

Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture. By Edith L. Blumhofer. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993. Pp. x, 281. Notes, illustrations, bibliographic note, index. Clothbound, \$42.50; paperbound, \$17.95.)

Little did college student Agnes Ozman know when she spoke in tongues in Topeka, Kansas, on the first Friday night in January, 1901, that historians would count that evening as the beginning of the Pentecostal movement in the United States. Pentecostalism, the largest new North American religious movement in the twentieth century, is difficult to delineate. It consists of a number of Protestant denominations, "charismatic" members of non-Pentecostal denominations (including Roman Catholics), small rural congregations, mega-churches, local faith healers, and the vast evangelistic empires of Jim and Tammy Bakker and Jimmy Swaggert. For the purposes of this study of the Assemblies of God, the largest single Pentecostal denomination, Edith L. Blumhofer defines Pentecostalism theologically: "They agree that the gifts of the Holy Spirit described in the New Testament should operate in the church today," and "that Christians should experience a distinct 'filling' or 'baptism' with the Holy Spirit" (p. 1.). Blumhofer's goal is not only to write a denominational history of the Assemblies of God but also to use the Assemblies of God as an extended case study of the ways in which "Pentecostal people have related to American culture" (p. 8).

Although Blumhofer's denominational history is precise and readable, this study shines brightest when it takes up cultural issues at midcentury. After 1940, the Assemblies of God and its people had to come to terms with neo-evangelicalism, the civil rights movement, new premillennial and healing revivals (Oral Roberts among them), the ecumenical movement, the charismatic movement, increasing prosperity, the social chaos of the 1960s, feminism, new immigration, scandals involving denominational leaders, pop culture, and the media. Blumhofer concludes that the tension between Pentecostals' original identity as a band of outsiders restoring the true church, on one hand, and the denomination's desire to expand and its members' upward mobility and infatuation with a parallel Christian pop culture (from Christian rock to diet programs), on the other, has tipped toward cultural accommodation. She argues convincingly that this denomination faces the same stagnation as the mainstream.

The scope of this study is impressive; yet it would benefit from more descriptions, examples, and excerpts from primary materials that convey the power of Pentecostalism as a religious movement, the content and tone of its preaching and rituals, and more knowledge of local Assemblies of God congregations.

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