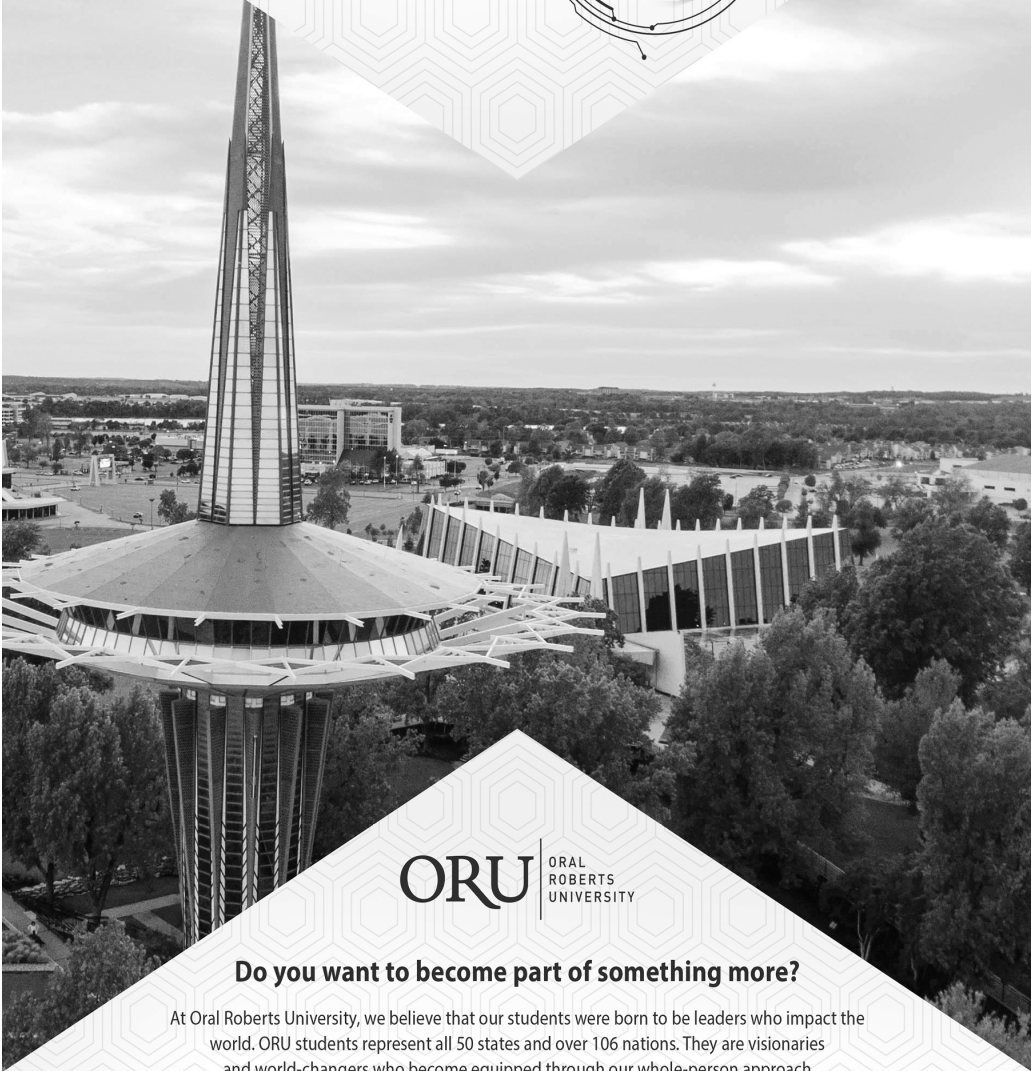


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EDITORIAL: SO WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT?

JEFFREY S. LAMP, EDITOR

By any reckoning, 2020 was a year for the books. For those residing in the United States, it was a confluence of several seismic events, the occurrence of any one of which would have been difficult enough. Of course, in terms of significance and scale is the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, a global pandemic national leadership first assured us was under constant scrutiny and control, only to have it emerge in a way that betrayed our lack of national preparedness and ability to respond in a coherent way. The fact that the pandemic emerged in the lead-up to another divisive presidential election cycle did not help an ideologically polarized society deal with it in a better way. Add to this another in a seemingly endless line of national racial reckonings and the result is a concentrated and complex social unrest that rivaled the Civil Rights and Vietnam Eras of the 1960s and early 1970s.

