Daniel Ramírez


There has been scant attention paid to the voices of Chicano/Mexican Pentecostals whose existence was marked by constant settlement and resettlement. Daniel Ramírez’s excellent book successfully traverses and lessens this gap in knowledge, providing a voice to long-forgotten testimonies of those whose lack of the ability to speak English left us to the unintentional “sociolinguistic captivity of the [Azusa Street] revival’s leaders” (p. 5).

The focus of *Migrating Faith* is primarily placed on a particular stream of Pentecostalism, namely, the oneness stream of Apostolicism, which Ramírez considers *sui generis*. Its root is not Reformed, Wesleyan, or African-American, as has been argued by many scholars for North American classical Pentecostalism. It formed within its own context, oftentimes outside the attention of orthodox Christianity, which allowed for its oneness doctrine to flourish. Ramírez traces these mobile pioneers throughout the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. For them the borders were fluid. At times they moved voluntarily, following employment opportunities. At other times their movement was forced upon them, as best seen in the Great Repatriation that forcibly returned even American-born Mexican-Americans to Mexico. However, these movements only led to the further spreading of the Apostolic message. Ramírez shows how a continual flow of migration introduced many people to the Apostolic message, who would then carry the message to their destinations. Oftentimes many would become converted in faraway destinations and return to their homelands to share their newfound faith, leading to a further transnational character and solidarity of Chicano/Mexican Pentecostalism. As Ramírez states, “In a sense Pentecostalism represented as much a movement of labor and migration as of religious belief and practice” (p. 74). The spread of Apostolic Pentecostalism was further aided by its pragmatist characteristic. It easily adapted the musical culture of Mexico, utilizing the rhythms and the instruments of popular culture that had been deemed profane by mainline Protestants and Catholics alike. Due to these various features, Chicano/Mexican Apostolic Pentecostalism flourished, treating the border with fluidity in its expansion.

*Migrating Faith* is divided into six chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. Chapters one and two introduce the reader to important figures and explain the various elements at play in the spread of Apostolic Pentecostalism. In them the reader finds that this spread was no easy accomplishment.
Along with armed conflicts that led to the retreating of missionaries, there were many oppositions at play: persistent racism, religious intolerance, anticlericalism, and orthodoxy, for example. However, these oppositions also played a part in the development of stronger solidarity amongst these Pentecostals and the flourishing of oneness doctrine.

Chapters three and four further recount the unintended effects of repatriation. Through this unfortunate event, the Pentecostal message spread and created a deeper transnational network. The heterodox oneness doctrine flourished due to this jarring experience because uprootedness opened people to new beliefs and ways of thinking and solidified relationships that were forged through this fire. These relationships and networks were also created without foreign missionary assistance, which further strengthened the fraternal bind. These relationships transcended borderlines, overcoming national allegiances. What mattered was recognition within the network. This led to the empowerment of these Pentecostals who belonged mostly to the lower socioeconomic class. Whether these migrants were legal or illegal, whether of means or poor, they were shown hospitality and fellowship. Especially through letters of recommendation, those “held in low esteem (and meagerly compensated) by a capitalist society during the day (or on the graveyard shift) regained a large measure of self-esteem when gathered with spiritual kin for spiritual fellowship and bread breaking” (p. 133). Apostolic Pentecostalism benefited in these regards.

Chapters five and six give a glimpse of the characteristics of this migrant Pentecostalism. Drawing much of his information from the periodical *Exégeta Apostólico*, Ramírez paints a picture of a musical Pentecostalism, along with its characteristic hospitality and relationality, emphases on healing, missions, and even division. Music has always played an important role in Pentecostalism. Especially for these Apostolics, music was a medium that not only transmitted Apostolic theology to its churches, but also gained wide reach outside Apostolic Pentecostalism. This was due to Pentecostalism’s appropriation of popular culture, much to the chagrin of Anglo missionaries. Music has always been an important medium, and it plays a central role throughout Ramírez’s work.

*Migrating Faith* is an important work in the history of Pentecostalism that presents much neglected perspectives. However, one minor critique can be raised for an otherwise excellent work. This critique is a matter more of style rather than of substance, although substance is often part of style. In certain places, the valuable information in the chapters did not seem to connect well with each other. Rather than offering an overarching theme within a chapter and the work, each piece of information often seemed to lack coherence, leaving the reader wondering how to connect the information together. While