

Review of Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit – in Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today* (Grand ...

Russell Almon

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coming from other denominations or none need to know about the particular practices of a Baptist church, and why this is so. The earlier edition of this book was of great help to me in making my way as a young American Baptist pastor.

Baptists, they explain, are a non-creedal people, using the whole New Testament as their standard of faith, with a clear commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. Early Baptists believed they were replicating the New Testament church in their organization (an oversimplification, the authors admit). Out of this comes an emphasis on the ministry of all people (also called the “priesthood of the believer”), a role for the called minister, and local church autonomy (and thus a “bottom up” organization of groups of Baptist churches). Early in their history, Baptists discovered how churches need each other for support, encouragement, accountability, and mission tasks, and so the importance of associations in their various developments became an important part of Baptist practice.

Out of this foundation grow chapters on baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the meaning of membership, ministry, church organization (with the usual varied boards or a possible single board alternative), and more.

This volume goes beyond “how things are done” to explore the dilemmas of Baptist polity and how this has played out in recent years. The authors write, “The most perennially vexing and paradoxical challenge of Baptist denominational life is to manage tensions we feel between *autonomy* and *interdependence*.” (p. 233). A brief summary of history in recent decades demonstrates this dilemma in controversies when one region of American Baptists dismissed some congregations for being “welcoming and affirming” (to homosexual persons) and when, for a similar reason, a whole region dissolved its affiliation with American Baptists. Of this and other intra-Baptist conflicts throughout history, they write, “At the end of the day, interdependence could not survive the competing autonomies” (p. 237).

They also note the progressive changes in denominational structure. In the light of decreased membership and resources and less local inclination to follow national programs, organizational structure and staffing has decreased considerably and local initiatives have more priority.

To their credit, the authors assume that women in ministry are called, recognized, and affirmed, and that that issue has been settled for this denomination. They mention the topic only once as an assumption, and use inclusive language throughout.

For all the gifts of this volume, it has some disappointments for this reviewer: (i) in a day of smaller memberships and overcommitted members, I wish more attention had been given to simplifying and streamlining church structures beyond a brief discussion of one-board churches; (ii) I wish more focus had been given to living our life in a postmodern, post-Christian, and certainly post-denominational age—in my opinion, the discussion about associate and open membership, and particularly the suggested constitutional clause on associate membership (p. 326), is inadequate; and (iii) in a pluralistic age, I wish for more enthusiastic openness to ecumenical endeavors, and at least a mention of interfaith relations. The latter is a tragic omission, in my opinion.

I may be asking too much. The authors are clear about their purpose: “Without a common vision of mission and a clear commitment to serve Christ and his church, organizational structures will not renew a denomination. However, motivation and vision may be hampered when structures are not adequate” (p. 286). The authors want to help Baptists be wise in building those structures to serve that mission. May they be successful. Amen.

Richard P. Olson

Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Shawnee, KS, USA

The Holy Spirit—in Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today, by Anthony C. Thiselton. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013. xiii + 565 pp. \$46.00 (pbk). ISBN 978-0-8028-6875-6.

This comprehensive treatment of pneumatology by Anthony Thiselton is the most extensive overall scholarly treatment of the Holy Spirit to date. This hefty volume is clearly divided into three parts. The first part takes up “The Holy Spirit in Biblical Teaching” and begins with the Holy Spirit in Judaism and the Old Testament, while focusing most of its attention on New Testament pneumatology. The second part treats “The Holy Spirit through the Centuries” and presents a historical survey that spans from the early church and apostolic fathers to eighteenth century figures. The third part continues with “The Holy Spirit in Modern Theology and Today” and presents a historical survey that spans from the nineteenth century to the present day.

A number of strengths make Thiselton’s volume a valuable resource. First, Thiselton’s book is the most comprehensive one of its kind. Thiselton adeptly covers biblical and historical sources, with substantial documentation for readers to follow up on, and provides rich and valuable information concerning the Holy Spirit and hermeneutics (the latter of these being a well-known specialty of Thiselton’s). Second, Thiselton gives substantial attention to Charismatic, Pentecostal, and Renewal Movements in regards to the Holy Spirit, healing, prophecy, and tongues. Although not everyone will agree with his conclusions, it will nevertheless be a welcome change of pace for those looking to see these themes treated in a scholarly manner. In addition, the notes, bibliography, and indexes make this volume an extremely valuable resource for reference and research. Professors and educators looking for a wide-ranging textbook for courses on pneumatology will find that this book is without parallel in its scope and exhaustiveness.

