

2021

Reviewing *Depression, Where is Your Sting?*

Cletus L. Hull III

Oral Roberts University, online teaching, chull3@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/salubritas>

Recommended Citation

Hull, Cletus L. III (2021) "Reviewing *Depression, Where is Your Sting?*," *Salubritas: International Journal of Spirit-Empowered Counseling*: Vol. 1, Article 12.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31380/2771-1242.1011>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Theology & Ministry at Digital Showcase. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Salubritas: International Journal of Spirit-Empowered Counseling* by an authorized editor of Digital Showcase. For more information, please contact digitalshowcase@oru.edu.

to human sexuality. In keeping with the studies' broad scholarly and contextual scope, it would have benefited the book to have the input of voices who hold alternative views of human sexuality to contribute to the dialogue. However, the absence of such voices makes this book "safe" to put in the hands of students and interested laypersons within the Spirit-empowered communities while still challenging them and expanding their understanding of the topic. To this point, the book does remarkably well. It undoubtedly fits the brief of providing a text to the global Spirit-empowered community discussing the theological and pastoral challenges regarding this issue of human sexuality.

Robert D. McBain is Dean's Fellow and a Ph.D. student in the College of Theology and Ministry at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK, USA.



Depression, Where is Your Sting? By Robert D. McBain. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2021. 158 pp.

Serving as a chaplain in two Pennsylvania state psychiatric hospitals for over three decades, I have read numerous accounts about depression. Why read another? Because each person's journey is different, and healing originates from God in various ways. This book reveals the spiritual aspect of recovery in depression that is profoundly missing from countless volumes. Mental health concerns have become immense topics of conversation in our society, and properly so.

Robert McBain's book, *Depression, Where is Your Sting?*, is a courageous description about one man's battle with depression. The author openly shares his fight with depression in his youth on the East Coast of Scotland. He relates his struggle about despair overwhelming his life as he walked into the Atlantic Ocean to drown himself. Providentially, he recounts that his cell phone rang and eventually he walked back on the shore to answer the device. These suicidal feelings pervaded his life for a number of years. As he wrote, "suicide acted as a vent to release the pain depression causes"

(34). Consequently, when he had an encounter with Christ, his spiritual life tackled futility with some victory. Yet, his salvation experience did not necessarily take away his hopeless feelings. I will not provide the entire narrative in this review; one must read his story for all the details.

The author describes depression interchangeably as either a disease, illness, or sickness. He speaks of the stigmatic grip it has in our American society toward this dreaded ailment, as opposed to other sicknesses. When one speaks of cancer, there is an immediate compassion (as it should be toward the person). However, we treat depression with comments such as “cheer up,” or “just get over it.”

Nevertheless, the author conveys a different perspective than the distinctive biomedical model cure. He takes us on his spiritual pilgrimage for help and wholeness for depression. One of his conclusions is that the biomedical model has overtaken the spiritual paradigm for people suffering from depression. He notes that in the medieval era the church led the way with assisting persons with mental health issues. In our contemporary age, with the discovery of psychotropic drugs and therapy, the spiritual is disregarded. McBain offers a holistic method that includes spiritual with physical methods.

The author defines depression as “a total body experience that isolates the sufferer from everything real” (15). He presents the themes of depression, guided by John Swinton’s book, *Spirituality and Mental Health*, such as meaninglessness, the meaning of life, abandonment, clingy feelings, physical exhaustion, and a trapped life (15–25). Insightfully, he notes that these themes with proper reflection can become a life-changing experience that enriches our lives.

McBain researches several biblical characters such as kings like Saul, David, and Ahab. Other personalities like Elijah and Job are unpacked as well. Through scripture, primarily the Psalms, he demonstrates how insomnia, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness, and recurring thoughts of death are common in the mind of depressed people. Even the psalmist wrote, “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?” (Psalm 42:5, NIV).

One major item he notes is that our modern church remains relatively silent about depression. He chronicles the church's response through the centuries from exorcism, to the Great Awakening enthusiasts, to the biological method. Today, the majority of pastors assign these issues of mental health to the hands of psychiatrists and psychologists. In his view, having only the medical response is not a complete healing process. Notably, after his experience he believes that every church should have a mental health department. That is a novel idea worth consideration.

The book discloses the coping methods he learned in overcoming his depression. Some approaches he employed were:

1. Lament. He utilized the lament Psalms commenting that “the Psalms acted as a lens and an outlet through which I could reflect on my experiences and communicates them to God” (54).
2. In addition, he practiced spiritual language such as “the garment of praise” and “tongues” for catharsis and help (116–20).

