

# EDITORIAL: EARTHLY MINDED AND HEAVENLY GOOD?

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As I pen these words, we in the United States have recently observed the Martin Luther King, Jr., federal holiday. Over the long holiday weekend, my wife and I saw the motion picture, *Just Mercy*, a powerful and moving portrayal of a case in rural Alabama in the late 1980s of an African American man wrongfully convicted of a brutal murder. The film chronicled the efforts of a young civil rights lawyer to get his client a new trial so that evidence suppressed in the original trial might be presented in order to right the previous wrong. The events portrayed in the film, occurring some thirty years ago, continue, to our shame, to reflect the lives and conditions of many in minority communities today.

Sadly, throughout its history, Christianity has often proven complicit in the perpetration of injustices against those outside of the spheres of power in the societies in which the Church is present. A movement that began with the ministry of an itinerant Jewish carpenter's son who frequently kept company with outcast and oppressed members of society, a movement that found receptive audiences among those largely from the lower classes of the Greco-Roman world, soon found itself in seats of power in the Empire, and in the flow of history, would find itself a willing partner of those wielding power in the world. Christianity all too frequently has been co-opted, and indeed has co-opted itself, in order to exercise power in the world, even if, at times, this exercise has violated the core principles of its charter to exist.

Around the turn of the twentieth century would come a movement of the Spirit, landing squarely in the midst of the unjust structures of the world. At first, it would find a home among the poor, the outcast, the uneducated. It would be embraced by men and women of diverse races and ethnicities, reflecting the gathered faithful on the Day of Pentecost. At its best, this Spirit movement has shown itself to be a people who welcomed all as brothers and sisters, equal in the sight of God their Father, extending the kingdom of a benevolent God to those who found themselves outside the spheres of the powerful, the prosperous, the positioned, and the privileged. Of course, as time passed, the injustices of the world outside the movement crept into the movement and manifested as the sins of racism, sexism, classism, nationalism, and the like.

As I began editing the studies published in this issue of *Spiritus*, I noticed that some of them addressed the involvement of Spirit-empowered movements in a world in

which numerous social maladies prevail. How has Pentecostalism positioned itself to act and respond in such a world? How has it done so previously? What are the prospects for future engagement? What might Pentecostals do to prepare themselves better for a complex world of social interactions? We did not set out to craft the issue around these questions; it just turned out that some of the articles in hand nicely constellated around these questions.

Keeping with the Journal's practice of opening each issue with a study on Oral Roberts, Daniel Isgrigg contributes an intriguing piece that examines Oral Roberts' evolving understanding of prosperity theology in light of Roberts' early experience of poverty and how it affected him psychologically. Isgrigg interprets key moments in Roberts' personal life and ministerial career against the background of his poor upbringing in light of current research conducted on the biological effects of socioeconomic status. The result is a fascinating case study of how personal experience is a significant shaper of theological perspective.

Following Isgrigg's article are two studies that probe biblical and theological topics of interest for Pentecostals. J. Lyle Story examines the story of Nathaniel's calling in John 1:45–52. Story draws connections between this passage and the Old Testament to highlight how both the original participants in the narrative and the post-resurrectional community would find their identity in and relationship with Jesus through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit. Chris E. W. Green examines the tendency in Pentecostal circles to construct Spirit christologies that stress the incompatibility between the divine and the human such that God must limit God's power in order to allow creation to exist in its own integrity. Green offers an alternative approach, following Cyril of Alexandria, that argues that creation finds its genuine *telos* only as Christ, in the fullness of his divinity, enters into human emptiness in order to take it unto himself and transform it into glory. The result is a Spirit christology seen not as the "elimination of God, but as the gracious realization of God in creation and creation in God."

Arto Hämäläinen follows with a study of the history of collaborations among Pentecostal groups on local, regional, and global levels. Acknowledging the pragmatic benefits of collaboration in missional and evangelistic efforts, Hämäläinen argues for a theological basis for efforts aimed at unity among Pentecostals, especially as this extends beyond national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. Paul Miller contributes a fascinating study that examines the role of the Holy Spirit in missionary work in nineteenth-century Hawaii. Miller identifies both positive and negative results of this work, correlating success with those instances where missionaries exercised conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit and failure with times when the leading of the Spirit was muted. The most intriguing part of the study consists of Miller's examination of the

role that the Christianization of Hawaii played in the decline of indigenous cultural expression and the loss of political independence in nineteenth-century Hawaii.

Daniel Topf examines the reasons behind Pentecostalism's historical lack of emphasis in scholarship and formal theological education. Looking beyond the stock answer of a latent anti-intellectualism in Pentecostal circles, Topf suggests that a more informed assessment takes into consideration the historical roots of nineteenth-century American fundamentalism, the socioeconomic reality that many early Pentecostals emerged from the margins of society and did not have the means to invest in establishing higher educational institutions, and the theological adherence to a dispensational eschatology tempered desires to focus attention on long-term projects such as formal theological education. Allan Anderson looks at the relationship between Pentecostalism and global development, noting that Pentecostalism has long been ambivalent regarding sociopolitical involvement yet has engaged in projects that cohere quite well with the aims of global development. Anderson argues that as Pentecostalism continues its worldwide growth it will find itself well-positioned to minister more holistically to people in their circumstances.

The final study is a collaborative project carried out in an undergraduate honors course, Science and Sustainability, at Oral Roberts University in Spring 2019. Under my supervision, a group of students examined the relationship between caring for God's creation and caring for human beings, drawing on a case study of the effects of mercury pollution on the unborn. The structure and argument derive from the students; my contribution was to provide further factual detail at points. This study is an example of the Journal's desire to be a venue for collaborative work between students and their instructors.

The history of Pentecostalism is replete with evidence of effectiveness in evangelism and the cultivation of personal and congregational spiritual fervor. Its record regarding attention to more terrestrial matters is somewhat spotty. Yet the good news, as evidenced by the articles in this issue, is that there are those who are focused upon crafting a Pentecostalism that takes its social voice seriously and is prepared to do the hard work of self-examination, scholarship, and training future generations to take their place in God's church and world, to bring together heaven and earth in response to the petition of the prayer Jesus taught us to pray (Matt 6:10).

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