**Book Review**


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This study seeks to clarify the characteristics of “Mexican Pentecostalism,” its diversity and localization within the Mexican religious field, its religious world view, and its political vision of the national history (p. 20) – all of this focusing on the example of just one Church, the Movimiento Iglesia Evangélica Pentecostal (MIEPI).

In nine chapters the author presents his results. Chapters one and two give an introduction to Pentecostalism in general and to Mexican Pentecostalism, finishing with a focus on MIEPI. A next unit, chapters three to five, is dedicated to MIEPI exclusively. First the author gives an account of the administrative structure of the church, presenting this as a study of “Mexican Pentecostalism.” Then he draws on the religious world view of “Pentecostalism” analyzing Sunday school material of MIEPI and focusing on the political aspects of evangelical apocalyptic. The next chapter describes and reproduces – under the heading of “power” – some aspects of Pentecostal ritual as a veiled form of political critique and a catalyst of protest (p. 117). Chapters six to nine focus on the political ideas of MIEPI, especially on its view of Mexican nationalist history and historiography. The analysis is based on excerpts from the official bulletin of the church “El consejero fiel,” mostly between the thirties and the sixties, in order to explain the current position of MIEPI (or “Pentecostalism”) towards the Mexican nation state, lacking a sufficient base to explain the current situation. The reader would have liked some substantiation of the judgments by interviews or at least a fair amount of written sources on the current debate. Further, in his brief research of the relation between the political field, the Catholic Church and “the Pentecostals” (chapter seven) – referring to just one political writer – the traditional motif of tension between Catholics and Protestants dominates so much that the author fails to see interesting moves like the cooperation of conservative Protestant and Catholic circles in socio-moral issues (homosexuality, abortion etc.,) and identity politics. Entering chapter eight, the reader feels rewarded for his/her patience,
Since Alvarado presents his core research which is worth a closer look: his study of MIEPI members’ voting in the 1988, the 1994 and the 2000 elections. He can show that MIEPI members have quite a notable tendency to the left: while in 2000 48% voted for the old institutionalized revolutionary party (PRI) and showed a special kind of leftist conservatism, 23% voted for the new left candidate of PRD, and only a 12% for the right wing PAN.

Chapter nine interprets the results of this research within the framework of a symbolic dispute between liberals and conservatives in which Pentecostals take their stance. These chapters articulate the core thesis of the book, namely that the political opinions and their participation of Mexican Pentecostals are determined by the religious version of a liberal imaginary that is represented by the PRI and PRD. In contrast, the PAN represents a conservative symbolism linked to the religious meaning that Pentecostals associate with the Catholic Church. While this argument has some plausibility due mainly to historical reasons, it fails, however, to account for the political orientations of the actors in a differentiated manner, especially when it comes to distinguish between the authoritarian, clientelist, left-populist tradition of the once state-party PRI and the actual attempt of the PRD to create a reformed new left wing. This difference is one of which Mexican actors are very aware. But a mere “symbolic analysis” (p. 23) does not account for it. The socio-metric profile of the MIEPI-electorate with a look upon education, gender and grade of commitment with the church suggest explanations for the different orientations. This would have been worth a closer analysis. Instead, the author makes haste to declare that there are no significant differences to be found (p. 117).

Generally, it is stunning how quickly the author generalizes the results of his study of just one church. But MIEPI is not “Mexican Pentecostalism.” It is just MIEPI, a conservative, independent Mexican Pentecostal church, split off the Assemblies of God, maintaining a strong distinction between “Church and World,” and representing just one sector of a quite diverse field of Pentecostal actors in Mexico. Any reference to that diversity is missing, so that the swift generalizations in almost any chapter are not justified.

Finally, it is not clear from what discipline’s viewpoint the author looks (although it seems to be “ethnohistorical” (p. 20), “symbolic anthropology” (p. 23) or just “anthropological” (p. 193). This void is brought into sharp focus when viewing the theoretical and methodological bases of the study. Incidental quotes of Evans Pritchard, Levi-Strauss, Berger and Luckmann and Gustavo Martín in terms of theoretical warrants do not help the reader. This, too, should be taken into account while appreciating the results presented in chapter eight.