

BOOK REVIEWS

Corky Alexander, *Native American Pentecost: Praxis, Contextualization, and Transformation* (Cleveland, TN: Cherohala Press, 2012).

Thomas Eric Bates, *Native American Identity, Christianity, and Critical Contextualization* (Cleveland, TN: Cherohala Press, 2013).

Cheryl Bear-Barnetson, *Introduction to First Nations Ministry* (Cleveland, TN: Cherohala Press, 2013).

In *Native American Pentecost*, Corky Alexander describes how six traditional Indigenous religious practices (language, smudging, drums and rattles, dance, talking circles, and the enemy way ceremony) have been successfully incorporated into the congregational worship of a handful of Indigenous Pentecostal congregations in the United States. Alexander chose to discuss these particular practices because he believes that they “will reduce syncretism while speaking to both Christian and non-Christian Native Americans” (3). By “syncretism” Alexander means the unapproved integration of Indigenous religion with Christianity, whereas he uses the term “critical contextualization” to refer to those instances of approved integration between Indigenous religion and Christianity. He employs these two terms as code words to represent the current boundaries of acceptable coopting of Indigenous religion within American Pentecostalism, at least as assessed by Alexander. “The goal of this,” he continues, “is to enable the Native American Pentecostal community to proceed with an integrated Christian witness for a relevant approach to evangelism by using Native traditional practices conducive to Pentecostal worship” (3). In short, the author attempts to identify traditional Indigenous religious practices that exert the least amount of tension possible with existing Pentecostal belief and practice, which he hopes might be used to enhance Pentecostal proselytization efforts among Indigenous Peoples in both Canada and the United States.

The core of Alexander’s study is the third chapter where—after very briefly describing each of the six Indigenous practices—he provides an even briefer biblical justification for the continued expression of each practice within Pentecostal orthopraxis. Although I do not believe that it was the author’s intention, this chapter reads like the many early missionary accounts of Indigenous religion in the Americas—such as

those found in the *Jesuit Relations*—that evaluated Indigenous religiosity based on the standards of Christian settlers. These early missionaries—not unlike Alexander—were also eager to identify components of Indigenous religiosity that they believed were “compatible” with—and might be incorporated into—Christian belief and practice in order to bolster their evangelistic work. After providing a Christian settler stamp of approval on these six practices, Alexander proceeds to make a series of recommendations directed towards Pentecostal denominational leaders intended to assist them in the development of more effective ministries targeted at Indigenous Peoples.

Before evaluating the content of this book, it is first necessary to briefly comment on some problems of form. *Native American Pentecost* is based on Alexander’s Doctor of Missiology dissertation completed at Fuller Theological Seminary, and, unfortunately, appears not to have been either significantly revised or professionally edited. The text, for instance, is riddled with an overabundance of definitions, qualifications, repetitions, and headings, and even contains discrete chapters devoted to a literature review and methodology, which should have been removed or at least shortened and incorporated into the introduction prior to publication.

Turning to content, this book raises two primary concerns for a Canadian Indigenous Pentecostal such as myself. First, Alexander claims that his study describes a broader “critical contextualization” of Indigenous religious practice occurring within Indigenous Pentecostal congregations across “North America”—which by his own definition includes both Canada and the United States—and that his recommendations also apply to congregations in both countries. The problem with this claim is that Alexander did not conduct research within a single Canadian congregation. In fact, his research was comprised of only nine site visits and eleven interviews in the United States. This is hardly an adequate amount of data with which to make the kinds of generalizations that he does regarding Indigenous Pentecostalism in the United States, let alone Canada, where both Indigeneity and Pentecostalism are very different than they are in the United States.

