

Book Review

To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity

Allan Heaton Anderson

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In his 2004 work, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, Allan Anderson sought to situate Pentecostal movements within their historical contexts and to emphasize their theological developments as they occurred.¹ In his latest book, Anderson endeavors to take his exploration of Pentecostalism to the next level. Recognizing that the movement's immense growth exists as an acknowledged fact, he aims to provide an explanation for the global acceptance of Pentecostalism. After defining Pentecostalism as "all those movements and churches where the emphasis is on an ecstatic *experience of the Spirit* and a tangible *practice of spiritual gifts*," Anderson utilizes a thematic structure to explore what he designates as nine significant features of global Pentecostalism (p. 8).

In surveying these themes, Anderson begins with the historical precedents and origins of Pentecostalism. Growing out of nineteenth-century radical Evangelicalism and holiness movements, Pentecostalism focused on revivalism, personal spirituality, and healing. With his examination of revivals in India, China, Korea, Chile, and Liberia, Anderson makes the significant point that

these precursors to Pentecostalism did not move from the West to "foreign lands," but instead, they developed on the continents themselves (p. 36). Like the revivalist movements from which it emerged, Pentecostalism took on a local character as it addressed the felt needs of communities. Even as denominations such as the Assemblies of God and the Church of God surfaced, they emphasized indigenous principles to develop self-supporting, self-governing churches. While encouraging local leadership and autonomy, Pentecostal missionary impetus received support from printed periodicals that highlighted progress, provided a fund-raising network, and formed a Pentecostal meta-culture that defined the rites and characteristics of community life.

Transitioning from questions of origins, Anderson next focuses on specific theological and practical emphases of Pentecostalism. As he explores Pentecostalism's impact upon women, the author draws attention to their ambiguous role. Though hierarchies often deny them leadership positions, women function as spiritual leaders because of Pentecostalism's proclamation that all people, irrespective of gender, have the Spirit's gifts available to them. Anderson similarly acknowledges the availability of the Spirit in his chapter on Bible interpretation as he stresses that Pentecostals contextualize the biblical

¹ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

message to form “a source book of supernatural answers to humans needs” (p. 125). With the Bible in hand, Pentecostals go forth to evangelize and proclaim the “full gospel” of Jesus as Savior, Healer, Baptizer in the Spirit, and Soon Coming King who is able to deliver from every form of oppression.

After delving into theology and praxis, Anderson concludes by investigating the impact of Pentecostalism on world Christianity. As an indigenous movement unhindered by formal structures, the Pentecostal approach to ministry led to the proliferation of independent churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the “Pentecostalization” of established churches on these continents. This “Pentecostalization” became prominent in the latter half of the twentieth century with the advent of the Charismatic Renewal, independent neo-pentecostalism, and the Word of Faith movement. Along with these movements, Anderson also partially credits Pentecostalism’s growth to entrepreneurial local preachers, such as David Yonggi Cho in South Korea, who effectively contextualize Christianity and interact with older religions in the process.

Drawing on his experience as a Pentecostal minister in South Africa and as Professor of Global Pentecostal Studies at the University of Birmingham, Anderson demonstrates an impressive breadth of knowledge of Pentecostalism in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Though the sheer number of historical personalities, dates, and locations can sometimes seem overwhelming, Anderson’s expertise proves valuable to the Oxford Studies in World Christianity series which examines “post-Western developments in Christianity” and “the elaborations, variations, continuities, and divergences with the originating Western forms of the religion” (p. xvi).

In his search to explain its growth, Anderson unsurprisingly refrains from identifying a single reason for global Pentecostalism’s expansion. Instead of presenting firm conclusions, Anderson’s historical analysis provides trajectories for further exploration.² Nevertheless, an overarching argument that materializes concerns the movement’s adaptability. Because of its emphasis on the immediacy of spiritual experience, the meeting of felt needs, and the indigenous church, Pentecostalism in its various forms is always rooted in the local context. Though it does not give complete resolution in explaining Pentecostalism’s development, the book does meet Anderson’s standard of success in urging readers “to become more culturally and theologically sensitive, more politically and socially sensitized, and more globally oriented” (p. viii).

As it encourages readers towards a global perspective, the book will benefit several audiences. Those seeking historical insight into Pentecostalism beyond the North American context will find Pentecostal roots prior to the 1906 Azusa Street revival. Anderson does not deny the significance of Azusa, but stresses Pentecostalism’s continuity with earlier international movements as well. *To the Ends of the Earth* could serve as a text for either undergraduate or graduate courses on global Pentecostal history or theology.

Anderson opens his book with and derives its title from Acts 1:8. While one cannot question the import of Pentecostalism’s adaptability to the local context, Anderson’s

² Two recent works of interest include Donald E. Miller, Kimon H. Sargeant, and Richard Flory, eds., *Spirit and Power: The Growth and Global Impact of Pentecostalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), and Michael Wilkinson, ed., *Global Pentecostal Movements: Migration, Mission, and Public Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

title serves as a reminder that Pentecostalism would not find itself in new localities if it were not a missionary, evangelism-oriented movement. As Anderson observes, the Pentecostals “were as much convinced by

Acts 1:8 as they were by Acts 2:4” (p. 163). Pentecostalism has grown and impacted world Christianity because it focused on “the ends of the earth.”