

Book Review

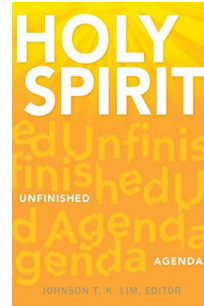
Johnson T. K. Lim.

Holy Spirit: Unfinished Agenda

Singapore: WordnWorks, 2015. 371+xxviii pages.

ISBN 978-981-4597-64-7. USD 49.

Reviewed by, Timothy T. N. Lim, Ph.D.



The theologically-untrained can finally look to a one-stop and accessible volume on a kaleidoscopic study of the Holy Spirit! Johnson Lim pulls together six-five essays, written by 70 stellar scholars (19 females and 51 males) across Christian traditions and geographical representations. Without necessarily forcing an agreement between contributors, the book presents the study of the Holy Spirit in a lively fashion, engaging robustly with biblical, historical, theological, and inter-denominational resources. Readers will walk away appreciating the complexities, dynamism, continuities and discontinuities on the subject no less because of contributions from many respected Wesleyans, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Methodists, Lutherans, Evangelicals, Charismatics, Catholics, Brethren, Baptists, Anglicans, Anabaptists, secular academicians that span across ten countries from parts of Asia, Britain, Europe, Germany, North America (including Canada), Oceania, and South Africa. Still, the ethos of the volume is evident to some, given the dedication of the work to Evangelist Billy Graham and to a former Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary president, the late Dr. Lilian Hui Kiau Lim (1959-2009).

These and more subjects fill the pages. Who is the holy spirit? What are evidence of the work of the holy spirit in the Old Testament, the New Testament, history, liturgy, missions and theology through the lens of various past and contemporary evangelists, revivalists, scholars, and theologians? Themes are organized into nine parts after an introduction on the four phrases of studies on pneumatology in Christian history then and now by the former Nottingham University hermeneutician, Anthony C. Thiselton. In Part 1, four scholars show various intersections of hermeneutics and the study of the Holy Spirit in Scripture and theology. Besides the typical platforms of the world of the text, the world behind the text, and the world of the reader interfacing in reading the Spirit in the biblical pericopes, conversations also explore whether the contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic readings are para-modern or a form of post-modern reading, and to what rejoinders, if any, may be helpful with voices from the Reformed tradition. Essential to these reviews showcase the dynamic relationship between Spirit, Word and community.

Part 2 brings together ten scholars to review the Spirit in various biblical genres and/or books. Among discussions include whether the Spirit of God in the Old Testament is the same as the Spirit in various books of the New Testament. The chapters show (albeit implicitly) how Christian traditioning came to embrace pneumatological perspectives as we now find in

various Christian traditions. Should following the Spirit lead one to move from a naturalist and rational reading into a free-flowing subjective pneumatic impulse takes some attention. Contributors find a consonant voice that evidence of the Spirit will cause individuals and communities to become empowered conduits of God's mission, justice, rebuilding, and creativity in the face of destructive human tendencies, sins, and devastating forces. Where the Spirit is, the gospel is advanced, and souls are taken on a journey towards sanctification! Thus, the failure to recognize the spirit imperils one's spiritual life, though discernment is by no an easy task. The authors engage in their own ways how themes like the Spirit, Christ, and the witness of Christian life conflate or converge.

Parts 3 and 4 bring together theological, historical, and practical questions intentionally. Among conversations include whether the Spirit that indwelling God's people in the Old Testament and in the new covenant are the same. How do prophecies differ between the two covenants? How is global mission energized since the early church? How is Christ's baptism and resurrection of Christ related to the Holy Spirit? How did Christian process eventually introduced the Spirit from Nicea (325)'s simple and short sentence to a full-blown treatment of the co-divinity of the Spirit in Nicea-Constantinople (381), and how did the division of pneumatological disagreement between the church of the Latin West and Eastern Orthodoxy of 1054 find new ground in the 21st century? Can there be discernment of the spirit prior to, during, and after the close of the scriptural canons? What about the theme of glossolalia (tongues-speaking), healing, and sin against the Holy Spirit? What roles did the Spirit play in the patristic age, medieval period, throughout church history, and in contemporary church

growth movements?

The practical dimensions of studying the Spirit in Christian life that began in Parts 3 and 4 continue into parts 5, 6, and 7. Part 5 focuses on the Spirit in spiritual formation, worship, and prayer. Part 6 focus on the Spirit in Christian illumination, preaching, African American experience, and global missions. Part 7 examines the Spirit in pastoral ministry, mentoring women, ministry and leadership, music, discipleship, and in the workplace. The relevance of embodied ministry, empowerment, and community-support in concrete life situations are either explicitly considered or implied in the essays.

Parts 8 and 9 examine historical and contemporary evangelists, preachers, theologians, and revivalists who have either written or spoken about the Holy Spirit. The array of persons under investigation (not in order in the publication) include Augustine, Balthasar, Billy Graham, Charles Spurgeon, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, George Whitefield, Gregory of Nyssa, John Calvin, John Chrysostom, John Stott, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Karl Barth, Martin Luther, Martyn Lloyd-Jones (the volume spelt as Martin L-J), and Thomas Aquinas. Though the list is neither exhaustive nor comprehensive, which is not the goal of the volume, readers unfamiliar with the subject now find a spread of resources to enrich their biblical reading. Footnotes in the volume at times introduce secondary resources from as far back as the early nineteenth to twentieth centuries and would make for an interesting retrieval.

The concluding chapter by Evangelical missiologists Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo speaks about three central development of global Christianity in which the Holy Spirit is seen to be most active: in the Global South,

in Pentecostal/Charismatic denominations, and in interreligious engagement, with supporting missiological statistics Christian World Database (Brill) and World Religion Database (Brill). The conclusion did not bring any radically new insights if one has been following the scholarly developments in recent centuries, especially scholarly contributions in *Zygon*, *PNEUMA*, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, and a range of other research on Pentecostal/Charismatic studies across the globe. There are much less discussion on the intersection of science, humanities, and pneumatology that have been rigorously discussed in the Society of Pentecostal Studies. Nonetheless, to a less-informed reader, and even to early seminary students (especially those who may

not be familiar with their own tradition's understanding to the many issues discussed), the volume is truly amazing in its breadth of discussion, and in truly concise manner! Most chapters fall within 4 to 6 pages, with a few chapters extending no more than 8 pages: taken together, the brevity and breadth of coverage is nearly impossible, and Johnson has done it again in pushing his contributors to such a conflated task! So, to ERTTP's readership, and especially to the editor, Johnson Lim, my friend for a decade now, I am grateful for the wisdom and charism in bringing this volume in-print, on the much polarized view of the Spirit in Pentecostal and Evangelical communities, for ourselves and for the larger Christian audience!