Second—with the exception of a few passing remarks—Alexander fails to discuss the insidious attempt by European settlers to assimilate Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the United States into both

Christianity and settler culture, which resulted in some of the worst atrocities enacted against any group of people in modern history. The legacy of the Church's active participation in this attempt at aggressive assimilation is still very much alive within Indigenous communities in both countries, and must be critically engaged prior to any discussion of Indigenous proselytization. The policy—either official or unofficial—followed by many Christian denominations in Canada, is to leave responsibility for designing and implementing Indigenous ministry to Indigenous workers who possess both the cultural knowledge and moral authority to work among these communities. I believe that Alexander's attempt is earnest, but it demonstrates a lack of the kind of cultural and historical awareness that is needed whenever settlers attempt to engage Indigenous Peoples in conversations about Christianity.

Alexander's work, unfortunately, reads far too much like the account of a white settler telling Indigenous Peoples how to be "good" Christians for it to be particularly helpful within Indigenous Pentecostal ministry. The fact of the matter is that Indigenous Christians do not need settler Christians to tell them how to worship God or how to define what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable religious belief and practice. Like Alexander's own participants explained to him (90), many Indigenous Christians believe that God revealed himself to their Peoples through their traditional religions long before Christianity even existed, let alone was shared with them by Europeans. This may be difficult—or perhaps even impossible—for some settler Christians to accept, but this does not particularly concern many Indigenous Christians. Indigenous Peoples in North America have been negotiating a complex process of selective isomorphism between their own traditional religions and Christianity for more than five-hundred years, and are fully capable of continuing this journey without the paternalistic guidance of Christian settlers.

In his *Native American Identity, Christianity, and Critical Contextualization*, Thomas Eric Bates, unfortunately, replicates the same underlying colonial framework developed by Alexander in which the terms "syncretism" and "critical contextualization" are used as polite code words for the mixing of Indigenous and Christian religious ideas that are either unapproved or approved, respectively, by white majority Christians (33). Like Alexander, Bates fails to critically examine who gets to decide what constitutes "syncretism" and what constitutes

“critical contextualization,” and in doing so, accomplishes little more than an update to previous colonial Christian evaluations of Indigenous Christianity. In the end, Bates unconvincingly argues that Christianity—which was the initial cause of the sociocultural devastation of Indigenous Peoples in North America—alone holds the solution to their revitalization, ignoring the recommendations made by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation whose more than \$500 million of research on Indigenous wellness directly refutes such claims (69). Standing at a mere seventy-two pages and based on just three days of participant observation and a single interview (3, 48), Bates’s work is difficult to treat as a serious contribution to the study of Indigenous Pentecostalism.

Cheryl Bear-Barnetson’s *Introduction to First Nations Ministry* avoids some of the errors committed by Alexander and Bates. Bear-Barnetson is an Indigenous Christian who unlike the settlers Alexander and Bates—as both the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s *Calls to Action* make clear—possesses the moral authority to write prescriptively about Indigenous religiosity. Bear-Barnetson also displays a greater awareness of Indigenous culture and history, particularly the destructive and ongoing legacy of the Indian Residential School System on Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the United States. Similar to Alexander, her book is based on a Doctor of Ministry dissertation completed at The King’s Seminary. At the core of her book is a basic—though mostly accurate—primer on Indigenous religion and culture targeted towards Christian settler ministers, which, she believes, can help them to more effectively proselytize Indigenous Peoples (6). Like Alexander’s work, this introduction is unnecessarily burdened by the accoutrement of her dissertation, robbing the work of its potential force and appeal to a larger audience. Bear-Barnetson, for example, spends three of her six chapters reproducing what appears to be the unrevised methodology, results, and reflections of her dissertation project, the conclusion of which is simply that Christian settler ministers possess a lack of understanding regarding Indigenous religion and culture and this is what inhibits their evangelization of this demographic (148). Although Bear-Barnetson adopts the largely colonial evangelization agenda espoused by Alexander and Bates, what differentiates her from these authors is that she is herself Indigenous,

and, therefore, possesses the moral authority to promote such an approach.

It is difficult to recommend any of these books for serious students of Indigenous Pentecostalism, except for Bear-Barnetson's, and only then with the caveats noted above. Despite the obvious good intentions of the authors, the majority of the content in these books is anachronistic, paternalistic, and out of step with the current state of settler-Indigenous relationships in Canada and the United States.

