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BOOK REVIEW

Wonders above, signs below: Pentecostal missiology and environmental degradation

Baron, E. & Yong, A. (Eds), (Langham Publishing, 2025), pp. 416, 978-1-78641-152-5 print; 978-1-78641-1 e-Pub; 978-1-78641-260-7 PDF.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pentecostal missiologists are not known for their engagement with the environmental crisis, but Baron and Yong (2025) present a well-researched and widely consulted book that hosts contributions from Pentecostal-Charismatic academics, practitioners, and eco-activists from all over the globe. Without being ignorant about past tendencies to focus on the saving of the soul and the eternal life that awaits the believer, Baron and Yong (2025) demonstrate how the church after Pentecost understood its environmental responsibility, presented by the authors in the book, regarding issues that are organised in four perspectives.

The book is written for Pentecostal-Charismatic mission leaders, missionaries, missiologists, scholars, theologians, ecclesial leaders, ecclesial communities, mission movements, organisations, and last, but not least, all brothers and sisters who "bear faithful witness in an era of environmental degradation" (Baron & Yong 2025:15). A book

with a wide reach but also written "in many tongues" that truly represents Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in a cross-confessional, cross-continental, and cross-contextual way.

Instead of focusing on individual chapters, effectively and succinctly summarized by Baron and Yong (2025:10-15), this review is framed around four perspectives, namely scriptural, theological, global, and ecumenical perspectives.

2. SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVES

In the first four chapters, the authors wrestle with an apocalyptic Pentecostal eschatology that is mostly regarded as a main reason why Pentecostals in the past focused mostly on the saving of souls and were less concerned about a world that will go up in smoke.

Davis and Grey (2025:2) critically examine some of the apocalyptic texts and argue for a Pentecostal ecotheology that takes human responsibility for the degradation of creation seriously. The broken covenant and its renewal, as well as the relevance of Isaiah 24 for such a theology are rooted in the self-giving love of God and the restoration and renewal of creation. Lamp (2025) examines the temptation of Jesus (Matthew) and the groaning of creation (Romans) and derives from these texts that the hope for creation lies in the mission of the Spirit-filled believers who engage with the care of creation. What was lost in the vocation of Adam was reclaimed in Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers.

Newton (2025) detects a deficiency of scriptural engagement in most of the Pentecostal eco-theologies, except that, for some, putting forth the books of Revelation and Genesis is most creation conscious and environmentally aware. After discussing various themes related to the environment, Newton considers that the call of repentance to the churches still applies nowadays. Yong (2025) finds a correlation between language endangerment and environmental degradation, from biblical times to the first peoples, and up to the present. The creational mandate to fill the earth and the Pentecost message of many tongues provide a theological witness that results in a cultural linguistic revitalisation and ecological renewal (Yong 2025:82). Going green is everyone's responsibility, prioritising indigenous communities, interrelating community development, and reviving endangered languages.

3. THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

One of the foundational fathers of Pentecostal theology, Walter Hollenweger, was quiet but not silent about eco-theological matters. Swoboda (2025) finds in his work some launching points for an ecological pneumatology, ecclesiology, and soteriology. He refuses a theology that was only church-centric, and his understanding of healing was not for the soul but for the whole world. Peyton (2025) reflects critically on the lack of theological and scientific foundations in Oneness Pentecostalism, that contributes to their lack of interest in ecotheology. What is needed, in Peyton's view, is the integration of *spiritus Dei*, *missio Dei*, and *imago Dei* in Oneness Pentecostalism, and it is their limited view of the *missio Dei* that prevents them from caring for creation.

The materiality, interdependence, and participatory nature of Pentecostal experience is of interest to Frost (2025), especially how the Spirit can use these to bring renewal to creation. The Pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit leads to a holistic sense of mission, thus bringing about upliftment for the poor, and a holistic spirituality that sees the Spirit at work in every sphere of life. The Spirit brings not only an otherworldly, but also a this-worldly orientation, and although sometimes abused in the prosperity gospel, it is holistic in nature. Staying with the present realities and potential futures, Rizzo (2025) brings in conservation as an aspect in environmental stewardship and integral to eco-mission. A zoological focus of eco-mission includes safeguarding animal habitats, preventing species extinction, and fostering biodiversity. When extinction is viewed as a theological problem, it results in a comprehensive understanding of salvation and holistic mission that includes animal care.

4. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Wachsmuth and Ana (2025) identify a dualistic spirituality towards the environment in the Romanian context, which results in either an escapist approach or an environmental stewardship. Romanian Pentecostals experience persecution in various ways but their view of the interconnectedness of human beings, animals, and nature creates an appreciation for the environment. Developing a theology of place might help Pentecostals appreciate the extension of the role of the Holy Spirit to creation and respect for human dignity.

