

**Charette, B 2000 – Restoring Presence: The Spirit in Matthew's Gospel**

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**Reviewer: Dr David C Sim (Melbroune, Australia)**

This book on the Spirit in the Gospel of Matthew appears in the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* Supplement Series, and reflects a scholarly Pentecostal approach to the subject. While the Spirit in Luke-Acts and John has been well covered, it has been comparatively neglected in Matthean and Markan studies. Charette's book is an attempt to restore the balance, at least with regard to the Gospel of Matthew.

In his Introduction Charette states his method and approach. Perhaps the most controversial element here is the fact that Charette only focuses on the Old Testament in reconstructing the evangelist's theology of the Spirit. Since the Old Testament was without question of primary importance for Matthew, Charette contends that only this text can be said to have had a major influence on his work. Charette does not deny that the evangelist may have been influenced by contemporary Jewish views and non-canonical texts, but he argues that these influences are less clear and more negligible. They therefore play no part in his study.

The first chapter sees Charette examine the link between the Spirit and the messiahship of Jesus. He begins with a discussion of some of the key messianic passages in the Gospel, and follows this with a survey of Old Testament texts that provide some background to these themes. In the history of Israel, there is a strong link between the Spirit, the agent of God's purpose, and those who were anointed to leadership. Charette then examines the concept of the coming messiah, the eschatological ruler descended from the house of David. This messiah would be essentially the presence of Yahweh himself, and he would act in concert with the Spirit of God in bringing about eschatological redemption. Charette establishes how Matthew depicts Jesus as this expected messiah who fulfils these roles. He is conceived of the Holy Spirit and his name denotes the eschatological redemption he brings. At his baptism, where the Spirit descends upon him, Jesus is formally anointed and given the power and authority to undertake his messianic duties. These attributes are reinforced in the temptation narrative, and they come to the fore in Jesus' mission of preaching, teaching and healing.

The second chapter is devoted to the theme of Spirit and redemption. Here Charette focuses on the forgiveness of sins as a central feature of Jesus' mission. This leads to the conflict between Satan and Jesus in the Gospel. Charette understands the domination of Satan as a continuation of exile; the people are spiritually exiled from God, and Jesus, with the help of the Spirit, is to deliver the people from the power of Satan. The people of Israel, however, fail to respond because they are led astray by their wicked leaders. This leads to their judgement and to the kingdom being given to another people (the Church). Next, Charette examines the death of Jesus in Matthew, noting that it has great redemptive significance. In addition, Charette links together the death of Jesus and the work of the Spirit. The latter is released upon the death of Jesus and, in a Matthean version of the Pentecost story in Acts, now begins to dwell in the new people of God.

This theme, the Spirit and the new community, is the subject of the third chapter. Charette argues from a number of Matthean texts that the church is the new temple; the followers of Jesus the messiah therefore have become the site of God's presence on earth. Assisting the church in its community and missionary endeavours is the Holy Spirit which, in Old Testament thought, was expected to help build the eschatological temple. In his conclusion Charette restates his case, and examines briefly the implications of his study for Pentecostal thought and praxis.

Charette's study of the Spirit in Matthew's Gospel is welcome indeed. It is, as he makes clear, an area of Matthean scholarship that has been neglected, and Charette's work contains much valuable discussion of this particular theme. He shows that the Spirit plays a far more prominent role in Matthew's story than scholars

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have previously allowed. Needless to say, I do not follow all of Charette's exegetical conclusions. On a number of occasions, they seem to me to exceed the evidence.

My main concern, however, is that Charette has seen fit to limit his sources to the Gospel itself and the Hebrew Scriptures. It goes without saying that these sacred writings impacted enormously upon the evangelist in many ways, but Matthew did not live in a historical vacuum with the Hebrew Scriptures as his only source. He was a first-century Jew and as such he was doubtless influenced by later Jewish texts and oral traditions. Much of his theology has little basis in the Old Testament, and certain aspects are best understood by examining contemporary Jewish texts which contain the same themes. The evangelist's demonology is a clear case in point. While Charette tries to tie this subject to the Old Testament theme of exile, his arguments are not convincing. It is preferable to examine this theme in the light of the advanced demonology of contemporary Judaism. The same can be said of the evangelist's pneumatology. While Charette is doubtless correct that many of Matthew's views on the Spirit are based upon the Hebrew Scriptures, it can be questioned whether these texts can adequately account for every Matthean viewpoint. Charette's canonical approach needs to be supplemented by a more historical approach.

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