



Spirit of God: Christian Renewal in the Community of Faith

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"I wish Spirit of God had been available when I planned my seminar on the Holy Spirit; I would have adopted it as a textbook. If I teach it again, I will adopt it. It's a marvelous survey of contemporary biblical and theological reflections on the Holy Spirit by evangelical scholars. I highly recommend it to all who are interested in this topic of current interest. The chapter 'Stories of Grace: Pentecostals and Social Justice' is worth the price alone."

— Roger E. Olson, George W. Truett Theological Seminary

Exploring the Expansion of the Holy Spirit's Work in Global Christianity

During the past century, Christian churches around the world have identified a remarkable work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of everyday people. Young and old, men and women, rich and poor alike have felt the powerful and personal presence of God. Is it any surprise that Christian theology, in turn, witnessed a revival in study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit? From the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism and the persistent invocation of the Spirit in Roman Catholicism to the Spirit-infused worship of charismatics of all denominations and ecumenical gatherings in the name of Christian unity in the Spirit, Christianity around the world continues to experience a renewal of life unlike any age since the founding era of apostolic witness.

Spirit of God: Christian Renewal in the Community of Faith contributes to the wider project of church and academy through an ecumenical collection of essays that explore biblical, historical, doctrinal and practical insights into the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The volume originated in the twenty-third annual gathering of the Wheaton College Theology Conference. Recent theology conferences at Wheaton College have explored central doctrines (Trinity, ecclesiology), major thinkers (Bonhoeffer, N. T. Wright) and other topics of wide-ranging interest (Christianity and the arts, Christianity and politics), but this gathering initiated conversations long overdue in the evangelical world.

In fact, some might argue that evangelicalism maintains a difficult relationship with pneumatology today. While noted scholars of evangelical history and theology such as Timothy Larsen have rightly highlighted the pneumatological orientation of all evangelical Christianity, tensions persist. For some, evangelical commitment to biblical authority leaves contemporary reflection on the Holy Spirit's ongoing work and distribution of gifts in a subordinate position, at best, to the inspired words of Scripture. For others, the commonplace identification of some fringe Pentecostal groups (such as proponents of the so-called health-and-wealth gospel) with the Spirit's activity distorts the conversation and leaves many Christian leaders in a state of pneumatological apathy. Still others believe that pneumatology must always be subordinated to reflection on primary doctrines such as salvation or the ongoing evaluation of the person and work of Jesus Christ—it is a common claim, after all, that "the Holy Spirit prefers to go unnoticed!"

As the essays in this collection make clear, talk about the Holy Spirit is as old as talk about God. Christians believe that God has made himself known by way of the Holy Spirit from the very beginning. In the prophets, too, the Spirit's presence could be discerned in words and deeds of profound significance. The promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, was anointed for a work of proclamation and the release of those bound by various forms of oppression. And

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BOOK EXCERPT

Edited by **Jeffrey W. Barbeau** and **Beth Felker Jones**, these thirteen essays on the topic of the Holy Spirit were presented at the 2014 Wheaton Theology Conference. Covering biblical, historical and theological perspectives, they feature important contributions on the current shape of global Pentecostalism. The contributors also include

- **Estrelida Y. Alexander**
- **Allan Heaton Anderson**
- **Oliver D. Crisp**
- **Timothy George**
- **Gregory W. Lee**
- **Matthew Levering**
- **Douglas Petersen**
- **Sandra L. Richter**
- **Kevin J. Vanhoozer**
- **Geoffrey Wainwright**
- **Michael Welker**
- **Amos Yong**

when the disciples gathered in Jerusalem after the ascension of the Lord, they experienced the Spirit's work as a diverse community of faith and gave witness to the risen Christ in the power of the Spirit.

In light of such a pervasive biblical witness to the Spirit's presence, few should be surprised that Christians in every age have continued to give testimony to the work of the Holy Spirit. Whether in creedal declarations of belief or mystical descriptions of divine renewal, the Holy Spirit continues to act in every generation—even when institutional pressures, the potential for disorder and the prevalent desire for systems threatened to domesticate the personal presence of God. The fact that the Spirit's work is directly tied to the changing face of global Christianity makes pneumatological reflection all the more important today.

— *Taken from the Introduction*