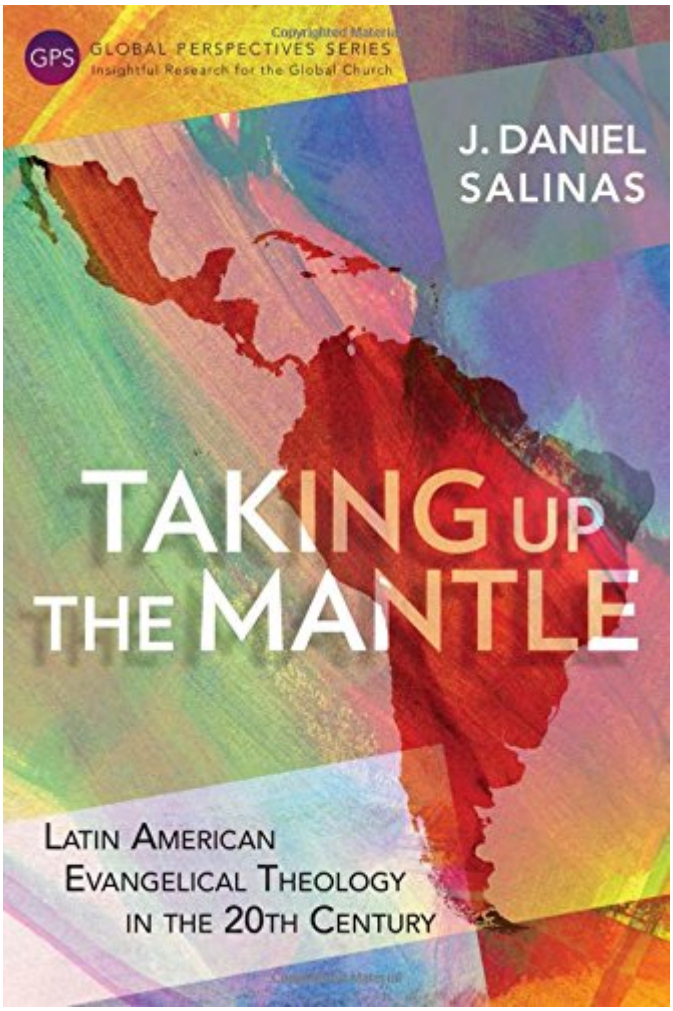
BOOKS I HAVE READ: TAKING UP THE MANTLE

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Category: Reviews

The bottom line is thatÂ Taking Up the Mantle: Latin American Evangelical Theology in the 20th CenturyÂ is an excellent, well researched, thorough overview of Â Latin American evangelical theology. The book is a medium format paperback of 200 pages (including bibliography and index) and will set you back around five pounds - a bit less for the Kindle version.



As a non-specialist, who has read a fair bit of about mission history and the background to the Lausanne movement, I was aware of some of the key issues in Latin evangelicalism. However, if truth be told, I tended to get lost in a long list of acronymns, associations and conferences. It is hard to keep track everything.

The first three chapters of this book look at the development of evangelical theology in Latin America from the Panama conference of 1916 to the late 1960s. True to form, there lots of conferences and acronyms to get to grips with. I suspect that specialists in the field will find the overview very helpful. For someone such as myself, it is a valuable resource to turn back to when reading other documents. If I can't always remember what CELA I was, at least I now know where to look to find out.

For me, it was the last two chapters of the book, where it all came alive. There is stuff here for anyone interested in the growth of the World Church and the development of global theologies. Chapter 4 looks at the seventies and eighties and the search for a true Latin theological identity in reaction to what was being imported from North America. Chapter 5 looks at the consolidation of that theological identity and places it in the context of what is happening across the globe. Both of these chapters have sections on women in theology and on the growth of Pentecostal theology in the Latin context; subjects which are incredibly important to anyone wanting to gain an understanding of what is happening around the world today.

I don't know the field well enough to give a detailed critique or review. I'll leave that to people who work in this area. However, as a generalist, I found this to be a fascinating book and it's given me a good deal of food for thought. Who should read it? Certainly anyone working in Latin America should be aware of the issues raised by the book and if they aren't reading similar stuff in Spanish or Portuguese, they should turn to this one. It is also of interest to anyone with an interest in the development of the World Church and the growth of non-Western theologies. Certainly Bible and mission colleges should be buying one or two copies for their library.

It's a hard book to pull quotes from, but the following quotes give a picture of some of the struggles that the book deals with:

> *Such a search for an indigneous theological expression was, however, "neither a free anti-Aericanism nor a teenager's rebellion." Instead, (Samuel) Escobar explained,*
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> *"I understand mission and theology as a way of life which takes place in a community without any distinctions. Besides, I believe we should recongnize the indebtedness Latin American evangelicas have toward Anglo-Saxon missionaries who brought the gospel. The problem is that our efforts to respond to the challenges of our environment, to think our faith within our particular contexts, have often been blocked by people or missionary organizations who want us to limit ourselves to just repeating what they have learned in their lands. Accusations of heresy and institutional squabbles come when we insist on our own way. Those people of missionary organizations do not appreciate indigenous efforts to think on our own; there is no sensibility to trying to understand the Latin American context. Most painfully, there are local caudillos who play this fundamentalise game because often they are inside this parternalistic scheme and benefit from it. If translating and repeating like servants profits much and provides certain advantages, why bother trying to find indigeneity?" (p.125)*

> *"My biggest question as Latin American preacher and teacher is how to recover in my own theological thinking and teaching the humanity of Christ without falling into the trap of another ideology. One of the reasons we inherited a Christology that understands onlty the deity of Christ is tha tmany missionaries who came to Latin America came out of the liberal-*

> *conservtive controversy in North America. In their apologetics, they were trying to defend the deity of Christ to answer the liberal challenge..." (Emilio Antonio NÃºÃ±ez p.142)*