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Studebaker, Steven M. *The Spirit of Atonement: Pentecostal Contributions and Challenges to the Christian Traditions*. London: T&T Clark, 2021; xi + 208.

Through this monograph, Canadian Pentecostal Steven Studebaker constructs a “pentecostal theology of the atonement” grounded on two trajectories that structure its contents. First, on “the pneumatological, holistic, and life-renewing and empowering character of pentecostal experience” (ix) and practice (1, 6-7, 201-202). Second, on a biblical theology of redemption that situates the Christian notion of “atonement” within the initiating redemptive aims of the Holy Spirit towards humanity and creation, which thereby posits “Pentecost” as the eschatological *telos* of biblical redemption (1, 6, 9, 18-20f, 39, 94, 105, 200-202). In Studebaker’s work, “Pentecost” thus metaphorically characterizes the full “Spirit-breathed life in and for the world” that God has always purposed for humanity (18, 66-67, 74).

Studebaker, therefore, consistently defines “atonement” as acts of “reconciliation” (80) that restore flourishing relations with God, people, and creation (20, 33). Hence, he argues that the biblical “history of redemption is a narrative of atonement” and thus a “history” of the Spirit’s redemptive aims towards creation (9). Therefore, Studebaker’s “central theological claim that grounds this pentecostal theology of atonement” is that “The Spirit of Pentecost is the fundamental gift of atonement” (200).

I should stress this book’s historical context and ecumenical significance. First to note is that, to the best of my knowledge, it is the first book-length theology of atonement coming from within the global Pentecostal tradition. Thus it significantly contributes to a recently (first emerging in the mid-2000s era; then mushrooming over the past decade) growing corpus of monographs that are constructing Pentecostal systematic theology from within the tradition’s distinctive theological methods, sensibilities, experience, and practices. Readers should thus particularly note how this book closely dovetails with Frank D. Macchia’s 2018 book *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer: Christology in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing). In contrast to most traditional Protestant construals of atonement from which Classical Pentecostalism has commonly drawn,

Studebaker's atonement theology thus robustly "integrates pneumatology and Christology," thereby positing "Pentecost, not the cross," as the "telos of redemption" (200).

Second, Studebaker ecumenically offers this work to the broader Christian traditions as, first, a corrective to traditional Protestant assumptions that atonement is strictly a Christological rather than also a pneumatological category (201). And second, he thereby prods both Pentecostals and Protestant traditions away from punitive/penal conceptions that interpret atonement as an "intra-trinitarian judicial proceeding between the Father and the Son" that gives humans "a forensic acquittal of sin." Instead, he argues for a fully Trinitarian redemptive labor of God that justly restores, heals, and transforms humans to Spirit-breathed flourishing life (201-202). Such a move is subverting the human "logic of retribution and redemptive violence" (ix). As Studebaker himself notes, his approach—while not substantially engaging its resources—strongly resonates with Eastern Orthodox atonement themes, even though, again, he rather forcefully works from a Pentecostal orientation (10, 53-55, 201-202).

Studebaker's agenda is both constructive and critical. Yet, for the prescriptive aim of constructing an atonement theology, he demonstrates congruent integrity between the biblical redemption narrative and the best features of historic Pentecostal experience and practice (viii, 3-4, 17). Hence, the primary problem he identifies and addresses is what he calls the "profound irony" characterizing "traditional pentecostal theology" (3). While the tradition's religious experience and missional praxis robustly confirm his portrayed atonement theology, "classical pentecostal theology" reflects neither the pneumatological praxis of Pentecostals nor the place of the Spirit of Pentecost in the narrative of redemption" (4).

Studebaker pinpoints this incongruity to the tradition's historically uncritical retrieving of Western Protestant Christocentric and penal/punitive/judicial construals of atonement doctrine and theology (4-9, 200-201). Throughout this work, he vigorously refutes these atonement construals as portraying not the broad biblical atonement narrative, but rather, quite more accurately, basic human penchants for retributive violence (ix, 41-42, 56-62, 66-67, 72-75, 202). Studebaker moreover stresses that he aims neither to "supplant" Christology nor the crucial role of the cross-event within the biblical redemption narrative, but rather to show how both Christology and pneumatology are thoroughly integrated dynamics within the biblical redemption narrative (6, 200).

Reflecting on his agenda, Studebaker has structured his book into two parts. After the Introduction, Part One ("Theology of Atonement") comprises five chapters that develop his atonement theology across their respective themes, beginning with

“Pentecost” and then to “Incarnation, cross, resurrection, and eschaton” (12). Then in Part Two (“Practicing Atonement”), he develops a conversation demonstrating how the constructed theology of Part One is both historically and contemporaneously illustrated through Pentecostal missional praxis. The first five chapters of Part Two, comprising the themes of “Empowering All People,” “Renewing Embodied Life,” “Living in the Way of the Cross,” and “Waking to New Creation,” are amply supplied with numerous cases studies from around the world that together show how globally diverse expressions of Pentecostalism well exemplify the book’s constructive themes.

Followed by an Epilogue that tightly summarizes the book’s main arguments, the final chapter (“Going Home”) briefly delineates how the book’s trajectories enjoin “a shift from the escapist and otherworldly eschatology of Classical Pentecostalism to a realized and participatory eschatology of the Spirit of Pentecost” (179); a shift that naturally intimates towards greater ecologically turned sensibilities, premised on the biblical vision of creational flourishing that would, Studebaker argues, hospitably situate human “cosmopolitanism” (194-199).

If I might identify one possible weakness, I feel Studebaker could have given more, even if briefly, exegetical discussion on some relevant New Testament texts, specifically drawing on “atonement” terminology. The reason would be to better clarify his arguments before those who may fault him for not doing so. Yet interestingly, he concludes by stressing he chose not to engage this issue to focus on ensuring a strong narrative approach that could effectively dramatize the biblical story of redemption (202). And I would say that he has done so well—in prose that is both highly readable, edifying, and inspirational.

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