

2020

## Book Reviews

Larry Hart  
*Oral Roberts University*, [lhart@oru.edu](mailto:lhart@oru.edu)

Mark E Roberts  
*Oral Roberts University*, [mroberts@oru.edu](mailto:mroberts@oru.edu)


Sally Shelton  
*Oral Roberts University*, [sshelton@oru.edu](mailto:sshelton@oru.edu)

Jeffrey Voth  
*Oral Roberts University*, [jvoth@oru.edu](mailto:jvoth@oru.edu)

Monte Lee Rice

*See next page for additional authors*

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

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), [History of Christianity Commons](#), [History of Religions of Western Origin Commons](#), [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#), [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#), [New Religious Movements Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Hart, Larry; Roberts, Mark E; Shelton, Sally; Voth, Jeffrey; Monte Lee Rice; Robert D. McBain; and Joji Mathew (2020) "Book Reviews," *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology*. Vol. 5 : No. 1 , Article 12.  
Available at: <https://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/spiritus/vol5/iss1/12>

This Article 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 *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* by an authorized editor of Digital Showcase. For more information, please contact [digitalshowcase@oru.edu](mailto:digitalshowcase@oru.edu).

---

## Book Reviews

### Authors

Larry Hart, Mark E Roberts, Sally Shelton, Jeffrey Voth, Monte Lee Rice, Robert D. McBain, and Joji Mathew

## REVIEWS

***Baptists and the Holy Spirit: The Contested History with Holiness-Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements.*** By C. Douglas Weaver. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019. xvi + 573.

C. Douglas Weaver, Professor of Baptist Studies at Baylor University, has provided the definitive historical account of the relation of Baptists to the Holiness-Pentecostal-Charismatic movements. He has filled a gap that has surprisingly existed in the studies of these movements for over a century. Weaver's volume of more than 500 pages takes its place alongside similar landmark works such as Vinson Synan's *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Eerdmans, 1997) and David Edwin Harrell, Jr.'s *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America* (Indiana University Press, 1975). Influenced by Harrell, Weaver's history evinces the same meticulous scholarship combined with a lucid and engaging narrative that one finds in Harrell's history as well as his authoritative biography, *Oral Roberts: An American Life* (Indiana University Press, 1985).

Weaver first published in this arena of study an exploration of the ministry of one of the pioneers in Pentecostal healing evangelism: *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham: A Study of the Prophetic in American Pentecostalism* (Mercer University Press, 1987). Since both Baptists and Pentecostals are participants in restorationist movements, Weaver became intrigued with the question of the interfacing of these movements and their resultant pneumatologies and spiritualities. His extensive research revealed a strong Baptist resistance to these Spirit-movements (Holiness, Pentecostal, Charismatic) as well as to their influence on the Baptist movement, since Baptists themselves—contrary to mistaken assumptions on the part of many—have always possessed their own understanding and experience of the Spirit. Since the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have witnessed both the evangelicalization of pentecostalism and the pentecostalization of evangelicalism, one should not be surprised to discover many bapticostals (a label Weaver's book may be establishing as official scholarly nomenclature!) as well as a demonstrable influence of the Charismatic Movement upon the worship and spirituality of Baptist churches.

The book launches the reader on a fascinating journey through the history of modern American religion (nineteenth and twentieth century), detailing the surprising developments of revivalism and renewal movements impacting the leading evangelical churches of the day,

Methodists and Baptists. Focusing specifically on Baptist interaction with these movements, Weaver uncovers much new material largely overlooked by students of American religious history. Reliving the stories of these movements and their leaders and adherents is like bingeing on a televised miniseries on modern religious developments. Weaver provides engaging, relevant, and thought-provoking analysis that could only enhance the church's self-awareness while, at the same time, nudging her on to greater maturity and unity. Readers will find themselves captivated by the story and prompted to reflection upon our common spiritual hungers. What more could one ask of a historical study?

An additional strength of Weaver's study is his factoring in key race, gender, and socioeconomic issues. There is a subtle, yet distinct, prophetic flavor to the author's presentation. In effect, he holds up an ethical mirror for all the movements surveyed here, encouraging honest appraisal and soul-searching. Ultimately, Weaver concludes that all God's people have the Spirit—but does the Spirit have them? That is, can such a historical analysis actually promote our learning and growing up—together?

Weaver concludes that there has been abundant interaction between Baptists and the Holiness-Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions and significant mutual influence. Considering the demonstrable Arminianizing of grassroots Baptist theology, the obvious renewal of emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and the emergent teaching on spiritual gifts, this spiritual and theological cross-pollination needed to be highlighted and documented. Weaver has done so masterfully. He helpfully describes how Baptist experience-oriented faith has variously embraced holiness, Keswick, and Pentecostal-Charismatic emphases. And even though Baptists and these Spirit-movements have continued to chart their own independent courses, more recent developments seem to indicate that this fascinating story is far from over.

With the inclusion of national leader Greg Laurie and his church in the Southern Baptist Convention, and the election of young pastors and scholars, known to be charismatic (tongues-speaking) in their personal spiritual lives, to leadership roles in the convention, the SBC could already be characterized as evincing "Pentecostal-Charismatic" proclivities. Add to this the spirited worship in many Baptist churches today: Should one, while surfing the web, come across the dynamic worship service of a church like Prestonwood Baptist in Plano, Texas, he or she might assume at the outset that they have simply tuned in the telecast of a Charismatic megachurch. Perhaps this combining of Baptist Word-emphasis with Pentecostal Spirit-emphasis was what God had in mind all along. I can even hear the Reformers uttering a hearty Amen here!

Additionally, Weaver's fascinating history often raises significant theological issues that could be further investigated. Years ago, Baptist theologian Chad Owen Brand published *Perspectives on Spirit Baptism: Five Views* (Broadman & Holman [the

Southern Baptist publishing house], 2004), providing substantive interaction between representatives of Catholic, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Reformed traditions. A follow-up volume on speaking in tongues was considered but ultimately abandoned. The Spirit-baptism volume has circulated widely in Baptist circles, indicating continued interest in these theological issues. If current surveys are correct in reporting that fully half of Southern Baptist pastors believe that all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament, including the gift of tongues, are still available today (in contrast to the ubiquitous cessationism one most often associates with Baptists), then there is considerable rationale for further theological investigation.

Finally, Weaver might want to take into account the emerging influence of what is now being called “network Christianity” (see Brad Christerson’s and Richard Flory’s *The Rise of Network Christianity* [Oxford University Press, 2017]). Individualistic Americans, now more than ever, seem to be charting their own spiritual voyage! Just as Charismatics originally established their own networks of interaction and influence, with the explosion of cyber-space, there is even greater opportunity of cross-pollination among the various ecclesial traditions and pneumatic movements of Christendom.

