

Pentecostal Power: Expressions, Impact and Faith of Latin American Pentecostalism. Calvin L. Smith, ed. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2011. 284 pp., hardback £103 ISBN 978-90-04-19249-2

Reviewed by **Brian N. Brewer**
King's Evangelical Divinity School, U.K.

The explosive growth of Latin American Pentecostalism between 1960 and 1990 became the catalyst for increased scholarly attention of the Pentecostal movement in the global South. Whereas, previous scholarly works tended to relegate Pentecostal studies within a broader interdisciplinary analysis of the movement, the rapid rise of Pentecostal studies is becoming a sub-discipline in its own right. Thus, the purpose and benefit of this book lie in its survey and exploration of various aspects of the Pentecostal movement by scholars from diverse disciplines.

The chapters are organized into three-sections: General historical overview of Latin American Pentecostal development, theoretical issues, and theological matters. In chapter one Everett Wilson utilizes selected case studies to explain why Pentecostalism out-paced non-Pentecostal evangelicals despite not having a well-structured organization or fixed-ideology. Ultimately, he attributes Pentecostalism's phenomenal growth to "divine intervention" (p. 13). Chapter two, by Juan Sepúlveda, explores the origin and character of Chilean Pentecostalism. Sepúlveda asserts that the Chilean Pentecostalism movement was homegrown and essentially independent of Azusa. He observes that while Pentecostalism has influenced and shaped Chilean Pentecostal identity and its relationship with other religions and engagement with society and politics, their social-political preferences do not differ significantly from non-Pentecostals of the same social sector (p. 60). Carmelo Alvarez closes out the first section with a historical review of Hispanic Pentecostals in the U.S.—both their involvement and impact in early North American and Latin American Pentecostal development. He discusses a cyclical pattern of cross-fertilization between North American and Latin American Pentecostalism with its subsequent re-exportation to the South.

The second section, Theoretical Issues, opens with chapter four and Bernice Martin noting the development of the term "fundamentalist" as pejorative and how social scientists distorted the true character of Pentecostalism by coupling it with fundamentalism (p. 104). Martin continues, in chapter five to describe how reductionist social science models created ideological conflicts regarding the characterization of Latin American Pentecostalism. Tracing the progressive move away from automatic hostility towards Pentecostalism, Martin highlights "the ideological distance traveled by

analysts of Pentecostalism” (p. 126) and the need to not treat Pentecostalism “as an ideological football” (p. 130). Chapter six has Heinrich Schäfer commending social theories of Pierre Bourdieu to espouse the need for a new model to analyze religious praxis “for qualitative research ... on both identities and strategies of religious actors” (p. 141). For Schäfer, the need for a new analytical model is to help eliminate “fuzzy experience” in order to establish “clear cut meaning” (p. 152). Stephen Hunt rounds out the theoretical section in chapter seven with a Brazilian case study. He highlights Pentecostalism’s shift from margin-oriented political-social involvement to “third-wave Pentecostalism” that directly challenges political processes through an emphasis of “conquering demonic strongholds” accompanied by a “strong prophetic element” (p. 158). Though classic- vs. neo-Pentecostalism nurture quite “divergent political orientations” (p. 171)—i.e., political quiescence/passivity or active involvement – Pentecostal interest is ultimately in their respective congregations, not Brazil’s civil society (p. 176).

Calvin Smith inaugurates the theological section by noting how little work has been done regarding Latin American Pentecostal theology as compared to the abundance of historical, sociological, and political studies. Smith focuses on Pentecostal pneumatology and eschatology and notes how these two doctrines impact Pentecostal life. He highlights how a “theological emphasis on individual empowerment” (p. 186) works so effectively, especially by a movement that does not have a rigid monolithic theology (p. 199). In chapter nine, Virginia and Eloy Nolivos posit that Pentecostal paradigm shifts in Christian theology, identity, and history “can best be seen among the fundamental unit of society, the family” (p. 205). Pentecostalism offers an alternative reality and new understanding of God as compared to the old reality fostered by Catholic and Spanish colonization’s “negative anthropology” (p. 210) or “victim identity” (p. 212). For the Nolivos’ Pentecostalism is transforming the Latin American psyche away from the previous negative anthropology.

Chile serves again as a case study in chapter ten as Martin Lindhart probes Pentecostalism’s emphasis on spiritual (cosmic) warfare as the answer to everything from global disasters to problems of everyday life. Lindhart calls this emphasis “diabologies” and proffers that their use explains the historic Pentecostal problem of intra-church schism and division (p. 228) as well as sociality and micro-politics (p. 234). The book concludes with Cecil Robeck’s review of the erosion of Catholic hegemony in Latin America. Though Catholic bishops initiated efforts toward détente between Catholics and Pentecostals, Robeck highlights a depth of conversation that has “steadily grown” (p. 258), particularly through the International Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (pp. 259, 270-71). Though in many parts of the world

Pentecostals and Catholics treat each other as “ideological enemies” (p. 266), Robeck seems to enthusiastically promote “the Dialogue” and any process that makes “dialogue and communication between Catholics and Pentecostals ... healthier” (p. 272).

The three major sections have more than organizational value as they overlap and are not mutually exclusive. The difference of opinions presented by Sepúlveda and Alvarez highlight the ongoing debate regarding Latin American Pentecostalism’s autochthonous vs. exogenous nature and relationship with the United States/Azusa. Thus, the additional works by Calvin Smith listed at the end of chapter eight are recommended to highlight that it is not an “either-or,” but a “both-and” issue. The theoretical section, notably Bernice Martin’s contributions, follows well from the historical. However, Schäfer’s essay is complex requiring readers to be familiar with social science. This chapter is much more theoretical than practical, and the goal for a new analytical model to eliminate fuzzy experience and establish clear-cut meaning is presented in a manner that seems to come close to Bourdieu’s own warning against the temptation to construct over-simple models for social realities—realities that are constantly changing.

For those looking for a definitive theological work distinguishing Pentecostalism as either an evangelical or non-evangelical movement, the reader will find primarily implicit characterization rather than explicit. If one uses—as Calvin Smith does and with which this writer agrees—Bebbington’s famous quadrilateral as the basis for making such distinction (p. 182), then this book commends Pentecostalism as being evangelical. The result, however, is that Cecil Robeck’s essay promoting Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue and cooperation presses a “theological nerve.” A comparison of typical evangelical systematic theology against Catholic teaching (Council of Trent and Roman Catholic catechism) begs the question whether evangelicals and Catholics are working from the same foundation that allows for true dialogue and cooperation.

This first regional volume of Brill’s Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies series will appeal to a broad readership by providing practical data and information alongside scholarly theoretical observation and opinion. The price seems a bit excessive and may be a barrier in getting this valuable information into the hands of a wider readership. Nevertheless the book is both fairly easy to read and engaging. *Pentecostal Power* would be a valuable resource to anyone interested not only in Latin American Pentecostalism, but also in the wider, global Pentecostal movement.