In short, McBain's writing is a much needed response for the care of church parishioners who come seeking God's care for this disease. From my involvement in this vocation of ministry, I would add these ideas to the book, assisting pastors and priests who deal with this subject in their congregations.

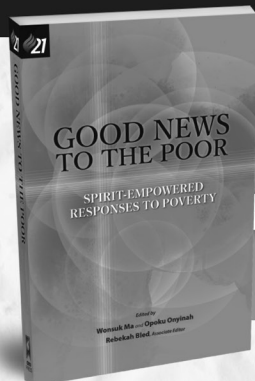
1. Pray openly about depression in the pastoral prayer of the liturgy of the worship service. Almost every time I intentionally express the thought of depression, someone comes after worship and wants to talk about the topic.
2. Speak up about depression in sermons. Inevitably, we will meet individuals with depression and either subtly turn them away or discount their feelings with our lack of interest. Most therapists believe that talking openly assists with the healing process. We provide care groups for other diseases, why not depression?
3. Provide training in mental health and family systems in seminary as a required course of study and experience for pastors. I wonder

how many ministers would have survived in the church ministry understanding the facets of mental health in their members.

As Pentecostal-Charismatic theology continues to evolve, a theology of suffering must mingle with the triumphalist preaching that comes from some sectors of this renewal movement. McBain's book unveils these dual concepts in his story. His experience does not dispose of medical science. Neither does he trust that faith alone provides healing. He believes that the combination of these actions remains our best option for wholeness to occur. Oral Roberts attacked this problem head-on with his emphasis on building the City of Faith (COF) in Tulsa, Oklahoma. COF was a medical center founded on combining both the biomedical world and faith for healing. Opening up about depression is not easy. It is a vulnerable and raw part of ourselves that many persons desire to ignore. I commend Robert McBain for the candid and honest thoughts about his journey. By writing about his depression, he opens a door for more dialogue on the topic. Hopefully, this work will cause others to spring into action and support those struggling with mental illness.

Cletus L. Hull, III, is Assistant Adjunct Professor of Biblical Studies, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK, USA.

Academic Books from  **ORU PRESS**



GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR

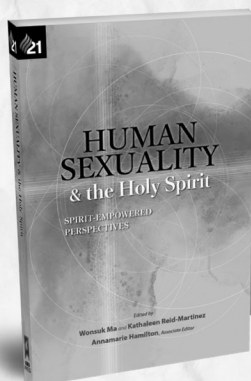
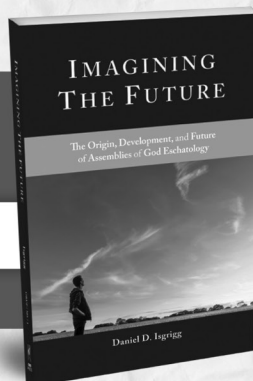
SPIRIT-EMPOWERED RESPONSES TO POVERTY

Wonsuk Ma and Opoku Onyinah
Rebekah Bled, Associate Editor

IMAGINING THE FUTURE

The Origin, Development, and Future
of Assemblies of God Eschatology

Daniel D. Isgrigg



HUMAN SEXUALITY & the Holy Spirit

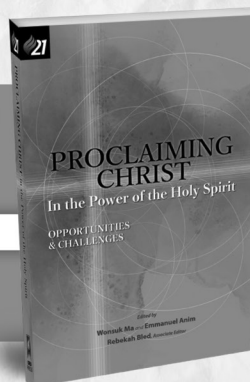
SPIRIT-EMPOWERED PERSPECTIVES

Wonsuk Ma and Kathaleen Reid-Martinez
Annamarie Hamilton, Associate Editor

PROCLAIMING CHRIST In the Power of the Holy Spirit

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Wonsuk Ma and Emmanuel Anim
Rebekah Bled, Associate Editor



Buy through ORU.edu/ORUPress

from **WIPF** and **STOCK** Publishers

DEPRESSION

Where Is Your Sting?

by Robert D. McBain

“Depression, Where Is Your Sting?” is exemplary, research-informed, and empowered by the Holy Spirit: it tackles immediate and everyday challenges, the author’s personal journey as a crucial resource for theologization, and the Spirit’s central role in restoration. The book speaks volumes in the pandemic era.”

—WONSUK MA

Distinguished Professor of Global Christianity, Oral Roberts University

“In his most recent book, *Depression, Where Is Your Sting?* author Dr. Robert McBain takes an honest look at the painful and overwhelming realities of depression through the lens of God’s everlasting word. Through honest personal accounts and powerful biblical revelation, McBain walks the reader through a restoration process that reinforces the hope and joy we have in Christ!”

—JAMIE AUSTIN

Pastor, Woodlake Church, and Presbyterian, Oklahoma District of the Assemblies of God

