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What Has Wittenberg to Do with Azusa?: Luther's Theology of the Cross and Pentecostal Triumphalism

By David J. Courey



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Global Pentecostalism is a twenty-first century phenomenon. Yet in North America, where the movement was born, it has stalled. Courey uncovers the cause of this plateau in the triumphalism that is characteristic of both North American Protestantism and Pentecostalism. Through the identification of parallels between Martin Luther and contemporary Pentecostals, Courey detects in Luther's Theology of the Cross a potent remedy for this tension. Utilising this insight, Courey reflects on other faith traditions, and provides a counterpoint to the triumphalism that inhibits the development of Pentecostalism in North America and around the world.

This work comprises of three parts. The first is historical, charting the antecedents and development of Pentecostal triumphalism. The second is an experiment in historical theology, seeking basic resonances between Luther and early Pentecostals, and examining the Theology of the Cross as a means of probing Pentecostalism. The final section is an effort in constructive theology, applying the *theologia crucis* to some of the central aspects of Pentecostalism.



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Editorial Review

Review

“David Courey writes with a pastor's heart, a theologian's thoughtfulness, a deep love for his Pentecostal tradition and a knowledge of the Theology of the Cross. Since it originates in many years of pastoral experience, David's introduction of Luther's Theology of the Cross to Pentecostalism holds the possibility of serious, constructive dialogue. David's ability to bring together Pentecostalism's enthusiasm for the Gospel with Luther's understanding of both God and the church hidden in the cross could be a dynamic force for renewal. I hope that people immersed in the traditions of both Azusa Street and Wittenberg will pay careful attention.” ?Robert A. Kelly, *Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Canada*

“This book is an inducement to new thinking. The *prima facie* improbability of Martin Luther and Pentecostals as bedfellows melts in Dr. Courey's hands. He, himself a pastor/theologian or theologian/pastor, like Luther, was in a solid position to orchestrate the merging. Skillfully, he navigates history and historical theology to point Pentecostalism to a way past “institutional triumphalism” through Luther's “theology of the Cross.” Some will be provoked and others inspired. To borrow an idea he draws from Luther, Dr. Courey shows himself to be “a theologian of the cross [who] calls a thing what it actually is.”” ?Ron Kydd, *Tyndale University College and Seminary, Canada*

“Classical Pentecostals have long honored Luther as a progenitor of spiritual renewal but mainly as a passing stage towards an even greater triumph of the Spirit. David Courey's extremely insightful theological reflection grants Luther's theology of the cross an enduring significance in Pentecostal theologies of the Spirit, tempering their triumphalism and granting them proper direction (theologically and politically). This is a must read for Pentecostals and Charismatics as well as anyone interested in the global significance of Luther's theology of the cross.” ?Frank Macchia, *Bangor University, UK*

About the Author

David Courey is Pastor of Calvary Pentecostal Assembly (Cambridge, ON, Canada). He holds an MA in History and a PhD in Theology from McMaster Divinity College, Canada. He has taught in Bible Colleges in Canada, as well as in Africa and Asia.

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