesus' return,<sup>33</sup> Spirit Baptism prepared the believer for the Rapture as part of "the Bride," which sparked an explosive global missionary movement. Azusa Street historian Cecil Robeck notes that numerous Pentecostal evangelists spread northward along the Pacific Coast across the Mid-West and into the Southern United States within months of its beginning. By the end of

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 25-27.

<sup>27</sup> Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, 415. The digital archives at [www.pentecostalarchives.org](http://www.pentecostalarchives.org) contain such titles as "The Bridal Call Foursquare," the "Bridal Call Crusader Foursquare" and the "Latter Rain Evangel," further illustrating the eschatological orientation of the early Pentecostal movement.

<sup>28</sup> *The Apostolic Messenger*, Vol.1, No.1, (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. February/ March 1908), 5.

<sup>29</sup> *The Apostolic Faith*, Vol.1, No.1, (Los Angeles, Cal. September, 1906), 3.

<sup>30</sup> R.E. McAlister, *The Good Report*, No.1 (Ottawa, Canada. May 1911), 4.

<sup>31</sup> "Jesus is Coming Soon," *The Apostolic Messenger*, Vol.1, No.1, (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. February/ March 1908), 5. Thos Smart writes, "There is a marriage coming, and there is a bride prepared, but all who are expecting will not be the bride nor be admitted to the supper. Some will be foolish and neglect to provide oil in their vessels with their lamps".

<sup>32</sup> Frank Small, ed. *Living Waters*, Vol. 1 No.1 (Winnipeg: Old Knox Church, 1918), 3.

<sup>33</sup> *The Apostolic Faith*, Vol.1, No.1, 1, 4. On page 4, we find: "This is a worldwide revival, the last Pentecostal revival to bring our Jesus. The church is taking her last march to meet her beloved."

1906, missionaries were in Africa; by 1907, in Mexico, Canada, Europe, and Asia.<sup>34</sup> Lastly, the newsletters clearly demonstrate that early Pentecostals viewed the restoration of Spirit Baptism and their role in reaching a last-days harvest through the lens of Latter Rain Covenant eschatology. For example, the last page of the first edition of the *Apostolic Faith* quotes Joel 2:23 and adds, “He gave the former rain moderately at Pentecost, and He is going to send upon us in these last days the former and *latter rain*. There are greater things to be done in these last days of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>35</sup>

### Summary

With a doctrine of an imminent coming of the Lord in a secret rapture, such convictions created a sense of urgency and provided a means to give Spirit Baptism a greater value as they interpreted it as “oil” in the lamps of wise virgins and as a “seal of redemption” promising an escape from Tribulation and a seat at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. But this eschatological motif also was a powerful missiological catalyst. The soon return of Christ shaped the heart and motivated the hands of early Pentecostals. It fuelled their motivation to win and warn others before He came on the clouds of glory to snatch away His bride. Significance was given to Latter Rain Covenant eschatology, which framed their experience, spirituality, and missionary spirit, provided the empowerment and impetus for the evangelization of the world, signaling the imminent return of Christ, and setting them apart for their role in God's plan for the dispensation of the Spirit.<sup>36</sup>

## Part II: Where No One Has Gone Before: Revising Pentecostal Eschatology for Ministry and Mission a Postmodern Context

Now into the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, much has changed since Pentecostalism appeared on the scene at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. First, Pentecostal's adoption of fundamentalist dispensationalism in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century appears to be highly problematic for classical Pentecostal spirituality, emphasizing charismatic phenomena as signs of Christ's imminent coming and the basis for its mission.<sup>37</sup> Instead of possessing a self-understanding of having the unique role in reaping a Latter Rain harvest, the influence of fundamentalist eschatology fostered a posture of *escapism* from a world headed toward destruction rather than a posture of *responsibility* to the world as Spirit-empowered witnesses of Jesus and His inaugurated and soon coming consummated Kingdom. On this point, Peter Althouse writes,

The pre-millenarianism of fundamentalism, with its doctrine of a secret Rapture, is opposite to the pre-millenarianism of the early church. Early church apocalypticism included eschatological

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<sup>34</sup> Robeck, *The Azusa Street Revival & Mission*, 8.

