This volume represents the beginning of a new commentary series called The Pentecostal Commentary. As such it represents another series available on the market, written from a specific perspective. We have, for example, the much older series, the Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Neukirchener), initiated in the 1970s. In much more recent times we have seen several other kinds of series focusing on specific aspects, such as a series called A Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings (Sheffield Academic Press), and there is a sociorhetorical commentary on its way. Each of these is supposed to be written from a specific perspective, denominational, hermeneutical or methodological, or both. One may like this development or not; personally I have my reservations, but it appears that there is an interest in the market for it. But I do not think it is good for the genre as such of biblical commentary series.

The present series is, as stated by its main editor, “to provide reasonably priced commentaries written from a distinctively Pentecostal perspective primarily for pastors, lay persons, and Bible students. Therefore, while the works are based upon the best of scholarship, they are written in popular language” (vii). I will review the volume,
especially focusing on what is the special characteristic features of the book and how it manages to live up to its stated purpose of being a Pentecostal commentary.

The volume comprises only 176 pages; this does not leave much space to the commentary proper, as it deals with both 1–2 Peter and Jude. The volume is, however, written in a readable style and with sober judgments concerning the difficult passages present in these New Testament works. The author thus does not indulge in the difficulties of the text nor avoid them. The reader is rightly informed that some texts are more discussed than others, some more difficult to interpret.

The exposition of 1 Peter comprises a total of seventy-six pages. The letter is considered written by Peter, or rather “through Silvanus,” around 65 C.E. Accepting Silvanus as the physical writer solves, according to Skaggs, several of the problems associated with a Petrine authorship. In order to assure that it might have been written already at the time of Nero, she suggests that the suffering theme of the letter is “addressed to people who had perhaps fled from the Roman persecution, having lost relatives and/or friends in the persecution at Rome” (7). The main theme of the letter, furthermore, is said to be suffering (11–14). The introduction ends with a brief review of the theme of the Holy Spirit in the letter (14), a topic that it is admitted is not a major theme in the epistle.

In her exposition of 2 Peter (80–146), the letter is interpreted as belonging to two literary genres, the letter form and the “testament” or “farewell speech.” Concerning the question of authorship, Skaggs concludes that, although it shows the influence of the apostle Peter, it was most probably not written by him, neither do we know who else wrote it. Accordingly, she is also free to accept a rather late date and suggests it may have been written at the end of the first century C.E. or at the beginning of the second (89). The author was probably highly educated, possessing a rich vocabulary and concepts of the Hellenistic world.

Concerning the letter of Jude (148–75) however, she adheres to a more “conservative” opinion. After a brief but judicious presentation, she states that both the internal and external evidence supports the view that the author might very well be Jude, the brother of Jesus and James. The question is, however, left rather open, but she finds that the author shows a familiarity with Judaism, “as well as a marked reliance upon Palestinian literature, haggadic tradition and apocalyptic perspective” (149). The destination of the letter is unknown, but the intended recipients were probably Jewish-Christian.

In the commentary proper on 1 Peter, the text is divided into three sections; 1:1–12; 1:13–4:11; 4:12–5:14. Each section has an additional actualizing section called “Reflection and Response.” A brief bibliography is added. Skaggs manage to work her way through the
letter without getting involved in the interpretive problems sometimes inherent in the texts, such as 3:18–22 (50–54). Her own favorite commentators on the letter are obviously L. Goppelt and Ramsey Michaels, as these are very often referred to. She is, however, also aware of the major issues discussed in later research on this letter, as represented by the works of John H. Elliott. In dealing with 2 Peter and Jude, she often refers to Neyrey’s commentary (AB) and Bauckham’s (WBC). But in sum, in these 176 pages on 1–2 Peter and Jude she manages to provide a readable brief exposition of the major issues in the letters.

After her expositions of each major sections of the letters, she presents some actualizing comments, called “Reflection and Response.” In these sections she draws some spiritual lessons from the texts. Because the commentary is written from a Pentecostal perspective, one might have expected that this denominational preference would appear more explicitly here, but the comments are rather very common. Here is very little that is explicitly characteristic of Pentecostalism.

Hence, the volume, claiming to be a Pentecostal commentary, has become a very general commentary. I can very well imagine that a volume on the Lukan Acts of the Apostles written from a Pentecostal perspective would be much more explicit on the Pentecostal issues. Here, as the author herself admits, the Holy Spirit is not that central. I think both laypersons and Bible students would gladly receive and accept the expositions in this brief commentary, whether they belong to a Pentecostal church or not. And that is, after all, in my opinion, a good mark of a biblical commentary.