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David J. Courey, *What has Wittenberg To Do With Azusa? Luther's Theology of the Cross and Pentecostal Triumphalism* (London: T & T Clark, 2015).

When I first saw the title of David Courey's monograph, I experienced polar opposite reactions. On the one hand, a subtitle with Pentecostals, triumphalism, and cross in one line certainly sparked my interest.¹ On the other hand, though I am a passionate ecumenist, his title and provocative question – what has Wittenberg to do with Azusa? – produced a derisive response – “nothing!” I have argued elsewhere that Pentecostals and Anabaptists share a similar struggle to retain their prophetic and counter-cultural impulses over and against an increasingly accommodating and democratized Protestant Tradition.² Courey forces me to consider afresh (somewhat begrudgingly) new possibilities for mutual witness and praxis between Pentecostals and Luther.

This work is Courey's doctoral dissertation at McMaster Divinity College under the supervision of Steve Studebaker. Courey recently began his tenure as Dean of Graduate Studies at Continental

¹ This subtitle resonates well with my earlier work, *Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts: Implications for a Pentecostal Pneumatology* (London: T & T Clark, 2004).

² In fairness, Courey admits to similar conclusions “Early Pentecostalism may, in fact, represent a twentieth-century version of the left wing of the Reformation, proposing, as the enthusiasts did, a rejection of tradition in favor of a more democratized experience of Spirit-inspired apocalyptic community” (114). See also my “My Life as a Mennocostal,” *Theodidaktos: Journal for EMC Theology and Education* 3.2 (2008): 10-17.

Theological Seminary in Brussels, Belgium, after thirty years of pastoral ministry. The everyday realities of parish ministry in a Pentecostal environment brought to the surface a “basic contradiction between the expectation raised by its [Pentecostal] promise of power, and the frustration of disappointed experience” (2). Since Pentecostals promise more than they can deliver, he searches for answers to the impasse between expectation and experience only to find solace and inspiration in Luther and his seminal *theologia crucis*. Courey writes not to interrogate Pentecostals for their untamed use of power, prosperity, and pragmatism, but to call for a tempered yet unswerving commitment to welcome signs and wonders in tension with the cross.

Courey divides his work into three parts. In part one, he provides a short history on the rise of Pentecostal triumphalism. He surveys the Pentecostal quest for divine immediacy, due in large part to perfectionist and restorationist influences. As the twentieth century marches on and end time urgency begins to wane, Pentecostals must reinvent themselves; they become less content with classification as a movement of protest and more enamored with the quest for “the officially optimistic religion of America” (110).

In part two, Courey rehearses Luther’s *theologia crucis* not in order to decimate a Pentecostal *theologia gloriae*, but to explore opportunities for the former to inform the latter. Courey advances four ways Luther might serve as a timely interlocutor: 1) his openness to the supernatural; 2) his theology of the priesthood of all believers; 3) his vivid apocalypticism; and 4) his balanced approach to everyday life (18, 114).

First, Courey recasts Luther’s *theologia crucis* in terms of *pneumatologia crucis* and *eschatologia crucis*. He locates convergence between Luther’s insistence on *charis* that saves alongside Pentecostal proclivities toward *charismata* (119). Both Luther’s soteriological and Pentecostals’ pneumatological approach conclude that God’s work in and through humans is a gift of grace.

Second, Luther’s revolutionary dictum regarding the priesthood of all believers resonates naturally with Pentecostal proclamation on the universal availability of Spirit baptism. On this matter, Courey would do well to employ the proposal of Roger Stronstad, who takes Luther’s axiom to another level. Stronstad argues that Pentecost paves for the

way for the *Prophethood of All Believers*.³ Further, Luther's recognition of ordinary and hidden elements of vocation provide a much needed corrective to Pentecostal tendency to value primarily sensational and extraordinary service.

Third, Luther and (early) Pentecostals share a predilection toward eschatological immediacy. As Luther proclaimed the coming Last Days, the rise of Antichrist (the Pope), and Satan's rage against the church, so also Pentecostals turn to contemporary fulfillment of Joel's "last days" prophecy (Acts 2:17-21).