A careful combing through of any historical work will inevitably discover “blemishes,” especially if that reader has known firsthand some of the persons and events covered in the text. For example, New Testament scholar Craig Keener is not an African American, even though he is a member of an African American denomination. Even some of my own personal history, as portrayed in the book, needs minor tweaking for precision. But overall Weaver’s narrative and analysis exemplify historical investigation and presentation at its best.

Although Weaver’s book is voluminous and pricey, it is well worth the indulgence of those who value surveying and analyzing the riches of this intriguing swath of American Christianity. *Baptists and the Holy Spirit* will now take its place in the libraries of Baptist, Pentecostal, and Wesleyan schools as the standard resource on the subject. Much gratitude is owed to the author for his faithful historical labors.

**Larry Hart** is Professor of Theology, Graduate School of Theology and Ministry, College of Theology and Ministry, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK, USA.

***Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel.*** By Wolfgang Vondey. New York: T&T Clark, 2018. xiv + 302 pp.

Wolfgang Vondey, Reader in Contemporary Christianity and Pentecostal Studies and Director of the Center for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies at the University of

Birmingham, UK, home of the so-called Hollenweger school, is a prolific author, prominent among current Pentecostal scholars. In this, the inaugural volume of the Systematic Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology series, Vondey identifies Pentecost as the core theological symbol of the Pentecostal movement. His academic and writing expertise has enabled him to engage successfully in the difficult task of formulating a systematic Pentecostal theology. Considering the heterogeneous nature of global Pentecostalism, writing such a theology is a complex task, but Vondey—who self-identifies as a Pentecostal—responds successfully to the challenge, with the expressed hope that the global character of the Pentecostal community will speak through the book (xi).

In the introduction, Vondey clearly delineates the background, structure, and central agenda of the book as well as summarizes its hypothesis: “Pentecost is the core theological symbol of Pentecostal theology and its theological narrative is the full gospel” (1). The central argument of the book then is that Pentecost is the primary symbol of Pentecostal theology, the full gospel is the expression of the theological narrative of this symbol, and the altar is the liturgical heart of this narrative where Pentecost reaches deep into the hearts of Pentecostals.

The prolegomena to Pentecostal doctrine contained in the first chapter precede the two main parts of the book, each of which contains five chapters. Each of the chapters always returns to the central claim of the book that Pentecost is the wellspring of the Pentecostal movement and its theology (10). Pentecostal theology, as the title suggests, can be characterized as a form of living the fullness of the gospel. The first part provides the theological narrative of the Pentecostal full gospel placed under the symbol of Pentecost and emerging from practices at the altar. The five chapters in the first part outline this narrative along the themes of salvation, sanctification, Spirit-baptism, divine healing, and the coming kingdom.

In the second chapter, the author asserts that “a narrative account of Pentecostal theology begins with soteriology,” and, indeed, that the full gospel is soteriological from beginning to end. Accordingly, Vondey presents salvation as a primary metaphor for Pentecostal thought and as a dominant Pentecostal theme. In chapter 3, Vondey explores the motif of Jesus Christ as sanctifier. In the context of the soteriological practice of the altar call, sanctification identifies both the call of God to holiness and the desire of the believer for holiness (59). In chapter 4, Vondey treats the role of Spirit-baptism in the full gospel narrative. Pentecostals have looked consistently to the day of Pentecost as the root symbol for understanding Spirit-baptism.

In the fifth chapter, Vondey presents Jesus as the healer, and traces the theological contours of divine healing, the fourth motif of the full gospel, through the metaphor of

the altar. In chapter 6, the discussion centers on the eschatological emphasis the full gospel places on Jesus as the coming King. An apocalyptic emphasis on the imminent return of Christ always projects Pentecostal theology back on itself in critical reflection: eschatology not only draws Pentecostals from the altar to the ends of the earth but urges them to return to the altar for the signs and wonders of salvation, sanctification, Spirit-baptism, and divine healing. Pentecostal eschatology culminates with the apocalyptic mandate to go and seek the lost, proclaim the kingdom of God, and bring the world to the altar (133).

The second part of Vondey's systematic theology is a mirror extension of the first including its themes. In this way, the second part demonstrates the return of constructive and systematic Pentecostal theology to its root symbol of Pentecost. Rooted in the wide-ranging soteriology of the full gospel, in this second part Vondey envisions a larger theological narrative by means of expanding the lens of the full gospel to the dominant theological conversations on creation, humanity, society, church, and God. The five chapters in the second part move from the macro to the micro, from the cosmos to the local church, before returning eventually to a theological vision at the altar at which the full gospel originates (155). In chapter 7, Vondey applies the fivefold pattern articulated in the first part to the constructive concerns of a theology of creation. Given the centrality of the altar for Pentecostal practices, the author argues that creation be seen as the economy of salvation, as it were, the cosmic altar of redemption, sanctification, empowerment, transformation, and eschatological mission. In chapter 8, Vondey then proposes that in the context of creation, identified previously as the cosmic altar of redemption, humankind is created to embody the image of God to the world through the reception of the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 9, Vondey continues to explore the contributions of the full gospel to the wider theological conversation by probing the concrete, intertwined, and complex realities of the public social, cultural, and political spheres underlying the theology of creation and theological anthropology. The author then argues that the full gospel offers a comprehensive proposal for a genuinely Pentecostal ecclesiology because it draws from Pentecost as the unifying theological symbol of the movement (ch. 10). In the closing chapter (ch. 11), the author picks up his initial argument that the full gospel points to the worship of God as the beginning and end of Pentecostal theology. He brings the doxology implicit throughout the book into conversation with the doctrine of God. This final chapter highlights that the goal of any doxology is not primarily epistemological but ontological and soteriological, reminding his readers that worship brings about transformation. The chief conclusion is that Pentecostal theology represents a liturgical tradition oriented around the altar.

