

BOOK REVIEW

Keith Warrington, *Discovering the Holy Spirit in the New Testament*. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2005), paperback, x + 230pp., ISBN: 1-56563-871-9, US\$ 16.95.

This well written book on a survey of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is a welcome contribution to the store of knowledge about early Christian understanding of the Spirit of God. Keith Warrington writes in a non-technical way, and he is very concise and straight to the point in his presentation of the Spirit from every book of the New Testament. Exceptions to his treatment of every New Testament book are James, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John. However, 2 Pet 1:21 is discussed with 1 Pet 1:11. (198-9) In his preface, the author acknowledges his indebtedness to Gordon Fee's work on Paul's understanding of the Spirit. Warrington also names Turner, Dunn, Menzies and Wenk as those who have influenced him in his view of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. Furthermore, the writer of this book provides an average of three to five commentaries and books as selected bibliography for each book of the New Testament.

The format of the arrangement of materials in the book is consistent and the setting of the individual books is briefly depicted in every chapter. Then, there is a bulleted points section called "What Does the Author Say about the Spirit?" in every chapter. But, because of his discussion of Matthew and Mark together, Warrington calls this section "What Do the Texts Say about the Spirit?" The Spirit verses in the Thessalonian Correspondence and the Pastoral Epistles are dealt with by one chapter each. (4) The bulleted points about the biblical author's understanding of the Spirit receive adequate exposition. Then an analysis of the meaning of the Spirit passages for the initial intended reader complements his exposition. After a selected bibliography for each chapter, the author provides a series of questions as a way of reflection and application of the materials discussed in each chapter. The approach is devotional in nature, and the insights and views of Warrington are beneficial. He lets the reader express and apply for himself or herself the significance of the work of the Holy Spirit upon their lives through the contemplative questions.

The presentation of the chapters is based on the canonical order of the books in the New Testament, so it is convenient to follow the author's arrangement of chapters. The approach of Warrington is not intended for the specialist and yet, he is very thorough. His book-by-book organization of materials and verse-by-verse style of presentation is systematically done. The themes in each book of the New Testament that are related to the subject of the Holy Spirit are sensibly articulated. The author's style of

writing is clear and the materials included in the book are well organized; the treatment of the passages discussed is reasonable. Warrington wrote *Discovering the Holy Spirit in the New Testament* for "the church leader and student of the Spirit" which entails "believers who are aware of the work of the Spirit in their lives and want to know more about him." (vii) The writer also assumes that the Spirit should be perceived according to the Jewish understanding. (1)

The author basically provides his own views on the interpretation of the texts that relate to the Holy Spirit. His manner of presentation makes him precise in his selected perspectives. Nonetheless, the material that he discusses becomes more interesting as he makes a careful attempt to avoid a one-sided standpoint. Warrington shortly presents other views and then he focuses on what he thinks is the proper interpretation of the text. This approach is admirable. A good example is his treatment of the concept of baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire in the Synoptic Gospels as preached by John the Baptist. (6-9) The author correctly asserts that the verb "baptize" in connection with the Holy Spirit should be understood within the background of "watery connection." (6) Then he provides an exegesis of the Spirit baptism, stating that baptism in this case is "a metaphor, describing a powerful infusion of the Spirit into the life of an individual and must always be treated as such." (7) Warrington in this instance is able to put into a few words his understanding of the notion of Spirit baptism in the Synoptic Gospels.

Picking another example in the same context as that above, the writer identifies the popular view that the reference to "fire" in relationship with Spirit baptism "relates to the issue of judgment." (7) At this juncture Warrington synthesizes the Synoptic Gospels' perspective with Paul's in Rom 8:15-16 maintaining that "the Spirit functions as the one who sets believers apart to God, confirming that they are the children of God." (7-8) In connection with his exegesis of Mt 3:11, Mk 1:8 and Lk 3:16, his interpretation of the metaphor of fire is most remarkable. He uses a cross-referencing or inter-textuality in suggesting that the intended reader would have picked up the Exodus stories (Exo 3:2; 13:21-22) and the purifying fire message of the prophets (Isa 4:4; 29:6; and Zech 13:9). (Warrington's references, 8) And consistent to his approach, Warrington finally shows his proclivity that the first audience of Matthew would have perceived that Jesus is "superior to the sort of Messiah they were expecting." (8) The author's conclusion of this section is precisely the way he understands the Matthean intent. He maintains that from the start of his Gospel Matthew meant to depict Jesus as the greater and exalted one. Jesus "who not only is associated with the Spirit, and that from birth, also has the capacity to bestow the Spirit on others" which is "a prerogative that belongs only to