Finally, Courey revisits an oft-overlooked component of Pentecostal spirituality not guilty of triumphalism. Courey unites Luther's theology of the cross with Pentecostal testimony, specifically those based upon the "storms of life." Courey suggests Pentecostals already employ a solution for overly futuristic and ultimate triumphalism. Stories of believers' everyday endurance declare not only a proleptic foretaste of the kingdom, but also a penultimate kenotic (self-emptying) spirituality (240).

In part three, Courey proposes implications for Pentecostal theology and praxis. His pastoral experience comes full circle. Courey calls upon Pentecostals to sing and live with authenticity and theological tension of our "Victory in Jesus" and how "He [Jesus] Lives within My Heart."

I heartily recommend this book for students and scholars of church history. Courey writes not to make "a Pentecostal of Luther, or Lutherans of Pentecostals" (115), but to initiate an ecumenical conversation that transcends time. Courey sounds a clarion call for Pentecostals to reconsider their rhetoric of triumphalism, and instead persist in their unwavering zeal for divine encounter in concert with Luther's theology of the cross.

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Robert W. Hefner (ed.), *Global Pentecostalism in the 21st Century* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013).

³ Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke's Charismatic Theology* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010).

This is a commendable collection of essays on Pentecostalism in different regions of the world, written by some of the leading social scientists, historians, and religion specialists in the western world—with one exception, an article by a Hong Kong Chinese social scientist. The driving force for the volume is the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs at Boston University where sociologists of religion David Martin, Peter Berger, and the book's editor and anthropologist Robert Hefner, who has taken Berger's place as director of the Institute, worked. Pentecostalism, in the grand secularization thesis so popular in earlier studies, was seen as a reaction to modernity, anti-modern and "re-enchanting" religion. Instead, these scholars recognised over three decades ago that there was something more complex going on in the fastest-growing religious movement of the twentieth century. Far from being anti-modern, Pentecostalism was an alternative form of modernity, they contended. The writings of Martin, who contributes the first chapter in this volume, and Berger, who writes the afterword, were pivotal and prophetic of what was to come. No social scientist today, whether a "methodological atheist" or an insider, can merely write off Pentecostalism as a reactionary return to the past or an exception to the grand secularization theory. Interest in the subject has been soaring among social scientists since the 1990s.

This is the overall theme of this collection, a state-of-the-art look at where studies in global Pentecostalism stand today. It stems from a Boston workshop in 2010 and a conference a year later. It provides a splendid companion to Anderson et al. (eds.) *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (2010), for it expresses how the study has grown by reference to cases in specific countries: Brazil, Zimbabwe, China, Russia and Ukraine, India, and the Philippines. It deals with such important subjects as modernity, globalization, social mobility, politics, gender and civic involvement, among others. It addresses questions relating to how Pentecostals, particularly after their first flush as conservative, world-rejecting movements, move into integration with wider society. This includes engagement with civic society and even with national politics, something that has only surfaced in its recent history, as Pentecostal churches have been courted by politicians on account of their numerical clout. It also includes discussion of how Pentecostals moved from a holiness and other-worldly theology to an emphasis on

capitalistic prosperity, their upward move in social status to reach the middle classes, and their increasing internationalization. The focus of the collection is on the global South.

