
As one might assume from its name, the Theology for the People of God series endeavors to provide ecclesially-focused (i.e., in service to the contemporary church) theological perspectives not only on the traditional loci of systematic theology but also other relevant topics (xxi–xxii). Each volume in the series is written from “a theological outlook that is convictionally Baptist and warmly evangelical” (xxi–xxii). Moreover, each contribution is co-authored so as to foster the successful “integration of biblical and systematic theology in dialog with historical theology and with application to church and life” (xxii). Here, Andreas J. Köstenberger, research professor of New Testament and biblical theology and director of the Center for Biblical Studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri, contributes the biblical-theological presentation of pneumatology in the first half of the volume. Gregg R. Allison, professor of Christian theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, then presents the systematic-theological treatment of pneumatology in the latter half of the book. Both authors are well known for exceptional contributions to their respective fields, and this collaborative effort makes yet another fine contribution reflecting the kind of seasoned scholarly contemplation of the subject that one might expect from them.

“Part I: Biblical Theology” consists of eleven chapters. Following the first chapter, which covers introductory matters, the Old Testament is covered in four chapters, including the Pentateuch (chapter 2), the Historical Books and Wisdom Books (chapter 3), the Prophetic Books (chapter 4), and “The Old Testament’s Contribution to a Biblical Theology of the Holy Spirit” (chapter 5). Next, the New Testament is covered in five chapters, including the Gospels (chapter 6), Acts (chapter 7), Paul (chapter 8), General Epistles and Revelation (chapter 9), and “The New Testament’s Contribution to a Biblical Theology of the Holy Spirit” (chapter 10). Rounding out this section of the book are chapter 11, “A Biblical-Theological Synthesis of the Holy Spirit in Scripture,” and an appendix listing references to the Spirit within Scripture. One complaint here is that the arrangement involves the separation of Luke
from Acts and the piecemeal evaluation of the Johannine corpus (with John’s Gospel, Epistles, and Revelation placed in distinct sections), thus obscuring their distinctive contributions.

“Part II: Systematic Theology” consists of fourteen chapters. This portion of the volume begins with “Introduction, Methodology, Central Themes, and Assumptions of a Systematic Theology of the Holy Spirit” (chapter 12). Next, one finds chapters on “The Deity and Personhood of the Holy Spirit” (chapter 13), “The Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity: Intratrinitarian Relations” (chapter 14), “The Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity: Trinitarian Processions and Missions” (chapter 15). Following these are chapters on the Holy Spirit vis-à-vis creation and providence (chapter 16), Scripture (chapter 17), angelic beings (chapter 18), human beings and sin (chapter 19), Christ (chapter 20), salvation (chapter 21), the church (chapter 22), and the future (chapter 23). Drawing the volume to a close are chapter 24, “Contemporary Issues in Pneumatology,” and chapter 25, “Conclusion.”

This volume represents a tremendous attempt at integrative collaboration between a biblical theologian and a systematic theologian, and for the most part the respective portions of the book nicely complement each other. At the same time, the more exegetically oriented reader may feel that some of the more speculative musings about intratrinitarian relations, eternal processions, and the like lack sufficient exegetical foundations.

