

Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2007), paperback, x pp. + 261 pp., ISBN: 978-0-520-25194-6, US\$ 25.95.

*Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* is a well written book that expounds on the Pentecostal churches' ministries with the social problems in the contemporary world. The authors, Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, develop the main case of their book with sympathy to the Pentecostals. According to the authors "the thesis of this book is that some of the most innovative social programs in the world are being initiated by fast-growing Pentecostal churches." (6) This primary argument is reiterated at the beginning of the concluding chapter of the book. In their own words: "The thesis of this book is that Pentecostals are increasingly engaged in community-based social ministries." (211) The focus of their study is on "Pentecostal churches that have active social ministries." (1) Miller and Yamamori coined the category "Progressive Pentecostals" to describe Pentecostalism's engagement with social needs in the world. The authors "define Progressive Pentecostals as Christians who claim to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and the life of Jesus and seek to holistically address the spiritual, physical, and social needs of people in their community. Typically they are distinguished by their warm and expressive worship, their focus on lay-oriented ministry, their compassionate service to others, and their attention, both as individuals and as worshipping community, to what they perceive to be the leading of the Holy Spirit." (2-3) And once again the definition of "Progressive Pentecostalism" is duplicated in the last chapter stating their discomfort in the definition: "We struggled with what to call this emergent phenomenon within Christendom and finally settled on the label Progressive Pentecostalism, which we defined as a movement of Christians who claim to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and the life of Jesus and who seek to holistically address the spiritual, physical, and social needs of people in their community." (212) The authors of *Global Pentecostalism* acknowledge their own theological biases from the start: "Yamamori as a noncharismatic Evangelical and Miller as a liberal Episcopalian of long standing." (6) What is telling about this volume is the evaluation of the authors as outsiders of the Pentecostal movement's public commitment in serving their surroundings.

The introductory chapter reports the exponential increase of Pentecostals. Those who are claiming to be Spirit-led believers, whether they brand themselves as Pentecostals or not, are the people included in this notable global study. (2) However, those who are collaborating with the oppressive rightist regimes, aligning with prosperity gospel groups without social concern and stressing conversion as the sole purpose of reaching out to the community are excluded. (2) At the beginning the authors recognize that Pentecostals have constantly been doing a holistic practice of their belief and that their good works are increasing in impetus. (3) The authors repeated this observation again: “Throughout the history of Pentecostalism there have been examples of compassionate social service, so this is not a new phenomenon. But we believe there is an emergent movement within Pentecostal churches worldwide that embraces a holistic understanding of the Christian faith.” (211-212) Hence, *Global Pentecostalism* is not saying that the Pentecostals were never involved in the society. Rather, Miller and Yamamori are amazed at the strong emphasis that the Pentecostals are placing on social engagement. The reason why Pentecostals became the object of this study is because about 85% of the Christian groups that were recommended to the authors for research are Pentecostal or Charismatic. (6) The criteria for research among Pentecostals were clear: “(1) be fast growing, (2) be located in the developing world, (3) have active social programs addressing needs in their communities, and (4) be indigenous movements that were self-supporting and not dependent on outside contribution.” (5-6) Furthermore, *Global Pentecostalism* is an investigation of “a particular slice of Pentecostalism.” (6) It is “not a historical overview of Pentecostalism.” (7) It is also not meant to “rest on specific numbers” neither on statistical data. (7)

As Miller and Yamamori launch into “Global Pentecostalism: An Emergent Force within World Christianity” in the first chapter they review the phenomenal growth of the Pentecostals and the story of the movement as well as the types of Pentecostals and how they are perceived in the Christian world. (15-38) In the next chapter the volume narrates stories of people and churches that have done humanitarian service and the holistic works or charitable efforts that they do, the community development and partnership with the NGOs and governments that they practice and the sincere inspiration or spiritual reasons that they have to serve the needy. (39-67) The third chapter is entitled “Building a New Generation: Programs Serving Children and Youth” wherein the authors travelled to Kampala, Nairobi,

