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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

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REVIEWS

Messenger: Sydney Elton and the Making of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. By Ayodeji Abodunde. Lagos: Pierce Watershed, 2016. 479 pp.

Nigeria has the largest constituency of Pentecostals and charismatics in Africa, representing three out of every ten Nigerians. While Israel O. Olofinjana (2011), Jesse Zink (2012), Nimi Wariboko (2014), Richard Burgess (2015) and Musa A. B. Gaiya (2015) have addressed this phenomenon, there has been little research about Sydney Granville Elton (1907–1987), one of the longest-serving Christian missionaries in Nigeria (1937–1987). In *Messenger: Sydney Elton and the Making of Pentecostalism in Nigeria*, historian Ayodeji Abodunde uses extensive primary sources, oral interviews, and analysis of secondary sources to explore the contributions of this key leader. It clearly demonstrates how Elton helped shape Pentecostalism in Nigeria through encouraging strong foundations; Pentecostal revival; ecumenical unity; charismatic renewal; and theological teaching.

Strong Foundations

The first three chapters cover the origins of the Apostolic Church in Nigeria and Elton's early involvement. The movement can be traced back to the 1917 founding of the Diamond Society, Lagos by David Ogunleye Odubanjo. Members embraced rigorous holiness teaching and rejected modern medicine. After 1923, the renamed Faith Tabernacle Church continued to spread as the Faith Tabernacle movement. During 1930, a great healing revival broke out through the ministry of Joseph Ayo Babalola, bringing thousands suddenly into the churches. In an attempt to allay violent harassment by the colonial authorities, a partnership was formed with the Apostolic Church in Great Britain.

In 1936, Sydney Elton, originally from Wolverhampton, England, was sent out by the Shrewsbury Apostolic Church to Ilesa area in

western Nigeria. The following year, his wife Hannah and three-year-old daughter Grace, also joined him. Working closely with Apostolic Church leader, J. A. Babatope, Elton led church planting drives and trained up new leaders. However, tensions arose when Pentecostal missionaries began to question Babalola's interpretation of divine healing and complete rejection of medicine as idolatry. In 1940, the movement split and Babalola formed Nigerian Apostolic Church, while Babatope stayed loyal to Elton and the Apostolic Church.

Pentecostal Revival

Chapters Four to Six examine Elton's involvement in Pentecostal revivalism. After the 1940 split, the number of Apostolic Churches in the Ilesa Area decreased from almost 200 to only four assemblies. From Elton's base at Oke Oye, he helped build this back up to 125 churches. Babatope established Ilesa Bible School to train workers and Elton later took on the principalship. In 1945, Elton also became pioneer principal of a government-approved teacher training centre called Elementary Training Centre in Ilesa.

During 1951, the Canadian-originated Latter Rain movement reached Nigeria. Elton (107) writes that, "God broke us" in repentance from "dead works." Consequently, he spoke to crowds of up to 50,000 people and planted 150 churches. However, within a couple of years, the anti-Latter Rain faction of the Apostolic Church International Missionary Council in Bradford had condemned the revival. So, in 1954, Elton resigned and was apparently wiped from the records, as he does not even rate a mention in the extensive Apostolic Church history by T. N. Turnbull (1959).

Ecumenical Unity

The next three chapters explore Elton's focus on ecumenism in Nigeria and Ghana through his World Christian Crusade. Through this organisation, he hosted renowned preachers, such as David du Plessis, Gordon Lindsay and T. L. Osborn. As the only Pentecostal on the Christian Council of Nigeria, Elton also toured the United States of America and Great Britain. He founded the Nigeria Christian Fellowship as a

network of independent churches and thousands of leaders were trained through his Bible school programs and correspondence courses. Ayodeji Abodunde (150) argues that this represented “the largest individual effort toward laying the foundation of Pentecostal doctrine in eastern Nigeria outside denominational boundaries.”

During Nigeria’s civil war (1967–1970), Elton founded Soul-winners Unlimited Nigeria which ran short-term schools of evangelism. By 1977, around 50,000 young people had been trained. To counter Communist literature, Elton’s *Our Freedom* magazine circulated over 80,000 copies a month and his *Nigerian Herald of the Last Days* became his flagship publication. Elton also contributed articles to the popular *Pentecost* and distributed the international *Herald of His Coming*. Thus, Elton helped bring Nigeria into the global Pentecostal limelight.

Charismatic Renewal

Chapters Ten to Thirteen discuss Elton’s role on tertiary campuses. He supported charismatic leaders, such as Tunde Joda, David Oyedepo, Bayo Famonure, Francis Wale Oke, Emiko Amotsuka, J. M. J. Emesim, Chukwuedozie Mba, Paul Nwachukwu, Augustine Nwodika and Emeka Eze. In 1975, Elton also helped found Calvary Productions which became the largest indigenous missionary organisation in Africa. Therefore, he is known as the ‘father’ of the charismatic renewal in Nigeria.

Another prominent leader mentored by Elton was Benson Andrew Idahosa who founded Christ for the Nations International Evangelistic Association which had over 700 churches. However, after Idahosa was ordained in Benin City as bishop (and later Archbishop) of the Church of God Mission, Elton became concerned about the negative influence of American Pentecostal materialism. Elton’s condemnation of the prosperity gospel ultimately saw him ostracised from Nigerian Pentecostalism.