The array of scholarly contributors is nothing less than impressive. Mostly sympathetic outsiders, these authors know their particular field well and are usually the best authorities on the subject on which they write. Pentecostal readers would certainly find a broadly consensual overview here of what social scientists and other scholars think are important features in Pentecostalism. An incisive introduction by Robert Hefner sets the scene by comparing early North American Pentecostalism with current forms in the global South. Pentecostalism does well in both forms where there is a religious mind-set, and not among the secular working and middle classes of western Europe or countries like Uruguay (or, perhaps Canada!). It also does well when people feel marginalized by the elites in established religious systems, where in particular, migration, urbanization and cultural dislocation combine to create a feeling of anomie. Then, the rapid way in which Pentecostal churches “localize” and have relatively low start-up costs contrasts with that of the older churches, so that new denominations arise quickly, often with transnational connections and networks. David Maxwell illustrates this with regard to Zimbabwe, Nanlai Cao in the case of China, Christopher Marsh and Artyom Tonoyan in Ukraine, and Rebecca and Timothy Shah in South India. All the writers illustrate that the older Weberian adage of “routinization” has a Pentecostal version, where established denominations become less charismatic, more hierarchical, and more patriarchal. In the latter case, the book also discusses the “gender paradox” of women, who make up the majority of members, but whose importance is camouflaged by male hierarchical leadership. Bernice Martin tackles these questions head on in her chapter on gender and family relations, but the topic is also touched on in other chapters. The egalitarian message of Pentecostalism is greatly compromised in many parts of the world by this gender paradox. But as Peter Berger vividly observes, “The women (graciously and perhaps wisely) allow the men to strut about as preachers and public leaders, while the women take control of missionary work, healing ministries, and (most important) the household” (252).

What is particularly gratifying to this reviewer, and doubtless to some Canadian readers, is that Pentecostalism, to quote Hefner (13-14)

“had not one but several birthplaces.” The globalizing influence of early North American missionaries “would have amounted to nothing had it not been for the efforts and imaginations of ordinary people.” It appears that the theory of multiple origins is more widely accepted than ever before. The book is not without serious critique, such as Pentecostalism’s perceived social instability and the lack of a cohesive Pentecostal public and political theology, which is Paul Freston’s observation on Brazilian Pentecostals. This is hardly surprising given the vast heterogeneity of Pentecostalism worldwide. There is also a reflection on the migration of Pentecostals to other churches, or to no faith whatever in the case of the new generation. I heartily recommend this collection to serious scholars of Pentecostalism today.

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A. J. Swoboda (ed.), *Blood Cries Out. Pentecostals, Ecology, and the Groans of Creation*. Pentecostals, Peacemaking, and Social Justice Series 8 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014).

“Pentecostals are not interested in dealing with issues relating to ecology!” Is this really true? This book clearly shows that responsibility for the earth as God’s creation can be a major concern for Pentecostals. The editor A.J. Swoboda has put together a book with 13 contributions providing substantial information about environmental stewardship from a Pentecostal point of view.

The book starts with a foreword by Steven Bouma-Prediger and a helpful introduction by A.J. Swoboda. The main text is divided into three parts. The first one provides a historical context that opens avenues for appreciating Pentecostal positions on ecological matters. The second section focuses on theological reflections with regard to creation care. The last part illustrates how a deeper understanding by Pentecostal and charismatic Christians can spur practical actions.

The first contributors offer an overview of the rise of ecological concern among early Pentecostals in North America. Two chapters, one co-authored by Darrin J. Rodgers and Nicole Sparks and the other by Jay Beaman, pay special attention to John McConnell Jr. and how his

background as a Pentecostal disposed him to become the founder of Earth Day. These texts show how peacemaking, reconciliation and healing have been understood as being part of God's plan of salvation and how this naturally relates to a commitment to the healing of all of God's creation. Brandon Hubbard-Heitz studies the attitudes of Pentecostals to the transformation of spaces (e.g. dance halls into places of worship) and applies their hermeneutic generating eco-theological implications. Brian K. Pipkin looks at the environmental theology of Aimee Semple McPherson. These contributions clearly show that Pentecostals have a rich history and the resources that can be related to the care of creation.

