ARGENTINE PENTECOSTALISM AND GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

What implications, if any, does Pentecostalism in Argentina, or even in all of Latin America, have for global Christianity? There are at least two implications that I can see; the first is that with a growing number of Pentecostals in the southern hemisphere the relative balance of Protestant Christianity in the world will be dramatically affected. In 1900 with 80% of Protestants being white and mostly in the north Protestantism was overwhelmingly a northern/western phenomenon. By the year 2001 this statistic had radically changed with 55% of all Protestants now in the global south.¹ This change has already affected the Anglican Church, the southern churches functioning as a conservative rein on liberal policy changes. It is yet to be seen how the new power balance will affect other branches of Protestantism.

The second implication is the globalising potential of Argentine Pentecostalism. Discussions on globalization tend to see the influence all flowing from the north to the south or from the west to the east, this however is not always so. In the case of Argentine Pentecostalism there is an ongoing interaction with influence flowing both ways. It is true that Omar Cabrera was influenced by Morris Cerullo, and Carlos Annacondi was probably influenced by Manuel Ruiz (a Panamanian), and Benny Hinn has had incalculable influence through his books and videos. Claudio Freidzon for example, the current star evangelist, says he found the missing ingredient to his ministry in Benny Hinn’s book *Good Morning Holy Spirit*.² However, in the other direction we must insist that Peter Wagner was almost certainly influenced by Annacondia, even though in an article on revival in Argentina he credits two North Americans as having taught Argentines how to do spiritual warfare; however this was in 1987

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seven years after Annacondia started his ministry.³ An example of close interaction between north and south is Harvest Evangelism, an international organisation using principles of spiritual warfare, founded in 1980 by Argentine Ed Silvoso who worked with Luis Palau in North America.⁴

A concrete example of direct influence from Argentina to the rest of the world is the link between Buenos Aires and Toronto. The Arnott’s, of Toronto Vineyard fame, received their anointing under Freidzon in 1993, took it back to Toronto which then became known globally as the ‘Toronto Blessing’. The movement did not become known as the ‘Buenos Aires’ blessing, presumably because it wasn’t marketed and packaged in a form that Christian consumers could appropriate en masse. The main problems presumably were the Spanish language, the lack of resources for publishing and distributing written materials, and the relative expense of flights to Buenos Aires in comparison to flights to Toronto. Despite these barriers many westerners did in fact go on pilgrimage to the most famous mega-churches and other ministries such as Cosecha i.e. Harvest Evangelism.⁵ They hoped that revival fire would be catching, or that they would learn how to make it happen in their own country. Enough evidence to substantiate Poewe’s and Freston’s warning not to accept North American origin theories at face value, as it is North Americans who have the resources to publish them.⁶ However, with the help of Peter Wagner some of this marketing problem is being overcome.⁷ Modern communications is also increasing the globalising potential of this form of Christianity


⁵ For example in 1996 twenty five Australians visited Harvest Evangelism in Argentina. Pastor Brian Medway the senior pastor of Grace Christian Fellowship in Canberra writes, “We spent fifteen days in Argentina for three major reasons: 1, to attend the International Institute, a gathering of Christian leaders from every part of Argentina and most nations of South America, 2, to receive a commitment from wonderful South American Christian pastors and leaders to pray for a million hours for revival in Australia, 3, to visit with leaders in some of the cities and gain some understanding of the practicalities of reaching whole regions for Christ”. Brian Medway, “Standing in the Rain: Reflections on the Argentine Revival”.

