

Matthew 24 (at verse 14), aimed at softening the tension about the imminence of the coming of the Son of Man, expected to take place soon after the destruction of Jerusalem.

On the whole, Gundry has given us an excellent commentary on Mark. The wealth of references in this exhaustive work will certainly make it a favorite nonserial volume for years to come.

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Howard-Brook, Wes. *Becoming Children of God: John's Gospel and Radical Discipleship*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994. 510 pp. \$21.95.

*Becoming Children of God* is part of the "Bible and Liberation" series which focuses on political, social, and contextual issues in the biblical text. By highlighting the social struggles behind the text, the series gives a foundation from which the reader can extrapolate to the contemporary scene. This commentary follows the pattern of the other volumes in the series by not only reading John's Gospel personally, but also exposing it politically. In this way it calls for "radical discipleship."

The commentary itself parallels Chad Myers' *Binding the Strong Man* (Orbis, 1988). Howard-Brook applies the same method Myers used in developing the commentary on Mark. As *Binding the Strong Man* grew out of a community, so *Becoming Children of God* is the product of the Galilee Circle community in Seattle. The members of the community not only spent two years rereading the Johannine text, but they also lived out "the radicality of the gospel in community" (xvii). At the heart of this new understanding is the reading of the Gospel through the eyes of the street people in Seattle, through the eyes of the shattered lives of prisoners and urban gangs, and through the lenses of the other marginal groups.

At the outset, Howard-Brook, a lawyer who did graduate theological studies at Seattle University, challenges approaches to the biblical text adopted by fundamentalists, by ivory-tower academics who focus on methodological and critical questions, and by those who give up the task altogether. Of the three groups, he is most critical of the academics. He admits that his reading of the text does not come out of the "context of university conversation . . . but rather out of radical discipleship" (7). Of course, he makes it clear that he is not disparaging the entire academic enterprise. Rather, he is quite engaged with those academics who see in the Scriptures the power to liberate people and social structures. What he cares deeply for is that the text be read not only from the university perspective, but from the grassroots and the underside.

Instead of the critical source-oriented method which is limited to academics, Wes Howard-Brook opts for a discourse-oriented reading which allows anyone to hear the text as a whole, as he or she would "listen" to a novel, history, or biography. For the reviewer, this is possibly the most useful method if one is going to read the biblical text from a discipleship perspective. It alerts us to the truth that John is not a collection of "facts," but is instead a dramatic narrative.

Howard-Brook divides John's dramatic narrative into twenty-nine major segments or chapters. At the beginning of each chapter (or major subsection within a chapter), he presents the following in brief outline form: chiasm, location, time, Hebrew scripture context, social factors, themes, key words. It is a most helpful device which aids the reader to readily understand the structural, literary, social, and theological basis of the author's argument within that section. It is also helpful for study groups as they try to study segments of the Gospel systematically.

The most controversial element of his structure is the use of chiasms. He finds macro-chiasms (upon which all the chapters, except 5:1-4, are built;) and microchiasms within each of the former. Howard-Brook categorically states that chiasm is "the structural key to the fourth gospel" (39) and the "structural beauty" (117) of John's work. Since he finds chiasms "behind every bush" in John, and almost every section and subsection of his commentary is based on a chiasm, it seems odd that the entire Gospel is not a grand chiasm following the same five-part pattern (a b c a<sup>1</sup> b<sup>1</sup>) which he finds consistently in the entire document.

If the above is a minor point, then more major is his failure to address adequately the objection that chiastic parallelisms are more in the eye of the reader than in the text. To say that "any discourse-based reading method must recognize that any structure or meaning is not 'in the text' but *in the relationship between the text and the readers*" (39, emphasis his), doesn't get to the heart of the issue. Howard-Brooks does not let us into his secret as to what clear controls he has. We, therefore, must wonder if some of the chiastic parallelisms are forced. While many of the chiasms are impressive and convincing, not all are. If we grant the commentary's author his contention regarding text, reader, and chiasms, do we then read the entire Bible chiastically, whether the author of the text intended it or not?

If there is weakness in the chiastic structure of the commentary, there is strength in the political, social, and liberative aspects. Howard-Brook disagrees with those who suggest that the Gospel is not ideological but "mystical," "individualistic," and "personal" (24). This position can only be held by those who make a dichotomy between the spiritual and the social/political. Howard-Brook rightly rejects such an artificial dichotomy, and reads John as a sociospiritual document— just as the entire Bible should be read.