Part two of the book includes 6 articles that raise the question how Pentecostal and Charismatic believers can develop an eco-theology that takes their traditions and experiences seriously. On his way to establishing an ecological pneumatology, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen points to the fact that the utilitarian idea of nature being made for the sole benefit of humans is of Greek origin and does not really represent Judeo-Christian thought. Quoting Jürgen Moltmann he states that Christian theology of creation should be thoroughly ecological (94). Steve Overman contributes a fascinating reflection on the cosmic vision of Maximus the Confessor, thus illustrating that Pentecostals can draw from older Christian traditions. Peter Althouse focuses on Moltmann's green theology and considers salvation, eschatological existence, and the sanctification of creation as important elements of the kenotic act of the Spirit of Pentecost. Robby Waddell compares secular and religious eschatologies and ventures in an interpretation of John's Revelation that is "green" rather than "black", i.e. he argues that from a biblical point of view that the earth in John's Apocalypse is not faced with total annihilation but rather with a new flourishing that brings all of God's creation to fulfillment. Jeffrey S. Lamp compares the Pentecostal "fivefold gospel" message with aspects of ecological responsibility especially with regard to Jesus as Sanctifier; not only in terms of showing human beings their place in God's order, but also emphasizing that the other-than-human creation has intrinsic value in God's sight. The last contribution in the theological section is made by Michael J. Chan, who looks at how generational sins, a topic popular in some Pentecostal-charismatic circles, could be read from a transgenerational point of view. Studying a number of Old Testament passages, he reflects

on how “sins of the ancestors” relate to our current ecological crisis in an interconnected world. Just like the post-exilic Jews during the times of Nehemiah one can raise the question, “What kind of response do we have in view of this age of judgment?”

So far so good. History and theory have their place. The question arises if Pentecostals can also deliver. The last section of the book tries to do that by providing examples from Africa, Europe and Latin America. Matthew Tallman tells about models of Pentecostal environmentalism in Rwanda, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Paul Ede refers to a charismatic church in Glasgow, Scotland, currently engaged in healing urban wasteland. Appropriately, he points to the fact that Pentecostalism is growing strongest in the slums of the majority world. This fact brings along a challenge to bring physical healing to these places. Finally Richard E. Waldorp shows that although Latin America has suffered for centuries from human and environmental destruction and institutionalized violence, a new self-awareness arises. This happens also among Latino Pentecostals, who not only reassert their self-identity but also rediscover ways of earth-keeping as an integral part of their indigenous cosmology. He encourages his readers (mostly Western) to learn “... to read the ‘Book of Nature’ and practice a hermeneutic of creation along with our growing re-visioning of Scripture” (233). This would be in line with recovering the roots of Pentecostal traditions.

The historical context proves that Pentecostals have it in their “genes” to think ecologically. The theological reflections are important because they relate the beginnings of Pentecostal eco-theology in a wider context, thus opening the horizon for fruitful dialogue. Many of the authors have referred to voices from other churches. This makes the book all the more valuable. The praxis oriented part does not leave the reader with an “if only” feeling. It encourages to common action.

A.J. Swoboda must be congratulated for this volume that has been thoughtfully put together. It provides a good foundation for further reflection and encourages commitment to good stewardship of God’s creation.

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Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

Scholars of Pentecostalism already know Grant Wacker's work because of his much-heralded book, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (2001). What Wacker did for pentecostal studies with that book, he has now done for Evangelicals, placing Billy Graham into the larger context of American culture and explaining his wide and enduring appeal over six decades of public life. In *America's Pastor* Wacker once again tackles a big subject, brings his insightful analysis and clear expression, and puts a major piece of twentieth-century American religion into context. Wacker does not simply retell the Graham story, instead he answers three questions. The first focuses on Graham himself and how he became the "most powerful preacher in America." The second is about Graham and American religion, namely how he helped to "expand traditional evangelical rhetoric into moral vocabulary that millions of Americans used to make sense of both their private and public experiences." The third and most central question is about Graham and American history since the 1940s, "precisely, how did he speak both *for* and *to* modern America?" (27).

