

Wallace, Daniel B. & M. James Sawyer, eds. *Who's Afraid of the Holy Spirit? An Investigation into the Ministry of the Spirit of God today.* Dallas, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 2005.

The title of this book is much more provocative than the actual contents! But it is a great collection of essays by several authors trying to bring some balance back to the role of the Spirit in non-“Charismatic,” cessationist (meaning sign gifts have ceased) churches. The opening question is: If the Spirit did not die at the end of the first century, what is He doing today? The book addresses the common problem of neglecting the Holy Spirit for fear of being “too Charismatic” or “too emotional.” The essays range from some technical (like “The Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Bible) to many that are easy to read. Some essays that didn’t go far enough were J. I. Packer’s on discerning the will of God and Tim Ralston’s “The Spirit’s Role in Corporate Worship.” Obviously, there are subjective elements in the process and Packer didn’t really give the reader any help on determining the Spirit’s leading. Ralston’s essay on the Holy Spirit in corporate worship didn’t seem to fit with the rest of the other author’s emphases. He seemed to caricature most outward expression as an emotional free-for-all and didn’t address the psalmist’s language of outward expression in corporate worship. My favorite chapters were on the Holy Spirit and the local church and what His presence should bring about – lots of prayer and humility. The other favorite was “The Father, the Son, and the Holy Scriptures” which traced the hyper rational roots coming out of the Enlightenment that are still present in many conservative churches today (whether they know it or not). Hence the title, “Who’s Afraid of the Holy Spirit?” The title implies that many today are afraid of losing control if closer attention was paid to the Spirit’s presence in our lives. I really liked the book. If you read it, don’t expect the chapters to flow from one to the next. It is a collection of essays by different authors. This book is only available for purchase online at www.bible.org.

Level: Medium

Theological Stance: Bible church; Baptist; Anglican, Presbyterian

Rating: 7

Recommend? Yes