One other area of concern pertains to the authors’ remarks concerning Jesus’s reception of the Spirit. They are rightly concerned to explain the activity of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus in accordance with a theologically sound christological and trinitarian framework. In the Gospels, “Jesus is shown to accomplish his ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit, but his possession of the Spirit is a function of his divinity rather than the latter being merely the result of the former” (55). Consequently, the activity of the Spirit in Jesus’s ministry is properly “viewed within the context of a divine Christology and monotheism, designating Jesus as the Spirit-anointed Messiah and Son of God” (55). Köstenberger here distances himself from James D. G. Dunn (55 note 2). Later in the volume, Allison argues against what he regards as an improper Spirit Christology as exemplified by scholars like Gerald F. Hawthorne (362–66). Stemming from these theological
commitments over against some exegetically driven observations, the book contains some apparently tensive statements regarding Jesus’s empowerment by the Spirit. On one hand we read, “Given that the evangelists consistently take note of the Spirit’s coming upon Jesus at his baptism (Matt 3:16/ Mark 1:10/ Luke 3:22/ John 1:32–33), we are doubtless to understand that the Spirit empowers Jesus for the earthly ministry, which his baptism inaugurates” (213). Also, the Spirit “anointed Jesus for his messianic ministry (Acts 10:38)” (99), and “the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit at his baptism . . . marks the beginning of his messianic mission” (184). These remarks rather clearly communicate that Jesus was empowered by the Spirit for his ministry beginning at his baptism. This appears to be a sound interpretive conclusion. On the other hand, “from the beginning of the Son’s incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth, continuing throughout Jesus’s entire earthly life, and culminating in Jesus’s death, resurrection, and ascension, the Holy Spirit fills and enriches the God-man without measure” (362). “It is as the incarnate Son of God, fully divine and fully human, completely and always dependent on God the Father and completely and always filled with God the Holy Spirit, that Jesus proclaims the gospel of the kingdom, resists temptation, disciples the Twelve, confronts his enemies, performs miracles, suffers, is crucified, rises again, and ascends into heaven” (365; see 353: “[T]he incarnate Son is filled with the Holy Spirit from the moment of conception and lives the entirety of his earthly life in dependence on the Holy Spirit indwelling him”; also 63 note 27: “The conception of Jesus in Mary’s womb by the Holy Spirit suggests that he is filled with the Spirit from birth”). One is left wondering in what sense, then, Jesus receives empowerment at his baptism. Perhaps the authors believe that the “public reception of this boundless anointing by the Spirit occur[ring] at Jesus’s baptism” (354, italics mine) is merely an outward display of what was already true in Jesus’s prior experience. If so, it would seem that he is not actually empowered in any meaningful sense at that moment in time. In any case, it appears that theological concerns here may have overridden exegetical ones.

In chapter 24, a section entitled “Spirit-Emphasizing Movements” (464–70) surveys Pentecostalism, the charismatic movement, and third-wave evangelicalism, highlighting what the authors regard as distinctive elements as well as weaknesses. This section concludes with an
admonition: “Our pneumatology urges believers and churches to avoid easy reductionism by which Pentecostal and charismatic phenomena are dismissed as either the highest expression of divine blessing or the derelict result of demonic activity” (470). The authors affirm continuationism rather than cessationism (429–34), but they argue against any Pentecostal/charismatic notion of subsequence/separability, favoring instead the view that baptism in the Spirit occurs at salvation (85–86, 389–95). While I do not concur with the authors’ perspective on Lukan pneumatology in this regard, a short review is certainly not the place to engage such a complex debate in any thoroughgoing fashion. In any case, their interpretation and the supporting arguments are basically standard fare among non-Pentecostal evangelical treatments of Spirit baptism and thus perhaps warrant little further comment anyway.

Just a few other notable points from among many possible examples, presented here in rapid-fire fashion, include the following: explication of the non-gendered nature of God (231–32 note 24); acceptance of Calvin’s spiritual presence view of the Lord’s Supper (454); affirmation of the cessation of the apostolic office (444); discussion of worshipping and praying to the Holy Spirit (478–79); consideration of the Spirit vis-à-vis the eschatological future (457–61). Also noteworthy is a helpful section entitled “The Holy Spirit and a Theology of Religions” (470–76), which includes brief interaction with and response to Catholic inclusivism and Amos Yong as an example of Protestant inclusivism. Here the authors explicate their view as follows: “Our doctrine of the Holy Spirit, affirming the inseparable operations of the triune God and being inextricably connected to Christology, is a missional pneumatology that holds to exclusivism and rejects inclusivism” (474).

This book is packed with a wealth of informative evaluation of a full range of biblical texts and a wide breadth of pneumatologically relevant theological foci, all presented from a conservative evangelical perspective that is not only irenic in tone but also warmly open to the moving of the Spirit. It will serve as an excellent textbook for both undergraduate students and seminarians, as well as a most valuable resource for pastors, teachers, and scholars. Highly recommended!

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