It would be wonderful if at this juncture in this little discussion I could triumphantly announce that Spirit-empowered believers rose to the occasion as a whole and offered a healing way forward. The reason I cannot do so is for the same reason I cannot announce the opposite, namely that Spirit-empowered believers are largely to blame for the national malaise. The Spirit-empowered movement is too large, diverse, and global to permit such facile assignments. To be sure, there are Spirit-empowered believers who are charting ways forward in the face of all of these issues. On the other hand, there are those who perpetuate racist attitudes and practices, who sow partisan political and social discord with alleged prophetic pronouncements and advocacy of conspiracy theories, and who unnecessarily pit church and state against each other in a God vs. Caesar showdown while thousands suffer physically, economically, and emotionally from the effects of the pandemic and the effects of systemic racism. The sad fact seems to be that Spirit-empowered believers have not clearly distinguished themselves from the rest of the population in terms of responses to the challenges of our day.

Perhaps this is not even a cause for concern. A monolithic movement would run the risk of running off track without the ability to correct itself effectively. The short history of Pentecostalism shows that there really is no such thing as “Pentecostalism,” but rather, in the well-worn retort, there are only

“pentecostalism.” As a mentor of mine back in the 1980s was fond of saying, “The Charismatic Movement does not have a papacy, but we have many popes.” Perhaps it is best that in the post-Pentecost (Acts 2 version, not 1906) age of the democratization of the Spirit there is no one entity that can ride herd on all expressions arising from various sectors of the movement.

I surely believe there are individuals and groups within the larger movement who are articulating and living the truth as it is in Christ, just as there are those who seem to have forgotten the moorings of the gospel. The Spirit-empowered conversation is often as “spirited” and vitriolic as the secular counterpart, with one side at one time holding sway and another side at another time. And because even Spirit-empowered human beings are complicated critters, sometimes an individual gets it right on one point and wrong at another. Of course, we could all wish the other side would have a “come to Jesus” moment and see things our way, making all things right. But given that all sides of any issue of concern within the movement might hold to this dream, we’re right back where we started.

I suspect there will be no real resolution to this issue on a macro scale. The movement is large and diverse, and there will inevitably be issues where faithful people disagree. Perhaps the test of the day is not which side “wins” the debates, but how we go about waging the battle. A place to start may be to turn attention from winning the argument to helping those who suffer. Who are the victims of the plague? Who are those suffering from injustice on any front? Whose voices aren’t being heard, and how can we hear and project them? Does anyone have a cup of cold water to offer? I recognize that even asking these questions as I have evidences a bias in how I view the path toward wholeness. Even so, we must strive as a movement to hear the voice of the Spirit, adopting a stance of humility as we engage each other, and the world, to bring the healing power of God to bear on the ills of our day.

By all indications, 2021 has not proven a remedy to the previous year’s maladies. Despite promise of vaccines, the pandemic still rages, cases spiking again when our national discipline wanes. Six days into the new year, the government of the United States came perilously close to unraveling on national television. Much has been said on the matter of race, but as “allyship” increases, so too do voices within our movement that seem to long for the days of Jim Crow. It is painfully obvious that merely turning a calendar page to a new year will not be the answer. Perhaps a sober examination of what it means to be truly Spirit-empowered will be a place to begin. I jokingly remind my students that the Spirit’s first name is

“Holy.” However we express our empowerment, it must always reflect the Spirit who sanctifies us and leads us to be holy as God is holy.

So in light of all of this we offer this spring’s issue of *Spiritus*. Several of the articles in this issue reflect the topics of the day, some directly, some less so.

The issue opens with a memorial tribute to the founding Dean of ORU’s Graduate School of Theology and Ministry, Dr. James (Jimmy) B. Buskirk (1933–2020). Dr. Buskirk’s life, ministry, and legacy within the ORU community are lovingly surveyed by Arden Autry and James and Sally Jo Shelton. The tribute clearly shows Jimmy Buskirk as a man who lived for the glory of God both by doing that to which God called him and who lived “in such a way that people have a better opinion of God.” Of particular interest in this piece is the story of how Dr. Buskirk came to ORU to serve as its founding Dean and what he accomplished during his tenure (1976–1984).