Wacker is ambitious to seek understanding of American religion and culture since the postwar through the lens of just one life. It is, however, an intriguing assignment and Graham is the obvious subject for the task. It would be difficult to overstate Graham's impact. Wacker claims that "with the possible exception of Pope John Paul II - the evangelist likely addressed more people face-to-face than anyone else in history" (20). And yet, while Graham was the friend of American presidents and Hollywood personalities, he somehow managed to remain a popular preacher with a humble demeanour. He did so while he managed a ministry empire of vast proportions and founded the leading periodical of American Evangelicalism, *Christianity Today*. In the end, Wacker reveals that he has one answer to all three of the questions he posed about Graham, and it is this [spoiler alert!]: "From first to last, Graham displayed an uncanny ability to adopt trends in the wider culture and then use them for his evangelistic and moral reform purposes" (27). Wacker focuses on Graham's nimbleness at finding middle ground on questions that deeply divided Americans in general

and Evangelicals in particular, including, to name but two, civil rights and creation versus evolution.

Wacker examines Graham under eight different rubrics: preacher, icon, southerner, entrepreneur, architect, pilgrim, pastor, and patriarch. From all these different angles, Wacker builds his argument that Graham's wide appeal ran much deeper than a particular expression of evangelical theology or practice. Indeed, Graham was no theologian and Evangelicalism was never homogenous. His winsome good looks, charming southern ways, and astute business sense made Graham a quintessential American male hero. Yet while the great evangelist enjoyed enduring fame and popularity, his career was not without controversy and mistakes and Wacker does not shy away from that fact. Graham's failings were not the all too familiar ones usually associated with television evangelists; there were no serious money scandals and no marital infidelity. Graham's mistakes can be traced instead to his love of political influence and his sometimes too-close alignment with partisan politics. Examples include Graham's support of militarism, especially the Vietnam War; his close proximity to presidents, particularly his unswerving loyalty to Nixon; and his propensity to speak "off the cuff," most regrettably, his damning remarks about Jews revealed in the Watergate tapes.

In *America's Pastor* Wacker sets Graham's life and times into the broader context of American culture and he recognizes that "the story of Billy Graham's rise, singularity and longevity as a religious icon is a constructed story" with many complex layers (69). When Wacker deconstructs that story, he lays some important tracks, not just for future studies of Billy Graham in particular, but for scholars of Evangelicalism in general. For example, Wacker's attention to how Graham represented such an iconic expression of masculinity is a model for scholars of gender. Most existing work on gender has paid attention to women and their inclusion or exclusion in particular faith movements. While that feminist task remains crucial, it is time to turn our attention to how power and authority are created and reinforced by particular expressions of masculinity. Wacker blazes an important trail here. A second promising direction is future research exploring Evangelicals and cultural engagement. For example, when Graham's son Franklin praises Vladimir Putin for his stance on homosexuality and lashes out at a department store for marketing toys in a gender-

neutral fashion, Franklin clearly does not share his father's innate ability to take a moderate stance. This begs the question of whether anyone really can replace Billy Graham and whether Evangelicalism itself will regain its equilibrium from the issues that currently divide it.

Wacker claimed that by the time he wrote this book in 2014, "Graham's place on the Mount Rushmore of American religious icons seemed secure" and that the remaining task was to ask what that icon "told Americans about themselves" (19). An important question, indeed. Canadians have no Mount Rushmore, but Billy Graham was an icon on this side of the border too. While it is beyond the scope of Wacker's book to consider this, one is left to wonder how Canadian Evangelicalism also bears his imprint.

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Gary Wilkerson and R. S. B. Sawyer, *David Wilkerson. The Cross, The Switchblade and The Man Who Believed* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2014).

Very few of us will have our life stories published and available on Amazon 24/7. Biographies are written about outstanding individuals who have had a significant enough impact on society to warrant lots of people parting with their money: people like Nelson Mandela and that guy that was runner-up on American Idol last week. The subject of a biography is distinctive, perhaps unique in some way. But what often makes a biography compelling is to find that this unique character is in some ways just like you.

If you are a baby boomer reading these words, there is a good chance you have heard of David Wilkerson. His book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, has sold in the neighborhood of sixteen million copies and been translated into thirty languages. Pat Boone played him in the film version, which has been viewed by an estimated fifty million in over thirty languages in 150 countries. Younger readers may not recognize the name, though they may have heard of Teen Challenge, the ministry that was birthed when Wilkerson followed a divine call to gang members in New York City in 1958.