Theological Teaching

The final four chapters provide an analysis of Elton’s theology which viewed the church as the prophetic voice of the nation. With the post-civil war rise of Communism, Elton increasingly described Jesus Christ as a radical revolutionary and he actively supported the Christian Students’ Social

Movement and Christian Action Committee to foster Christian political engagement. He believed the church was to be a vehicle for cultural, political, economic, religious and social transformation.

Elton also called for a restoration of the five-fold ministry gifts and believed that denominationalism stifled revivalism. After 53 years of marriage, Hannah passed away. In 1984, Elton married Grace Delbridge but he died just three years later. His daughter, Ruth ultimately spent almost five decades serving in Nigeria. Ayodeji Abodunde concludes that the Eltons contributed about 160 years to Nigeria – perhaps more than any other missionary family in the nation’s history.

The primary contribution of this volume is that it provides a detailed biography of one of the most influential figures of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. Lapses in chronological order are occasionally distracting and further research needs to explore the missionary work of Hannah and Ruth Elton. Nevertheless, the author provides solid evidence for his case that Sydney Elton made a major contribution to Pentecostalism in Nigeria. As such, it is a thoroughly commendable work.

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The Spirit of Jesus Unleashed on the Church: Acts of the Early Christians in a Changing Culture. By Ron Clark. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016. 204 pp.

Ron Clark is a pioneer pastor of a “missional” church (my term for a church which is very outward-looking and involved with the local community) in Portland, Oregon. His journey into and with this church plant gives him a specific and interesting perspective on the Book of Acts. This book offers brief commentary on Acts but seeks primarily to apply the message of Acts to the current situation in light of Clark’s missional church experiences. Clark supplements this application with insights

into Acts from his own studies and reading. The two perspectives come together awkwardly at times, but when they do interact successfully, profound insights result. Clark does not appear to be Pentecostal, but he believes strongly the Holy Spirit works in and through today's church powerfully, if the church is willing to adventure radically with Jesus.

This book is the third in a series: the first two were about the Old Testament prophets and the Gospel of Luke, and the volume on Luke is referred to frequently in this book. But both earlier books provide the basis for the introductory chapter, "How Did We Get Here?," which opens with a story of the author's conversations late one day with two unusual people in a light-rail train, one with hygiene issues and the other a marijuana user. His point is the need to engage with people where they are as the Spirit leads us. Perhaps if this were a Pentecostal book, it would have ended more dramatically, but Clark shows his willingness simply to engage with these people and not try to convert them. He then develops the Old Testament prophetic background about Israel's waiting for God's deliverance and the coming of Christ, leading to the coming of the Spirit to empower the first believers in Jesus as his witnesses. The conclusion is that the waiting time is over: now "Christians are not called to wait, they are called to go" (14), especially to the marginalized and outcasts of society. Clark shares his own story of being called to plant a church like this at the end of Chapter 1.

The rest of the book covers Acts largely in chronological order, arranged under three sections:

Should We Stay or Should We Go? (based on Acts 1—12)

An Empire Sent by the Spirit (based on Acts 13—20)

Enduring Resistance for the Sake of the Empire (based on Acts 21—28).

Several distinctive features of the book's discussion of Acts are worth noting. It emphasizes Acts as narrative and compares, for example, its account of Paul's life with that of Homer's heroes, although without implying that Acts is fictional. The work interacts intermittently with critical voices, for example, with Patricia Walters' contentions about the authorship of Acts (22). It also gives periodic insights from social

scientific and other scholarship on Acts, for example, the intriguing suggestions about Paul's relationship with Sergius Paulus, the proconsul in Cyprus, which may even explain his adoption of the name Paul (93–94). Finally, the work uses the language of empire and resistance to disclose the theological emphasis of Acts, drawing on the canonical prophetic literature and its theme of restoration. This approach gives the reader both a historically contextual insight (contrasting with the Roman empire) and a fresh view of the Spirit's ongoing outreach in Acts. As a result, the author, for example, sees Acts not so much as an unfinished story (a common view) but as a finished story that climaxes with Paul's arrival in Rome, where he may speak about Jesus to all who visit his rented apartment. This action truly ends Acts: finally "there [is] no resistance" from the Jews and others to the gospel, "the gospel end[s] not at the seat of Judaism but that of the Gentile world" (for those formerly on the religious margins), and "the gospel end[s] with hospitality" as Paul welcomes seekers in Rome, even though he is a prisoner (171–172).

Sometimes the author's anecdotes do not relate well to the discussion of Acts; however, Clark's insights challenge and provoke thought. On the whole, then, this work approaches Acts as a book and its message for contemporary western churches in a refreshing way.

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Strangers to Fire: When Tradition Trumps Scripture. By Robert Graves, ed. Tulsa, OK: Empowered Life Academic, 2014. xxxvii + 561 pp.

