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Wonders Above, Signs Below

Pentecostal Missiology and Environmental Degradation

Eugene Baron and Amos Yong (eds.)

Reviewed by: Timothy J. Healy

Alphacrucis University College

timothy.healy@ac.edu.au



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This comprehensive, multi-author volume examines Pentecostal and Charismatic theology in conversation with today's ecological crises. Editors Eugene Baron and Amos Yong present the collection as a missiological call: if creation is groaning, how can Pentecostal communities discern the Spirit's mission and partake in its healing of the earth? This is an expansive and diverse dialogue that spans hermeneutical, epistemological, and ecclesial diversity, while maintaining the Spirit's work as a common focus. The book provides a theologically deep, globally aware, and pastorally supportive resource that will benefit scholars, ministers, and students seeking to incorporate creation care into Pentecostal worship, discipleship, and mission. Methodologically, most chapters blend close biblical or historical-theological analysis with constructive suggestions for missiological practice. Structurally, the book is organised into four parts: Scriptural Perspectives, Theological Perspectives, Global Perspectives, and Ecumenical Perspectives. The four main sections guide the reader from exegetical foundations to doctrinal development, then to regional case studies and cross-tradition dialogues.

Part 1 introduces key biblical lenses. Anita Davis and Jacqueline N. Grey challenge dispensational premillennialist readings that anticipate world annihilation but overlook ecological concerns. Through a close reading of Isaiah 24, it becomes clear how earthly devastation is framed as judgment with human causality (broken covenant). However, in their view, judgment occurs before and even enables the renewal of the earth, guiding Pentecostal eschatology towards responsible action rather than fatalism or escapism. They suggest that Acts 2 signals a reversal of the judgment of Isaiah 24. Jeffrey Lamp offers an ecological reading of Mark's wilderness temptation episode, connecting it with Romans 8 to present an eco-pneumatology where the Spirit that "drives" Jesus into the desert also "groans" with creation and "sends" the church into embodied solidarity with a suffering earth. Jon K. Newton's approach to Revelation challenges an eschatology of abandonment, demonstrating how doxology, critique of empire, recognition of the earth's agency, and hope in new creation recalibrate the moral and eschatological imagination of Pentecostal readers. Amos Yong's chapter is perhaps the most intriguing in this section, drawing on research that maps the connection between linguistic and biological diversity. He links Pentecost (Acts 2) to the "reauthorisation of many languages" (89) and the revitalisation of endangered languages and biocultural niches. By preserving languages, we preserve cultures and the ecological wisdom embedded within those cultures. Mission, in this context, isn't an abstract universal but a Spirit-led participation in revitalising local cultures, endangered languages, and vulnerable ecosystems. This, Yong argues, occurs in service of the creational mandate and in anticipation of the promises of the New Creation. The move from Pentecost to biocultural conservation is both creative and compelling. The challenge, however, is operational: churches will need concrete partnerships (with Indigenous organisations, schools, archives) and the

necessary training to avoid superficial “language appreciation” that fails to recognise sovereignty and land claims.

Part 2 features insightful essays that highlight Pentecostal distinctive beliefs while engaging in broader discussions. A. J. Swoboda emphasises the ecological aspects in Walter Hollenweger’s work, including a liturgical and pastoral vision of healing broad enough to address fractured relationships among God, humanity, and the non-human creation. Retrieval as a theological method fits well here, and the chapter will benefit scholars. However, for practitioners, the value could increase with a clearer translation of Hollenweger’s insights into the rhythms of church life. Next, Joey Peyton laments the lack of pastoral concern or theological response to the ecological crisis among Oneness Pentecostals. He identifies a tendency among some to celebrate the Spirit’s outpouring without sufficiently connecting God’s mission and humanity’s calling as the *imago Dei*, which explains their limited engagement with ecological responsibility. He advocates for a discipleship emphasising being God’s image and actively participating in God’s mission for all creation. This intra-family critique is candid but considerate. Given the diversity within Oneness traditions, future work could include empirical mapping of church initiatives to avoid overgeneralisation and to highlight promising examples of change. In chapter 7, Michael J. Frost suggests that Pentecostal experiences shape believers for collaborative action in God’s renewing work. He warns that instrumentalising the Spirit risks fostering passivity, whereas attentive engagement with materiality, interdependence, and participative living energises ecological responsibility. In the chapter that follows, Daniela Rizzo further broadens this view, advocating for a holistic “zoological imperative” that challenges an ethic focused solely on humans. Rizzo argues that “a zoological focus amplifies the imperative to safeguard animal habitats, prevent species extinction, and foster biodiversity” (164). Such a perspective expands

salvation beyond saving human souls to include the renewal and flourishing of all creation. As a result, species loss and extinction are seen as theological rather than merely biological concerns. Rizzo urges Pentecostals to consider the Spirit poured out on “all flesh” as including non-human animals, and even to see species endangerment/extinction as a form of sin. This bold extension of pneumatology initiates necessary debates about animal ethics, liturgy, and pastoral practice. Critics may protest the application of the moral notion of “sin” to species loss. Nevertheless, this provocative use of the term purposefully challenges anthropocentrism and frames conservation as an intrinsic part of the church’s mission. Overall, these essays sketch a Pentecostal theological ecology with a distinctive pneumatological character.