<sup>35</sup> *The Apostolic Faith*, Vol.1, No.1, 4.

<sup>36</sup> On the significance of the Latter Rain Covenant and its shaping of the PAOC, see David K. Porter, *Shaping the Missionary Identity of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada: Spirit Baptism and the Latter Rain Covenant in the writings of R.E. McAlister and George A. Chambers* (Th.M. Thesis: Wycliffe College, University of Toronto).

<sup>37</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see Peter Althouse, “‘Left Behind’ - Fact or Fiction: Ecumenical Dilemmas of the Fundamentalist Millenarian Tensions within Pentecostalism,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13.2 (2005), Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 145, and Gerald T. Sheppard, “Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship,” *Pneuma* 2.2 (1984). This adopted eschatological framework is highly problematic for Pentecostals to maintain due to 1) strict biblical literalism, 2) exclusion of OT and NT that are relevant to Pentecostals, 3) a sharp distinction between the church and Israel, and 4) adheres strictly to cessationism. This leads to incompatibility with a Pentecostal ethos. Suppose OT promises and prophecies apply only to Israel during the millennium. How can Pentecostals appeal to Joel 2 and continue to validate their charismatic experiences biblically, or frame their eschatological purpose as signs of last days and the soon coming of Christ?

hope that resisted the powers of sin and oppression, but fundamentalist apocalypticism embodies a spiritual escape from the world. Passive withdrawal in the hope of a secret Rapture abdicates our responsibilities to protest against the powers of sin and oppression in all their personal, social and cosmic dimensions.<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, Van Johnson, in an article titled, "Jesus is Coming Soon," notes that those in the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada are now enjoying the benefits of upward mobility and have gained a legitimate status within wider Evangelicalism. This has shifted the previous disenfranchisement and marginalization of the movement, resulting in a loss of eschatological interest.<sup>39</sup> The third is the transition from modernity to postmodernity - Christendom to post-Christendom, which has resulted in North America becoming a challenging and resistant mission field.<sup>40</sup> What is urgently required for the present religious terrain is a revision of Pentecostal eschatology that is biblically faithful, true to the Pentecostal ethos, and can adequately shape ecclesial praxis to engage a post-Christendom, postmodern era successfully.

### **Revising Pentecostal Eschatology: The "Now/Not Yet" Kingdom of God**

If Althouse is right that fundamentalist eschatology abdicates social responsibility and creates a view that social action and transformation are useless in the light of Christ's imminent return,<sup>41</sup> a revision of Pentecostal eschatology will be required if the Pentecostal Church can successfully engage the postmodern mission field called North America. In the following, I will endorse Althouse's proposal to rethink Pentecostal eschatology as "proleptic anticipation."<sup>42</sup> This means that the Pentecostal church, while living in the "now," is to represent the "not yet" Kingdom of God as if the future already exists. This means participation for the Kingdom, compatibility for Pentecostal theology,<sup>43</sup> and resonance with those developing a missional ecclesiology for a postmodern context.

### **The In-Breaking of the Kingdom of God: The Eschatology of Jesus**

The Kingdom of God was central to the thought and actions of the writers of the synoptic gospels. The phrase appears 122 times - 92 times on the lips of Jesus.<sup>44</sup> For "to miss or misunderstand this term is to miss Jesus altogether."<sup>45</sup> Gordon D. Fee explains that the Kingdom of God is an *eschatological* term, a reality that points to the day when the end would come, and God would establish his rule over the created order. The Jewish eschatological expectation was that when Messiah came, the old age would pass, and the new age would dawn, "ushering in an age of

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Althouse, "Left Behind," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13.2 (2005), 191.

<sup>39</sup> Van Johnson, "Jesus is Coming Soon," Article 17, *Eastern Journal of Practical Theology*, 25-34.

