

Book Review

From Pentecostal to the Triune God: A Pentecostal Trinitarian Theology

Steven M. Studebaker

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In this study on trinitarian theology, Steven Studebaker argues that the experience of Spirit baptism within Pentecostal tradition comprises significant theological resources for grasping the Spirit's active constitutional role towards forming the identities of the Father and Son within the fellowship of the triune Godhead. Working from this thesis, Studebaker consistently stresses the Spirit's mission towards inducting human life and creation into the trinitarian life and fellowship of God. Studebaker concludes by appropriating this pneumatologically nuanced theology of the Trinity to the twenty-first century issues of religious pluralism and environmental care.

In the first three chapters, Studebaker comprehensively unpacks his proposals for the constitutional role of the Spirit within the Trinity. Chapter 1, "A Pentecostal Approach to the Trinity," begins with an argument for the legitimacy of Pentecostal experience historically exemplified through the Spirit baptism metaphor, towards funding a theology and doctrine of the Trinity (pp. 46, 50). I believe that in doing so, Studebaker theologically substantiates early Pentecostal assumptions as well as ongoing Pentecostal and ecumenically rooted theological reflection, that the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism grants both revelation and lived intermediacy into God's trinitarian life and reality. However, Studebaker has not actually delved into

these precedents. In order to provide the context for readers not informed with the relevant literature, some historical background engagement would have proved helpful towards better appreciating the historical precedence for his arguments.

In chapter 2, "The Holy Spirit and the Trinity," Studebaker delineates the liminal, constitutional, and consummational roles of the Holy Spirit illustrated in the biblical story of redemption. He consequently provides a robust biblical theology that grounds his thesis concerning the Spirit's constitutional role towards the Father and the Son within the triune Godhead. In doing so, Studebaker provides a theological hermeneutic that should deeply resonate with the Biblicism intrinsic to the historical Pentecostal psyche. He does so by constructing an expansive doctrine of the Trinity first grounded upon a "pneumatological reading of Scripture" (p. 98) rather than classical creedal formulations, which Studebaker critiques as historically nuanced to issues of "processions within the Godhead and christological categories." (p. 3)

In chapter 3, "Eastern and Western Trinitarian Theology," Studebaker supplements the Western trinitarian "mutual-love" model, given its attendant preoccupation on processions within the Godhead (noting this same preoccupation

with the Eastern tradition's "two hands" model), with 12th century Richard of Saint Victor's nuance on the "shared love" ("condilectus") between all three persons of the Triune Godhead (p. 125). In doing so, Studebaker establishes a more historical-theological precedence for his thesis concerning the active constitutional role of the Spirit within the Triune Godhead.

Given the historical links between Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism, in chapter 4, "Reformed Evangelical Trinitarian Theology," Studebaker critiques contemporary Evangelical trinitarian theologies according to how they contrast or converge with his basic thesis. Chapter 5, "Charismatic Trinitarian Theology," delineates fruitful strides in Pentecostal and Charismatic scholarship within varied traditions, towards constructing trinitarian theology, evident in the projects of D. Lyle Dabney, Killian McDonnell, Frank D. Macchia, and Clark H. Pinnock.

In the final two chapters, Studebaker applies his thesis to the contemporary issues of religious pluralism and environmental care, thus concluding the book with suggested directions towards Pentecostal mission, ministry, and spiritual formation. In chapter 6, "The Spirit of Pentecost and Theology of Religions," while differentiating his position from a "religious pluralist" perspective (p. 232), Studebaker proposes a theology of religions that discerns the Spirit's *prevenient* soteriological mission to people within the context of their religious traditions, recognizing these as an integral domain of human culture. Studebaker bases this theology on a reading of the Pentecost event in Acts that appreciates the "mission of the Spirit of Pentecost" as wholly congruent with the broader trinitarian mission of God towards creation (*missio Dei*) (pp. 216-217). The practical implication Studebaker

suggests concerning one's missional posture towards religious traditions is a practice of discerning where and how the Spirit may already be at work in pointing people towards the Triune fellowship of God even within the context of their present religious identity and involvement (pp. 219-239).

In chapter 7, "The Spirit of Pentecost and Creation," Studebaker fittingly concludes this study by premising his argument that creation care is intrinsic to Christian formation upon the Spirit's consummational role towards redeeming creation, and thus driving it towards its destined union with the trinitarian fellowship of God. Intrinsic to this trajectory is Studebaker's insistence that from the basis of the Spirit's luminal, constitutional, and consummational role, God's trinitarian mission towards creation and redemption are not two distinct programs but rather one singular, "creative-redemptive" mission (p. 68, 71-72, 258-259, 268). Hence, the Spirit "seeks to actualize the Trinitarian life and fellowship of God in creation" (pp. 256-257, 261-262). From this premise, Studebaker, therefore, argues for a "unified theology of creation and redemption" (p. 258) that should inform one's reading of the eschatological Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit. Such a reading, thereby, beckons one's participation in this "entelechy of the Spirit," recognizing this participation as integral to Christian sanctification, given one's own role as a herald of God's eschatological renewal of all things (p. 263, 267). I find Studebaker's proposal historically timely, as it challenges Pentecostals to explore how they ascetically structure practices of creation care within Pentecostal paradigms and liturgical practices of Christian formation, premised upon a unified vision of God's triune "creative-redemptive" mission towards humankind and thereby—all creation.