

Book Review

Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Praxis: A Case Study

By John Mark Robeck

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In a day and age when the concept of decolonization is garnering considerable attention in various disciplines across the academy, John Mark Robeck's book, *Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Praxis: A Case Study*, is a timely addition. Although not explicitly a decolonial effort, it does serve as a resource that highlights the epistemological realities in a Latin American context that shed light on the task of decolonizing theology.

The purpose of the book is, in the words of Robeck himself, an "inquiry related to the development of a formal Pentecostal theology of praxis" (p. 9) through a mixed methods approach that includes qualitative and theoretical components. Regarding the qualitative elements, Robeck investigates "a group of churches that operate in the country of El Salvador, and in conjunction with a faith-based NGO named ENLACE" (10). As for the theoretical aspect, Robeck relies on the frameworks of Liberation Theology and Pentecostal Theology. Through these means, Robeck provides an insightful assessment of the intersection of these two theological camps as experienced in churches actively engaged in social projects. Robeck's work also provides both theoretical and practical observations that are useful in giving direction for a Pentecostal theology of praxis.

The book is structured around six chapters. In the introduction, Robeck lays the foundation for the study, which includes the similarities between Liberation Theology and Pentecostalism, an argument against the notion that Pentecostalism is “so futuristically orientated that they neglect the here and now all together” (7), and a brief description of ENLACE’s work.

Chapter one utilizes Gustavo Gutierrez’s seminal work, *A Theology of Liberation*, to describe elements that will then be correlated to Pentecostalism. Robeck also highlights various concepts developed by Pentecostal scholars that make the case for the consideration of the similarities between Pentecostalism and Liberation Theology, which set the stage for a Pentecostal theology of praxis.

The Salvadoran Pentecostal context is described in chapter two. This chapter includes a brief historical account of growth of Pentecostalism in El Salvador, an introduction to various important ecclesial leaders and their contributions, and a brief recapitulation of the various denominational movements in the country. Each of these concepts proves to be imperative for understanding the Pentecostal movement in El Salvador today.

Chapter three describes the three churches and their respective pastors that make up the case study. The story depicts the interrelationships between the churches’ lived experiences and their engagement with the social context surrounding the churches.

In chapter four, Robeck takes on the task of evaluating the content of sermons and hymns in order to articulate how Pentecostal praxis is communicated within the churches in the case study.

While the author utilizes multiple forms of data (i.e., theoretical and qualitative), the book has two gaps. First, the content does not account for women’s roles in church and in social engagement efforts. While it may be true that within the Salvadoran context men are often the ones holding formal leadership positions, women are not completely detached from the work being done within and outside the church. Second, although Robeck provides examples of how experience informs pastors’ theology in El Salvador, he does not explicitly explain how this process works. There is an epistemological assumption being made. Hence, an epistemological evaluation of this process might be helpful in providing greater clarity concerning the specific context from which the development of a Pentecostal theology of praxis is taking place.

Nonetheless, Robeck’s work is a valuable asset for the body of literature that sheds light on theology and ministry in the context of El Salvador. It is a great resource for organizations that seek to serve communities in El Salvador and neighboring countries. Missionaries may find this book to be an invaluable tool as they work within this context. This book is also a great resource for higher education institutions in that it provides helpful insights that can be used in a variety of courses, such as global Christianity, Latin American Christianity, missions, pastoral ministry, contextualization, and Latin American theology, to name a few.