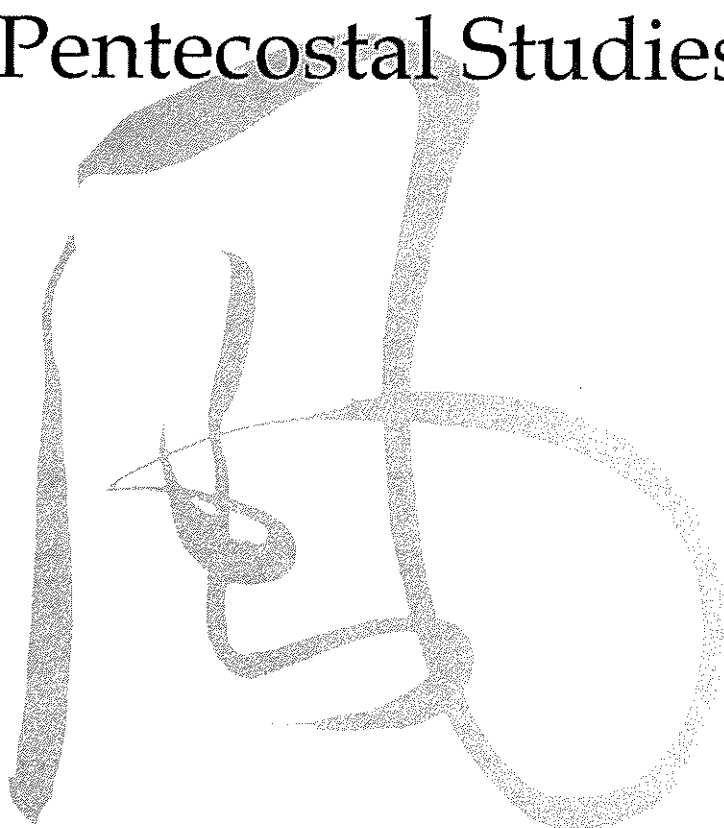


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Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Books, 2002). 177 pp., ISBN: 0-8010-2448-X.

Rarely does one come upon a book that instantly lends itself to be used in a classroom, yet this is such a one. The focus of this book is to relate the current expressions of pneumatology from both ecumenically broad and culturally contextual perspectives. As such, this book should be thought of as “pneumatologies,” insofar, as the author seeks to accurately demonstrate the various pneumatological positions.

In general, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen’s style is lucid and balanced. He has managed to take a massive topic and summarize it without glossing over the different positions. The value of this book for the classroom is beyond question. The distillation of various pneumatological positions both within various traditions, and different contemporary theologians and perspectives is insightful and comprehensive.

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen starts his book with an introduction to pneumatology as a theological discipline. He discusses the recent renaissance of the Spirit, and the current positions on the Holy Spirit as the “Cinderella of Theology.” He further delineates the place of pneumatology in Theology, and concludes the chapter by summarizing some of the diverse pneumatologies that he will address in more detail later in the book. The second chapter is a basic summary of the biblical foundations for pneumatology. The third chapter gives a historical overview of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The author is not trying to summarize the Christian doctrine rather he is wanting to look more closely “at the ways the church and Christian theology appropriated the Spirit’s person and work during history and to investigate the main challenges that drove the church toward a fuller understanding.” (p. 38) Starting with the Charismatic experience found in the early church, Kärkkäinen moves to the Montanist challenge. He then looks at the Eastern Church Fathers and Augustine and their respective pneumatological perspectives. In the Medieval period, attention was given to the Mystics, namely, Hildegard of Bingen, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, and Catherine of Siena. From the Reformation period, the author discusses the ‘Left-Wing’ pneumatology of the Anabaptists (in regard to the church and the Word). He then looks into the philosophy of the Spirit of G. W. F. Hegel, and concludes the chapter by discussing Classic Liberalism.

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen in the next three chapters discusses the different contemporary perspectives of pneumatology found in the

church and Christian theology. The first chapter (chapter four of the book) looks at four pneumatological perspectives found in the ecumenical church, namely Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Pentecostal/Charismatic perspectives. The chapter concludes with a section summarizing the pneumatology of the World Council of Churches. The next chapter is a study of pneumatologies from some of the leading theologians today: John Zizoulas, Karl Rahner, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, Michael Welker and Clark Pinnock. The final chapter presents what Kärkkäinen calls “Contextual Pneumatologies.” In this chapter the pneumatologies of Process theology, Liberation theology, ecological theology, Feminist theology, and African theology (as a representative of a pneumatology from a concrete cultural situation) are summarized.

Within this book, I felt that Kärkkäinen especially demonstrated his great knowledge and background in his presentations of Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Pentecostal/Charismatic positions. In fact, the sections on the Lutheran perspective especially from contemporary Finnish research, and the summary of the pneumatology of the World Council of Churches were very significant and astute. By and large, the various presentations of the last two chapters were good basic summaries of differing pneumatological perspectives.