Considering the diverse nature of global Pentecostalism, writing Pentecostal theology is not an easy enterprise, but clearly the author has accomplished his task meticulously. The work is a unique attempt to frame a Pentecostal theology on the foundation of Pentecost and its narrative of the full gospel, without dwelling on the usual discussion of whether the center of Pentecostal theology is christology or pneumatology. The metaphor of the altar adopted throughout the book specifies the significance of worship in Pentecostal life and doctrine in terms of a spiritual movement towards and mystical encounter with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit that empowers and transforms the world. The book culminates in the conclusion that Pentecostal theology at heart is a liturgical theology, which Vondey establishes as a foundation upon which systematic and constructive Pentecostal theology can be further developed. In his own words, “The further development of Pentecostal theology, systematically and contextually, practically and methodologically, depends on a deeper understanding of the liturgical qualities of Pentecostalism as a religio-cultural tradition.” Elaborating on Pentecost, full-gospel narratives, and the metaphor of altar, Vondey presents his ideas consistently and coherently. Reading the book is an amazing experience, widening one’s horizon of understanding of Pentecostal theology and spirituality. I would recommend this volume as required reading for any undergraduate or graduate course on Pentecostal theology. The author has presented the profound theological ideas without overusing theological jargon, making the book appealing to and readable for the non-academic audience as well. The target audience of the book is nothing less than Pentecostals worldwide, Global South or North, scholars or laypeople.

**Joji Mathew** is Senior Pastor of Bethel India Christian Assembly, Tulsa, in Jenks, OK, and PhD student in the College of Theology and Ministry, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK, USA.

***World Christianity: A Historical and Theological Introduction.*** By Lalsangkima Pachuau. Nashville: TN: Abingdon Press, 2018. xiii + 247.

Lalsangkima Pachuau, Professor of Christian Mission and Dean of Advanced Research Programs at Asbury Seminary, was ordained in the Presbyterian Church of India and received his PhD from Princeton Theological Seminary. Originally from northeast India, Pachuau has served as itinerant evangelist in his home state and among Hindu communities in India and the United States as well as lectured in various venues in the United Kingdom, Asia, and Africa. A member of the Center of Theological Inquiry



(Princeton, NJ), Pachau has published both books and journal articles and served as editor of *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies*. Describing himself as an academician from the Majority World trained in the West (21), Pachau's global experience puts him in a unique position to talk about how non-Western Christianity is reshaping Christianity globally.

Pachau seeks to characterize World Christianity from historical and theological viewpoints (19). The first chapter of his book serves as an introduction to this venture. Pachau sees "Global Christianity" and "World Christianity" as interchangeable terms, with the former carrying with it negative socioeconomic and political connotations (2). He observes that the first millennium belonged to the Eastern church, the second to the Western, and the third to the Southern continents (7). He uses the term "Majority World" to describe everything that is non-Western, as he sees it as a less offensive term than "third-world" (18).

In chapter 2, Pachau discusses the Western precedence of Christianity and explains the point of departure he is taking for his discussion on World Christianity (20). He begins with the concept of "the West and the Rest," which, despite its negative connotations, is the framework this book uses (24). He continues with an overview of the Enlightenment and its effect on theology. In the second part of the chapter, the author narrates the story of the modern missionary movement—with the crises of the changing course of missions—and how it led to the emerging Majority World Christianity in the twentieth century (30).

In the third chapter, Pachau provides an overview of the cultural, theological, and historical features of Christianity within Africa and Latin America (42), while commenting on how various parts of the world experienced European colonialism differently. For instance, Pachau observes that Africans "seem to have a more positive image of colonists than some people in Asian nations" (42). In chapter 4, Pachau discusses the new Christian movements of the post-colonial period and presents the story of Christianity in Asia and the Pacific (20). Because in many areas of this part of the world, Christianity is a contested minority religion (63), the author concentrates on areas where Christianity is experiencing momentum and growth (65).

In chapter 5 Pachau explains how contextual theology has globally reshaped the theological discipline (20). Historically, Christians have always practiced unity through diversity (91), with the call to experience God's transforming grace being the unifying factor (91). He argues that history shows that Christianity maintains authenticity by being adapted, indigenized, and contextualized (92). The author goes on to discuss contextual theology, which he defines as the act of theologizing in context (100), in contrast to contextualization, which deals with the cultural dynamics involved in the

reception of the gospel (94) and is therefore a cross-cultural communication method (97).

Chapter 6 focuses on the three major Southern continents and the core theological works in these contexts. The author asserts that one cannot miss the massive shift in the focus and orientation of Christian missions theologically and historically. However, he notes that in these areas of growth, there is a tension between the established forms of Christianity and the emerging kinds (20). He reiterates that the contextual theologies are constructed in response to contextual realities (111) and discusses those realities by typifying three macro-theologies common to the people of Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Islands. The macro-theologies are the people's religiosity, poverty and inequality, and tensional existence (111).

In chapter 7 Pachuau speaks about modern missions, which is followed by the rising world mission movement and the dynamics of Christianity that have helped to redefine the meaning and practice of Christian mission. He highlights the conceptual changes and then looks at the development of mission in the Majority World, especially among Pentecostals. He underlines the developments of Christianity in regions where developments are apparent and provides a few case studies (143).

In his conclusion, Pachuau focuses on the demographic changes that have occurred during the rise of World Christianity, specifically how the center of gravity moved from the West to the non-West (177–78). With this rise a tension between Western and Western Christianity has developed, with the West at one end of the theological spectrum and the East at the other (180–81). While this tension may disappear over time as Western Christianity and emerging Christianity converge, for the present, the author considers it a suitable framework (24).

This book has many strengths, one of which is the summary of the theologians and missiologists who have contributed to the establishment of World Christianity as an academic discipline. Pachuau mentions, in particular, Walbert Buhmann and Andrew Walls from the 1970s and 80s and describes their contributions as well as those of more recent contributors (712). Another strength is Pachuau's overview of contextual theology and the distinction he makes between it and contextualization.

Pachuau's writing style is an engaging blend of scholarly thoroughness and easy reading, ideal for the new scholar approaching the topic. The book provides an overview of the subject as well as stimulating discussion that sparks questions. However, outside the context of a classroom setting where the book is supplemented by lecture and other readings, the reviewer thinks that this book may be too advanced for casual readers. For serious students, however, *World Christianity* will prove an insightful and

useful tool that will help them understand how to theologize within the conceptual framework of “the West and the Rest.”

**Robert Daniel McBain** is Dean’s Fellow and PhD student in the College of Theology and Ministry at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK, USA.

***Spirit Baptism: The Pentecostal Experience in Theological Focus.*** By David Perry. *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*, 26. Leiden: Brill, 2017. xi + 263 pp.

By ecumenically forwarding an erudite apologetic for the Classical Pentecostal experience of Spirit-baptism albeit through the theological method of one of Roman Catholicism’s (RC) most innovative twentieth-century theologians, Australian Pentecostal theologian David Perry presents a seminal groundbreaking approach to understanding theologically the Pentecostal “experience” of Spirit-baptism. Hence, Perry’s 2017 monograph proffers a pioneering analysis, potentially fertile to related projects within the domains of Pentecostal studies, theological methodology, and ecumenical dialogue.