For the last three decades, the Rev. John F. MacArthur, Jr., popular evangelical author and radio Bible teacher, has raged against the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement (PCM). Beginning in 1978, with his book, *The Charismatics*, again in 1993, with *Charismatic Chaos*, and most recently, in 2013, in the pages of *Strange Fire*, MacArthur attacks

the PCM. While his earlier books sought to point out the theological weaknesses of the PCM, in *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship*, he makes a full attack on not only the theological tenets of the PCM, but also upon the very essence of the PCM and labels it a “demonic delusion”. MacArthur’s central argument against the PCM is that of cessationism, i.e., that the *charismata*, or spiritual gifts and miracles, mentioned in the New Testament, have ceased to operate in the church, especially since the canon of the New Testament was finalized and such *charismata* are therefore no longer needed to authenticate the apostolic proclamation of the gospel. As a result, all claims about the contemporary occurrence of miraculous gifts are false and the occurrences themselves are counterfeits, at best, or demonic.

Several texts have answered MacArthur’s attacks but none as ably as *Strangers to Fire: When Tradition Trumps Scripture*. This volume, edited by Robert W. Graves, director of the Foundation for Pentecostal Scholarship, addresses every aspect of MacArthur’s challenges. Its thirty essays draw from classical Pentecostal and denominational and independent charismatic authors and address exegetical, theological, and historical questions raised by MacArthur. Several of the essays are reprinted from other publications, such as *Paraclete* and *Pneuma*, and five of the chapters are published posthumously (Essays by Andrew T. Floris, d. 2012; Melvin Hodges, d. 1988; Omer J. Sharp, d. 2006; Horace S. Ward, d. 2014 and David A. Womack, d. 2009.)

The list of contributors shows the breadth and depth of the scholarship of the work. A fair and balanced foreword by J. Lee Grady, former editor of *Charisma* magazine, honestly acknowledges that the PCM has its “fringe element” and “that MacArthur doesn’t have to look hard to find examples of troublesome doctrines and quirky practices” (xxiv), but it also challenges MacArthur’s blanket condemnation of all who believe “that God can speak to people today,” including even Southern Baptist author Henry Blackaby, who certainly would not describe himself as Pentecostal or charismatic (xxiii).

The first section of *Stranger to Fire*, seven essays, respond specifically to MacArthur’s *Strange Fire*, while the remaining twenty-eight, in the second section, are entitled “Classic Replies to Cessationism and

the Misuse of the Charismata.” The chief strength of the book is its excellent scholarship that will benefit a wide audience. Several of the chapters are scholarly, making ample use of New Testament Greek and exegeting in detail relevant passages; others, however, are written more popularly and can easily be grasped by those without formal theological training. Every chapter makes clear that the authors are not attacking MacArthur personally but instead answering his objections.

This review’s brevity directs it to deal now with only several of the most significant essays. Asbury Seminary’s Craig Keneer’s review of *Strange Fire*, originally published by *Pneuma Online*, deals skillfully with MacArthur’s theological arguments. Keneer acknowledges that some who self-identify with the PCM act in troubling ways and believe highly questionable theology, but he rightly rejects MacArthur’s sweeping condemnation of the PCM as a whole for errors at its fringes.

Only one chapter of this work is written by someone who MacArthur might negatively characterize as a “faith healer.” Randy Clark, founder and director of Global Awakening, travels throughout the world, praying for the sick and manifesting the gift of the Word of Knowledge. Likewise, he teaches others how to engage in the same ministry. Thousands who have attended Clark’s crusades testify to receiving miraculous physical healing. Clark’s chapter ably defends the contemporary practice of divine healing by appealing to Scripture and church history and pointing to MacArthur’s “incomplete commitment to *sola Scriptura*” (59), because MacArthur argues almost exclusively against the practices and theology of the fringes rather than from scriptural exegesis.

The chapters of the second section expose the weaknesses of cessationism effectively, although several of the chapters include redundant content that could have been edited. Nonetheless, several chapters are veritable goldmines of important exegetical, patristic, and historical information. Robert Graves’ two chapters adroitly answer accusations repeated commonly that those who claim to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit fixate on speaking in tongues or are interested in the ministry of the Holy Spirit more than in Christ’s ministry. Graves’s chapter on glossolalia is, in my opinion, one of the best treatments of the subject.

Strangers to Fire answers the questions that MacArthur and his theological allies raise concerning the PCM and its claims. Brought together in this one volume are finely crafted historical, exegetical, and theological arguments for the continuing manifestation of the *charismata* in the church, for the glory of God and the progress of the gospel.

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George Jeffreys: Pentecostal Apostle and Revivalist. By William K. Kay. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2017. 461 pp.

During the 1980's, Pentecostal scholars Russell Spittler and Cecil M. Robeck Jr. challenged Pentecostal scholars to contribute to the corpus of Pentecostal histories by producing biographies of important Pentecostal leaders. Since then, many stories of early Pentecostal leaders have been produced and have given us glimpses into the history of the movement through the lens of its leaders' biographies. In *George Jeffreys: Pentecostal Apostle and Revivalist*, Pentecostal historian and educator William K. Kay tells the story of a prominent British Pentecostal pioneer, evangelist, and pastor. Weaving Jeffreys' story into his social and political context, Kay also gives us a skillful account of Pentecostal history in Great Britain.

