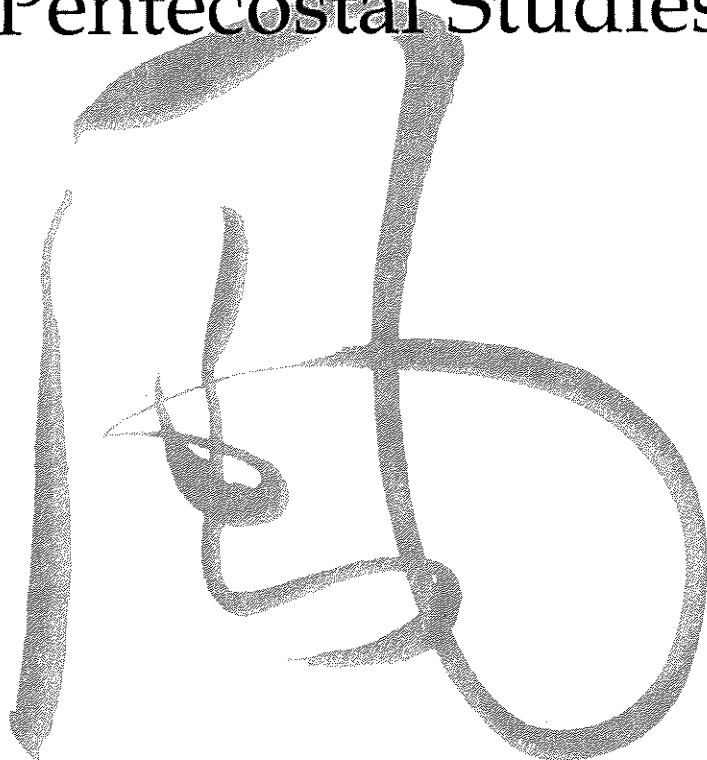


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Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Oxford, UK: Monarch Books and Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 160 pp., paperback, ISBN: 978-1-85424-702-5, GB£7.99/US\$15.00.

It is appropriate for *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* to start the first chapter citing Gen. 1:1-2 and have a title "The Creating Spirit." Christopher J. H. Wright sees the Spirit of God, who is usually linked with Pentecost, in "the second verse of the Bible." (13) For him "the Spirit and the universe" is about the Spirit as "hovering and speaking." Wright views Gen. 1:1, which is the gateway statement of the Hebrew Scriptures, as an essential declaration that the whole universe came into existence because God was the creator. Then, Gen. 1:2, the second verse, continues to present the very first portrayal of creation in its earliest phase with an imagery of "chaos" and "darkness." Although the raw material was present in the beginning "it has not yet been shaped to the world we now know." (14) God, through his own *ruach*, transforms the as yet unformed substance from being formless, chaotic and dark, to universe. The Deut. 32:11 clause about an eagle hovering over its young talks about God's protection of Israel is the sense of the Spirit's hovering ready for creative activity. (14)

The discussion about "the Spirit and the earth," which is the subtitle of the section "Sustaining and Renewing," deals with ecology. "Old Testament Israelites did not spend a lot of time wondering about how the world began, except that it began by God's say-so. Once they had affirmed that in Genesis 1-2, enough seemed to have been said." (19) For Wright, the Spirit can be grieved by intentional and casual damage made to "the good earth" which is beautifully made and kept going by God himself. (25-26) "The Spirit and humanity" are contradictory corollary of "breathing and leaving" because the Spirit of God is the source of life breath but at the same time of death when he leaves a mortal. (26-31) Another important section is "the Spirit and the new creation" which is a discussion of Romans 8 from the New Testament. The discussion of the passage is meant to have an application of the earlier materials about creation accounts, ecological concerns and human lives that God sustains by his Spirit to the New Testament teaching on the new creation and the resurrection. (31-34)

Chapter 2 expounds on the idea of "The Empowering Spirit." Wright maintains that the Old Testament connects the Spirit of Yahweh with power. (36) To demonstrate that the Spirit is God's power doing vocation among Israelites, a survey of the Spirit's equipping work is presented one at a time. Bezalel and Oholiab received excellent enablement as craftsmen from the Spirit to do their work in the sanctuary of the tabernacle. (37-39) A list of judges from Othniel to Samson received an empowering of the Spirit to provide daring

headship and heroic acts to defeat the enemies of Israel. (39-41) The lives of Saul and Moses give instruction on how the Spirit of prophecy comes to the chosen of God. However, power can bring destruction, and so humility is a necessary balance for the experience of God's empowering presence. (41-61) The significant role of the Spirit when it comes to chosen Israelites is the vocational capability to accomplish tasks that mere human skill cannot carry out.