Perry is certainly not the first within Pentecostal studies to explore how in Pentecostalism, experience functions as a viable source of theology and doctrine. That has been—and I suspect will continue—as a requisite mainstay of Pentecostal theological reflection for years to come. Yet what Perry offers are new cutting-edge ways of apologetically framing, clarifying, and assessing this basic premise within Pentecostal spirituality. He achieves this by using RC Bernard Lonergan’s theological method for analyzing relations between experience and meaning, which posits a “cognitional theory” (56) that appreciates experience or “subjectivity” as a knowledge source, contra a past Protestant tendency to subordinate experience as a dubious category within “the hierarchy of knowledge sources” (54).

Perry thus effectively elaborates how *experience* functions as an important scientific source for arriving at knowledge, understanding, and meaning, particularly in Christian doctrine (56–72). Hence, at the heart of Lonergan’s method is his cognitional theory that through four processes of cognitive comprehension—experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding (73–74)—leads to four “functions of meaning,” namely, (1) cognitive, (2) effective, (3) constitutive, and (4) communicative functions (75–78). Before proceeding then, I would urge readers to familiarize themselves with Lonergan’s highly readable book, *Method in Theology* (1972), which succinctly summarizes these concepts

that Perry appropriates to his theological investigation into the Pentecostal experience of Spirit-baptism.

Therefore, as earlier alluded, Perry's purpose for this book is "to undertake a critical analysis of Pentecostal Spirit baptism based on [Lonergan's] methodology," which effectively allows "focus particularly on the meaning embodied in the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism[, to] . . . explore how Spirit baptism functions cognitively, effectively, constitutively, and communicatively within Pentecostalism" (3; see also 219). Hence, Perry's "overall aim is to gain a clearer understanding" of how the notion of Spirit-baptism functions within Pentecostalism, and thereby suggests ways it may be revitalized and continue to function theologically toward the fostering of twenty-first-century Pentecostal identity worldwide (3–4).

What Perry's book thus primarily offers is a phenomenological analysis of the grassroots experience itself that has generated the Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism. More pertinently, as I understand Perry's aim, his primary intent is not foremost toward developing a Christian theology of Spirit-baptism, but, more narrowly, to elucidate how the notion of Spirit-baptism is "experienced," and thereafter, "described, explained, and doctrinalized" within Pentecostalism (6). Then, from this analysis, his purpose is to reflect theologically (24) and suggest how Pentecostals might best doctrinally conceive (231–35) their historic experience and the notion of Spirit-baptism in light of twenty-first-century challenges toward the tradition's ongoing testimony to the renewing "lived reality" (235) of this "transformative encounter with the Holy Spirit" (xi, 235).

In chapter 1 ("How Did We Get Here?") Perry critically surveys how Pentecostal scholarship has historically engaged its doctrine of Spirit-baptism and suggests the need for a "methodological turn" via Lonergan's four "functions of meaning," to analyze closely the grassroots experience Pentecostals have historically identified as Spirit-baptism (45). While Pentecostal scholars have long effectively argued for the privileging of experience as a source for theological reflection and doctrinal formation, in chapter 2 ("Experience and Meaning"), Perry brings fresh clarity to the discussion by substantially addressing the Protestant tendency to divide subjective from objective knowledge, by recognizing that all knowing comes from "pre-conceptual experience" (54–73). In doing so, Perry establishes how Lonergan's four functions of meaning provide apt methodological categories for analyzing the "necessarily subjective nature" of the Pentecostal Spirit-baptism experience (73–83).

Through an ecumenically informed investigation, engaging the RC notion of sanctifying grace, into historic grassroots Pentecostal testimony and current Pentecostal scholarship, Perry suggests in chapter 3 ("Spirit Baptism and Cognitive Meaning") that the Pentecostal experience of Spirit-baptism be *cognitively* understood as "an experience

of the Holy Spirit” (118), yet one that, first and foremost, comprises an encounter with God’s love by which recipients are profoundly drawn into participation in the Triune mission of God to all creation (148–49).

In chapter 4 (“Spirit Baptism and Effective Meaning”) Perry notes that historically, Pentecostal Spirit-baptism experience has been an *effectual* cause of Pentecostal holistic mission and evangelistic endeavor worldwide, albeit largely within the framework of their presumed “eschatological expectation” of the imminent return of Christ (176). Yet, given recent shifts in eschatological understanding, Perry suggests that we can far more robustly perceive the *effective* meaning of Spirit-baptism within another concept, namely, the love of God poured out on the believer through Spirit-baptism; hence, it is this experience of God’s love that *effects* and thus *empowers* Pentecostals’ involvement in mission, presuming they recognize the Trinitarian role of the Spirit in mediating God’s love towards creation (176).

In chapter 5 (“Spirit Baptism and Constitutive Meaning”), Perry posits that while for early Pentecostals Spirit-baptism *constituted* a common ecclesial identity through a shared experience, this earlier meaning is now challenged by contemporary shifting understandings within grassroots Pentecostalism regarding how Spirit-baptism is presently being experienced (181–88, 203). Perry cites recent statistics that suggest decreasing numbers of Spirit-baptism experiences that conform to the traditional Pentecostal understanding of Spirit-baptism, coupled with a decreasing practice of glossolalia, despite Classical Pentecostal credal statements continuing to affirm a close link between Spirit-baptism and glossolalia, particularly via the older evidentialist language (183–88). Perry therefore suggests that the ongoing *constitutive* function of Spirit-baptism within Pentecostalism requires a shift from the historic Pentecostal “narrow construal of the experience” demarked by evidentialist language for describing the links between Spirit-baptism and tongues speech, to a broader construal that describes Spirit-baptism as a transformative experience with God’s love (202). As such, Spirit-baptism is better described “as a baptism into divine love” (232).

In his concluding sixth chapter (“Spirit Baptism and Communicative Meaning”) Perry first evaluates how Pentecostals have historically communicated their perceived meaning to their experience of Spirit-baptism, through appropriating Lonergan’s insight that people may communicate meaning through a variety of mediums (e.g., artistic, symbolic, intersubjective, linguistic, or incarnational) with each medium expressing a unique nuance (204–5). Perry concludes that given Classical Pentecostalism’s historically “close phenomenological association” with Spirit-baptism (206–7), Pentecostals must recognize glossolalia as a historically important medium towards identifying the “pre-

conceptual” (or “elemental”) meaning of Spirit-baptism in Pentecostal experience (206–7, 214).

