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## Review

**Ngaruiya, David, and Reed, Rodney L. (eds), *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity*. Langham Global Library, Carlisle, 2022. ISBN 9781839736469, xii, 153pp.**

Review by Dr Ryan Faber<sup>1</sup>

*The Holy Spirit in African Christianity*, the seventh publication in Langham's ASET Series, features eight select papers from the Africa Society for Evangelical Theology (ASET)'s annual conference in 2021. Though the volume is pan-African—it includes contributions from West Africa (Ghana and Nigeria), Southern Africa (Botswana), and East Africa (Ethiopia and Kenya)—a disproportionate number of contributions come from Kenya. This may reflect ASET's Kenyan roots and locale. The majority (70%) of the volume's contributors are African. Of the non-African contributors, two co-authored their contributions with African scholars.

The volume seeks to give an account of the Holy Spirit in African Christianity. But, as editor David Ngaruiya notes, neither African Christianity nor its understanding of the Holy Spirit is monolithic. Ngaruiya distinguishes between three main church traditions in Africa: charismatic (and pentecostal) churches, mainstream (historic mission) churches, and indigenous churches (xi). Though contributors represent mainstream churches, the volume says little about understandings of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in those churches. Instead, it focuses on how the Holy Spirit is understood in charismatic and indigenous African churches.

As Kenosi Molato's comparative study of pentecostal and indigenous churches in Botswana reveals, those traditions understand the Holy Spirit differently.

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Yet, in comparison with mainstream churches, both are Holy Spirit churches. Mainstream churches will do well to attend more carefully to the work of the Holy Spirit, because ‘a church that does not reflect on the work of the Holy Spirit [...] is considered to be dry, dead, and consequently, incompetent in dealing with African problems’ (105).

Several contributors echo this call for mainstream churches to attend to pneumatology. In their chapter, Kwaku Boamah and Jacob Kwame Opatá compare the pentecostal movement with Montanism. They acknowledge that the ancient church judged Montanism a heresy (18), but fail to interact with that judgment and its implications for the pentecostal movement. Their conclusion that the two movements ‘are more similar than different’ (25) demands such interaction.

Their essay focuses more on the origin of the movements than on their beliefs and practices. Both were indigenous movements—in his chapter Molato also observes that African pentecostalism developed independent of the Azusa Street revival (113)—and both developed in response to the attitude and practices of the established churches. Boamah and Opatá conclude: ‘If the church wishes to avoid the rise of such pneumatological movements, the church must always try and keep the activities and roles of the Spirit central’ (30).

In their evaluation of deliverance in Ghanaian charismatic movements, Stephanie Lowery and Danson Ottawa Wafula also reach a similar conclusion. Though critical of deliverance practices, they focus on what mainstream churches can learn from the charismatic movement. Lowery and Wafula acknowledge that the charismatic emphasis on ‘practical salvation’ ‘challenges our own theological tendency to emphasis inner spiritual transformation, too often at the expense of neglecting transformation of one’s lifestyle’ (139). Too often, mainline churches ‘focus upon the Spirit as the giver of new life, so much so that his ongoing role in sanctification is minimised or ignored’ (139).

Moses Iliya Ogidis argues that mainline churches also minimise or ignore the work of the Spirit in the empowerment of believers—especially youth, women, and persons with disabilities—for ministry. Ogidis offers an inclusive reading of Acts 2 that challenges the practice of mainstream Nigerian churches that do

not ordain women. His attentiveness to the text is commendable. Acts 2, especially the prophecy of Joel that is fulfilled at Pentecost, emphasizes the empowerment of women and youth. The inclusion of people with disabilities, though an appropriate implication of the Spirit's outpouring on *all* flesh, seems like an imposition on the text. The rationale for that emphasis in Ogidis' chapter is unclear.

Esther Mombo and Helen Joziase argue that 'the exclusion of women from official leadership in the churches and little elaborate pneumatology [go] hand in hand' (93). Their contribution about the experience of women in the African Israel Nineveh Church, an indigenous church, demonstrates how attention to the work of the Holy Spirit empowers women for ministry in indigenous churches in Africa.

Other contributors address deviations from historic Christian orthodoxy in charismatic churches and among Jehovah's Witnesses. John Michael Kiboi addresses the Neo-Pentecostal presentation of the Holy Spirit as 'an impersonal force and not God' (49). Jeffery S. Krohn answers the Jehovah's Witness claim that because the Holy Spirit, unlike the Father (*Yahweh*) and the Son (Jesus), is not given a personal name in Scripture, the Holy Spirit is not a person. David K. Ngaruiya provides readers with an account of Augustine's articulation of the Holy Spirit as a 'divine, active person' (36). The emphasis in these three chapters is in the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Little is said about the work of the Holy Spirit.

That is the main disappointment with *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity*. While the contributors provide critical accounts of practices related to the Holy Spirit in charismatic and indigenous churches, they say little about how the work of Holy Spirit is understood in mainstream African Christianity. Two recurring themes demand more attention. First, mainstream churches must give great attention to the work of the Holy Spirit. Second, in addressing the work of the Holy Spirit, mainstream churches must consider the empowerment of women for ministry. That seventy percent of the volume's contributors are male may reflect the neglect of women's gifts in mainstream African Christianity. Perhaps a future ASET conference will attend to the development of a mainstream pneumatology that considers these issues.