

Review of Adam Stewart, ed. *Handbook of Pentecostal Christianity*. DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012.

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This book will likely interest readers of *Bible and Critical Theory*, primarily as a resource for teaching. Indeed, Stewart's introduction provides a "Sample Course Outline" with entries grouped into units (7-8). Before addressing the content of the volume, it seems that a brief case for the teaching of Pentecostalism is needed. Several reasons can be adduced: 1) Pentecostalism is a large and growing set of movements with which students are likely to interact in almost any part of the world, so a basic understanding of the movement can help students to deal with this phenomenon on an interpersonal level. 2) In a quite a few countries, Pentecostalism has gained or will gain some level of political influence, so it must be met in the public sphere by knowledgeable citizens. 3) Study of Pentecostalism can be a gateway to understanding religious phenomena in both contemporary and pre-modern (including biblical) contexts, helping students to gain the necessary empathy to enter worldviews other than their own. 4) Learning about Pentecostalism can also foster increased cross-cultural awareness due to the often cross-cultural nature of Pentecostalism itself.

As for the content of the book, the core entries (out of 50) are those addressing Pentecostalism in world regions and among ethnic groups: African American, African, Asian, Australian (actually Australasian), European, Latin American, Native American, and North American Pentecostalism. Of these, Lewis Brogdon's entry on African American Pentecostalism is foundational in describing the African American origins and ethos of Pentecostalism. While the movement has adapted itself to most world cultures, it is deeply rooted in African spiritualities practiced by slaves. These spiritualities in turn interacted with the churn of American revivalism.

If this book is tilted toward North American themes, it is especially focused on the influence of Canadian Pentecostalism (which has been a topic of increasing interest among scholars of Pentecostalism). Entries on the Hebden Mission and the Latter Rain Movement bring this sometimes-neglected history to the fore. Other entries encapsulate the biographies of influential leaders linked to early Pentecostalism, including William Howard Durham, Charles Harrison Mason, Charles Fox Parham, William Joseph Seymour, and (of course) Aimee Semple McPherson. These biographical entries helpfully address the racial dynamics of early Pentecostalism in the United States, covering reconciliation and conflict alike. An entry on Pandita Sarasvati Ramabai highlights an Indian woman who led a Pentecostal movement that was indigenous to India, while the entry on Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson provides a history of the entire Church of God movement, which is rooted in Appalachia. That fascinating movement is also addressed by Amarnath Amarasingam's thought-provoking entry on the Snake Handling tradition. Other standout entries are those on Ecclesiology, Eschatology, the Azusa Street Mission and Revival, the Keswick Movement, Neo-Pentecostalism, and Televangelism.

But Stewart's editorial approach is flawed in that he attempted to blend informative and critical entries such as those noted above with uncritical expositions of Pentecostal beliefs regarding biblical and theological topics in order to expose readers to grassroots Pentecostal theology. These entries, which make up about a third of the book, are sometimes pedantic, repetitive, and naive about critical approaches to biblical texts. For instance, Keith Warrington's entry on Suffering tries to put a positive spin on suffering (even while acknowledging that most Pentecostals do not do so), by citing biblical texts. Puzzlingly, he claims that the ministry of Jesus did not reference "the removal of

slavery, the oppression of the Roman empire, the crippling poverty of the people, or the many other aspects of life that called for a radical solution to establish justice” (202). One hardly knows whether to refer the author to liberation theology, historical Jesus scholarship, or Luke 4:18, which has Jesus proclaiming his mission as one of bringing good news to the poor and freedom to the captives and the oppressed. Other entries, such as those on the Acts of the Apostles, Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and Hermeneutics, while not outright counterproductive, could have cited fewer biblical texts and instead engaged more explicitly with actually existing Pentecostalism.

There are already enough texts offering training in Pentecostal beliefs and practices for Pentecostal students, so the entries that duplicate those texts are unhelpful. But, at its best, this book offers a thorough array of historical, sociological, and theological perspectives that can expand the horizons of students who might not be familiar with Pentecostalism as it exists outside televised megachurch services. In its mixed quality, the book imitates the status of Pentecostal scholarship today: moving forward by combining mainstream academic standards and methods with new insights, but still held back by some naively pre-critical and insular approaches.



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