Onen and Riches (2025) report from the Ugandan context how local congregations help with the regeneration of the forest. As an important resource for community survival, the forests need saving from environmental degradation, which is an injustice to the environment and human beings. Pentecostal churches view reforestation as an important part of their mission. Part of it is decolonising Christian perspectives of mission and the

environment, and appreciation for the African understanding of life force or vitality. Poverty and ecojustice are considered to be intertwined and require serious interrogation. A relationship of friendship with nature is proposed.

With Ghana also facing deforestation, praying on mountains, in forests and rivers, is also regarded as pneumatological prayer practices that can bring environmental protection. Oppong-Konadu and Sansa (2025) consider environmental sustainability in Ghanaian Pentecostal lived theology, finding prayer as a direct engagement between God, those who pray, and their environment. Miraculous encounters with God in the bush, like Moses, is enough motivation for God's presence in the cosmos. Awudi (2025:259) claims that the answer lies in embracing ecotheology in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology. Without it, there is no motivation to care for creation. The foundations of Pentecostal ecclesiology on the fivefold gospel, Jesus the Saviour (salvation and sanctification), Healer (healing), Spirit Baptiser and King (parousia), is not enough, without the Scriptures. Creation care should become a lifestyle and eliminate anthropocentric tendencies, reinterpreting healing, and including the other-than-human in the Spirit's empowerment.

Eriksen (2025) also wrestles with the tendency among Pentecostals to neglect care for creation in favour of care for the soul, which ends normally in an otherworldly approach to the environment. Neo-Pentecostal focus mostly on materialistic things which is supported by the prosperity gospel. They are inactive when it comes to caring for creation. Ericksen (2025) proposes a spirit-infused ethical network that integrates spiritual, theological, imaginative, and rational resources for social transformation. Such an approach requires all Pentecostals, in both the Global South and the Global North, to work together.

5. ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVES

Hunter (2025) couples restitution by the Global North towards the Global South with climate justice, arguing that it should become part of an understanding of Pentecostal mission. The need for a global ecology group consisting of Pentecostals is also identified, but recognition does not always come from global institutions such as the UN. Amid all efforts across the Pentecostal denominational divide, climate justice and environmental justice remain unchallenged and not dealt with. Urvas (2025) argues for a Pentecostal public missiology, that is not only spiritual and intellectual, but also includes bodily experience, finding in Mary, the *theotokos* or bearer of God, an expression of what it entails. The theology of an early church writer, Ephrem the Syrian, is also consulted to explain the incarnational nature of the Trinity and its implications for a public missiology and environmental mandate. It

links mystical and concrete experiences, connecting human beings with the created order and God, enabling the community of the Spirit to demonstrate the overflowing love of God, like Mary carrying it under our hearts. This looks at the reality of despair caused by the environmental crisis.

Yong (2025) questions whether consolation can be found in Christian teachings, and in which ones? The answer to this question can be found in the cosmotheandric vision of Pannikar who focuses on the divine, humanity, and the cosmos. Pannikar's open table approach to the Eucharist makes the mystery of Christ available to all without judgement. Being in Christ interrelates us with others, and brings about relational transformation that includes social justice. Yong (2025) proposes a contemplacostal spirituality that expresses this openness characteristic of early Pentecostalism, as found in the Eucharist, connection, communion, and confidence. Such a spirituality can address ecological justice in four ways, namely recover practices that confront suffering and bring transformation; recreate practices that strengthen interdependence with life; mind-dominated dominance should include wisdom-embodied living, and rediscover dimensions of life that are compatible with diversity. A relational solidarity is needed that includes the divine, the human, and the cosmos.

Lord (2025) turns to the contemplative practices of Thomas Merton and argues for a Pentecostal ecological imagination. Building on Vondey and Yong's understanding of pneumatological imagination, Lord criticises their work on ecological concerns and practices as too abstract and distant from contemporary imaginative narrative and testimony, arguing for a finding of the Spirit on the edges. Using Merton's contemplative narratives, Lord discovers the need for clarity on ecology, and the need to identify the Spirit's work on the edge.

Baron (2025) concludes the section and the book with a call on the entire church to join the *missio Dei*, the call to care for creation. Pentecostals form part of this call to ecological transformation and should make it part of their missional worship, in their singing, worship, and personal lives. In that sense, Pentecostals will be able to address the need for an experiential epistemology that addresses the crisis of ecological degradation.

6. CONCLUSION

Baron and Yong (2025) create a glocal (both global and local) platform for Pentecostal voices that were muted for too long or whose conversations took place on the margins. In their book, *Wonders above, signs below*, Baron and Yong were able to weave all these strings representing different beliefs

and expressions within Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, from the Global South and the Global North, from all continents, from different race groups, genders, ethnicities and nationalities, into a rich tapestry of ecological sources.

The book succeeds in combining biblical perspectives on ecology and theological perspectives from different ecumenical conversation partners. The book facilitates open and frank conversations that can elicit further conversations on Pentecostal missiology and ecological degradation. More extensive research is required on how all these can become part of Pentecostal liturgical spaces and, as indicated by Baron, missional worship, not dominated by one partner over another.