Even though Perry acknowledges the research that indicates a present decline in tongues speech worldwide (210), given the phenomenological link earlier mentioned, he suggests Pentecostals identify glossolalia in such a way as to communicate elementally something about “the divine love of God” (212–13), which he earlier identified in chapter 5 as the *constitutive* meaning of Spirit-baptism. Building on this suggestion, he then shifts attention to recent ecumenical dialogues on Pentecostal Spirit-baptism as a “case study” illustrating these observed connections between God’s love and Spirit-baptism (219–30).

In conclusion, Perry proposes two major re-wordings to common Pentecostal doctrinal statements about Spirit-baptism (230–35). First, he proposes its definition as a “transformative encounter with the Holy Spirit that unites Pentecostal believers . . . towards empowered witness . . . through an outpouring of the divine love and God.” Second, he proposes that the “essence of this encounter . . . may be communicated through . . . speaking in tongues” (234).

I shall now make some important confirmations to Perry’s work within Pentecostal theological scholarship, coupled with some critical concerns. First, as Perry himself occasionally points out, closely substantiating his conclusions (x, 7, 33–36) is Frank Macchia’s earlier monograph titled *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Zondervan, 2006). There, Macchia similarly argues the same close link between Spirit-baptism and God’s love. Incidentally, through a multi-disciplinary approach, Amos Yong argues the same conclusion in his book, *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace* (Baylor University Press, 2012).

Though both Macchia and Perry have reached these similar understandings albeit through two different methodological procedures (36), Perry critiques Macchia’s theology of the Spirit-baptism metaphor that posits a comprehensive understanding of Spirit-baptism encompassing the whole narrative of Christian salvation (33–34), as “too far removed” from actual grassroots Pentecostal understanding or experience (36). While this may be true, I would prompt Perry to recognize that their respective aims are quite different. Perry has indeed narrowly focused on investigating the actual way Pentecostals have historically described and doctrinally conceived their experience of Spirit-baptism (2–3), whereas as his book title infers, Macchia has rather striven towards an ecumenically expansive theology of Spirit-baptism, albeit one informed by Pentecostal orientations.

Meanwhile, let me reiterate that I deeply appreciate Perry’s singular focus on how Pentecostals have traditionally experienced Spirit-baptism. For this reason, yet also

keeping in mind that the Spirit-baptism metaphor comprises polyvalent meanings both within the New Testament and across Christian traditions, I have long felt that Pentecostals might better refer to their unique understanding as the “Pentecostal experience” of Spirit-baptism. Doing so thus differentiates this experience from how Christians might differently experience God through the Holy Spirit within other Christian traditions, historically and contemporarily.

This approach thus recognizes the cultural-linguistic power of a lived setting within a specific tradition to shape human experience. Hence, Pentecostals need to assess how their culture has historically fostered expectation towards phenomena Pentecostals have historically associated with Spirit-baptism. Hence, notwithstanding that George Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic theology of doctrine can mistakenly limit recognition of transcultural realities (80–81), his approach helps foster a critical rather than naive realism towards one’s own lived tradition.

A final concern pertains to the fresh clarity Perry brings to the implicit Pentecostal privileging of experience as a source for theological reflection and doctrinal formation. This is really nothing new, but a premise running throughout the broader Christian tradition exemplified in the ancient dictum that the “rule of prayer shapes the rule of belief.” Yet one fresh way Perry helps is by addressing a wrong tendency within much of Protestantism toward dividing subjective from objective knowing, since all knowing comes from “pre-conceptual experience,” and all experience is subjective (54–62).

A potential problem arises, however, from Perry’s reliance on Lonergan’s cognitional theory that posits distinctions between experiencing “corporeal” and “non-corporeal” realities, or between experiences that are presumed as internal rather than external to the human body (56). Now Perry is helpfully arguing the legitimacy of non-corporeal experience as a knowledge source. I would affirm this. Yet I think we may need to update Lonergan’s basic cognition theory, given it is based on assumptions about the mind and body that are now more than fifty years old. For example, we should perhaps factor into Lonergan’s methodology the growing shift within the humanities today from linguistic-centered hermeneutics (the earlier “linguistic turn”) to a “turn towards the body,” that recognizes the body and mind as thoroughly integrated. Hence, given this recognition, I wonder if we can any longer say that any experience is internal apart from corporeality. Or, might we now say that our bodies mediate all experience to us? In other words, might we rather say that for embodied humans, all experience is indeed corporeal. To sum up, I believe these are discussions that current philosophical and scientific research obliges us to consider as we further strive towards appreciating the Pentecostal insight into the role of experience as a genuine source of knowledge within theological formation.

Yet to reiterate, I find Perry's monograph a profound, highly original watershed contribution that is necessary to ongoing discussions about the Pentecostal experience of Spirit-baptism and Pentecostal theology. For this reason, it is a must addition to theological libraries worldwide. It also required reading for scholarly research not only on the topic of Pentecostal Spirit-baptism, but toward broadening our repertoire of apt theological methods for investigating the role of experience within Pentecostal life and theology. Moreover, I would add that by way of Lonergan's theological methods, Perry's work proffers ecumenical import towards analyzing the experience of Spirit-baptism within other Christian traditions as well.

**Monte Lee Rice** is an itinerant preacher and independent scholar in Singapore and throughout Southeast Asia and a PhD student at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio, Philippines.

***Galatians***. New Cambridge Bible Commentary. By Craig S. Keener. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. xl + 332 pp.

***Galatians: A Commentary***. By Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019. xlvii + 848 pp.

The ever-prolific Dr. Craig Keener has written not one but two commentaries on this Pauline letter, released hardly a year apart. The relation between them Keener notes in the front matter of each: the much briefer *Galatians* for the New Cambridge Bible Commentary (NCBC) was written first but with the writing of the much longer, stand-alone *Galatians* for Baker Academic in view. Editors for both editions permitted this close relation between the two. Such a relation suggests, rightly, the two agree about introductory matters, interpretation of most-debated texts, and theology elicited from the letter. By the numbers, the NCBC version fills 294 pages with commentary, accompanied by 1,447 notes, while the Baker version fills 588 pages with 4,626 notes. Often over half a page in either edition is filled with citations of ancient primary sources and an encyclopedic spectrum of secondary sources spanning Christian history, making either version valuable for guiding students to worthwhile sources for research beyond Keener's excellent commentary. The commentary of the Baker version differs from the NCBC only in its greater length and detail, but both express the high quality of scholarship we have come to expect from Dr. Keener. New Testament scholar Michael



F. Bird's endorsement in the Baker edition fits both editions: Keener expresses "an erudition and thoroughness that is simply unmatched," an "encyclopedic knowledge of the ancient world," and "sharp exegetical insights and sensitivity to the theological texture of Scripture" (back cover).