Born in Wales, Jeffreys was the son of a coal-miner father and a mother who was the daughter of a Baptist preacher. After losing his father at age seven, George and his older brother Stephen became close as Stephen took over the role of head of the house. Between 1904 and 1905, the Jeffreys brothers were influenced by the Welsh Revival, during which George was healed of a childhood paralysis. George and Stephen both desired to enter the ministry and started preaching and evangelizing on nights in weekends. They soon gained fame as compelling preachers and began to hold meetings in Wales and Ireland and eventually all over England and Scotland. Kay documents the Jeffreys' effective evangelistic

strategy, in which they held large crusades in rented venues and saw hundreds saved and healed. Following such crusades, Jeffreys would establish congregations with seasoned pastors and fund the purchase of facilities. This approach led to the founding of the Elim Assemblies, Elim Evangelistic Bands, and Elim Missions. In 1918, these various ministries operating throughout Britain merged into one of Britain's strongest Pentecostal denominations, The Elim Pentecostal Alliance. After several years of successful ministry together, George and Stephen eventually parted ways, and George rose to prominence through his strategy of using large evangelistic campaigns in London during the mid-1920s.

Kay draws interesting parallels between the events of Jeffreys' life and the rise and gradual decline of British supremacy between the two World Wars. At the height of Britain's colonial dominance, Jeffreys' ministry also saw its golden age, demonstrated by the successful yearly evangelistic campaigns held in Royal Albert Hall in London, 1926–1939. In an age of the great public oratory of Churchill and Lloyd George, Jeffreys' powerful preaching before large crowds won him fame as a British preaching icon. Several chapters in the middle of the book outline Jeffreys' books and his evangelical and Pentecostal theology expressed in the four-fold gospel of Jesus as savior, healer, Spirit-baptizer, and coming king.

In the final half of the book, Kay guides the readers through the challenges that arose during the 1930s. Through a series of disputes between Jeffreys and the Elim executive leadership, the organization Jeffreys had built began to unravel. At the center of the controversy was Jeffreys' push to adopt British Israelism, the eschatological teaching that God has a special end-time plan for Britain because the British are the descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel. This decade-long struggle eventually alienated Jeffreys from Elim. Throughout this section, Kay carefully untangles the issues surrounding Jeffreys' eventual exit from Elim and his founding of a new organization, The Bible Pattern Church.

Kay's work expands on the limited biographies of Jeffreys from the past and expresses new research into the history of Elim and Jeffreys. At times the account borders on being too detailed, a possibility Kay addresses in his introduction. Even so, Kay's clear writing and attention to the pertinent historical context of the story makes the book enjoyable to read.

This biography of George Jefferies will appeal to those interested in Pentecostalism on several levels. It immerses students of Pentecostal history into the events and personalities of the first four decades of the Pentecostal movement in Britain. As Kay shows, what Jeffries accomplished as a mass evangelist, popular preacher, church planter, denominational and Bible School founder, periodical editor, and writer is on par with, if not exceeding, the accomplishments of some of Britain's most famous revivalists. This work also serves as a compelling denominational history of the Elim Pentecostal Alliance woven together with the stories of other Pentecostal denominations in Britain and Europe. For those interested in Pentecostal eschatology, Kay's treatment of British Israelism and the controversy surrounding its propagation demonstrates how eschatological ideas can shape the social and ecclesiological focus of Pentecostal groups. Finally, those particularly interested in British history will appreciate Kay's setting the story of Jeffries and Elim skillfully in the context of Britain from the early 1900s through the 1940s. Pentecostals and all interested in twentieth-century British Christianity should treasure Kay's work on George Jeffries for years to come.

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The Revelation Worldview: Apocalyptic Thinking in a Postmodern World. By Jon K. Newton. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015. 380 pp.

The last decade has witnessed a virtual renaissance in the academic study of the Book of Revelation by Pentecostal and charismatic scholars. The year 2006 alone saw the publication of three academic monographs devoted to the Apocalypse, including the first full-length study of its pneumatology,¹ an extensive examination devoted to the conversion of the nations,² and an investigation of the issues of religious identity

in the book.³ In the next few years these publications were followed by several commentaries devoted to the book.⁴ During this time an important monograph devoted to the theme of worship in the book also appeared,⁵ along with a number of significant articles⁶ and not a few PhD theses on the Apocalypse currently being undertaken. It is indeed a wonderful time to be studying the book of Revelation from within the Pentecostal tradition.

One of the most recent contributions comes from Australian scholar Jon K. Newton (PhD, Deakin University), the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Head of Research at Harvest Bible College and co-pastor with his wife of the Oasis Church in Melbourne. Newton is no newcomer to the study of the Apocalypse, having published previously a monograph entitled *Revelation Reclaimed: The Use and Misuse of the Apocalypse*⁷ and having contributed articles on Revelation to a variety of academic journals.⁸ While the trend to this point has been primarily either to offer a commentary on the text or to trace a significant theme or emphasis through the book, Newton pushes in a different direction altogether. He boldly proposes to identify and use the worldview found within the Book of Revelation as a foundational narrative by which to engage the sometime treacherous terrain of a postmodern world. This tremendously ambitious project is carried out in seven chapters—a good number for any Apocalypse project—with introductory and concluding chapters forming an inclusio around his more substantive work.

