

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Denzil R. Miller, *Empowered for Global Mission: A Missionary Look at the Book of Acts*, revised edition (Springfield, MO: PneumaLife Publications, 2019). 310 pp. \$15.95 paperback.**

I recently read Denzil Miller's *Empowered for Global Mission* while preparing to teach a course in Africa. Denny has ministered in Africa for many years and is a passionate proponent of the missiological significance of the Pentecostal gift. As I read his book, I was immediately impressed with its clarity, significance, and value.

In this book Miller takes the reader on an inspiring tour through seven key outpourings of the Spirit in the book of Acts. Along the way, he presents compelling arguments for reading Acts as "a handbook on missionary strategy" (12). The "key to understanding Luke's intent for writing the book" is found in Acts 1:8 (35). This verse not only provides a programmatic outline for Acts (" . . . Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth," v. 8b), but it also presents a timeless, paradigmatic promise: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses . . ." (v. 8a). Here too we find a clear statement of Luke's purpose: "He wants his readers to know that in order to fulfill Christ's command to take the gospel to all nations, the church, and each believer in the church, must be empowered by the Holy Spirit" (67-68).

The book actually begins with a helpful description of important literary features and hermeneutical principles relevant to the study of Acts (Part 1). The heart of the book consists of an analysis of six of the seven key outpourings of the Holy Spirit recorded in Acts 2, 4, 8, 9, 10 (Part 2). An analysis of the seventh outpouring of the Spirit on the Ephesian disciples (Acts 19) is combined with a discussion of the Spirit-empowerment theme in Paul's epistles (Part 3). Finally, Miller ends with an extremely helpful "Application" section (Part 4) that treats the role of gifts of the Spirit in missions, evidential tongues, and several other themes. The book includes two informative appendices that offer an outline of Acts and a catalogue of gifts of the Spirit that appear in Acts. A glossary and bibliography, along with subject and verse indexes, complete the book.

In my opinion, *Empowered for Global Mission* represents an incredibly valuable resource for Pentecostal students and pastors. It should be required reading in every Pentecostal Bible school, whether in Africa, Asia, America, or elsewhere. Several qualities encourage me to make this unsolicited endorsement. First, in addition to its outstanding Pentecostal content, the book is immensely readable. Miller's writing

style is exceptionally clear. With short, simple sentences and strikingly memorable phrases he illuminates his subject. Miller's pedagogical genius is reflected in the book's structure, in its compelling descriptions, and in the numerous charts and illustrations that serve to aid the reader. The book's simplicity and clarity will undoubtedly make it easy to translate. I have already encouraged friends in China to take up this task.

Secondly, this book convincingly articulates a core Pentecostal doctrine: the missiological nature of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Miller skillfully guides the reader through key passages in Acts and builds his case, block by block, for Luke's missiological purpose. Miller correctly notes that "a powerful dynamic of the early Pentecostals was the way they successfully married the experience of Spirit baptism to world evangelization and to the soon coming of Christ" (13). Miller develops these interconnected themes—Spirit baptism, eschatological urgency, and global witness—through a careful reading of the book of Acts. For example, of the angels' declaration in Acts 1:11, "why do you stand here looking into the sky?," Miller implores: "Sense the urgency in their voice. Time is wasting; Jesus is coming again; be about your business of receiving the Spirit and preaching the gospel to the nations!" (59). Miller traces the "*empowerment-witness motif*" throughout Acts and notes that "every evangelistic and missionary advance . . . is preceded by one or more empowerings with the Holy Spirit in which the church is equipped for the task ahead" (66). Miller also helpfully highlights Acts 19:1-20 as "the clearest and most comprehensive example of the strategy Paul used in his missionary work" (182). Paul's strategy here included: (1) pneumatic empowering (19:6); (2) evangelism (with new believers, 19:9); (3) training workers (Hall of Tyrannus for two years, 19:10).

Finally, *Empowered for Global Mission* is intensely practical. The book is peppered with edifying exhortations (e.g., "Luke wanted his readers to know that one outpouring—or one infilling—of the Spirit is not enough, no matter how powerful or how dramatic it may have been," 98) and insights that will inspire sermons (e.g., on Acts 13:1-4, 171-74). This practical, down-to-earth quality makes the book tremendously valuable and useable for pastors and students alike. I warmly commend it to all who are interested in pursuing the call of Christ contained in the promise of Pentecost.

Miller's instincts are surely correct when he writes:

It is my belief that the western Pentecostal church's hope lies at least in part, in the emerging missionary movements of its daughter churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These

churches are much more oriented to supernatural experience than their parent churches in the west. Rather than following the lead of the west, these churches must assert themselves, and stand firm in the area of Pentecostal doctrine and experience (270).

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**David Bentley Hart, *You Are Gods: On Nature and Supernature* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022). xi + 139 pp. \$25.00 paperback.**

David Bentley Hart's new essay collection, *You are Gods: On Nature and Supernature*, is the second volume in a one-two punch against traditionalist Thomism, the first having arrived a few months earlier in his *Tradition and Apocalypse*. While these texts signal Hart's selection of a new opponent, *You are Gods* also serves as a tapered point wherein the seemingly disparate strands of Hart's recent research are gathered and unified. A deeper examination reveals that this current polemical campaign is just the latest in a demonstration of martial artistry that began all the way back in *The Beauty of the Infinite*.

In *Tradition and Apocalypse*, Hart provided an argument against defining tradition historically, the approach favored by traditionalist Thomism. As an alternative, Hart argued that tradition ought to be defined in reference to its eschatological horizon. *You are Gods* takes this eschatological perspective and applies it to a metaphysical and phenomenological revision of theological anthropology broadly speaking. In doing so, Hart takes aim at the hard distinction between the natural and supernatural, a distinction safeguarded by the same traditionalist Thomists critiqued in *Tradition and Apocalypse*.

The chief implication that Hart draws from this eschatological framing is that humanity's nature must always be considered according to its telos in deification. From this perspective, nature and supernature as discrete concepts lose all meaning. Framed by theosis, human nature is defined by its supernatural culmination and is thereby shown always to be a supernatural trajectory. Hart argues that this metaphysical reality correlates to a phenomenological one. Rational volition and cognition subsist as an orientation toward Being as such. And rational desire, therefore, is fundamentally a desire for union with God, which can only be properly understood and satisfied eschatologically. This undermines