<sup>40</sup> See Darrell L. Guder (ed), *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998).

<sup>41</sup> Murray W. Dempster, "Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective: Reformulating Pentecostal Eschatology" *Journal for Pentecostal Theology* 2 (1993), 52.

<sup>42</sup> Althouse, "'Left Behind' - Fact or Fiction," 202.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 202.

<sup>44</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 51.

<sup>45</sup> Gordon D Fee, "The Kingdom of God and the Church's Global Mission" in Murray W. Dempster, Bryan D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (eds.), *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 1991), 8.

righteousness and justice”<sup>46</sup> which includes “the destruction of the present evils and the realization of a completely new set of values.”<sup>47</sup>

In contrast to Christianity,<sup>48</sup> Jesus taught that the Kingdom was “now” but “not yet”; it is both *present* and future. In His person, the Kingdom of God was *among them*. Offering forgiveness of sins to outcasts meant that the great banquet of the future *had begun*,<sup>49</sup> healing and exorcism meant Satan’s dominion *was breaking*,<sup>50</sup> and the time to plunder his house *was beginning*.<sup>51</sup> This redemptive reign of God also created a new dividing line in humanity. No longer was the division between Jew and Gentile but between God’s children and the children of the evil one. Those who became the children of God formed a new society commissioned by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill their vocation<sup>52</sup> to represent that present reign.

### **Kingdom Now: Proleptic Anticipation and its Implications and Applications for Ministry and Mission to Postmoderns**

#### ***Implications for Social Transformation***

The gospel that is preached in many Pentecostal churches today tends to focus on individualistic salvation. Ronald Sider points out, “for the individualistic evangelical, the gospel is about the justification and regeneration of individuals rather than the dawning messianic kingdom where all areas of life are being redeemed in Jesus’ new community of believers.”<sup>53</sup> Sider, in his book *Good News and Good Works*, argues that the gospel of the inaugurated Kingdom of God was more than just good news of the forgiveness of personal sins, but that the scope of salvation includes all of creation. For Sider, biblical conversion transforms persons, families, and nations. It restores humanity’s broken relationship with God, frees us from the guilt and shame of sin, empowers us to abandon self-centered destructive behavior, and rejects oppression, injustice, tyranny, racism, and environmental destruction.<sup>54</sup> God’s ultimate goal, in the words of Craig Van Gelder, is to bring “...back to right relationship all that was lost. God was re-establishing creation design.”<sup>55</sup> For Van Gelder, creation design included God’s covenantal relationship with humans and the world, *human responsibility* to govern as stewards, relationship with God and one another, the ability to *create a society* that reflects God’s image, marriage and family as building blocks of that society, and the capacity to create culture. In a fallen world marred by sin, all of creation’s design has been deeply affected and corrupted. This is what Sider understands as “embracing the fullness of God’s salvation.”<sup>56</sup> If God is concerned about all of creation with the ultimate plan to reconcile all things to Himself as proven by Revelation 21-22, the good news of the Kingdom of God extends beyond personal salvation. If this is the case, Christians must respond by engaging in social action, working

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 9-10.

<sup>47</sup> William Raccah, [“Early Jewish Eschatology.”](#) in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World without End*, ed. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 29.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>49</sup> Mark 2:19.

<sup>50</sup> Luke 11:20-21.

<sup>51</sup> Mark 3:27.

<sup>52</sup> Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke: Trajectories from the Old Testament to Luke-Acts, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 93.

<sup>53</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works*, 34.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 117

<sup>55</sup> Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 95.

<sup>56</sup> Sider, *Good News and Good Works*, 83.

against oppression, injustices, tyranny, racism, and care for the environment as agents of the Kingdom of God, without neglecting the call to reconcile the lost to a right relationship with God and humanity as a whole.