His story is fascinating, and told by his son, who now is the President of World Challenge. Wilkerson grew up in a Pentecostal home; both his father and grandfather were preachers. While pastoring a small church in western Pennsylvania, he was moved by images in Life Magazine of young gang members in New York who had committed a senseless murder. Over time, the skinny, extremely out of place country preacher audaciously made contacts with the gangs in the worst neighborhoods of the city. What began as an outreach to gangs (called Teen Age Evangelism) soon developed into the ministry to drug addicts that more typified what became Teen Challenge, which is known today internationally for its effectiveness in dealing with various addictions.

Over the next fifty years, Wilkerson had a truly remarkable impact in many different venues. He was a child evangelist (and ventriloquist!). He traveled the country, preaching at youth crusades, many of them with singer Dallas Holm, where altars regularly were filled at the end of each service. He was very popular in California at Melodyland and the Anaheim Convention Center in the late 1960's, and had a profound impact on what came to be called the Jesus Movement. He moved to Texas and sparked the creation of a community of sorts involving top names in the Christian music field, such as Keith Green and The Second Chapter of Acts. And then in 1983 he felt called back to New York City and founded Times Square Church in a converted Broadway theater.

As I noted above, though, biographies are about human beings who share some of my struggles and flaws. He apparently took after his grandfather, who had a reputation for being a "showman;" his brother Don said that "David was always bordering on the sensational." On one Sunday, at his small church, for example, he drove a small car down the center aisle. His ego could be a problem; the biblical verse that he used in newspaper ads was "The prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in me." (John 14:30). Apparently it was not clear to whom the "me" referred. He had discomfort with the prophetic visions that he felt God gave him; indeed, his book *The Vision* (1973), warning of catastrophic judgment on a sinful America, brought widespread criticism. Cancer was a recurring battle for ones dear to him, including his wife, Gwen. Even after his compassionate interaction with troubled youth, his holiness roots led him to attack males with long hair.

As a youngster, I knew “Brother Dave” (for so most people called him). It was my father, Stanley Berg, the local Assemblies of God presbyter, who first welcomed him to New York City. At the time, my father was an assistant to Marie Brown, who had founded Glad Tidings Tabernacle in 1907, and had lost her long-time husband and co-pastor, Robert, in 1948. He gathered together some local ministers to hear Wilkerson’s testimony and burden, and he became the first chairman of the board of what was to be Teen Challenge and served in that capacity until he retired in the 1990’s. In addition, the book refers to my brother, Ken, who moved to Texas at Brother Dave’s request to produce his monthly magazine and later a number of films, including *The Road to Armageddon* and *The Rapture*. Ken remembered him from his teenage years in New York when Brother Dave came up with the idea of using what looked like a flip-top box of cigarettes as an evangelistic tool.

Though short of body, Wilkerson was intimidating; he had piercing blue eyes that seemed able to look right through you. He truly did have the air of a Hebrew prophet. This was true even at home, when he would occasionally walk away mid-conversation to a divine exchange in another room. Like Moses, whose face reflected his time with Yahweh, Wilkerson’s extensive (and intensive) times of prayer had a discernible effect on him and on others. At times, though, his son Gary and his siblings would have preferred a father who was a bit more “there” at least on those days when he was at home.

What is perhaps most striking in the biography is the revelation that Brother Dave, this man who had such a powerful impact on so many lives for the kingdom of God, struggled mightily for his entire life to accept that God loved him; perhaps this was connected with the fact that he never was hugged or told “I love you” by either of his parents.

Gary Wilkerson, with R.S.B. Sawyer, has produced a readable and insightful perspective on the life of an important figure in twentieth century American Christianity. Although he is rightfully proud of his father, he shares some of the hurt as well; he, like many other ministers’ kids, saw that the family was “third,” behind God and church. It was such an imperfect man that God used in a unique way; his story is an inspiring read well worth your time.

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