

**Macchia, Frank D. *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer: Christology in Light of Pentecost*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018. 371 pages + xi. \$48 (hardcover). ISBN 978 080 287 3897.**

Frank Macchia provides a thoroughly Pentecostal yet ecumenically aimed Christology, constructed from his insistence that functioning as the summit to Christ's "identity and mission," is God's saving aims through the event of Pentecost (ix, 2, 6, 12, 27). Therefore, springboarding from yet contra to Wolfhart Pannenberg's earlier important though insufficient stress on Jesus' resurrection as the "culminating point of his identity and mission" (ix, 30), Macchia's broadly argued thesis through this work, is that we ought rather to recognise this "point" as the Pentecost event, from whence he now continues pouring forth the Spirit as the promised Spirit baptiser (ix, 2, 25-29, 64, 301-302, 315).

Consequently, Macchia explicates the event and meaning of Pentecost as a key "*focal point* of Christological method" (12), and more importantly—Pentecost as the culminating aim of Christ's identity and mission towards humanity and suffering creation. Macchia also effectively explains, however, that this approach should not be appreciated as uniquely a Pentecostal nuance, for across Christian traditions, other respected theologians have similarly suggested this trajectory (x). Hence, Macchia has comprehensively bridged a wanting yet earlier unachieved grasp within contemporary Christology.

There is a three-part structure to Macchia's monograph. I would consider Part 1 as the most innovatively significant section of his book. Here Macchia explains how his thesis emerges from and substantiates a "Christology from below" method that closely attends to Jesus' relationship to the Spirit throughout the incarnation (15, 27). Yet he does not discount the importance of the more historically dominate "Christology from above" approaches that issue in "logos-Christologies," which stress the Father-on unity throughout the incarnation (13). He rather demonstrates how a robust contemporary Christology requires both approaches, though this also requires better foregrounding a "below" approach (13-15). Throughout his book, Macchia explores how Christ's "divine-human identity" and mission as Spirit baptiser historically confirmed at Pentecost (25-28), proffers clarity to a range of other theological topics. He especially addresses implications towards our understanding of soteriology in both its cosmic and specifically human aims (39-56), and also what this suggests towards ecclesiology (56-65). The second chapter provides another valuable aspect to Part 1, where Macchia extensively discusses both historical and contemporary "challenges" to Christology. By doing so, he provides not only a helpful and readable survey of major historic Christological issues

from past to the present, but some insightful discussions that proffer apologetical import for contemporary Christian faith (117-120).

Working from the preceding methodological trajectories, in Parts 2 (“Christ’s Incarnation and Anointing”) and 3 (“Christ’s Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Self-Impartation”), Macchia thus explicates his formal Christology. He does so via a close reading of relevant New Testament texts that together narrate the Son’s journey from incarnation to the Pentecost event (chs. 3 to 6), and thereafter to his ongoing reign and mission as Spirit Baptiser (ch. 6). In the concluding chapter (ch. 6), Macchia thus further delineates this reign as comprising the risen Christ’s roles as ascended Lord (309-320), speaking Prophet (321-328), and High Priest who bestows the Spirit in response to the epicletic prayers of the church (328-338). In turn, this latter role suggests his ongoing commissioning of the church to his continued mission towards humanity and creation (339-343), until his future coming renews all creation through and in the Spirit (343-349). Macchia thus effectively fulfils the book’s stated purpose, which “is to view all of the events of Christ’s life and mission through the lens of their fulfilment at Pentecost” (6).

Readers should also appreciate this work as a third volume in an emerging series Macchia has developed since publishing his 2006 monograph, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Zondervan), followed by its 2010 sequel, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Eerdmans). In *Baptized in the Spirit*, Macchia suggested ways that the Spirit-baptism metaphor can function as an effective prism for constructing varied theological themes, particularly soteriology and ecclesiology. Building on those aims, in *Justified in the Spirit*, he addressed weaknesses in both Protestant and Roman Catholic theologies of justification, by showing how Pentecostal spirituality provides an ecumenical bridge that rightly weds the Roman Catholic stress on “impartation” and the Protestant stress on “imputation” into a more robust doctrine of justification than either tradition comprises on their own. Therefore, this volume functions as a seminal important headway towards a broader blossoming of Pentecostal systematic theology, in a manner that is ecumenically-reaching while deeply sourced in and representational of the theological themes, imageries, and intuitions of Pentecostal spirituality.

Throughout his book, Macchia develops three other themes I find especially noteworthy. First is that he consistently accentuates the embodied mediation of the Spirit through the fleshly incarnation of Christ, thereby suggesting sacramental implications emerging from this Christological approach (123-134). In doing so, Macchia underscores how God’s saving aims are not simply spiritual or immaterial, but rather oriented towards the very materiality of creation, beginning with people

as embodied habitations of God's Spirit (123-124). Second, Macchia consistently discusses how chief amongst the soteriological and ecclesiological implications of this Pentecost-grounded Christology is that of creating hospitable space for an expanding diversity of human cultural expressions of life and charismatic giftedness within the worldwide body of Christ (59-61, 262, 299, 340).

Finally, Macchia also regularly discusses how his Christological approach is also accentuated within the life of Christian community, sanctifying aims of "core practices" (62, 331-332); foremost being the practice of prayer that petitions for the Spirit and hence the kingdom of God (207-211, 311-315). Coupled with this theme, Macchia closely links Christ's present role as Spirit-baptiser with his concurrent roles as High Priest in the "heavenly sanctuary" and ascended reign as king over creation (309-338). He thus implicitly suggests that we recognise a strong priestly context to the ongoing comings of God's Spirit. Hence, Macchia briefly brings into this discussion the Christian prayer of *epiclesis*; that is, the priestly act of invoking the Spirit over the Lord's Supper and thus the gathered congregation (335-338). I believe that this theme warrants further development, for Macchia's Christology strongly accentuates the priestly work of the Church at prayer before the Father, invoking the Spirit who comes through the ongoing priestly ministry of Christ the Spirit Baptiser. Hence, this theme also enjoins us to consider how the practice of prayer, both by Christ and the Church within the earthly and heavenly liturgies (Hebrews chs. 4-10), effects renewal through the Spirit. Macchia provides here some valuable insights towards better grasping the connections between the priestly office of Christ and the prayer of *epiclesis*, which I believe remains an underdeveloped theme in the ongoing development of Pentecostal theology, though it is very integral to Pentecostal spirituality.

I will raise two critical concerns. First, I am surprised that Macchia does not in any way discuss or engage implications from or towards the Pentecostal four/five-fold gospel motifs of Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Spirit-baptizer, Healer, and Coming King. I feel this is imperative for any effort at constructing Pentecostal Christology, given its wide historic precedence towards Pentecostal historic doctrinal confessions, and ongoing heuristic role within contemporary Pentecostal studies. Second, the book ends rather abruptly for it lacks a formal concluding chapter. A concluding chapter is much warranted, given the book's comprehensive scope and originality as a ground-breaking effort within the field of Pentecostal systematic theology and particularly Christology.

Notwithstanding the concerns just raised, I strongly commend Macchia's work as a requisite theological resource, useful within both the church and academy, while also evoking diverse applications within

the wider field of Pentecostal studies. Readers will also find it deeply edifying, eloquently readable, and consistently inspiring through its rich grounding in the imaginative imageries of Pentecost.

Reviewed by Monte Lee Rice