Howard-Brook argues that a major focus of John is the overthrow of the locus of oppression, viz. the Jerusalem temple. It is a theme, with variations, which pervades the Gospel (see 95). With this assumption Howard-Brook can extrapolate and relate issues such as the following to the situation in John's Gospel: violence; justice and compassion for the homeless and for AIDS victims; racism and civil rights; and the provision of equal opportunity for people of color, women, youth, elderly, and other marginalized persons.

I would wish to see much more specific extrapolation for today than is given in the commentary, although the author does become precise in a number of instances. For example, he addresses the beating of Rodney King and the subsequent trials; the Clarence Thomas hearings and Anita Hill's allegations; the Gulf War; events in the Two Thirds World like the Central American civil wars. As to these last two issues—war and violence—in a number of places, the author raises the question of the conflict between the biblical tradition of nonviolent resistance and the position of Christians' support of war today. To illustrate, in the discussion of John 5:39, Howard-Brook asks: "Why are so many religious leaders who claim to follow Jesus and who quote the Bible regularly so unwilling to recognize God's presence in the works of justice and peace?" (138). It is by his application of the situations in John to modern situations that the author makes John relevant. Of course, we must admit that on the one hand, extrapolating too precisely makes the commentary dated (e.g. references to the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran civil wars of liberation). But, on the other hand, a commentary done from the perspective of the underside cannot but be specific in its illustrations.

Howard-Brook must be commended for moving many of us away from the notion that liberation theology is limited to economic categories. Too often when we think of a biblical theology of social liberation, we immediately think in terms of poverty, the poor, and their oppression. This automatically, for some, leaves out certain biblical texts and documents which address liberation. The Synoptics are held up and portrayed as classics that address Jesus' liberative mission, and John is ignored. Howard-Brook's commentary, however, by highlighting John's concern with social barriers of ethnicity, racial impurity, privilege, and power, makes the fourth Gospel as much a treatise on social liberation as the three preceding ones.

Another major controversial aspect of the commentary (not in structure but in content) which must be noted, is his position that the term *Ioudaioi* should not be translated "Jews" but rather "Judeans." This is most important in his overall argument that John's message is addressing a situation of privilege and power. The term, Howard-Brook argues, refers to the elite and their followers who identify and align themselves with the Temple/Torah symbolic world. *Ioudaioi*, he claims, is not ethnic but

geographic and political throughout the entire Gospel. Thus the contrast is not between Christians and Jews, but between Galileans and Judeans. Howard-Brook builds a fair if not totally convincing case for his argument. His statement "the Gospel is not anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish but anti-Judean" (43) opens a window to my suspicion of his real intent. One must ask if his argument is an attempt to counteract the seeming anti-Semitism of John. In reality, we do injustice to the text if we make it say what we want it to say. The biblical text can be anti-Semitic without our being anti-Semitic today, just as we can be antislavery even if the text is proslavery. Let us hear the text on its own terms.

Finally, it is refreshing to read a commentary on John's Gospel which highlights its literary/aesthetic mode of storytelling. Instead of either picking the text to pieces, or making strained attempts at extracting "lessons" or "morals" from the text (though each procedure has its place), Howard-Brook has helped us to read the story John relates as a story—a truly liberative story.

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Mabry, Eddie. *Balthasar Hubmaier's Doctrine of the Church*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994. xviii + 217 pp. Cloth, \$32.50.

*Balthasar Hubmaier's Doctrine of the Church* is a development from Eddie Mabry's 1982 Ph.D. dissertation at Princeton. Balthasar Hubmaier (ca. 1480-1528) was one of the most prolific writers and the only doctor of theology among sixteenth-century Anabaptists. Mabry's treatise provides a valuable introduction to Hubmaier's ecclesiology—one of the doctrines that most sharply distinguished the Anabaptists from their Roman Catholic and magisterial Protestant contemporaries.

Mabry's work consists of six major chapters and a brief conclusion. Chapter 1 introduces Hubmaier and his theological development; chapter 2 outlines his ecclesiology; chapters 3-5 investigate his doctrines of salvation, the Lord's supper, and baptism; and chapter 6 spells out the role of the church in the world.

The author rightly identifies the centrality of Hubmaier's ecclesiology to his entire theology. During the scant three years from Hubmaier's rebaptism to his martyrdom, he never wrote a systematic treatise on ecclesiology. He touched on it, however, in several of his writings, especially in "The Twelve Articles of Christian Faith" (1526-27), which at the time of Mabry's doctoral research was available only in German, but has since been published in *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*,