God" (Num 11:29; Isa 42:1). (Warrington's references, 9)

Warrington has insightful thoughts, his views are plausible, and he is creative in his imagination. His discussion of the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, 10, and 19 where believers experienced the Spirit's infilling and spoke in tongues is a typical Pentecostal approach. (51-63) He is very insightful in highlighting "the manifestation of the Spirit in verbal communication, including prophecy, proclaiming the Gospel, and speaking in tongues." (51) His view that when Saul, who later became Paul, received the Spirit "he 'immediately' preached in the synagogues in Damascus, to the amazement of the people" (9:20-21) is most plausible. (59) The author's exegesis of the difficult Acts passage where Saul was filled with the Spirit and yet did not speak in tongues or prophesy is explained that he later had a Spirit manifestation through "verbal communication." Warrington is also imaginative in his interpretation of how "the Spirit inspires prophecy" and also "supports the proclamation of the gospel." (69-73) He creatively puts the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in Acts: "The future event for Joel has become a present event for Luke." (70) Another imaginative understanding of the Spirit's support among the early believers in evangelism, is Warrington's idea that the examples of the Spirit's inspiration and support among the Spirit filled personalities in Acts would set an example for the original readers "to believe the promises concerning the supportive role of the Spirit and to engage in evangelism." (72-3)

The assumptions that Warrington take for granted are commonly held. For example, he presupposes that there is "charismatic chaos in Corinth" and although if this is the case, the apostle Paul is still "affirming them in their giftedness." (99) This pair of assumptions is significant in his exegesis of the Spirit passages in 1 Corinthians. The author correctly sees the approach of Paul in the Corinthian problem as not to undermine them, but to correct their arrogance and egocentricity. Hence, Warrington focuses his exegesis of 1 Cor 12:27-31 arguing that the apostle continued to encourage the current practice of the gifts of the Spirit by the Corinthians. (103) Moreover, the author suggests that the greater gift for Paul is that which is more helpful for other believers in the congregation. (103) In addition, he maintains that the apostle Paul did not believe in hierarchical gifts; instead, the arrangement of the order of gifts in different New Testament passages indicates how different gifts may have had specific significance in the early church's maturity. (104) Warrington's understanding of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians is helpful in maintaining an encouraging attitude in the practice of charismata in the contemporary Pentecostal congregations.

Although the presentation of Warrington is generally clear and precise, the author mistakenly named Robert P. Menzies as Ralph P. Menzies. (2, 73)

Also, perhaps Warrington is unaware of a major work on Johannine pneumatology that is not included in his bibliography on John. Gary M. Burge's volume called *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* has been in print since 1987 by Eerdmans, and I suggest it would be a good addition to his bibliography on John's understanding of the Spirit. There are a few ambiguous statements by the writer, and because of a lack of further explanation, some statements in his expositions are not clear. The point that he wants to argue is confusing when he claims that "The same people who are baptized with the Holy Spirit are also baptized with fire." (7) Warrington continues saying that: "There is no suggestion that one group of people are baptized with the Spirit and another with fire." (7) It would have been helpful if he had used another paragraph to clarify what he means here. Another statement is puzzling: "Thus, Paul does not exhort them to be full of the Spirit, but rather to be continuously filled with the Spirit." (156) It is unclear if the writer is making a distinction between being "filled" and being "full" of the Spirit. His scholarly integrity though is admirable; if the text is not clear and there are several possible meanings, he is not embarrassed to admit the difficulty.

Such a work as this which attempts a comprehensive survey is vulnerable to editorial mistakes. But overall, this book is a good reference work. It is handy in locating references about the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. The index of Bible references at the back of the book is most useful in finding the scriptural texts on the Spirit. The Greek words are transliterated in English. No prior knowledge of Christian pneumatology is required to understand the book's content. The Spirit passages throughout the New Testament that are considered and explained by Warrington make this work a practical textbook for undergraduate course in New Testament pneumatology. The views of the writer are Pentecostal in inclination and his treatment of the Spirit passages in the Gospels, Acts and 1 Corinthians is notably coming from his Elim Pentecostal Church background. Warrington is much appreciated for providing a concise and yet thorough work on the Spirit of God in the New Testament, that is distinctly Pentecostal in perspective.

Warrington's *Discovering the Holy Spirit in the New Testament* is a recommended reading to anyone who is interested in knowing more about the New Testament's idea of the Holy Spirit.

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