Next is a trio of articles by professors in the Undergraduate Theology Department at Oral Roberts University. Julie Ma opens with an examination of the major themes of Oral Roberts’ preaching. The three key themes are the doctrine of Seed-faith, the healing of the whole person, and the “Fourth Man.” These themes emerge from key experiences in Roberts’ spirituality and theology: his resolve to be an “original” preacher, his own personal healing from tuberculosis, and his anointing to heal. Following this, James Shelton presents a biblical study of the name of Jesus in Acts. He traces the importance of the concept of the “name” in both Greek and Hebrew cultures, focusing attention on the significance of the name of Jesus in Luke’s portrayal in Acts. Shelton concludes that in the name of Jesus is power and authority that impinges directly on the mission of Jesus in the world, particularly in the church’s Gentile mission, that addresses the question of whether there may be salvation outside of the name of Jesus. In the name of Jesus resides the power and authority to address the condition of all peoples and thus must be proclaimed in all the world. Eric Newberg addresses the role of Pentecostal churches in the Middle East in terms of migration to this region triggered by poor economic conditions in countries of origin. Immigrants, whether documented or not, and often Pentecostal, flood into these nations and find in Pentecostal churches spiritual, social, economic, and political support, as well as assistance in resisting domination by oppressive local employers. Though small in number in the Middle East, Pentecostals play a vital role in the acculturation of immigrants arriving due to the realities of globalization.

A pair of articles by Monte Lee Rice and Dimitri Sala address the question of how Spirit-empowered Christians might bring the power and presence of the Spirit to bear on the matter of transforming culture. Rice proposes a complex conversation among several voices leading to a “conscientizing praxis of mass culture engagement.” He begins by forging a complementary synthesis of the contrasting pneumatologically themed theologies of culture put forth by Amos Yong and Simon Chan, then bringing this into conversation with Tracey Rowland’s critique of Vatican II’s *Guadium Et Spes* and *aggiornamento* agenda, appropriating her contention that cultural engagement in today’s world requires a strong “moral forming ecclesial culture.” From here, the discussion is informed by Frankfurt/Birmingham culture critique methodologies and then framed within the apocalyptically-themed Pentecostal cosmology, which entails appropriating the notion of Pentecostal formation Cheryl Bridges Johns calls “conscientization” and integrating James K. A. Smith’s practice of apocalyptic culture reading. The result is what Rice calls a “theologically robust model for popular culture analysis.” Sala explores the relationship between Pentecostals and the cultures we inhabit, drawing a contrast between “Pentecostal culture,” in which Pentecostals create a culture within itself, and a “Pentecost of culture,” in which Pentecostals exert a positive role within culture for its transformation. Based in part on an extension of the Pentecostal notion of Spirit baptism to include culture, he argues for the transformational model of cultural engagement, noting points at which Pentecostals are currently involved in bringing about “Kingdom-transformation” in cultures. He further notes that Pentecostalism is systemically ripe for this type of transforming work via its ability to change paradigms, its embrace of the manifestation of supernatural power, and its ecumenical modeling of unity.

In light of the impending centennial of the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, Harold Hunter offers a critical look at how Pentecostals have historically embodied interracialism in US churches and denominations, highlighting both points at which the racial harmony of the Azusa revival and the (re)appearance of white supremacy prevailed. Hunter assesses that the impact of Pentecostal interracialism has had a limited effect in addressing systemic racism and calls Pentecostals to “revisit the founders’ emphasis on repentance, reform, and restitution.”

Following Hunter’s piece two articles explore the responses of Pentecostals to the COVID-19 pandemic. Interestingly, one of these articles was written by an African American scholar and the other by an African scholar of Pentecostalism. First, David Daniels, III, provides a look at how the Church of God in Christ

(COGIC), a black Pentecostal denomination, has responded to the pandemic. Drawing attention to the leadership of Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr., Daniels argues that the COGIC response to COVID-19 serves as an example of a rapport between Spirit-empowered Christians and secular/scientific actors in addressing this health crisis. The COGIC response occupies a mediating position in which the findings of science and the spiritual and theological treasures of the tradition come together to urge parishioners to bring both sound science and spiritual fervor to bear on the crisis. Moreover, the COGIC approach offers the potential for the church to engage structural racism in healthcare as it addresses the pandemic. In his article, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu examines how African Pentecostals have responded to the pandemic. Noting the prevalence of the prosperity gospel in African Pentecostalism, Asamoah-Gyadu argues that COVID-19 has presented church leaders with a dilemma in addressing how the negative impacts of this “evil virus” square with a theology of health and wealth. The article surveys the responses of some key figures in African Pentecostalism whose responses range from espousing conspiracy theories, to motivating congregations to hopeful perseverance, to demonizing the virus and declaring protection from its evil. A key shift in emphasis by some leaders is the focus on an eschatological framing of the faith away from an overly realized triumphalism in the present.

Finally, on a more administrative note, the editorial board of *Spiritus* is proud to announce that the journal is now indexed in the ATLA Religion Database (ADB). ADB is the premier index of scholarly material in the fields of religion and theology, and the inclusion of *Spiritus* in this database will increase exposure of the journal to a wider audience and lead to more downloads of articles, particularly from other educational institutions. We have Thad Horner, Digital Scholarship and Research Librarian at ORU, to thank for this achievement.

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