
Reviewed by David Bundy

This volume is certain to be considered one of the most important books on the Pentecostal movement to be published in 1986. It is a provocative analysis which will elicit discussion and debate and will hopefully lead to additional research on the intellectual and spiritual heritage of Pentecostalism and the expansion of that tradition in Europe.

The author, Daniel Brandt-Bessire, is a Swiss theologian with roots in the Pentecostal churches. A university graduate in agronomy, he is also a graduate of Continental Bible College, Brussels, and the University Faculty of Protestant Theology, Brussels, where the present study was presented as a thesis for the Licentiate in Protestant Theology (1983) under the title, *Une contribution à la compréhension des racines théologiques du mouvement de pentecôte*. Brandt-Bessire was ordained in the Assemblées de Dieu de Belgique in 1976 but had to withdraw because of antagonism of Assemblies of God USA missionaries to his ecumenical commitments. He and his wife are now co-ministers in the Église réformée évangélique du Valois (since 1984) and pastors of a church in Montana, Switzerland.

The method of the book is to trace certain theological and ethical concerns as they came to influence the Pentecostal movement, especially the discussion of a work of the Holy Spirit in the believer after conversion (variously termed sanctification, entire sanctification, Christian perfection, baptism of the Holy Spirit) and the importance of personal piety. The author begins his Traditionsgeschichte with John Wesley, focusing on his concept of “perfection” of the believer and the exercise of spiritual gifts (Ch. 1, 41-61), acknowledging Wesley’s debt both to the Medieval mystics and to patristic theology.

He continues with John Fletcher (Ch. 2, 63-72) the Swiss pastor who became Wesley’s theologian and successor of choice. It was Fletcher who first made the terminological identification of “Christian perfection” and “baptism in the Holy Spirit” which he understood as an instantaneous experience of God with continuing implications for daily Christian praxis.

The Wesley-Fletcher concerns were appropriated by the Anglo-Saxon revivalist tradition (Ch. 3, 73-100). Brandt-Bessire examines the thought and influence of Phoebe Palmer (1807-1875) (80-90)
and William Arthur (1819-1901) (90-93) before going on to the work of Asa Mahan and C.G. Finney. Chapter 4 (101-131) discussed the higher life movement after the Civil War in the United States. He focuses on W.E. Boardman, Hannah Whitall Smith and Robert Pearsall Smith, A.J. Gordon, S.D. Gordon, the Salvation Army theologians and O. Stockmayer all of whom consciously adapted Wesleyan perfectionism as understood within the American revivalist traditions, into reformed, quaker and pietist milieux. He notes that each of these figures had personal and/or literary influences in England and on the Continent, as well as in the colonial empires. Many works by these writers have been reprinted and translated into various languages, often due to the efforts of Pentecostal publishers.

The interest in spirituality generated by the post-Civil War writers and lecturers resulted in the Keswick Conferences (and the earlier conferences at Broadlands [Oxford] and Brighton) and brought Moody and Sankey, A. Murray and R.A. Torrey to Europe (Ch. 5, 133-156). Each of these men was influential in shaping the spiritual aspirations and expectations within the European higher life movements. Torrey especially with his lectures on “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” delivered in various cities would create a context in which Pentecostal theology would present the logical conclusion. Another writer, A.B. Simpson, would articulate a synthesis of higher life theology (“the four-square gospel”) which as popularized by T.B. Barratt and Aimee Semple McPherson would provide the creed of Pentecostalism throughout Europe.

Finally, two movements, the Catholic Apostolic Church and the Welsh Revival, are cited as important precursors to the Pentecostal revivals (157-170). These provided, as Brandt-Bessire indicates, both a precedent for revivalist activity perceived as being directed by the Holy Spirit and a matrix of interpretation for the experiences of the revival. There is a considerable literature about both in early Pentecostal publications.

Chapter 7, “La Théologie pentecôtiste” (Pentecostal theology) (171-195) begins by examining, in addition to the theologians already discussed, the influence of J.A. Dowie (divine healing), E.G. White (prophecy and healing) and D.L. Moody (“equating maternal love and the love of God....the renaissance in a way of a practical pneumatology” [pp. 171-172]) on early Pentecostal theology. The importance of glossolalia is noted before the author continues to describe the four-square gospel of Pentecostalism: “Jesus saves, Jesus baptizes, Jesus heals, Jesus is returning.” This is one of the most succinct and insightful synopses of Pentecostal theology. It also has the added value of reflecting an awareness of