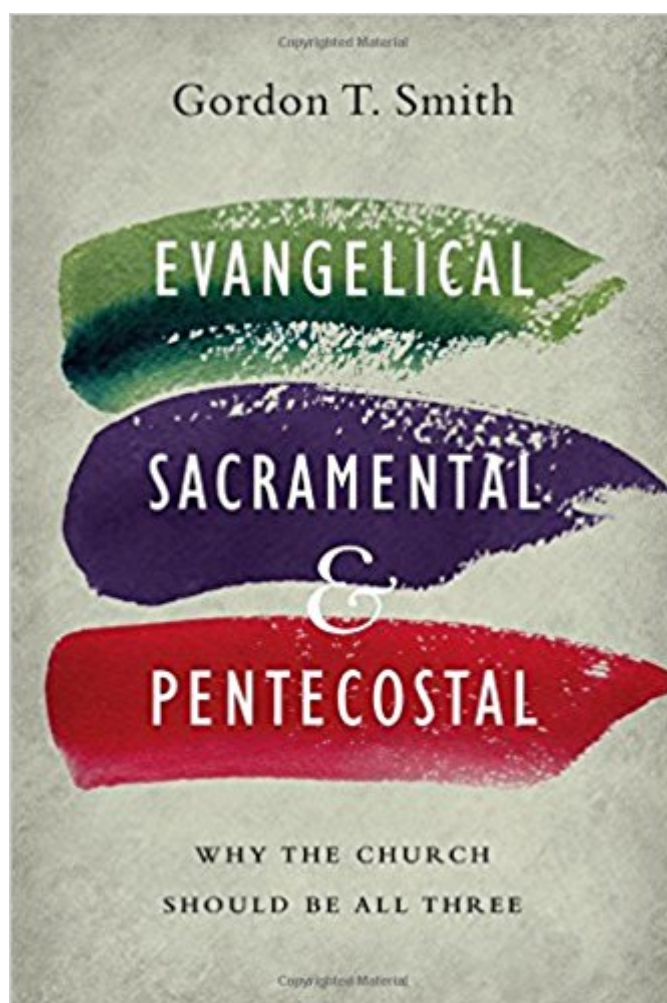


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Evangelical, Sacramental, And Pentecostal: Why The Church Should Be All Three



Synopsis

Evangelical. Sacramental. Pentecostal. Christian communities tend to identify with one of these labels over the other two. Evangelical churches emphasize the importance of Scripture and preaching. Sacramental churches emphasize the importance of the eucharistic table. And pentecostal churches emphasize the immediate presence and power of the Holy Spirit. But must we choose between them? Could the church be all three? Drawing on his reading of the New Testament, the witness of Christian history, and years of experience in Christian ministry and leadership, Gordon T. Smith argues that the church not only can be all three, but in fact must be all three in order to truly be the church. As the church navigates the unique global challenges of pluralism, secularism, and fundamentalism, the need for an integrated vision of the community as evangelical, sacramental, and pentecostal becomes ever more pressing. If Jesus and the apostles saw no tension between these characteristics, why should we?

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Customer Reviews

"This book should awaken us from our churchly slumbers. The evangelical, sacramental, and pentecostal streams of Christianity celebrate different things, but we should not think of them, argues Gordon Smith, as competing alternatives. Rather, each of these traditions highlights something essential to full-orbed and flourishing Christian experience. We can no longer afford to pick one favorite while neglecting what the others have to offer. This is a provocative call for a fresh ecumenical synergy—*for* weaving all these elements together into something stronger and

better than the older, isolating silos were able by themselves to deliver. Ever the pastor-theologian, Smith concludes with some practical proposals for moving us in this right direction." (Glen G. Scorgie, professor of theology and ethics, Bethel Seminary San Diego)"In *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal*, Gordon Smith is a constructive provocateur. The word *and* in the title of the book is far from a mere grammatical connector. 'And' is indicative of Smith's call to Christians, including evangelical Christians, to embrace together realities which too often are considered incompatible with each other, if not denied altogether. Furthermore, this call is not a call primarily to individual Christians or to some form of private piety. It is a call to churches – a call to churches to be the church. At the same time, this book is not primarily a critique but an invitation – an invitation to enter into and celebrate, in Smith's words, 'an ecology of grace.' *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal* is a wise and thoughtful invitation, accompanied by concrete suggestions, for churches to enter more fully into the grace that is found in union with Christ." (W. David Buschart, professor of theology and historical studies, Denver Seminary)"Christians often live in a state of spiritual malnourishment, choosing exclusively between the Word, sacraments, or renewal by the Spirit. In this timely pastoral appeal to overcome historical and theological divisions, Gordon T. Smith invites believers to be drawn into the fullness of life – fellowship with the living God – by embracing the divinely appointed means of grace." (Jeffrey W. Barbeau, professor of theology, Wheaton College)"This is a timely and significant book because it captures the emerging ecumenical, experiential spirit of our times. Smith's book offers a brilliant and practical vision for how the contours of an evangelical, sacramental, and pentecostal spirituality can be integrated into a full-orbed Christian spirituality and ecclesiology. This kind of perspective is absolutely in tune with what the church in post-Christendom needs in these days when we are redefining our identity as God's people and need resources to help guide us in that important work." (Lee Beach, associate professor of Christian ministry, McMaster Divinity College, author of *The Church in Exile*)"This book is a wonderful corrective to the tendency to be locked into our own theological tradition and be critical of other perspectives. Our Christian communities would be more vibrant and attractive to the unbelieving world if we intentionally incorporated the best in all traditions. Dr. Smith's book demonstrates how this can be done with integrity." (Glen Shellrude, professor of New Testament, Alliance Theological Seminary)

Gordon T. Smith (PhD, Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University) is the president of Ambrose University and Seminary in Calgary, Alberta, where he also serves as professor of systematic and spiritual theology. He is an ordained minister with the Christian and Missionary

Alliance and a teaching fellow at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia. He is the author of many books, including *Courage and Calling*, *Called to Be Saints*, *Spiritual Direction*, *Consider Your Calling*, and *The Voice of Jesus*.