Both editions deliver results from a mix of study methods we find satisfying: first, a traditional grammatical-historical-linguistic reading set deeply in the contexts of Second Temple and Greco-Roman sources cited with a proficiency one would expect from a specialist other than a New Testament scholar. (As quantitative evidence of this depth, abbreviations to extrabiblical and secondary sources fill twenty-five pages in the NCBC. In the Baker, similar abbreviations fill twenty-five pages in much smaller type. The NCBC's Ancient Sources Index in two columns fills thirty pages, while a similar index in the Baker fills seventy-one pages set in four columns. The Baker edition's bibliography is 124 pages set in two columns of small type.) This reading is then enriched with insights from social-scientific, rhetorical, narrative, and other developing methods. Keener synthesizes these to help readers imagine in an informed way how Paul's first recipients would have likely understood this most polemical of his letters and how Galatians fits within Paul's works and contributes to Pauline theology. Unlike some commentaries that exposit a range of interpretations but leave readers unsure of the author's view, after fair exposition of important differing views, Keener expresses his well-grounded judgment clearly. Then, especially through the six "Bridging [the] Horizons" features throughout both commentaries, Keener suggests plausible applications for today.

Along with those gestures toward responsible application, these works offer several features in addition to commentary. The Baker edition introduces Galatians in forty-six pages, tracing its interpretation especially since Luther and addressing other traditional topics, including date, provenance, genre, themes, audience, and the identity of Paul's Galatian opponents. This edition attends to how ancient epistolary and rhetorical conventions, including polemic, pertain to interpreting Galatians more than the NCBC does, including the question of whether Paul's letter was effective. Yet the NCBC edition introduces commentary with largely the same topics discussed more briefly and with a feature unique to it that favors students at beginning and intermediate levels of academic biblical study: six full pages of "Select Suggested Readings" on Galatians, which would help nearly any student begin research for course papers effectively. While the NCBC uses the NRSV, the Baker version rests on Keener's translation of Galatians, which appears twice: once for the whole of Galatians in the front matter and then again, verse by verse, throughout the commentary.

Commentary proceeds in the NCBC edition section by section, while the lengthier commentary in the Baker edition is presented verse by verse. Interspersed within the commentary in both editions are brief features titled “A Closer Look” that are like mini-articles from works like *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* on various topics, including these that occur in both editions: “Did Jews Eat with Gentiles?” “Christ-Faith,” “Law-Works,” “Pathos,” “Baptism’s Meaning in Its Ancient Context,” and “Adoption.” The NCBC has twenty-five of these, while the Baker has all of those, usually expanded slightly, plus an additional nine unique to it, including topics such as “Early Jewish Soteriology,” “The New Perspective on Paul,” “Magic,” and “Castration and Eunuchs” (the last of which shows Keener’s legendary thoroughness: slightly less than two pages of exposition are accompanied by twenty-three notes to chiefly primary ancient sources). Both editions divide the epistle into twenty-two units, but the Baker edition subsumes these under headings that disclose their epistolary-rhetorical function and reveal the value Keener finds in reading Galatians rhetorically—he seeks continuously to disclose what the text seeks to *do* (although not with the tour-de-force imposition of the forensic species Hans Dieter Betz attempted in his groundbreaking 1979 commentary).

A sampling of Keener’s judgment on controverted matters follows:

- South Galatia is Paul’s audience.
- “Christ-faith” (Gal 2:16; 3:22; *pistis Christou*) is objective: our faith in Christ; not subjective: Christ’s faithful obedience unto death that saves us, a truth that *pistis* in this context nonetheless cannot express.
- Regarding “law-works” (Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10), Paul “rejects . . . as a means of justification as opposed to faith in Christ” “any of the law,” including “boundary markers,” with emphasis in Galatians on circumcision.
- Regarding the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), Keener agrees that “the older Christian depiction of Judaism as graceless is incorrect,” observes that the New Perspective is hardly monolithic, and finds in some version of it “an important and fuller corrective of older approaches that viewed Paul as leading a new religion,” without endorsing NPP without qualification.

We think Keener’s heart for the outworking of the gospel in life today may be expressed most clearly in his “Bridging [the] Horizons” feature titled “Unity and/or Equality in Principle Only or Also in Practice?” in the NCBC edition. It is untitled in the Baker edition but over twice the length of the same feature in the NCBC. Keener discusses the application of Gal 3:28 to gender equality. Confessedly egalitarian, Keener nonetheless surveys hermeneutical options and insists “one can hardly say that Gal. 3:28

addresses ‘only’ salvation as if salvation itself lacks transformative implications for relationships” (291) while stopping short of insisting that the proper interpretation of this *crux interpretum* demands a thoroughgoing egalitarianism in marriage or church ministry. Not controverted but appreciated is Keener’s comments about the Galatians’ experience of receiving the Spirit and the force of that reception as receiving Abraham’s blessing, as giving a foretaste of the coming world, and as “the nonnegotiable mark of true followers of Jesus.” His commentary emphasizes the importance of the Spirit and of believers’ experience of him to Paul’s argument against his opponents and to believers’ ethical life.

The publishers may wish to consider these suggestions for future printings or a revision. We wonder why the Keener translation in the Baker edition of the whole of Galatians indents each verse as if beginning a new paragraph rather than gathering verses in paragraphs to disclose the flow of thought better. For both editions, we suggest locating the titles of the features in the Contents pages among the titles of the units into which Keener has divided Galatians. We think displaying the features titles (“A Closer Look” and “Bridging [the] Horizons”) in the Contents where they occur among comments on Scripture units promotes readers’ relating them to the texts that anchor them. For the NCBC, we suggest revising the page design so each feature ends with line spacing sufficient to separate the end of the feature from the resumption of the commentary proper. It seems pages were composed (or formatted) inattentively, such that the copy marking “\*\*\*\*” has been left at the end of most of the features without line spacing sufficient to separate feature from commentary (e.g., 69, 72, 85, 91). Lack of separation challenges readers to know where the feature ends and the commentary resumes. The twelve blank pages at the back of the book would be more than enough to absorb any shifting of text to a later page that correcting the page composition would cause. And for the NCBC, could the designer enlarge the tiny font of note numerals so they are more legible?

The Baker edition is now available in the USA in hardcover discounted for about \$40US, as an e-book for about \$35US, and as a Logos.com title for more. The NCBC edition is available in the USA both as hardcover (about \$78US) and softcover (about \$30US) as well as a Cambridge University Press DRM-free e-book (\$215US).