Traditionally, Pentecostals have focused on saving souls either in preparation for the Rapture or eventual death.<sup>57</sup> It has largely ignored the power resident in an eschatology that understands the Kingdom of God as *presently* breaking into our lived experience with the power for both individual *and* social transformation. On that historical trend, Robert C. Crosby notes, “for many years, North American Pentecostals were gun-shy about using terms like ‘social concern’ and ‘social justice’...many worried that a social justice emphasis would undermine the message of salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>58</sup> However, this trend is changing, especially among Pentecostals under 30 in North America.<sup>59</sup> Globally, African Pentecostalism also has responded to contemporary challenges by engaging politics, business, and social issues.<sup>60</sup> Further, social, political, and economic ills have been constructively addressed by Pentecostals in Latin America, South Korea, Africa, Australia, and South Africa.<sup>61</sup> It is clear that global Pentecostalism has moved on from an apolitical and otherworldly posture by engaging social concerns and politics to ameliorate society.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Application for Pentecostal Ministry to Postmoderns***

A revision of eschatology grounded in proleptic anticipation of the Kingdom of God will resonate well with postmoderns. Jesus, in challenging the status quo, sought to transform social conditions of the socially marginalized in His day by His concern for the poor, the weak, the disabled, and the ostracized. With these precedents in view, the church must strive for social transformation by working to change political, social, and economic structures that divide families, ethnic or linguistic groups, and even religious groups. The church can model the Kingdom through genuine compassion by working against injustices that ostracize, marginalize, and rob human dignity.

### ***Implications for Pentecostal Pneumatology***

As mentioned previously, a revision of Pentecostal eschatology in line with the “now/not yet” Kingdom of God is more compatible with Pentecostalism’s distinct pneumatology and doctrine of Spirit Baptism. Fundamentalist dispensationalism gated off Pentecostal experiences by relegating OT prophecies exclusively to Israel and propagating the doctrine of cessationism. On the other hand, Kingdom eschatology sees charismatic experiences as signs of the present Kingdom as he indicated to the Pharisees when they charged Jesus with blasphemy. The power of the Spirit demonstrated in healing, exorcisms, resurrections, prophecy, and tongues are all signs that the Kingdom of God has dawned, and, therefore, these charismatic phenomena should be expected as normative for Pentecostal ministry.

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<sup>57</sup> See Murray W. Dempster, “Eschatology, Spirit Baptism and Inclusiveness” in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World without End*, ed. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 157. Dempster writes, “Pentecostal historian Dwight J. Wilson ... made the... insightful observation that the premillennial dispensational eschatology of early Pentecostalism also unwittingly promoted a withdrawal of the church from social involvement, because such social concern might sidetrack the church from its priority of evangelistic mission.

<sup>58</sup> Robert C. Crosby, “A New Kind of Pentecostal” *Christianity Today* (2011)  
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/august/newkindpentecostal.html>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Cecil M. Robeck and Amos Yong eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2014),143.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 180-181. For example, standing against drug cartels, changing families' economic conditions, empowering women, and numerous social programs.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 183-189.

### ***Application of Pentecostal Pneumatology for Postmoderns***

Bradley T. Noel claims, "The newest generation [Generation X] having found themselves on the grand stage of history are significantly more open to, and more consciously searching for, the supernatural than any generation in several centuries."<sup>63</sup> This places Pentecostalism and its emphasis on Spirit Baptism for supernatural empowerment for mission and the charismata for ecclesial edification in a good position to reach and minister to postmoderns. Therefore, this revision of Pentecostal eschatology finds practical ministry value in a postmodern context where youth and young adults are, for the most part, absent in many Pentecostal congregations in North America.