The “Global Perspectives” section (Part 3) forms the practical core of the volume. Melody J. Wachsmuth and Adrian Ana examine Central and Eastern Europe, highlighting how dispensationalist eschatologies and specific anti-environmental sentiments, often imported through Western missions, can hinder ecological engagement, even as they identify potential avenues for change. The regional focus is welcome, and the diagnosis is nuanced. The chapter would benefit from more practical strategies for resource-poor congregations and environmental justice in post-socialist industrial zones. Ocen Walter Onen and Tanya Riches then present a compelling case study from Eastern Uganda, where a Pentecostal church partners with A Rocha Uganda on forest restoration. Their narrative, involving walking through the forest, assessing canopy health and biodiversity, and visiting replanting sites, illustrates how creation care is integrated into congregational life. This approach is motivated not by technocratic plans but by a pneumatological sense of the Spirit’s presence in and for the forest. This is one of the volume’s most vivid chapters, blending African Pentecostal spirituality with localised restoration efforts. Two chapters, focusing on Ghana, further develop this contextual work. Kwame Oppong-Konadu

and Sarah Korang Sansa explore prayer within Ghana's natural environment and its contribution to a distinct Ghanaian Pentecostal ecotheological praxis. Using life-history and semi-autoethnographic reflections, the authors examine how Ghanaian Pentecostal prayer practices in natural settings can inspire conservation and resource stewardship, advocating for an Afro-eco-Pentecostal missiology that engages with indigenous worldviews. Meanwhile, Emmanuel Awudi calls for an "eco-ecclesiology" that redefines Ghanaian Pentecostal ecclesiology to promote the flourishing of creation. Drawing on doctoral research across various Ghanaian denominations and African Initiated Churches, Awudi suggests that the Great Commission should be understood in conjunction with the first commission to "keep and guard" the earth. He proposes strategies to embed eco-care within church life. The ecclesiological reframing is pragmatic and pastorally insightful. However, it could be strengthened by adding metrics for congregational change (e.g., energy audits, curriculum adoption rates, and community impact measures) and discussing organisational change processes. Stian Sørle Eriksen broadens the understanding of neo-Pentecostal responses to climate change by examining diverse strategies, including the roles played by neo-Pentecostal universities and development programmes.

Part 4, the final section, presents ecumenical learning as a crucial aspect of Pentecostal maturity. Harold D. Hunter recounts the rise of Pentecostal climate justice, highlighting the often-overlooked theme of restitution and calling for institution-building to support global engagement. The restitution perspective is valuable as it links environmental healing with historical redress. The chapter invites but does not fully outline practical ecclesial pathways for restitution (e.g., land-back partnerships and reparations funds), which limits the immediacy of its call for justice. Sanna Urvas offers a Marian Pentecostal perspective on the incarnation as a "metaphysical key" for ecotheology, drawing insightfully on Ephrem the Syrian to sanctify materiality without merging

Creator and creation. This is a skilful exercise in East–West dialogue. Some readers might feel that Marian and patristic emphases sit awkwardly in certain Pentecostal contexts. However, the chapter's strength lies in demonstrating how it can deepen, not dilute, Pentecostal spirituality. Aizaiah G. Yong's essay on “cosmotheandric eucharist” (via Raimon Panikkar) and “contemplacostal” spirituality broadens liturgical thinking towards relational solidarity with all beings. Sceptics may question the relevance of a cosmotheandric idiom in more conservative contexts. However, framing it within biblical-theological categories already familiar in Pentecostal preaching could help with understanding. The penultimate chapter by Andy Lord engages in dialogue with Thomas Merton, arguing that contemplative perception (seeing in the Spirit) is a necessary foundation for honest ecological action following Pentecost. The chapter's literary approach offers a valuable resource for preachers, songwriters, and educators. It could provide clearer pathways for cultivating such imagination in local churches (e.g., study groups, reading practices, place-based storytelling with elders and youth). The volume concludes with Eugene Baron's constructive suggestion that understanding God's mission as creation care involves Pentecostal ways of knowing, including narrative, affective, and ritual approaches rooted in worship and congregational life.

In summary, the editors have selected genuinely global voices, ensuring that African, European, and Australasian contexts are not merely afterthoughts but serve as foundational elements for testing and refining theology. The Ugandan forestry case illustrates how science, spirituality, and community organising can intersect in congregational practice without harming any of the three. The ecumenical stance is confident yet non-defensive. Urvashi and Yong show how Pentecostal spirituality can both learn from and contribute to older traditions and broader theologies (Orthodox, Catholic) while maintaining a Pentecostal essence.

While the volume gestures promisingly towards decolonial methods and Indigenous epistemologies, one expects further exploration of Pentecostal encounters with Country or land. A more systematic focus on political economy would also be welcome. Hunter briefly mentions restitution, but Pentecostal theology still needs more thorough accounts of energy transitions, extractivism, debt, and reparative justice within a Spirit-led missiology. Despite notable academic progress, an apparent lack of discussion persists regarding the integration of ecotheological perspectives into Pentecostal higher education and ministry training.

These reservations, however, do not diminish the importance of this work. The collection showcases the development of Pentecostal ecotheology and missiology, no longer questioning whether Pentecostalism has the resources for creation care, but rather illustrating how a Spirit-filled community can actively embody that calling exegetically, doctrinally, and locally. Readers will not encounter a single blueprint. Instead, they will engage with a Pentecostal hermeneutic that is attentive to Scripture's apocalyptic urgency and hope for a new creation, to the Spirit's diverse gifts and groaning intercessions, to biocultural particularities, and to the practices of worship and justice that make the church a sign of God's reconciled future. For researchers, teachers, and pastors dedicated to a mission that loves the Creator of the world, this book is vital reading.

Wonders Above, Signs Below stands as a significant milestone in Pentecostal eco-missiology. It challenges stereotypes and firmly grounds creation care in the Spirit's mission. The volume should inspire local efforts in ecological discipleship, new research exploring Pentecostal practices across regions, and deeper ecumenical collaborations focused on justice, restitution, and the flourishing of "all flesh." It deserves wide reading and, more importantly, faithful, Spirit-led action.