



Shults, F. LeRon and Andrea Hollingsworth

The Holy Spirit (Guides to Theology)

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The Holy Spirit is the third installment in Eerdmans Guides to Theology Series (preceded by *The Trinity* [2003] & *Feminist Theology* [2003]). Like the first two books in this series the intended goal is to “provide a brief introduction to the chosen field, followed by an annotated bibliography of important works, which should serve as an entrée to the topic.” (n.p.)

Shults & Hollingsworth (hereafter S&H) get off on the right foot in the introduction by acknowledging the personality of the Spirit. They then trace the Holy Spirit through the Hebrew Scriptures to the New Testament sketching out a brief picture of the third person of the Trinity from what at first glance appears to be a mere smattering of passages but upon closer inspection actually reveals a thoughtful and deliberate choice of texts that all reveal a small piece of the pneumatological puzzle.

The book is divided into two main sections:

1. Interpreting the Transforming Experience of the Holy Spirit, and
2. English-Language Resources on the Holy Spirit.

The first section is broken down into two smaller parts the first of which addresses Patristic, Medieval, and Reformation interpretations of the Spirit. The second covers Early and Late Modern interpretations. The second section is the annotated bibliography that the Guides to Theology series is famed for.

S&H show a familiarity with ancient philosophy and modern science that helps to enlighten the reader in each section. We're shown how much Stoicism, Platonism, Middle Platonism, Neo-Platonism, and Aristotelianism factored into Patristic, Medieval, and Reformation thinking on the Spirit in the first half of section one. In the second half

Shults'¹¹ knowledge of modern scientific research and philosophy shines through and gives some alternatives for understanding the Spirit in modern thought. For example, rather than holding to the dichotomy that places matter in opposition to spirit which is understood in terms of being an immaterial substance, Shults says that:

Einstein's recognition that 'matter' and 'energy' are transferable ($E=mc^2$) has made it possible for theorists in the sciences of emergent complexity to conceptualize what has traditionally been called 'spirit' (or 'form' or 'life') as in some sense a qualification of matter. (90)

Whether or not one agrees with this proposal is beside the point as it at least provides alternatives for thinking on the matter. This is the general tone of the book overall; S&H provoke thought if nothing else. I can also say that I think their recounting of early Church history is well done even if marked by brevity.

Now onto some critical reflection. I have two main criticisms:

Firstly: While there was a good deal of attention given to the early controversies over the Spirit's deity with the *pneumatomachoi* as well as the *filioque* controversy, there is no mention of the denial of the Spirit's deity and personality by modern groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, nor is the debate on cessationism in modern pneumatological discourse addressed at all. While I'm by no means criticizing this for not being an apologetic or polemical work, I do think that the reader would have benefited greatly from mention of these issues and interaction with these positions.

Secondly: Conspicuously absent from the annotated bibliography were Craig S. Keener's *Gift & Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today* (Baker Academic, 2001) and Max Turner's *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: In the New Testament Church and Today* (Hendrickson, 1998). As can be expected, with the omission of these works from the bibliography came a lack of reference to them in the main body of the book which is unfortunate given that Turner and Keener are two notable charismatic voices.

In terms of positive presentations I think that S&H did well. I'm by no means an expert on pneumatology so I'm not qualified to critique their overall presentation, but as the type of person that this book was intended for I think that it has given me a good foundation for further study and reflection. Compared to the volume on the Trinity I don't think that *The Holy Spirit* was quite as well-written, but it was well-written nonetheless. I'd recommend this volume to anyone looking for a way into the subject, but for those who are already familiar with it, I'd say skip it.

¹ I say Shults specifically because of my knowledge of his other writings on the subject but I stand ready to receive correction if Hollingsworth is also knowledgeable in this area and contributed significantly to these portions of the book.