### ***Proleptic Anticipation, the Pentecostal Church, and Postmodern Witness***

Finally, as a new society representing the present and coming Kingdom of God, the church is to be a *sign, foretaste, and instrument* of that Kingdom. The church needs to see itself as a *living example* of what life looks like when under Christ's rule. Therefore, the church must *model* what it is like to love and worship God. The church must love, forgive, and be reconciled to each other, and work toward reconciliation in the world. In this way, the church can be an attractive counter-cultural alternative for postmoderns. Experiencing fragmentation, disorientation, the pain of broken relationships, uncertainty, and despair, the church can provide a *foretaste* of the Kingdom for postmoderns through witnessing true communion, unity, loving relationships, security, and hope. However, this also means allowing postmoderns the opportunity to test the authenticity of the alternative through belonging and thereby establishing trust which can lead to reconciliation with Christ. This means that churches must guard the unity of the Spirit so that such an environment can exist for postmoderns to explore.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, my exploration of Pentecostal eschatology has revealed that the beliefs, spirituality, and missionary impulse of early Pentecostals were the direct result of their premillennial views, in particular, the Latter Rain covenant. The adoption of fundamentalist dispensationalism in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and holding influence through the Scofield Reference Bible into the 1970's, produced an escapism mentality rather than one of responsibility to society. However, that system presented a truncated gospel, incompatibility with Pentecostal theology, and is unsuitable for mission in a postmodern context. The proposal to embrace an eschatology of God's inaugurated Kingdom as proleptic anticipation was found to offer a more biblically faithful holistic gospel, and compatibility with both the ethos of Pentecostalism and postmodernism. By adopting and applying proleptic anticipation, the Pentecostal church is better positioned to serve its role to represent the Kingdom of God through proclamation, the charismata and social transformation, in anticipation of God's redemptive work of cosmic renewal.

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<sup>63</sup> Bradley Truman Noel, *Pentecostalism and Postmodern Hermeneutics: Comparisons and Contemporary Impact*, (DTh Thesis: University of South Africa, 2008), 159.

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## Book Review



Hornik, H., and Parsons, M. (2017) *The Acts of the Apostles Through the Centuries*. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell. 368 pp, MSRP \$125.00, ISBN: 978-1119304067

*The Acts of the Apostles Through the Centuries* attempts to fill a gap created by biblical scholarship, which has sought to explicate what Acts “meant” in its original context, and what it now “means” in contemporary terms by highlighting what it “has meant” during the intervening period of the last two thousand years at various critical moments in history. To accomplish the task, Hornik and Parsons examine not only the history of the exegesis of Acts, but how Acts has influenced art, literature, music, liturgy, theology, church creeds, and film.

In the introduction, Hornik and Parsons provide an outline of Acts alerting readers to the range of concerns spanning the centuries. They list key interpreters, lectionaries, creeds, and the influence of Acts in art and literature. In Acts 1, Jesus' ascension was significant to early creeds and hermeneutical debates. In Acts 2, the authors highlight connections between Pentecost and Sinai, Pentecost and Babel, and Creation and Consummation, while also highlighting how others have debated the miracle of tongues. Pentecostal reception history and various themes identified by contemporary Pentecostal voices are also discussed. Baptism, wealth and possessions, communal living, and creeds focusing on ecclesiology were interpretive concerns in the latter part of Acts 2.

In Acts 3-5, the authors note the wide range of hermeneutical methods employed over the centuries. Artwork reinforced papal authority, the importance of catechesis, and contrasted almsgiving and greed. The numerous interpretations of Acts 5:29 suggest that the text was applied to issues that concerned the interpreters. Acts 6-8 was instrumental for church reorganization, Stephen's speech of significance to the Reformers, and his martyrdom the subject of both art and literature. Numerous aspects of Paul's conversion/call have been debated. Regarding Tabitha, traditional and feminist interpretations of Luke's views of women in ministry are discussed.

Early interpreters of Acts 10-12 debated tensions in Cornelius' life. Others who reflected on Peter's vision found a God who is unprejudiced; a picture captured by Fetti's *Saint Peter's Vision of Unclean Beasts*. On Acts 12, the authors note the acceptance and rejection of angels, as well as James' execution and Peter's liberation in paintings.

Paul's commissioning and missionary journeys served as paradigms for missionaries and for selecting church leaders. Acts 14:23 was also a scriptural basis for congregational polity and ordaining church offices. Artistic works depicted the *Conversion of the Proconsul*, the *Life of Paul*, the *Sacrifice of Lystra*, and *The Stoning of Paul*.

