

BOOK REVIEW

CARTLEDGE, Mark J. *The Mediation of the Spirit: Interventions in Practical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015. 199pp. Pbk. ISBN: 9780802869555. £20.99.

Reviewed by: Sheryl Arthur, University of Roehampton, UK. Email: arthurs2@roehampton.ac.uk

In light of the fact that relatively few Pentecostal theologians engage with the practical-theological academy, Mark Cartledge, in *The Mediation of the Spirit: Interventions in Practical Theology*, considers how a distinctively Pentecostal and pneumatological contribution might be constructed that intervenes in contemporary practical-theological discourse. Indeed, Cartledge is well placed to address this issue since he is one of the relatively few who can justifiably claim expertise in both arenas of practical theology and Pentecostal/Charismatic studies.

Arguably, it is Cartledge's wide-ranging expertise (alongside his clear literary style) that makes his proposed case for a Pentecostal/Charismatic intervention in practical theology so compelling. That is to say, because Cartledge draws on a considerable range of different practical-theological approaches to expose the academy's lack of attention to Scripture, experience, and the Holy Spirit, (three interrelated themes that are central to Pentecostal/Charismatic approaches to practical theology), he is all the more persuasive when he writes that, "[t]his lack of attention leads to a very clear deficit in practical-theological discourse, and this deficit is detrimental to the development of the discipline" (p. 58).

In response to this deficit, Cartledge presents a theological proposal that centres on the concept of "mediation", defined as a focus on "the way in which the Spirit is related to humanity in the Pentecost event and the means by which that intermediary role makes a relationship between God and humanity possible" (p. 64). Cartledge situates this concept, not only within Pentecostal/Charismatic scholarship on mediation and pneumatology (in relation to religious experience), but also more widely within Protestant theology, thus effectively demonstrating the broader significance of mediation for interpreting ecclesial practices (particularly the sacramental).

Cartledge proceeds to use the concept of mediation as a pneumatological lens by which to read selected narratives from Acts (Acts 2 and other Spirit reception texts), evidencing within them a model for understanding the relationship between religious experience and pneumatology, and crucially the part that ecclesiology plays within this relationship. Through his analysis, he formulates five propositions to represent the different interconnected forms of pneumatological

mediation. These are: (1) Christ mediates the Holy Spirit to the church (M1); (2) the Holy Spirit mediates Christ and the Father to the church (M2); (3) Creation mediates the Holy Spirit to the church (M3); (4) the church mediates the Holy Spirit internally (via individuals, groups, worship, and practices) (M4); and (5) the church mediates the Holy Spirit externally (via individuals, groups, public worship, and practices) (M5).

Key to the success of Cartledge's argument is the emphasis that he places on the continuing significance of these forms of pneumatological mediation for the contemporary church. Specifically, Cartledge writes that since the Holy Spirit continues to constitute the church in present-day reality, "one would expect to be able to discern the continual mediation of the Holy Spirit through the concrete ecclesial communities and intermediaries today" (p. 113). Accordingly, he suggests that Acts 2 might provide a possible agenda for interventions in practical theology comprising attention to ecclesial practices (such as church congregations; worship; church leadership; the relationship between Scripture, experience of the Holy Spirit, the community decision-making processes, and the modes of rationality employed in ecclesial life), and various theological loci (such as eschatology, Trinity and Christology, and soteriology).

It is in his final two chapters that Cartledge addresses the implications of his findings, offering two worked examples of "interventions". In his first example he "intervenes" in an existing congregational study (McClintock Fulkerson's study on Good Samaritan United Methodist Church), suggesting how an attentiveness to pneumatological mediation might have further enriched the author's analysis of the faith and praxis of the congregation. In his second example, he "intervenes" in practical-theological discourse on soteriology in order to show how, from a Pentecostal/Charismatic perspective, soteriology is "best understood via the notion of mediation of the Holy Spirit in the church and the world" (p. xiv). These two worked examples usefully illustrate how Cartledge's theoretically argued concept of pneumatological mediation might be of practical benefit to practitioners within the practical-theological academy.

Cartledge brings *The Mediation of the Spirit* to a close with his "Pentecostal Manifesto for Practical Theology". Within this manifesto are ten suggested areas for future research that Cartledge supposes, should the practical-theological academy choose to take them up, would "develop its own self-understanding and engagement with religion and society" (p. 167). Notably, the first of these urges the academy to address the fact that Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity have been (albeit not necessarily intentionally) marginalized by the practical-theological academy.

It is perhaps worth saying at this point, that I write this review from one of those marginalized perspectives, and as such, it will be of little surprise when I state that *The Mediation of the Spirit* makes a positive contribution to practical-theological discourse. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any Pentecostal/Charismatic student or scholar who would not recognize the value of a book that champions their beliefs, traditions, and practices. Cartledge's contribution, however, does far more than simply "call out" the academy for its lack of attention to those themes that are important to Pentecostal theology (Scripture,

experience, and the Holy Spirit); rather it also demonstrates to the wider academy the benefits of redressing the issue. This, for example, is particularly evident in chapter 4, when Cartledge models (by sharing with readers his own analysis of Acts 2) how detailed engagement with Scripture can benefit practical theology.

Overall, I found that whilst Cartledge addresses a variety of complex theological concepts, drawing not only on practical-theological literature, but also on literature from biblical studies and systematic theology, his clear explanations and logical structure (including helpful end of chapter summaries) make this book an accessible read. As such, both Pentecostal/Charismatic and non-Pentecostal/non-Charismatic scholars and students alike would benefit from reading and engaging with its contents. In terms of whether Cartledge has shown how a distinctively Pentecostal and pneumatological contribution might be constructed as an intervention in wider practical-theological discourse, I would say emphatically that he has. That said, time will be the true test of whether his theoretical agenda for interventions in practical theology will succeed in influencing a practical change in the theological landscape of the practical-theological academy.