We recommend both editions for overlapping but distinct uses: both for libraries and the Baker for Galatians scholars, while the briefer NCBC, which presumes no knowledge of Greek, can serve as a primary text for most undergraduate, seminary, and even church Bible classes (with serious lay students) on Galatians. The Baker version belongs in all library reference collections and promotes intensive study at a higher level for students who know some Greek (many Greek words and phrases

occur, along with transliteration) but do not require commentary on primarily the Greek.

**Mark E. Roberts** is Dean of Learning Resources at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK, USA.

**Philip R. Feist** is a practicing attorney in Tulsa, OK, USA.

***Where He Leads Me: The Vinson Synan Story.*** By Vinson Synan. Franklin Springs, GA: LifeSprings Resources, 2019. 235 pp.

Vinson Synan’s life story tells how a faithful son of a Pentecostal Holiness bishop—Joseph Alexander Synan—came to hold a place of distinction in the global Spirit-empowered movement, his influence far exceeding the bounds of his own denomination. The book begins with a preface written by one of Synan’s former students, A. D. (“Doug”) Beacham, Jr., followed by the author’s introduction. Then comes over 200 pages (fourteen chapters) of the main body of the text, followed by a bibliography of the author’s publications and an index.

In the preface, Beacham extols the distinction Synan had of “being both maker and chronicler of history” (7). In addition to pointing out Synan’s contribution to the Pentecostal church in the United States as its historian-in-chief, Beacham enumerates the many other roles Synan played throughout his lifetime including “professor, church planter, musician, academic dean, writer, denominational executive, organizer, preacher, and networker,” as well as mentor and truth-speaker (7). At the risk of making this review hagiographical in tone, I must add that, for those privileged to have known him personally, Synan was also a warm friend and compelling exemplar of positivity and gentleness. (I write this only a day after the passing of this modern-day Pentecostal saint on March 15, 2020, at the age of 85.)

In his introduction to *Where He Leads Me*, Synan traces his family back not to Scotch-Irish Protestants, as some had thought, but to a Catholic Irish family who from the twelfth century were land- and castle-owners in southern Ireland. After Cromwell invaded in the mid-1600s, the Catholic family was forced to sell their 12,000-acre estate to a Protestant family for a pittance of 300 pounds. Two centuries later, one of Synan’s ancestors came to America as a cabin boy and, stranded as a result of the War of 1812, later married and settled in Virginia. Though he remained Catholic, some of his descendants became Baptists, although Vinson’s father was a Methodist who became Pentecostal Holiness, which explains how it was that Synan was born into a Pentecostal

family. Synan humorously admits that as a young man he was “more afraid of Catholics than of communists or rattlesnakes” (90). In the latter part of his introduction, Synan ties his early Catholic ancestral ties to his first encounter with Catholic Charismatics on the Notre Dame University campus in 1972. When he first heard the voices of some 8,000 Roman Catholics singing in the Spirit, he wept as he realized that “the circle was now complete. My deep Irish Catholic roots were now connecting with my Pentecostal faith in a marvelous way” (14). Synan tells that part of his story in greater detail in chapter 6.

While this first experience with Catholic Charismatics would transform Synan’s understanding of the move of the Spirit and lead him to devote much of his life to promoting that movement across denominational lines and around the world, he always remained true to his Pentecostal-Holiness faith and vigilant against any compromise of his beliefs. No doubt, his being a historian rather than a theologian was why Synan said he found it difficult to understand the Catholic view of Spirit-baptism as an “‘actualization’ of what was received at baptism and confirmation,” as Fr. Kilian McDonnell—one of the first Catholic scholars of the Charismatic renewal—had described it; nevertheless, Synan believed “that this approach was the only one that would allow the movement to continue and grow in the Catholic system” (92). As Synan recounts in the rest of his memoir, he would have many opportunities to encounter Catholic Charismatics throughout his life, not least having audiences with Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis as well as speaking to 35,000 Catholics gathered at the Circus Maximus in Rome for “the Golden Jubilee of the Catholic Charismatic renewal in Rome” as recently as 2017 (209–10).

Synan’s memoir covers the major events of his life including his Pentecostal upbringing; his marriage to Carol Lee Fuqua and the birth of their four children; his education including his doctoral work at the University of Georgia; his publications including his dissertation, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, as well as over two dozen other volumes; his leadership in the Pentecostal Holiness Church including overseeing the trial of a bishop; and his work as organizer of numerous Pentecostal-Charismatic conferences, the highlight being undoubtedly the 1977 Kansas City conference with an attendance of some 50,000. He also treats his academic work including an early point in his career when he taught history at Emmanuel College in Franklin Springs, Georgia, and then later working as Dean of the School of Divinity at Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia, where he worked diligently to enable Regent to become the first university to gain ATS accreditation for an online PhD-in-theology program. He also covers his two tenures at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa,

Oklahoma, the first as director of the Holy Spirit Research Center and the second as Interim Dean of the College of Theology and Ministry.

Synan also briefly tells the story of how he, along with William Menzies and Horace Ward, conceived the idea of a professional society dedicated to Pentecostal studies, which would allow Pentecostal scholarship to develop far beyond anything that would have been imagined in the early decades of Pentecostalism when its adherents were largely uneducated. The society became known as the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS), which was to have convened its 49<sup>th</sup> meeting in March 2020 but was postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having organized national Pentecostal and Charismatic conferences throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Synan began working with Billy Wilson who—prior to becoming president of ORU—had been selected organizer of the Azusa Street Centennial celebration. After Synan’s successful participation in that event in 2006, Wilson asked him to accompany him on trips to various cities around the world, which Synan did despite enduring significant health issues. Greatly impressed by Wilson’s organizational skills, Synan then worked with him on Empowered21, including—with Amos Yong—editing four volumes on the global Spirit-empowered movements.

Wilson then asked Synan to serve as Interim Dean of ORU’s College of Theology and Ministry following Thomson Mathew’s resignation, which Synan did, in his memoir praising then Associate Dean, Cheryl Iverson, for her invaluable assistance during that transitional time. After Wonsuk Ma accepted the deanship, Synan was invited to remain at ORU as Scholar in Residence. Synan worked with Ma and Eric Newberg, one of his former Regent PhD students, to establish ORU’s PhD in Theology, which offered its first courses in the Fall 2019. Synan would live until shortly after ORU’s first PhD residency (Spring 2020).