In the reception of Acts 15, themes such as conflict resolution, cultural adaptation, gender inclusion, believer's baptism, missions, the authority of Scripture, God's providence, the gay marriage debate, and the conflict between Paul and Barnabas have received much attention. In Acts 16-17, Paul's circumcision of Timothy found ecclesiastical and social applications; the Macedonian vision theological reflection on divine guidance and sovereignty, and the church's obligation to the Great Commission. Paul's Areopagus speech was significant for patristic writers developing systematic theology; a basis for natural theology for others, whereas others still focused on final judgment, cross-cultural applications, and God as Creator.



For the reception of Acts 18-19, the authors note interpreters commenting on the hospitality extended to Paul, Priscilla as a religious authority, arguments opposing infant baptism, and the role of relics in healing. Visual interpretations depict Paul before Gallio, and his miracle at Ephesus which shows Paul identifying with the poor and as a miracle worker. Interpretations and debates surrounding Sabbath observance, Eutychus' fall, church leadership, local church autonomy, and the translation of Acts 20:28b are all concerns of Acts 20. Interestingly, Acts 20:35 played a role in American political rhetoric. Related to the prophesying of Philip's daughters in Acts 21, Luke has been criticized for his lack of focus on women in leadership. Acts 22:16 received much attention from interpreters concerning the salvific efficacy of water baptism.

In Paul's defence before Agrippa, interpreters have focused on Paul's conversion account while others have explored the image of Paul in chains. In Acts 27 to 28, the authors alert the reader to a unique and fascinating use of allegory and symbolism by Prudentius applied to Acts 27:14-44. Early and modern commentators have focused on the providence of God in the shipwreck of Paul with artwork vindicating Paul as God's agent. Finally, interpreters have debated the ending of Acts.

Consistent throughout, Hornik and Parsons identify the diversity of interpretive methods used by commentators spanning the centuries. Students of biblical hermeneutics would be able to detect allegorical, typological, symbolism, literal, historical-critical, and feminist approaches. Interpretations of Acts was not accomplished in a void, as later commentators often adopted or built on the reflections of those before them, while others engaged in debate. A lesson gleaned from this commentary is that since the history of interpretation reveals a vast range of views informed by one's political, social, and religious context, we must humbly come to the text cognizant of our own historical context and theological concerns.

Another contribution of a commentary of this nature is how the history of the interpretation of Acts demonstrates that historical narrative, contra to the axioms of Evangelical hermeneutics of the past, served as a significant source for normative theology. From the outset, Acts was used in the formulation of creeds and confessions, in the development of Christology, in debates surrounding water baptism, in developing ecclesiastical polity and leadership, in discerning the role of the Holy Spirit, in doctrine of God, and in navigating the social and political issues of the day. It is possible to denote that Hornik and Parsons' commentary serves as an example of the triumph of narrative theology, a fact that Pentecostals will well appreciate.

In their comments on the visual and literary reception and interpretation, it was insightful to see how artists and authors took liberties beyond the text when developing their interpretation. Whether paintings depicted Mary at the centre of a Lukan narrative, a picture of Paul out of his historical context, casting Peter in the likeness of the Pope, or depicting a ship as the church, artistic license shaped the theology of those who viewed them, serving as influential didactic media for the illiterate.

In the same way as a systematic theology text catalogues the theological views of major theologians spanning the centuries, Hornik and Parsons have provided a unique and enriching commentary that will be sure to serve the academy for years to come. The various comments and excerpts dealing with theological, social, and political issues will serve as a template for commentaries on other biblical books as the biblical text continues to intersect with an increasingly complex world.

**Reviewed By:**

REV. STEPHEN H. WILLIAMS is an alumnus of Vanguard College and Tyndale Seminary. He has served in Pastoral ministry in the Maritimes, ABNWT, and the WOD. He currently serves as an adjunct instructor for Master's College and Seminary, Peterborough, ON.

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