Wow! I bought this book in the first days it was released. As a pastor of 25 years (and now I train pastors) I believe this book can be groundbreaking for the church. While it is a shorter work, it is power packed and full of dynamic concepts needed for the church of today. I finished it today and I plan to buy many copies to give away to leaders in my denomination.

In this excellent book Gordon Smith reminds us to embrace all of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and the three primary ways in which God imparts grace to His people. Smith encourages us to see the value in all three (Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal), instead of just embracing one and disparaging the other two. Smith's words help us to find appropriate godly unity for the church if we will humble ourselves enough to embrace it.

The title says it well: why the the church needs to be all three, Evangelical with its emphasis on the Word of God, Sacramental emphasizing baptism and the Lord's Supper, and Pentecostal emphasizing the presence and power of the Spirit. With so many outward divisions, this is a biblical call for genuine unity in the Body of Christ.

Excellent book! The author offers well-reasoned, scripture-based case that God's grace is experienced through the Word, sacrament, and real-time ministry of the Holy Spirit. Our church experience should not just emphasize one or two of these sources, but all three. I found the book to be both thought-provoking and enlightening.

A few years back, I made friends with some young men who were leaving the Assemblies of God (my denomination) for the Episcopal Church. They had grown up in AG congregations and attended AG schools, but they felt something was missing. That something was tradition, liturgy and the sacraments. Growing up in an AG church in the 1970s and 80s, I knew people whose spiritual journeys were moving in the opposite direction. They were leaving liturgical churches and joining Pentecostal ones because tradition, liturgy and the sacraments seemed like lifeless forms compared to the life-giving power of the Spirit they experienced in the Charismatic Renewal Movement. And then there were the Baptist Calvinists I debated online who argued that

Pentecostalism was overrun by touchy-feely emotionalism, health-and-wealth hucksters, and preaching that Dr. Phil and Oprah and Tony Robbins with a patina of Bible proof texts. They thought we'd lost the gospel and, as a result, lost everything. I have come to realize that each of these people had a point. The gospel is central. The sacraments are important. Pentecostal experience is vital. The question Gordon T. Smith asks in his new book is why Christians identify as one or another. Why must we choose to be evangelical or sacramental or Pentecostal? Why can't we be all three? Smith argues that each is necessary to an "ecology of grace" which he describes as "...a dynamic, a kind of eco-system, with distinctive contours that brings us to an appreciation of the very way that grace functions, with a generative counterpoint between Word, sacrament, and the immediate presence of the Spirit, with each known and experienced in the fullness of grace precisely because this is how grace works." He goes on to define three principles that should exist in every church.

1. Evangelical Principle. "Scriptures play an animating role in the life of the church, not in a secondary sense, but as a primary means by which the church appropriates and lives in the grace of the risen and ascended Christ."

2. Sacramental Principle. "God is revealed and God's grace is known through physical, material reality, including, most notably, baptism and the Lord's Supper."

3. Pentecost Principle. "[T]he Christian life is lived in the grace and power of the Holy Spirit and that is experienced immediately." Put that way, the necessity of each principle seems almost self-evident, at least to me. Think of Acts 2, a passage we Pentecostals love. It begins with the disciples' experience of the Holy Spirit (verses 1-11), continues with Peter's Scripture-filled sermon that calls hearers to repentance and salvation (verses 12-40), and concludes with the description of a Church that, among other things, baptizes converts and shares the Lord's Supper among disciples (verses 41-47). In other words, the Acts 2 Church was Pentecostal, evangelical and sacramental. Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal is a short work readers can finish in a couple of hours. It is a suggestive treatment of the issues rather than a definitive one. And, no doubt, readers will find nits to pick - points where Smith doesn't do their tradition full justice, in their opinion. Still, it is an important book that left me longing for a church with an ecology of grace that includes Word, sacraments (or ordinances, as Pentecostals like to call them) and Spirit. If the Acts 2 Church embodied all three principles, shouldn't contemporary Acts 2 churches do so, too?

I grew up Pentecostal. I have been a part of the Pentecostal movement all my life and currently pastor a church in the Assemblies of God. Over the years I have worked to learn the other streams of the Church that have been part of Christianity for centuries and have grown in appreciation and practice for these streams. I have understood "evangelical" more readily as a Pentecostal, but learning the "sacramental" has offered me deep joy. Smith's book calls us to embrace all three movements. How can we possibly think of one without the other two? (We DO bring in our hardened categories, however.) Once I learned more about the Table of the Lord, I have learned MORE about the presence of the Spirit and the activity of the Spirit than ever before. Smith offers the "gems" of what each movement brings to the Church. He offers warnings of being out of balance in any of the areas as well. The book is concise and thought provoking. I would encourage any pastor, but especially those who are Pentecostal, to pick this book up and allow the encouraging thoughts call us to examine ALL that Christ has to offer the Church!

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