As Synan explains, his autobiography borrows heavily, with the publisher’s permission, from his earlier book, *An Eyewitness Remembers the Century of the Holy Spirit* (Chosen Books, 2010). The memoir accents the highlights of the life of the author, who played a key role in the global advancement of the Pentecostal and the Charismatic Movement, now called the Spirit-empowered movement. In *Where He Leads Me*, Synan also updates the account of his life and work since 2010.

I highly recommend the Vinson Synan autobiography to any student or teacher of church history—especially Pentecostal history—because the story of the Spirit-empowered movement in the United States and beyond cannot be fully understood without understanding Synan’s key role in it.

Furthermore, virtually any reader of Synan’s book will want to supplement it with Daniel Isgrigg’s twelve-hour interview of Synan, *Where the Spirit Leads Me: An Oral*

*History of the Life and Ministry of Vinson Synan, Ph.D.* (2019), which is freely available on ORU's Digital Showcase at <https://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/synan/>. The interview is well organized, evenly paced, and well worth every minute it takes to listen, with Synan, as always, his animated, compelling storyteller self.

**Sally Jo Shelton** is Reviews Editor of *Spiritus*, Theological Librarian, and Associate Professor of Learning Resources, at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK, USA.

***Is It of God? A Biblical Guidebook for Spiritual Discernment.*** By Paul L. King. Newberry, FL: Bridge Logos, 2019. xii + 328 pp.

In *Is It of God? A Biblical Guidebook for Spiritual Discernment*, Paul King states his thesis early and straightforwardly: the necessity that believers acquire the ability to discern whether “an unusual teaching, practice or manifestation is from God” (xii). In the first chapter, the author pursues his thesis by asking and answering a series of questions beginning with the foundational question, “Why do we need discernment?” In answer, he posits that both the Old and New Testaments call for the skill of discernment in the community of God. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *bin* is used to exhort the people to turn their minds upon and to understand, while the New Testament community is encouraged by the use of the Greek verb *krino* to “judge” and by the noun *krisis* to practice sound and godly judgment.

In the second chapter, King offers twelve practical, biblical responses to the earlier posed “why” question. With accompanying scriptural references, the author establishes a broad biblical context for discernment among God's faith community throughout the ages. Discernment is deemed necessary because (1) God is pleased with believers' desire to discern, (2) not all spirits are from God, (3) not all that is supernatural is from God, (4) not all angels of light are from “The Light,” (5) believers can be deceived, (6) even the innocent can be deceived, (7) believers are commanded to examine all supernatural things carefully, (8) Scripture can be mishandled and misused, (9) believers can mishear the voice of God, (10) it is important to distinguish spirit from flesh as well as (11) the fleshly from the demonic, and, finally, because (12) the natural mind is insufficiently discerning.

Having established the need for discernment by exhaustively answering the “why” question, King addresses the “what” question by offering what he calls the seven “main biblical foundation blocks” (15) as the basis for “true” discernment, which must be (1) God-given, (2) Christ-centered, (3) Spirit-guided, (4) prayer-saturated, (5) scripturally

based, (6) corporately confirmed, and (7) divinely balanced. To be effective, the principles of the practice of discernment that King proposes in chapter 3 must be based on this foundation.

In the third chapter, King presents basic principles to be regularly practiced in the effort to truly discern, rightly hear, and aptly respond to God's voice and will. The author offers these principles of discernment as a template for both individuals and communities. When an issue demanding discernment presents itself, King suggests the following process—based on the acronym DISCERNS—Discover a biblical precedent, Investigate the scriptural harmony, Scrutinize for sound doctrine, Confirm with experience, Examine the fruit, Receive supernatural discernment, Note examples and lessons from the past, and Sift and weigh for divine equilibrium. With these foundational blocks in place and the principles functioning as a guide, King proposes that true discernment is not only possible, but probable.

The next twelve chapters (4–15) deal with various issues and questions concerning discernment. The issues range from nuances pertaining to discernment (ch. 4), limitations of discernment (ch. 5), unbiblical v. non-biblical issues related to discernment (ch. 6), discernment v. judgment (ch. 7), questionable claims of discernment (ch. 9), discerning true and false use of Scripture (ch. 10), and discerning true and counterfeit revival (ch. 14). The questions include whether all discernment is from God (ch. 8), whether cessationism or continuism is of God (chs. 11–12), whether miracles are always from God (ch. 13), and, lastly, why revival is so messy (ch. 15).

While chapters 4–15 offer much valuable information, the next four (chs. 16–19) are even more helpful in that they offer instruction as to how to apply practically the foundational principles established in the first four chapters. In chapter 16, King offers a method to exercise discernment in respect to true and false manifestations. Some particularly helpful strategic tools King offers at this point are eight identifying marks of a counterfeit as well as seventeen qualifying questions. In chapter 17, King focuses on the ability to discern between the Spirit, the flesh, and the demonic by supplying scriptural definitions and examples for each of these realms as well as a chart outlining the spectrum of what he calls the “ten levels of demonic degression” (295–96), which illustrate how one might go from wrong thoughts in the first level to demonic control in the tenth. King uses Ananias and Sapphira, Simon Magus, and Judas Iscariot as compelling examples of how individuals can regress towards the lowest level of spiritual “degression.”

Chapter 19—the final overtly instructional chapter—is a succinct “how-to” approach towards the development of spiritual discernment. King entitles it, “How to Develop Spiritual Discernment” (314). As described, *Is It of God?* offers a myriad of



questions and issues along with related charts, graphs, and templates. Finally, however, King boils it down to four steps that must be taken to establish a rhythmic lifestyle of true discernment: (1) pray, (2) be humble, (3) know who the enemy is, and, finally, (4) train one's spiritual eyes and ears.

*Is It of God?* provides a wealth of information on the topic of spiritual discernment. Stylistically, it is both academic and practical, providing ample in-text linguistic insights and helpful endnotes, while remaining palatable and attainable for the layperson. Historically broad, theologically sound, and practically applicable in numerous contexts, the book will serve as a unique resource that focuses not only on Spirit-empowered orthodoxy but also on orthopraxy. Works of this genre tend to focus on one of these elements or the other, but here King has endeavored to do both and has done so successfully, making this a helpful resource for the parish, the classroom, and the prayer closet. For pastors, it is readily useable for expounding the need for "true" spiritual discernment. For teachers, it will provide substantive information for classroom presentations; and for laypeople, it will serve as a companion in their daily quest to hear the voice of God in their own hearts and homes.

**Jeffrey Voth** is Associate Professor of Practical Ministry in the College of Theology and Ministry, Oral Roberts University, and Lead Pastor at Church 3434 in Tulsa, OK, USA.