In the “Introduction,” Newton creates for his readers the context of and need for the project by briefly defining what he means by worldview and describing the clash of worldviews witnessed in the contemporary postmodern world. He goes on to propose that a Christian worldview that is responsive to postmodern questions and challenges can be constructed but it will be one that has a distinctive voice in this postmodern context and not simply one that takes fully on board a postmodern way of thinking. In order to construct such a Christian worldview, Newton turns to the Book of Revelation because it is the book in the Bible most open to a postmodern interpretation, it is regarded as summing up much of the biblical story, and its foreignness may offer a way forward as how to live with competing worldviews.

Chapter 1 analyzes most helpfully the shift from modernity to post-modernity and its impact on biblical studies and Revelation studies in particular. Chapter 2 seeks to place Revelation within the religious and social context of first-century Asia Minor. However, unlike scholars who examine such matters with an eye toward issues of origins or influence or both, Newton compares the worldview of the Apocalypse with other worldviews of the day, for which he offers a measured and reasonable assessment. Chapter 3 attends to the reality of the Spirit World by examining the world of Revelation and engaging the contemporary context on such matters. Chapter 4 investigates the knotty issue of the phenomenon of revelation: prophecy, truth claims, and the criteria by which to discern truth from false (prophetic) claims. This chapter, in particular, focuses on numerous topics of special interest to Pentecostal and charismatic readers.

Chapter 5 focuses on the significance of personhood and analyzes nicely of its importance in the Apocalypse. Chapter 6 examines the centrality of the biblical story in a discussion of the place of history and meta-narratives within a postmodern world. Here Newton does a lot of heavy lifting arguing for, among other things, the place of history in the Apocalypse, the phenomenon of Revelation as story, and its relationship to the “Big Story of Scripture.” It is here that the author explores Revelation as a war story and as a love story, concluding that Revelation—in a sense—can be seen as a Christian meta-narrative which can form a foundation for a Christian worldview.

In the final chapter, Newton examines Revelation’s attitude toward rival narratives, some of which can be engaged and even transformed (Judaism and certain narratives of the non-Jewish world), others of which must be rejected (imperial Rome and idolatry). He concludes (308):

Thus John shows us a possible strategy for Christians today in their response to other worldviews and ideologies of our time. . . . Christians . . . should not be afraid of claims that involve seeing the Christian story as framing and explaining the narratives of different cultures and providing them with a hope of fulfillment of their highest aspirations in Christ, albeit with

alterations and adjustments. Only the most blasphemous (that is syncretistic or imperialistic) claims need to be rejected utterly. In making these responses, Christians are giving priority to the Big Story traced in the Bible.

In his “Conclusion,” Newton goes on to define a Christian worldview as follows (313):

... a truly Christian worldview will always need to affirm the reality of the spirit world (with dualistic features), the validity of revelation (however defined) as a form of real knowledge, the fundamental nature of personhood, and the priority of the biblical story of creation, redemption, and consummation as an overarching explanation of human history.

Although quite an ambitious project, Jon Newton’s monograph is, in my estimation, very important and contributes successfully in various ways to the Pentecostal and charismatic interpretation of the Apocalypse. Its strengths are too numerous to list, but a few of them must be mentioned. First and foremost is his extraordinary knowledge of the Apocalypse that he brings to bear in this study. Time and again he exhibits a very deep understanding of the substance of Revelation that goes far beyond the proof-texting approach that often appears in volumes devoted to this book of the canon. From this knowledge he is able to engage a variety of issues that always seem true to the nature of the Apocalypse. Second, he is to be commended for his honest engagement with a variety of dialogue partners. Absent from his study are the construction of “straw men” or “straw women” with which to dispense easily. He always appears to feel the full weight of the arguments he engages, even when he rejects or critiques them as lacking. Third, Newton has clearly demonstrated how a biblical book can contribute, at a foundational level, to the construction of a Christian worldview that has integrity and is open to revision as its contours are discerned further in the Christian community. Fourth, his extensive engagement with the Book of Revelation models a way in which this book, notorious for its abuse in the world of interpreters, can be

engaged theologically with much profit in foundational ways for the believing community.

While there are any number of places where individual interpreters may have reason to disagree with this or that conclusion or inference, Jon Newton has contributed to Revelation studies significantly with this work, putting us all in his debt. It is to be highly commended. It is indeed a wonderful time to be studying the book of Revelation from within the Pentecostal tradition.

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Notes

- 1 R.C. Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation* (JPTSup 30: Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2006)
- 2 R. Herms, *An Apocalypse for the Church and the World: The Narrative Function of the Universal Language in the Book of Revelation* (BZNBW 143; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006)
- 3 P.L. Mayo, *“Those Who Call Themselves Jews”: The Church and Judaism in the Apocalypse of John* (PTMS; Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2006)
- 4 R. Skaggs and P. Benham, *Revelation* (PCS; Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2009); G.D. Fee, *Revelation* (NCCS; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011); J. C. Thomas, *The Apocalypse: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012); and J. C. Thomas and F. D. Macchia, *Revelation* (THNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).
- 5 M. L. Archer, *“I Was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day”: A Pentecostal Engagement with Worship in the Apocalypse* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014).
- 6 One of the earliest, predating this renaissance by about a decade, is M. W. Wilson, “Revelation 19.10 and Contemporary Interpretation,” in M. W. Wilson (ed.), *Spirit and Renewal: Essays in Honor of J. Rodman Williams* (JPTSup 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 191–202.
- 7 J.K. Newton, *Revelation Reclaimed: The Use and Misuse of the Apocalypse* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009).
- 8 Cf. “Reading Revelation Romantically,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18.2 (2009), 194–215; “Holding Prophets Accountable,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 30.1 (2010), 63–79; “Time Language and the Purpose of the

Millenium,” *Colloquium* 43.2 (2011), 147–68; “Story-Lines in the Book of Revelation,” *Australian Biblical Review* 61 (2013), 61–78; “The Epistemology of the Book of Revelation,” *Heythrop Journal* (June, 2013), 1–14; and “The Full Gospel and the Apocalypse,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 26.1 (2017), 86–109.

