

BOOK REVIEWS

Connie Ho Yan Au, *Grassroots Unity in the Charismatic Renewal* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011). xvi + 284 pp. \$35.00 paper.

In her dissertation, Connie Ho Yan Au studies the ecumenical elements of the British Charismatic Renewal through the renewal's embodiment in the Fountain Trust of the 1970s. She examines the ecumenical activities, goals, and reach of the Trust in order to draw out the renewal's latent and often expressed ecumenical theology. Through consulting literature from the various conferences of the Trust and conducting interviews of Trust leaders, Au gives an in-depth view into the ecumenical nature of the renewal. She uses this historical analysis as a launching point in the second part of the book to discuss ecumenics and the contributions that the Charismatic renewal could make to the ecumenical movement. Through this historical and theological analysis, she argues that "[w]hen the Spirit renews the church, the vision for ecumenical unity follows" (1).

Au begins the book in its first two chapters by introducing the dominant themes of the discussion and the history of the Fountain Trust. She explains the importance of grassroots ecumenism for the pursuit of church unity. The Charismatic renewal aids this grassroots endeavor because of its complementarity of lay involvement with and institutional commitments to ecumenism. She then describes the formation of the Fountain Trust. She does not give a complete history of Charismatic Christianity in England but rather utilizes the Trust as a representative of the renewal. Through giving a general overview of the Trust's ecumenical formation, leadership, and activities, Au sets the stage for her analysis.

The next two chapters analyze the Trust's conferences and unpack their contributions to grassroots ecumenism. The conferences intentionally included participants and speakers across denominational lines and from numerous countries. Au includes several examples of workshops and personal testimonies that reveal the ecumenical impact of the conferences. The book then studies grassroots unity through the conferences. Because the conference speakers were invited based on their commitment to the Charismatic renewal, they represented a diverse spread of denominational backgrounds. By discussing the

planning of the conferences, Au emphasizes that the ecumenical dimension of the Trust was intentional and coherent with the organization's commitment to the Charismatic renewal.

Au in the second portion of the book reflects theologically on the activities and impact of the conferences in relation to grassroots ecumenism. Through examining the liturgical practices of the conferences, she highlights the unitive effects of Charismatic worship on participants. The Eucharist receives special attention due to the challenges it posed to the fellowship between Protestants and Catholics at the conferences. The book then examines the complementarity between pneumatological charisms and christological institutions within ecumenism by discussing the contributions of the Charismatic renewal to the history of the ecumenical movement. Au concludes that the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement along with the World Council of Churches and the conciliar reforms of Vatican II constitute three streams of ecumenism that must coalesce for the sake of the church's unity.

Au's achievement in this book is her ability to balance historical analysis with theological reflection. The book's focus on a particular episode in the Charismatic renewal allows the discussion to provide concrete examples of figures and groups that interacted in ecumenical contexts. The theological discussion therefore avoids dealing with abstractions. Her engagement with leading voices, both historical and contemporary, in Pentecostal and ecumenical studies gives her analysis a theological depth without abandoning the book's historical concern. Additionally, she presents a thick description of the historical dimension of the study while orienting this description towards the study's theological dimension. The book is a model of how to reflect theologically on a historical subject for the contemporary church.

My only critique of the work concerns its occasional engagement with the institutional dimensions of ecumenism. Au affirms the interdependency of grassroots and institutional unity, but her discussions of institution lack specific correlations with the Charismatic renewal. Her section on the Eucharist transitions from historical analysis to theological construction. Though the Eucharist did play a significant role in the Trust's conferences, her theological reflection on the sacraments strays from the book's focus on the Trust. Also, her

advocacy of conciliar ecumenism is a speculative intrusion into the study. Neither the Trust in particular nor the Charismatic renewal in general proposed a model of ecclesiastical relations, yet Au spends considerable time addressing these relations. The book's strength is not in its institutional analysis.

This book is intended for a scholarly audience. Those with prior research experience in Pentecostalism and ecumenism will be able to more fully engage the subjects Au examines, though a reader with no prior knowledge would be able to follow the discussion easily. I highly recommend the book to scholars of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement and of grassroots ecumenism. No examination of the contributions of the Charismatic movement to ecumenism in England or abroad should be considered complete without engaging this book.

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