Can the sacred be collected in the scribing of history? Historian of Religion Lloyd Daniel Barba retrieves and narrates the history of the Mexican Pentecostal farmworkers in California from 1910–1960 with a sharp critical lens of the research and tender care for the stories gathered in this book through the close examination of photographs and oral history. Barba’s work is itself a harvest of a committed scholarship in religion, and furthermore, the lives of the faithful.

The history in this work decentralizes Pentecostalism’s origin story, which follows its Azusa Pentecostal roots and expands the historical recollection with these communities that have been obscured in primary and secondary sources in the Pentecostal movement’s scholarship. In this book, Barba, gathers the complexities of racial, ethnic, gender, and spiritual dynamics in the larger sociopolitical systems in the United States around farmwork and Mexican migration. The author looks at the Apostólico farmworkers in California and the communities overlooked by practices of racism and xenophobia who were forged amid a religious identity that superseded social boundaries. Barba notes that these communities, ‘rather than fighting for respectability in mainstream society, they incubated alternative religious communities in industrial agricultural fields’ (p. 6). Still an active religious organization, the Apostólicos belong to the Oneness Pentecostal vein of Pentecostalism and were incorporated as La Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, with origins dating back to 1909.

This work adds texture to the complex history of racism and xenophobia in the United States and the resistance of Mexican communities to stand their ground by showing the correlation between agriculture labor and religious communal conversion. The author notes that the Apostólico movement that took place in the planting of churches wherever there were farmworkers created a ‘vast network of churches throughout the valleys’ (p. 71). Barba relies on the use of photographs to illustrate, gaze, and interpret for the reader these communities’ predominant rituals, aesthetics, and organization creating sacred places and spaces amid racial and economic exploitation. He refers to these photographs as ‘a testament of ritual creativity and sacred space making’ (p. 75). The ritual of baptism is an example of how many of these photographs show the use of the landscape of farms to carry out their religious ceremonies.

Barba dedicates a chapter to what he calls the ‘sacred waters’ where Apostólicos used irrigation canals to perform full immersion baptisms. The author, along with other Apostólico practices, uses the term ‘ex-centric’ throughout as a theoretical
that he defines as ‘minoritized’ (p. 34) following Jacqueline Hidalgo and Vincent Wimbush’s use of it in the analysis of scriptures. These ‘photographs tell a story of a sanctified past in a context most notably characterized by structures of immense asymmetrical power’ (p. 78).

From the beginning of this work, Barba prioritizes the voice and contribution of women in both the movement and Pentecostal studies scholarship. He dedicates a complete chapter to their work, ‘Sacred Talents’, that highlights the participation, work, and financial support of women in the movement, specifically the funding of temple construction. Talents and the way they are employed in religious communities following scriptures, ‘bespoke a sacred and social material world largely created by women’ (p. 176). These women singlehandedly *amasaban una pequeña fortuna* (amassed/kneaded a small fortune) with the labor of their hands doing *tamaladas* (selling tamales) every weekend. Although the role of preaching is still reserved for male pastors, during the first decades of this movement, women could be certified as preachers. This practice, however, as the author notes, became obsolete with the institutionalization of the movement (p. 156).

There are several places where the reader can ask questions to further the conversation within the richness of its text. Primarily, reading this text as a practical theologian, *Sowing the Sacred*, invites us to explore material religion through photographs as ‘subaltern modes of memory’ (p. 195) where the illustrations of practices can both supplement and challenge discourse. Secondly, the text is also theologically generative as it invites further theological interpretation and inquiry around the naming of sacred and profane practices in spaces around labor and land. As the author makes the connection of material religion, I wonder about the complexities and critique of religious analogies, for example, baptisms in polluted water and what it means to call this sacred within sociopolitical and legal turmoil. Can these profane conditions be sacralized and sanctified beyond the individual’s interpretation of its use, in this case the Apostólicos? Finally, the terms ex-centric and ex-centric knowledges incite further exploration of its use and more elaboration of its meaning as they can push the analogies further.

This work’s theological contribution shows that the practice of sowing the sacred comes from resistance of sifting the profane amid oppressive conditions. Barba calls the material and economic conditions of farmworkers in these communities profane, still they made a sacred space out of irrigation systems in the field and tents in the middle of the fields for worship. An important contribution *Sowing the Sacred* gives us is the way it adds to the historical texture of the United States’ design of labor laws and practices regarding farmworkers and capitalistic production of the fields. The author shows in his research that these communities, despite living in conditions in which they could not live full dignified lives within a system that assumed they did not need to live full lives, they nevertheless thrived and fed a country amid exploitative labor and left a mark in religious history.

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