Calcutta, Johannesburg, Cairo, Caracas, Buenos Aires, Singapore and Manila in order to report on the charity programs of the Pentecostals in reaching out to the children and the youth. (68-98) Chapter four is about the Pentecostals application of their belief to bring change to people and their community whereby desperate drug addicts in Hong Kong, mentally ill prisoners in Buenos Aires, pitiful HIV-positive infants in Bangkok, STD infected people in Nairobi, dying AIDS victims in Kampala and abused prostitutes in Bangkok and Calcutta are receiving help from Spirit-led Christians. (99-123) In addition, the authors note Pentecostalism's considerable ventures in lessening poverty problems all over the world and getting involved in political issues as the Holy Spirit leads them. (123-128) The following chapter is very descriptive of Pentecostal experience of worship. The title is called "Encounters with the Holy: Meeting God in Worship and Prayer" and it tells the Pentecostal experience of the spiritual gifts and speaking in tongues as well as the encounter with God, demon possessions and empowering of the Spirit. (129-159) In the sixth chapter the Protestant influence on Pentecostal ethic in terms of capitalistic philosophy is expounded through the true stories of Pentecostals who moved upward in terms of social status. (160-183) The seventh chapter is appropriately named "Organizing the Saints: Giving the Ministry to the People" because this chapter of the book is basically arguing, again through stories of people and churches within the Pentecostal circles, that by using the giftings of the congregation, and through the cell groups, the pastoral role in evangelism and discipleship, as well as church networking and women's ministries, the exponential increase of Pentecostalism is unstoppable. (184-210) The final chapter is an assessment of the potential of "Progressive Pentecostalism" in comparison with "Liberation Theology" and the misled branding of Pentecostals as fundamentalists—but to the authors they are more postmodern who see the future of Pentecostalism with the experience of the Holy Spirit in a very positive light. (211-224)

The volume includes a DVD of film clippings that shows Pentecostal gatherings, public services and personal dialogues that the authors put together. (see 14) It is beneficial to watch the DVD videos in understanding the claims the book. The basic assumptions of the research are highlighted in the introductory chapter. This is very helpful. One important assumption is that people are "meaning-seeking" and another is that "religion is not a purely cognitive act." (12) Moreover, Miller and Yamamori are "standing within the Christian tradition" but their research is not for the confession of their

belief in God; and likewise to the best of their ability they evaded “the trap of cynicism;” rather, they “sympathetically attempt to describe” the things that they have seen. (13) As a matter of interest, the authors were on the defensive against their liberal colleagues who degrade the Pentecostals and chide the authors on why they would take huge amounts of time in going around to observe Pentecostal groups. (34-35) Other noteworthy features of *Global Pentecostalism* are the sections in some chapters that give theoretical reflections on the Pentecostal experience and practice. A few examples that caught the attention of the reviewer would be sufficient. In the first chapter the authors argue that Pentecostalism should be given the transcendent factor—what Pentecostals would claim as the Holy Spirit—when they reflect on “The Secularization Thesis and Pentecostalism.” (34-38) Another example is the section “Theoretical Interlude” in chapter four. Miller and Yamamori talk about the role of the Holy Spirit in the recovery of the people who got addicted to drugs and later became drug free due to the power of God. (108-110) Reviewing the theory of Emile Durkheim that the sacred is “utterly human” and “it is the collective sentiments that bind a group together” (133) in the fifth chapter is insightful. (132-134) A couple of further examples in chapter six about the role of the Protestant work ethic as explained by Max Weber for the upward movement of the social status of the Pentecostals (162-164) and the analysis of the Pentecostal life using Karl Marx’s theory of religion (179-180) are insightful and challenging to embrace. A final example in chapter eight is the “Comparisons with Liberation Theology.” The authors maintain that “Progressive Pentecostalism” and “Liberation Theology” could be complimentary. (213-216)

The highlights of the volume for this reviewer are the living testimonies of people that God is using to do humanitarian causes for the oppressed and the destitute. The stories of women of faith such as Coleen Walters in Johannesburg providing education to poor children (especially 75-79), Mama Maggie in Cairo saving the children from the dump (especially 80-83), Sister Marlena in Caracas snatching the teenagers from destruction (especially 84-88), Jackie Pullinger in Hong Kong bringing drug addicts to recovery (especially 99-105) and many others brought power and substance to the claim of the authors that Pentecostals are making a difference in society. Furthermore, the authors report that many Pentecostal churches from different parts of the world are doing humanitarian service to people with AIDS, providing livelihood to the poor, transforming their communities through charitable works and bringing hope to the hopeless. The use of

narratives with wit makes the volume a good read. Miller and Yamamori are clear and readable in what they are communicating in their narrations. Their sympathetic treatment of the charitable efforts of the Pentecostals highlights the positive results of what they call “Spirit-led” Christians. Although to an insider in the Pentecostal movement, the reviewer is surprised that the notion of the “Spirit baptism” is not mentioned in connection to Pentecostal empowerment in doing vocational service in terms of humanitarian concern, the experience of Pentecostal worship in Spirit is something that has been clearly articulated and emphasized as a key factor in the research. And so, the authors call it the “S factor.” (219-221) Thus *Global Pentecostalism* is both touching and challenging. It is a book that is not only an eye opener about what the Pentecostals are doing all over the world but confronts the reader to get involved in social engagement. For a Pentecostal reviewer, the way the authors tell the many stories in the book is both entertaining and edifying. It is a blessing to read how God is using Pentecostals all over the globe in reaching out to the lost world.

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