Any book with this broad of a scope will have by the nature of its shortness some possible shortcomings. Some of the shortcomings can be due to the need of a little more detail for a fuller and clearer understanding, while other perceived shortcomings could be due to omissions. Let it be stated that I greatly appreciate the approach, and I understand the need for brevity due to the purpose of the book. However, when I was reading the third chapter on the “main challenges that drove the church toward a fuller understanding [the Holy Spirit]” (p. 38), I wondered if some of the other perspectives (i.e., Syriac Christianity, Neo-Orthodoxy [Karl Barth, Emil Brunner] etc.) should not also be included or at least briefly mentioned. I was especially surprised at the exclusion of any discussions from the Reformed tradition (especially John Calvin’s pneumatology), Wesleyan tradition, or any recent Pneumatology specifically coming from these traditions. Further, I was also surprised at the omission of the work of J. Rodman Williams (especially his older works like *Era of the Spirit* or from the early 1990s his *Renewal Theology II*) or the work by the consensual evangelical theologian from the Wesleyan background, Thomas C. Oden (especially his *Life in the Spirit*).

In terms of a more detailed presentation, I would like to have seen a more thorough discussion of the Eastern Orthodox position. I salute the author's inclusion of sections on the Eastern Fathers, the Eastern Orthodox Tradition and John Zizoulas, but I would like to see a broader (e.g., John Meyendorff, Dumitru Staniloae) and deeper presentation (e.g., more on Simeon the New theologian, Basil, Gregory Palamas) especially in the Eastern Fathers section. In the Roman Catholic discussions, the majority of the work was related to Vatican II and after, Thomas Aquinas is barely mentioned, and the recent theologians Hans Urs von Balthasar and Yves Congar are briefly cited and discussed. I believe that all three deserve a greater place in the presentations.

From a Pentecostal perspective, I noticed that in spite of having the longest section of any of the various traditions, theologians or perspectives (pp. 87-96), none of the major Pentecostal/Charismatic pneumatologies were discussed in the 'Leading Theologians' chapter or the following 'Contextual Pneumatologies' chapter (unless Pinnock would be classified as Pentecostal/Charismatic). Is this an implication that there are no currently 'leading' or dominant Pentecostal/Charismatic theologians writing pneumatologies (granted that they are not universally dominant voices)? Or that in spite of Harvey Cox's observation (in *Fire from Heaven*) of Pentecostalism's dominant influence in Latin America (contra Liberation theology), it is not considered to be a contextual theology? There is no doubt that Pentecostal/Charismatics have been much better in practical endeavors (e.g., Missions) than given to theological discourse. To further emphasis this point, Hendrickus Berkhof in his *Introduction to the Study of Dogmatics* (109-110) mentions two modern pneumatological schools: the Social-Ethical school and the Pentecostal-Charismatic school. If we add the Traditionalist school (whose source of pneumatological discourse is derived from past scholars (e.g. Cappadocian Fathers, Luther), councils or 'tradition') to these other two schools: in the book the Social-Ethical school is represented by Moltmann, Welker, Liberation theology, ecological theology and Feminist theology; the Traditionalist school is represented by Roman Catholic tradition (including to a certain extent Rahner), Eastern Orthodox tradition (including Zizoulas), and the Lutheran tradition. Process can fit in this category in the sense that it goes back to the "process thought" of Alfred North Whitehead. Except for the Pentecostal/Charismatic section with the possible exceptions of Pinnock and African theology, there are no Pentecostal/Charismatic representatives in the last two chapters. Pinnock may be an exception insofar that he seeks to combine elements of the three schools

(Pannenberg also tends to be eclectic in this way). African theology may have Pentecostal/Charismatic elements, but many Pentecostals and Charismatics considered African theology syncretistic and not Orthodox Christianity.

I also have some comments on various sections or passages of this book. In the section on Classic Liberalism (61-65), Kärkkäinen relies heavily on the Gary Babcock's *Light of Truth and Fire of Love* in his analysis of Friedrich Schleiermacher, but barely mentions Karl Barth, his *The Theology of Schleiermacher* or others. Further, there was no mention of H. Wheeler Robinson's *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, or a discussion (although mentioned) of Paul Tillich's work. In the Pentecostal/Charismatic section, it is stated "Baptistic Pentecostals came into being with the organization of the Assemblies of God in 1914" (p. 90). Usually the Baptistic Pentecostal perspective dates back to William Durham of Stone Church, Chicago (1910-12) and his "finished Work" theology. The Assemblies of God may be called the first denomination formed based on this perspective, but they did not start this perspective. Further, I fail to see how a "Process Pneumatology" can be classified as a contextual theology. What culture or sub-culture does it belong to? What is the definition of contextual? How much of the "Contextual Pneumatologies" are contextual and how many are syncretistic? Further, how are they discerned within this pneumatological discussion? Perhaps one of the most important questions that needs to be asked relates especially to some forms represented in the "Contextual Pneumatologies" (e.g., Process Pneumatology, African Pneumatology), is that where is the dividing point between contextualizing and syncretism? And where can a person be open to ecumenical concerns, yet still "draw a line" separating orthodoxy from non-orthodox belief and practice?

In spite of the above-mentioned issues for consideration, I found the book vivid, lucid and very helpful as a contemporary pneumatology overview. As such, I would highly recommend the book as a pneumatology textbook for an advanced Bible college theology class or even at the Seminary level. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen has provided a great service and should be applauded for this grand work.

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