Early Pentecostals on Nonviolence and Social Justice: A Reader. Brian K. Pipkin and Jay Beaman, eds. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016. 194 pp.

In 1917, the prominent Pentecostal publication *Weekly Evangel* (now known as the *Pentecostal Evangel*) published a statement entitled “The Pentecostal Movement and the Conscription Law” that claimed that

From the very beginning, the [Pentecostal] movement has been characterized by Quaker principles. The laws of the Kingdom, laid down by our elder brother, Jesus Christ, in His Sermon on the Mount, have been unqualifiedly adopted, consequently the movement has found itself opposed to the spilling of the blood of any man, or of offering resistance to any aggression. (93)

This position may surprise many in the current American political climate, when exit poll data from the recent presidential election suggest that the winning candidate—whose expressed views have very little in common with “Quaker principles”—garnered the vast majority of the white evangelical vote and has received very public support from leading Pentecostals. Indeed, “Pentecostal” is a word that has not been conjoined in the popular imaginary with either “pacifism” or “social justice” for quite some time. *Early Pentecostals on Nonviolence and Social Justice* seeks to change that by compiling 39 excerpts from 17 leading early Pentecostal figures, spanning the years 1901–1940.

Each author, in his or her own way, makes a biblical and Spirit-oriented case against the prevailing militarism of the period preceding the “Great War” and leading into what would become WWII. The authors include Charles Fox Parham, the influential leader of early North American

Pentecostalism, Frank Bartleman, the evangelist and journalist known for his chronicling of the Azusa Street events, Aimee Semple McPherson, social activist and founder of Foursquare Church, and William J. Seymour, the famed pastor of the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles.

The excerpts vary widely in quality and in intent, with some representing thoughtful extended reflections on the relationship between Christianity and the state (e.g., Arthur Sydney Booth-Clibborn), others offering practical advice on how to approach conscientious objection (e.g., Donald Gee), and still others making prophetic statements about the signs of the times (e.g., Parham, Bartleman). The best of the offerings come by way of the Booth-Clibborn family (Arthur Sydney and his two sons, Samuel and William), Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson, Aimee Semple McPherson, and the lay preacher from Kentucky, Elbert Carlton Backus, whose approximately three-page contribution is worth the entire price of admission. I'll share just one especially timely statement from Backus, reflecting on Christ's statement about giving one's life for one's friends:

. . . let us pause just here to reflect that no love can possibly be Christian which is not universal in its scope. Christ loved ALL mankind, Christ died for ALL mankind, and although, in life, he . . . waged a fierce warfare, when he at last was ushered roughly into the presence of the Father, not one drop of blood stained his hands save what was all his own." (101–102)

The picture of Jesus one gets from these authors is unequivocally the infinitely loving, self-sacrificial lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world. The idea that this Man's teachings could be used to justify violence and oppression, even war, left these authors clearly bewildered. At one point, Gee remarks that "no Christian artist has ever represented the Galilean as commanding a machine-gun battalion or piloting a bombing plane. . . . [I]t has never been done simply because it is unthinkable." (136) Unfortunately, being "unthinkable" is a deterrent only for those who think; one can now easily find such "artistic" representations of the suffering Lord.

The few weak aspects of the book include the somewhat disproportionate focus on the work of Bartleman, whose views are occasionally

interesting but more often problematic theologically or sociologically (or both), and the need for more careful proofreading in several places. But these are overcome by the rest of the work, which easily accomplishes its stated task, which is to provide a first-hand account of Pentecostal nonviolence and social justice. I cannot think of a weightier issue confronting the Church currently, and many of the authors' warnings are surely as relevant today as they were a century ago. In a review of another work from 1930 included in the volume, the *Pentecostal Evangel* stated, "Those of us who drift along unconcerned now that the sun shines, need to be jarred by this book." (143) We could say the same.

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Biblical Theology: Past, Present, and Future. By Carey Walsh and Mark W. Elliott, eds. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016. x + 233 pp.

A "selection of papers presented at the Biblical Theology section of the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature over three years" (2012–2014; vii), with contributions from sixteen scholars, does not lend itself to a review of the entirety. The editors' organization of the chapters, however, provides an appreciated cohesion. Mark Elliott's "Introduction" is an *apologia* for the discipline of "biblical theology" (as distinct from systematic theology [dogmatics] or exegesis of isolated passages). "Biblical theology aims to see the big picture but to get there from an account of the details of exegesis of the biblical text. In that sense it can claim to hold the whole thing together" (x). Biblical theology, he continues, "will not abandon the spiritually important whole in order to stick with textual details or application, but will encourage the activity of shuttling between the two" (x). Not every biblical scholar cares for such "shuttling"; some question the relevance or possibility of "biblical theology." Whatever

the reader's presuppositions, this book provides a history of questions raised and approaches taken, and an optimistic perspective on the necessity of "doing biblical theology."