The next chapter puts forward the key notion of "the prophetic Spirit" wherein the author asserts that: "The New Testament, then, affirms the work of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament, not only in creation (Chapter 1), not only in works of power and leadership (Chapter 2), but also in the revelation of God's word [Chapter 3]." (62) The prophets were not giving their own message but they only spoke through the Spirit. Wright invokes at this point the classical texts of the inspired Scriptures, i.e. 2 Pet. 1:20-21 and 2 Tim. 3:16, establishing the role of the Spirit in communicating God's word. (62-63) He further elaborates in most of the pages of the third chapter how the false prophecies both in the Old and New Testaments were not really from the prophetic Spirit of God. What is clear "in contrast to the false prophets who deceived people with lies of their own devising and never challenged them about the rampant injustice in society, Spirit-filled prophets spoke the truth and stood for justice." (85)

In the fourth chapter, Wright moves on to address "the anointing Spirit" that empowered the historical kings of Israel such as Saul and David. (89-92) The promised "Anointed One" or the imminent "Servant-King" of Isaiah the prophet has the anointing that is indispensably "his commissioning to carry out God's ultimate mission and purpose of the world—not just for Israel, but 'to the ends of the earth' (Isa. 49:6)." (95) The author explains that this messianic person will fulfill "mission of God" that Israel as the chosen nation was not able to accomplish. (95-111) It is for the Christian to see God's anointing of Jesus Christ who has shown "justice," "compassion," "enlightenment," and "liberation" so that he can do the mission of God to bring in every kind of people to His fold. (113-114; cf. 106-107) Then, at the end of this chapter, Wright applied the meaning of following Christ using the designation of the Church that received the anointing and the commission to do the mission of God to bring the good news to all humanity.

In the final chapter "the coming Spirit" of Yahweh is associated first with the idea of "recreation and righteousness." (120-123) The pronouncement of judgment in Isaiah 32 is with hope of restoration. The Spirit is an element of change in Isa. 32:15. The metaphor of fertility is the Spirit bringing blessings of renewal. The restitution will not happen until the ruach is poured out from heaven, the abode of God. The Spirit is viewed in Ezekiel 36-37 as the source of "renewal and resurrection." (124-140) The transformation is caused

by a totally obedient heart. But to have a transformed heart, a further action of God upon Israel is to put the Spirit in them. The effect of the Spirit will be that Israel will at last be obedient. The Spirit of God enables the obedience that God demands.” (129-130) In addition, the Joel 2 oracle of “repentance and restoration” concludes all the discussions about the Spirit of Yahweh. It is the promise of the Spirit prophesied by Joel that was received by the Church. The blessing of the Spirit given to the Church according to Joel is worldwide, immense and salvific in nature. (153-159)

Although the U.K. edition does not have an index, the U.S. one provides a handy index for biblical references. The five chapters of the book are a series of lectures delivered in August 2004 at the New Horizon convention in Northern Ireland. The chapters were expositions of biblical themes about the Spirit of God: “He is the Spirit who breathed in creation and sustains all life on earth. He is the Spirit who empowered the mighty acts of those who served God over many generations. He is the Spirit who spoke through the prophets, inspiring their commitment to speak the truth and to stand for justice. He is the Spirit who anointed the kings, and ultimately anointed Christ the Servant-King. He is the Spirit whose coming in power was anticipated in words of almost unimaginable cosmic transformation. And he is the Spirit through whom the whole creation will finally be renewed in, through, and for Christ.” (10) However, the expositions are not purely from the Old Testament. The author also worked on selected New Testament passages to make the expounded material relate to the Christian faith.

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