

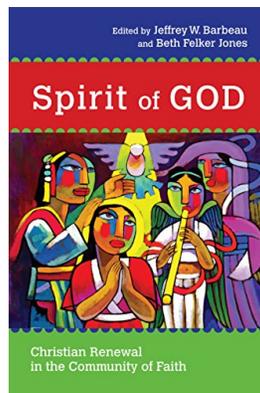
## Book Reviews

### Spirit of God: Christian Renewal in the Community of Faith Ray Hilsinger\*

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*Jeffrey W. Barbeau and Beth Felker Jones, Editors, Spirit of God: Christian Renewal in the Community of Faith, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.*

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The topic of the Holy Spirit is weighted with a theological understanding that any review of the Holy Spirit falls inadequate in mere words. This understood “Spirit of God” offers an excellent compilation of essays from well researched “[B]iblical, historical, doctrinal [,] and practical insights” (p.11). The greatest values of a book are the impact of the story told and the lessons learned by the reader, so, this review will offer a few brief lessons learned by this reader—as a recommending review of “Spirit of God.”

The “Introduction” presents a historical and current fact that, “tensions do persist for a “pneumatological orientation of all evangelical Christianity.” Added to this, Sandra Richter offers a thought-provoking question for any Christian, “What Do I Know of Holy?” She suggests that the Holy Spirit has regrettably been misunderstood or dismissed as some sort of “energy.” There is some truth to this generality but, Richter’s essay presents a brief Scriptural

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journey from the created work of the Triune God (Genesis) to the recreative work in Revelation 22 that clearly dismisses the idea of an “energy or force.”

The suggested lesson one might gain from the above reflection is two-fold: (1) What one knows about the Holy Spirit is primarily redeemed from one’s willingness to continually ask for the fullness of what God intended in the work of the Holy Spirit; and added to this is prayerful, theological reflection from reading Scripture, other books, and evidence redeemed from theological reflection offered by Biblical scholars; (2) Clearly the Word of God, which is how God (Jn. 1:1-4) reveals the truth that God is a Trinity of activity in those who will believe and accept the work of Christ.

Most existing tensions in the community of faith concerning the Holy Spirit reside within humankind’s attempts to understand who God is. Since God does not change (Heb. 1:10-12), the work of the Holy Spirit does not change. The lesson to be discovered is, “Why does the tension (relational difficulties) concerning pneumatology exist in the *community of faith*?” The volume, in its entirety, is a spiritually healthy pursuit of this lesson and a greater knowledge of the Holy.

Oliver D. Crisp’s essay, “Uniting us to God” presents a second important lesson. Crisp presents a brief expose of historical doctrinal statements from the Second Council of Constantinople (AD 553) to John Murray (Scottish Reformation) to Johnathan Edwards and John Calvin—concerning the work and role of the Holy Spirit. Crisp used this foundation (and more) to set the stage for two lesson making truths: (1) “The external work of the Holy Spirit is always in concert with the other members of the Godhead” and (2) “his peculiar work is bound up with God’s first intention to be united to His creatures.”

The lesson to hold on to here is that through the work of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit reveals, restores, and unites the relationships “with God, self, others and the environment,” (Bryant Meyers 2008, 27) that were distorted by humankind’s sin in the Garden of Eden. The work of the Holy Spirit is meant to unite the people of God, not divide.

The very title of this book, “Spirit of God: Christian Renewal in the Community of Faith,” presents the necessity of understanding a third lesson as an example of review of this book. It is found in the last essay of the book, “Come, Holy Spirit.” Jeffrey W. Barbeau and Beth Felker Jones wrap this lesson in one statement, “Shouldn’t we know the Spirit more than we understand the Spirit?” (pg. 242). This does not, by any means, negate the study of the Holy Spirit or the value of every essay within this volume, as they state, “The project of recovering biblical pneumatology remains incomplete, but what is needed is not only study but also the wisdom that comes from the self-revelation of the Spirit” (pg. 251).

Basically, the depth of the evidence presented in these essays concerning the Holy Spirit must have “a way forward for the readers” (pg. 243). If clear evidence is presented concerning the incredible work of the Holy Spirit by study and personal revelation, but not put into praxis, then it remains as words on a page and an unresponsive community of faith. Renewal of the local and larger community of faith remains dormant. Similarly, if one reads the Bible and the Holy Spirit reveals an important life issue; solution to a problem or insight into what God wants to do in one’s life, but it is not implemented by faith, then it remains as ink on a page.

This excellent volume is about much more than a collection of well-researched and well-written essays. Its diversity of Biblical, historical, doctrinal, and practical insights is shouting the message that the Holy Spirit is crucial in the life of every individual that is within the *community of faith, both locally and globally*. The more Christians exercise concerted efforts towards seeking personal revelation and study of the Holy Spirit within a relationship with Jesus Christ; the less chance of tensions concerning Pneumatology, and both the more opportunity of unity among the local/global community of faith and the more opportunity Christians will gain to know the Holy Spirit, as well as accessing gain knowledge of the working essence and functions of the Holy Triune God.