Chapters 1–5 trace "historical developments" in biblical theology from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries (1–75). These papers perhaps hold greater interest for historical theology than for exegesis as such, but reflections from David Lincicum's essay on Ferdinand Christian Baur (nineteenth century) are important for exegetes and theologians (33–50). Baur's emphasis on diversity and conflict in early Christianity portrays "biblical theology" as "a purely historical science . . . emancipated from the constraints of the dogmatic system of the church" (35, citing Baur's *Vorlesungen über neutestamentliche Theologie*, 1). Baur's Hegelian philosophy may be passé, but his "critical method remains" (46), posing challenges to notions of a coherent "biblical theology" or an authoritative canon (36–43). Baur's critical method (still the mainstream of biblical scholarship) does not seek a unified "canonical" description of God and God's will for humanity.

The book's second section (chapters 6–11; 77–164) discusses "methodological considerations for biblical theology now." These enlightening papers are worthwhile reading for exegetes of either Testament. Several contributors interact with Brevard Childs and Walter Brueggemann, particularly their late-twentieth-century "biblical theologies." Those seeking to understand current variations in "biblical theology" may find Darian Lockett's paper (91–107) the most helpful in the collection. Lockett observes: "The problem is that there is little agreement on what biblical theology actually *is* let alone how to *do* it" (91). He describes (with their strengths and weaknesses) five distinct ways of doing biblical theology. His trenchant conclusion notes how they all illustrate "the abiding challenge for biblical theology, namely the relationship between history and theology in reading the Old and New Testaments as Christian Scripture" (103). Along the lines of Childs's canonical approach, Lockett argues that history and theology can both be respected by recognizing that canon "incorporates a historical process and theological judgment at the same time" (105). There is no choosing between history and theology; it must be "both and." Canonical "biblical theology" recognizes the legitimate

interests of both history and theology—not neglecting one for the other but “maintaining the dialectical relationship between [historical] description and [theological] construction” (106).

Lockett’s point is echoed in the following chapter (108–21) by Scott Hafemann: “The problem of biblical theology” is “the problem of history itself” (111). After citing Oscar Cullmann, Hafemann asserts: “To reject redemptive history as the heart of primitive Christianity is to reject the Christian message itself” (117). He concludes: “The point of biblical theology, therefore, is to reaffirm revelation in history within a robust view of the divinely inspired reliability of the biblical text itself, which will require restoring the humility of the theologian before the text and, supremely, before God, whose text it is” (119). Hafemann admits, “This will not be easy in a world bent on disavowing its own finitude” (119).

The theme of respecting the historically-situated text (and its theological ramifications) continues in N. T. Wright’s chapter (147–64), which defends his approach to Jesus and Paul. “The Jewish context . . . is a non-negotiable element of the meaning of Jesus” (148). And “the so-called historical-critical school of exegesis” has “led us into a quagmire of false antitheses: *not because it was historical and critical but because it was not nearly historical or critical enough*” (151, emphasis in original). Sufficiently historical-critical exegetes should recognize the “non-negotiable” context of Jewish life and thought in the first century, particularly the theological themes of monotheism, election, and eschatology (156–64). Those familiar with Wright know the importance of those themes for him; those not familiar with him could read this chapter as a lively introduction.

The final section of the book looks for “constructive ways forward for biblical theology” (chapters 12–16; 165–233). Again there is variety. Janghoon Park (177–89) critiques Scott Hahn’s “three-stage developmental view of God’s trans-historical covenant-making” and Hahn’s attempts to show how liturgical use enables Scripture’s full efficacy. John Goldingay (203–13) suggests new ways of understanding narrative structures in both Testaments. Carey Walsh (167–76) contributes the volume’s boldest essay, offering an astonishing interpretation of the divine speeches in Job 38–41. For Walsh, God’s “whirlwind

speech acts as a kind of conceptual idol” (170). This God is “almost a bully,” lacking “signal divine characteristics” such as “love . . . [and] mercy” (173–74). “The wisdom of Job, then, is radically deconstructive” (172)—an understatement if Walsh’s interpretation of Job stands. But since this chapter is an exercise in “Postmodern Biblical Theology,” readers might deconstruct it as Walsh deconstructs (conventional readings of) Job.

This collection of papers (written for scholars) covers significant centuries in biblical theology and offers a stimulating variety of insights. The book’s value is enhanced by the bibliographies included with each chapter (except for Wright’s).

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Global Renewal Christianity: Spirit-Empowered Movements: Past, Present, and Future, Volume 1: Asia and Oceania. By Amos Yong and Vinson Synan, eds. (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2016), xxxix + 498 pp.

This volume is the first of four that emerged out of the four meetings of Pentecostal and charismatic (hereafter PC) scholars under the sponsorship of Empowered21, an interdenominational initiative aimed at benefitting the global Spirit-empowered movement. The purpose of this volume is to study the historical and theological developments of Pentecostalism throughout Asia and Oceania, with the objective of understanding the challenges and opportunities lying before the PC churches (xxxix). The introductory note by editor Amos Yong highlights the diversity and plurality of the two selected regions of the study and overviews the five parts and twenty-one essays he and co-editor Vinson Synan have gathered.

