

Mark J. Cartledge. *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition.* Traditions of Christian Spiritualities Series. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007. 152 pp. \$16.00 (paper), ISBN 978-1-57075-688-7.



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Reflections on Charismatic Spirituality

Mark J. Cartledge's *Encountering the Spirit* is a significant contribution to the Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series. Philip Sheldrake, the series' editor, points out that several of the traditions in the series would not have appeared some twenty years ago. This is certainly true of the charismatic tradition; and I applaud the foresight of the series editor to include it in this series.

Cartledge is senior lecturer in Pentecostal and charismatic theology at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. Over the past twenty years, he has been publishing on charismatic and Pentecostal topics. Cartledge's previous studies are certainly evident in this readable and reliable presentation on charismatic spirituality. The volume is a welcomed resource for anyone interested in the spirituality of charismatic tradition—ministers, laity, and students of the charismatic traditions will experientially connect with the key spiritual-theological themes addressed. This work could become an essential guide to bring renewal of spiritual vibrancy and revisioning of theological integrity of the charismatic traditions.

Cartledge's monograph contains an introduction and seven chapters. The introduction provides a brief definition of charismatic spirituality as encounter with the Holy Spirit and a succinct overview of the monograph, while the conclusion offers a helpful summary of the main arguments. Chapters 1 and 2 present the contextual framework for the discussion of the vital theological-spiritual themes that Cartledge addresses in chapters 3 through 6. The themes, which emerge from communities' relationship with God and are central to its spirituality, are praise and worship (chapter 3), inspired speech (chapter 4), holiness (chapter 5), and empowered kingdom witness (chapter 6). The four-fold thematic typology serves as a heuristic means to identifying charismatic spirituality (p. 31). The final chapter addresses the nature of the interpretive community. The church community, through a dialogue with scripture and the Spirit, provides the interpretive center. In other words, the community interprets and reinterprets experiences with God. Chapters 3 through 7 follow the same methodological progression. Each theme is examined in relationship to bibli-

cal, historical, and contemporary sources, demonstrating the contribution of scripture, tradition, and experience to charismatic spirituality.

Chapter 1 describes the current theological context of charismatic tradition. After an overview of the historical emergence of this tradition, Cartledge explains the process and framework for understanding charismatic spirituality. The key motif of charismatic spirituality is the sought after transformative encounters with the Holy Spirit. These encounters take place in corporate worship, in individual devotional life, and in the process of witnessing the world. Cartledge argues that charismatic spirituality is a journey of discovery (p. 27). Hence, a basic formational pattern, a cyclical process that moves from a search for God to an encounter with the Holy Spirit resulting in transformation, emerges from within the tradition. The process of search, encounter, and transformation repeats itself in the salvific journey of the community with the living God. The Spirit of God is the agent of the process, while a basic charismatic worldview of narrative, symbols, and praxis provides the framework. The reason for this formational journey is to bring glory to God and fulfillment of his purposes in the life of the community for the sake of the world.

One of Cartledge's main concerns is to demonstrate that charismatic spirituality is not an entirely new phenomenon; it has been an aspect of Christianity from the beginning, even though this dimension has often been marginalized. Chapter 2, which traces the key motif of encounters with the Spirit through Christianity, ends with a discussion of Wesleyan holiness Pentecostal traditions. In chapter 1, Cartledge began the historical review of the charismatic movement with Pentecostalism, and chapter 2 brings the reader full circle and sets the stage for the dramatic themes that follow. The chapters on the themes are biblically rich, descriptively accurate, and contemporarily significant to Pentecostal and charismatic spirituality. Cartledge connects each theme to his

main argument that charismatic spirituality is a dynamic journey of search, encounter, and transformation. The work, following a defined flow of argument, is coherent, interconnected, and compelling, thus making it an enjoyable read.

Many might be surprised by Cartledge's insightful perceptiveness of his presentation. In this monograph, he teases out a formational process connected to vital themes that function within the community as implicit practices. The practices are transmitted through the community's various worship and ministry activities that are necessary for the very existence of its spirituality. This work was not written by an outsider who surveyed the theological terrain and offered readers a sampling of its more prominent theological discussions (something that is helpful). A "critical participant" wrote this monograph, one who most likely experientially practices the formational process, and experiences the themes and the frustrations of the community. Cartledge does not simply look at the terrain; he has traversed it. He is not afraid to point out potential problems in the tradition, nor does he become fixated on certain topics; rather, he offers the reader a solid presentation of charismatic spirituality that is descriptive and non-defensive.

As a Pentecostal, I am in general agreement with his primary argument. Furthermore, my spirit resonated with the presentation of the themes. From my perspective, this work is a trustworthy guide that can lead one into the chaotic waters of charismatic and Pentecostal spirituality. The monograph provides a reflective stimulus on charismatic spirituality. This may challenge and invigorate other Christian traditions to recapture the dynamic interplay between the passionate pursuit of God and God the Spirit's passionate pursuit of us. The monograph can serve as an important contribution to theological courses in general; however, it is essential for introductory courses addressing Pentecostal and charismatic theology and spirituality.

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