No book is perfect, however, and readers should be aware of some features that some will consider weaknesses. One of these is the absence of substantial engagement with global voices (Latin America, Asia, Africa), which seems a significant oversight given the tremendous growth of Charismatic and Pentecostal spirituality outside of North American and the UK. Moreover, although Thiselton presents a sweeping history of the church’s teaching and theology of the Holy Spirit, and his book would function as an excellent text and resource for reference, readers should be advised that Thiselton gives little space to providing a constructive contribution to the field of pneumatology. Finally, the kind of comprehensiveness that makes this book a good survey text also means that Thiselton could not cover everything with the detail some may desire. Although this is understandable, educators using Thiselton’s book as a text will want to keep this in mind and use supplemental readings as appropriate.

These weak points, however, in no way override the strengths previously mentioned. Professors, students, and motivated laypersons seeking to know the story of the Holy Spirit in the teaching and theology of the church can look in no better place than Thiselton’s volume for the most comprehensive treatment available.

Russell Almon

PhD Candidate, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

III. Ministerial Studies

Distance in Preaching: Room to Speak, Space to Listen, by Michael Brothers. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014. 187 pp. \$20.00 (pbk). ISBN 978-0-8028-6969-2.

Michael Brothers brings preachers into conversation with the concept of “distance,” which he defines as “the psychic, aesthetic, spatial, and critical relationship between the sermon and the hearer” (p. 2). Distance is the combination of a number of factors in the sermon event: “the posture of the hearer, the structure and content of the sermon, the form, content, and style of the biblical text, and the role of the preacher with respect to individual hearers and the community” (p. 2). Precipitated by observing a shift in the ways that listeners interact with sermons, and, more specifically, how listeners have expressed the need for more “room” for their own interpretation and

Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: In the New Testament Church and Today. Max Turner. 4.7 out of 5 stars 11.Â Professors, students, and motivated lay persons seeking to know the story of the Holy Spirit in the teaching and theology of the church can look no better place than Thiselton's volume for the most comprehensive treatment available." Amos Yong â€” Regent University "Magisterial! Brilliant! Erudite! Anthony Thiselton offers a sure-handed overview of the biblical teachings on the Spirit, maps the major historical streams of pneumatological reflection, and charts the important trajectories going forward. . . . This book bridges heretofore divergent polemics and opens up new dialogical horizons and Using this book in addition to Bible Study will certainly enhance your understanding of the Holy Ghost and how He works in our world in the Christian faith. Read more. One person found this helpful. Rubens Pimpim. 5.0 out of 5 stars THE DOCTRINE OF HOLY SPIRIT. 26 October 2013 - Published on Amazon.com. Verified Purchase.Â Anthony C. Thiselton is the theologian appropriate for a project this size, as can be seen in James Dunn's testimony. However, the book is, in fact, a large collection of research of other theologians, and only in the last chapter we see the weight of the Thiselton's participation. But this does not take away the shine and competence the author. Biblical, theological and contemporary. I highly recommend it. Read more. By Anthony C. Thiselton. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. xiii + 565 pages. \$46.00 (paper).Â Your email address will be used in order to notify you when your comment has been reviewed by the moderator and in case the author(s) of the article or the moderator need to contact you directly. Please enter a valid email address. Occupation Please enter your occupation. Anthony Thiselton does just that in this crucial and practical work. I know of nothing comparable. The guidance in this volume is something every pastor and student should have in his or her library." - Klyne Snodgrass, North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago.Â An excellent book which covers the biblical teaching and movement of the Holy Spirit throughout history. A useful study resource which helps and inspires the reader to dig deeper into a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit. Read more. Comment| 4 people found this helpful.Â 5.0 out of 5 starsThe Holy Spirit in Biblical teaching through the centuries and today. 30 October 2015 - Published on Amazon.com. Verified Purchase. This learned book by eminent scholar Anthony Thiselton is a detailed biblical, historical, and contemporary study of the Holy Spirit.Â The book as a whole is at once scholarly and readable, comprehensive and practical. The Holy Spirit â€” in Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today offers scholarly work on specific themes such as prophecy, tongues, the miraculous, the range and nature of the Spirit's gifts, and the Holy Spirit in relation to the Trinity, along with practical consequences for worship and life. ...more.