In Part I: South Asia, Finny Philip (chap. 1) surveys the origins of PC churches in North India, with reference to the tribal Bhil Pentecostals, and investigates how their experiences impinged on their Christological

understandings (1 & 15). G. P. V. Somaratna (chap. 2) discusses why PC growth in Sri Lanka was slow, if not stagnant, prior to the independence in 1948, and why it has progressed since independence. Thomson K. Mathew (chap. 3) traces the history and global growth of the Indian PC movement with reference to Kerala. He elucidates the transnational contributions of Karalites in global PC growth, and sums up with three points recommendations for further progress (63).

In Part II: East Asia, Robert Menzies (chap. 4) illuminates the enthralling experiential practice of Chinese Christian spirituality and the PC nature and growth of indigenous house church movement under the slogans of “China for Christ” (77) and “China is Blessed” (80). Iap Sian-Chin (chap. 5) traces the major contribution of Bernt Berntsen, a Norwegian-American Pentecostal missionary with ties to Oneness and Sabbatarianism, toward the establishment and growth of the True Jesus Church, an influential Chinese independent Pentecostal denomination. Yalin Xin (chap. 6) investigates “the inner dynamics” of the “Word of Life” movement from the perspective of Howard Snyder’s “five-dimensional model of Pentecost” (110–122). Iap Sian-Chin and Maurie Sween (chap. 7) study the relationship between PC Christians with Protestant churches in Taiwan. Sang Yun Lee (chap. 8) examines the historical development and theological understanding of Korean PC Christians regarding the kingdom of God in both its present and not-yet aspects on the basis of the doctrine of the threefold blessing in 3 John 4 – “salvation, divine healing, and prosperity” (144). David Hymes (chap. 9) traces the impressive historical developments of the PC movements in Japan and highlights some of their theological trajectories.

In Part III: Southeast Asia, Vince Le (chap. 10) describes the origin, development, and current situation of Vietnamese Pentecostals, and concentrates on the issues of leadership, cultural engagement, and theological studies (194–95). James Hosack and Alan R. Johnson (chap. 11) trace the beginnings of Pentecostalism in Thailand with the arrival of foreign PC missionaries since 1951 (198) and describe the influence of the T. L. Osborn evangelistic meetings on the Thai PC movement (200). Timothy Lim T. N. (chap. 12) studies a distinct but healthy PC renewal in Singapore and Malaysia that began in the 1930s and continues

to “shine and open up new frontiers” (232). Ekaputra Tupamahu (chap. 13) presents a critical-theological reflection on the works of American missionaries in Indonesia by focusing on the birth and development of Pentecostal Bible schools led by them (233). Giovanni Maltese and Sarah Eßel (chap. 14) present creative and penetrative theological analysis of transformational development of PC churches in the Philippines through a critique of Joseph Suico’s 2003 PhD thesis (260).

In Part IV: Oceania, Denise A. Austin (chap. 15) explores how Asian Pentecostalism has helped form Australian Pentecostal identity. Shane Clifton (chap. 16) explains the beginnings and developments of the Pentecostal movement in Australia by concentrating on the three key trends of transitions. Mark Hutchinson (chap. 17) deals with the institutional tensions of Australian Pentecostalism (316) and argues that initial dilemmas such as the belief in *parousia*, gifts, ecclesial authority, and organizing principles are now the cause of a larger dilemma (329). Brett Knowles (chap. 18) reflects on the “glacial” change of Pentecostalism in New Zealand: from marginalization in its first thirty years to expansion in the 1960s and 70s to moral activism of the 1970s and 80s, with a numerical decline in this century accompanied by a greater “leavening” of mainstream churches” (340).

In Part V: Roman Catholicism and Other Theological Themes, Jonathan Y. Tan (chap. 19) studies the Roman Catholic Charismatic renewal movement in Asia, focusing on the Philippines and India. Jacqueline Grey (chap. 20) explores the possible influence of Chinese Confucian culture on Pentecostal hermeneutics. Simon Chan (chap. 21) analyzes possible directions forward for “Pentecostalism at the Crossroads,” as it chooses how to adapt to culture, to respond to theological critique, and both to retrieve resources from the past and to update them discerningly in new contexts.

The editors preface the whole of the four-volume series with their evaluation, which this review endorses: the chapters arise from presentations at conferences and consultations, with a few commissioned separately. Most contributors, but not all, participate in PC Christianity, and those who do not were invited to write because of their known ability to discuss PC “with sympathetic objectivity” (xvi). The chapters thus evince some unevenness from the diversity of contributors’

confessional stances and their varied academic and ministerial status; and the chapters, collected under such circumstances, leave many gaps in covering the whole of Asia and Oceania. This volume achieves, nevertheless, an important first effort of its kind in this generation to account for Spirit-empowered Christianity in these regions. It delivers historical assessment, theological self-reflection, “and even loyal criticism” essential for all students of PC Christianity. Such readers will benefit from “an expanded awareness of the challenges and opportunities” before this movement in these areas (xxxix). Highly recommended for students, ministers, scholars, and libraries.

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