

Amos Yong. *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

What do Pentecostals have to do with politics? To some, such a question serves as an oxymoron; to others, a topic too vast and thus impossible to assess. Not so for Amos Yong, who delves into yet another socio-theological sphere through his Pentecostal lenses. In his *In the Days of Caesar*, Yong now tackles (according to his sub-title) *Pentecostalism and Political Theology*. Given the diversity of Pentecostals, not to mention their numbers and global presence, such a task seems daunting. Yong, however, in typical fashion, takes readers on his signature path; he begins with a short synopsis of classical Pentecostal postures to politics, follows with a helpful history of interpretation on the convergence of Christianity and politics, and then ventures into various Pentecostal/Charismatic intersections with politics. In a nutshell, he arrives at “Many Tongues, Many Politics.” Yong discovers a big bucket filled with many theologies and marked by the social, economic, theological, and demographic diversity of global Pentecostalism.

As Yong’s publications continue to pile up, he leans more and more upon terms coined in earlier works. For example, Yong suggests Pentecostals (must) employ an uncanny “pneumatological imagination.” In many ways, Yong resonates with Grant Wacker’s description in *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Harvard University Press, 2001) of first generation Pentecostals as primitivists and pragmatists; Pentecostals seek

continuity with first century Christianity, often via the Lukan corpus, but they are also innovative. Yong locates these impulses in light of contemporary “Pentecost,” an event(s) not complete but ongoing, not closed but open-ended. In fact, Pentecostal diversity leads Yong not to a uniform political theology, but multiple theologies. He reaches back to another favorite adage, namely, the “many tongues of Pentecost,” whereby the work of the Spirit enables political engagement based upon a range of economic and social strata and in concert with various cultural expressions.

Yong frames his socio-political theologies within the classical Pentecostal depiction of a fivefold gospel – Jesus as Savior, Sanctifier, Baptizer, Healer, and Soon Coming King (115). As Jesus takes these ministries into the public square and passes the political torch to the apostolic community, so also contemporary Pentecostals (and all Christians) live in and engage their respective political worlds. Each representation leads to distinct (though often overlapping) political expressions. First, Jesus the Savior provides salvation as deliverance from cosmic forces of evil; certain Pentecostals, particularly from the global south, address principalities and powers as political forces. Jesus’ victory over these forces enables the church to function as a new and alternative *cosmopolis*. Second, those who strive to mirror Jesus as Sanctifier proclaim a church based upon one of two political possibilities. Either they live apart from the world and produce a people of God in stark contrast to the prevailing culture,

or they seek to reform/transform the existing society. Third, where proclamation of Jesus the Baptizer blazes in continuity with the early Pentecostal missiological thrust, these Pentecostals insist upon prophetic and counter-cultural deliberation of the gospel for a post-colonial, post-Western, and post-secular era of globalization. Fourth, Jesus as Healer extends not only to physical restoration but also to a multi-faceted prosperity expressed as *shalom*, which creates individual and collective redemptive lift for the people of God and potentially for the society at large. Finally, where Jesus the Soon Coming King remains critical as part of homiletical appeal, Yong acknowledges various Pentecostal eschatological stances based upon classical dispensationalism, but seeks rather to encourage a healthy already/not yet tension whereby the kingdom of God provides realized political hope while also waiting for full consummation.

Yong's efforts deserve attention by a wide audience. His grasp on the various histories and theologies of Pentecostalism proves valuable even for Pentecostals well acquainted with their tradition, for they will discover fresh contexts for appropriation of their theologies and praxes. Further, readers not familiar with the Pentecostal story/stories will be amazed at the complexity of Pentecostalism and recognize the import of a multiethnic and multicultural global movement, if for no other reason than an ever increasing and influential political presence. Moreover, Yong thrusts Pentecostals into conversation not only with other Christians, but also political theorists in the larger academy. This work should be considered for

seminarians and upper division undergraduates in confessional contexts, whether as a textbook or a research work, in areas of Pentecostal history, ecclesiology, political science/economics, social justice, and ethics. Indeed, any serious student (including informed lay readers) and scholars with an interest in the socio-religious dynamic of global politics cannot ignore the impact of Pentecostals in the public square. In sum, Yong, in his typical fashion, resists the temptation to produce a singular political theology. Instead, given Pentecostal numbers now beyond half a billion people, he concludes that the numeric and geographic success of Pentecostals points to their ability to sustain “Pentecost(s)” through their pneumatological imagination. Since Pentecostal growth remains strong, this work should give rise to further theological conversation and expression. Finally, this work should inspire exploration on (I am confident to say) the “many politics” of Canadian Pentecostals.

Reviewed by Martin William Mittelstadt
Evangel University