

section (1:16-11:36) of the epistle from the perspective of rhetorical construction, dividing it into three sections: "Through the gospel the uprightness of God is revealed as justifying people of faith" (1:16-4:25): "The love of God further assures salvation to those justified by faith" (5:1-8:39): and "Justification and salvation through faith do not contradict God's promises to Israel of old" (9:1-11:36).

Systematically Fitzmyer refers to patristic literature, mainly Augustine, Origen, Ignatius of Antioch, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Clement of Rome, and John Chrysostom. He does not neglect Protestant reformers, especially Luther, Calvin, and Melanchthon.

The author hopes that his Catholic background "will not show up too boldly" (xiv). In fact, the presentation is quite balanced, departing here and there from traditional Roman Catholic positions. For example, Fitzmyer states that "there is no reason to think that Peter was the founder of the Roman Church or the missionary who first brought Christianity to Rome" (30). He also minimizes the differences between Luther's view on the "uprightness of God" and his own position (257-265) and even calls Phoebe (16:1-2) a "minister of the Church" (728).

Although the analyses of controversial passages are necessarily short, they contain the essential information and are fair and clear. Especially well covered are the identification of the *ego* in 7:7-25 (463-466), the importance of chapters 9-11 within the purpose of the epistle (539-543), and the discussion of 10:4 and the end of the law (582-585).

The strongest and most useful contribution of this commentary is its massive documentation. This is presented both in a general bibliography (173-224) and specific bibliographies following each point discussed. In these, commentators are listed chronologically in five different periods. An index of subjects and another of commentators facilitates the use of the volume.

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Gundry, Robert H. *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993. iv + 1069 pp. Cloth, \$59.99.

It is a foregone conclusion in Marcan scholarship that the Evangelist wrote in a Gentile Christian context, perhaps in Rome itself and in the wake of the Jewish war of 66-73. Consequently, he removed all political connotations from the messianism of Jesus, as well as the overly Jewish elements from the primitive Christian tradition. According to Mark, the worst enemies of Jesus were the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, the same group responsible for the recent rebellion against Rome; in fact, Jesus him-

self was the victim of Jewish insurgency, with Rome's unwilling acquiescence. In Gundry's words, "Mark's audience will understand the following passion of Jesus to be, not a penalty deserved by him for any danger that he posed to society, but the outcome of a backlash against his having defeated opponents who were dangerous to society as well as to him" (8).

Gundry's detailing these facts in more than a thousand pages of fine print appears, at first glance, to be unnecessarily exhaustive. Yet given the author's meticulousness, demonstrated earlier in his *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (1982), one would be reconciled quickly with the length of the work. More significantly, Gundry departs from a number of givens that have come to characterize the study of Mark: the so-called messianic secret, the hypothetical Secret Gospel of Mark, the use of polemics and irony throughout, etc. His major thesis, as the subtitle suggests, is that Mark was written primarily to dispel from the minds of Gentile readers the stigma attached to the Cross of Christ, whose death would be associated inevitably with that of a serious offender, and thus to pave the way for a receptive audience to the proclamation of the gospel. On this count, Gundry's work is definitely meritorious.

The ground is well prepared in the "Introduction" (1-26), even by the use of such categories as "theological truth" and "historico-literary truth" (3). From the passion predictions well into the passion narrative, the story of Jesus is told "in ways that make the passion itself a success-story" (3). Mark has Jesus shame his opponents to the point of forestalling the shame that would otherwise attach to his crucifixion (6). Gundry has his readers as well prepared as Mark had his audience (much of the remaining introduction is a negative assessment of audience criticism).

There are a number of interesting features in the book that commend it further. The excursions preceding the treatment of the larger units are somewhat elaborate introductions, and the rich "notes" after the treatment of each pericope are no less than another elaborate excursus on the recent history of its interpretation (of particular interest for readers of this journal are the notes, on Mk 2:27-28, Jesus and the Sabbath [145-149]; and on 7:1-23, Jesus and the laws of purity [357-371]). The thirty-two-page bibliography at the beginning of the book (xxiv-lv) is another interesting feature.

The author's repeated justification of Marcan redundancies and syntactical roughness, however, is somewhat problematic (e.g., pp. 89-92, 155-156, 160-162, 520-523, 569-570, 824-825, etc.). It is inconceivable that Gundry could immerse himself so deeply in Mark and not recognize the possibility of a conflation of the other Synoptics in the Marcan text. The Evangelist's tendency to rework "the pre-Markan version" of stories—if not also to depart from the overly Jewish tradition (such as found in Matthew)—would make such a possibility demand further attention. Form and redaction criticism have not been applied to the text of Mark as was done earlier by the author in his treatment of Matthew. One cannot help

but speculate what the author's observations and conclusions would have been had the present work preceded his work on Matthew and had it been pursued with the same scrupulousness of form and redaction criticism as demonstrated in the earlier work.

The latter part of the subtitle denotes the uniqueness of this commentary and gives it a cohesion unlike most other commentaries. The necessary details, however, may cause the reader to lose sight of the sustained "apology for the cross" in the Marcan narrative. Aware of this, Gundry returns to his thesis at the end of the commentary. In a section entitled "The Purpose of Mark," in what would have otherwise been introductory material, he begins: "Now that Mark's text has passed before us, we can return better informed to the question, Why did he write this gospel?" (1022). Other introductory questions appropriately discussed at the end of the book are: "The Origin of Mark's Gospel" (1026-1045), "The Outlining of Mark's Gospel" (1045-1049), and "The Literary Genre of Mark's Gospel" (1049-1051).

Few observations on matters of origin and genre would suffice. The zeal with which Marcan priority is here defended on the authority of Papias and his claim, on the authority of John the Presbyter of Ephesus, that the Evangelist was informed by Peter, leaves much to be desired critically—since the testimonies of Papias lend equal credibility to Matthean priority (see Papias, *apud* Eusebius *HE* 3.39.14-16). Should we not suspect an early fabrication of a Petrine voice behind the Gospel of Mark so as to give it some apostolic authority and better reception in a predominantly Petrine territory? The veracity of the claim that Mark was the interpreter of Peter depends, to a certain extent, on an affirmative answer to the question of whether Mark is truly a "generic" book. Is the Evangelist simply setting out "the good news" about Jesus, with his use of the word "gospel" in the opening line being devoid of literary significance? Gundry seems to weaken his Marcan priority argument as he proceeds to settle the question of whether Mark is to be credited with expanding the meaning of "gospel" to include the early ministry of Jesus in addition to the Cross and the Resurrection. He concludes that the expansion of the meaning of "gospel" cannot be credited to Mark since none of the following three conditions is likely: (1) Peter's teachings, on which Mark draws as a source, cannot be described as "gospel"; (2) the evangelistic messages of Acts 2:22 and 10:36-39a are devoid of homiletical use of anecdotes concerning the ministry of Jesus; and (3) "Paul's concentration on the Cross and Resurrection is universalized," i.e., found to be common to the New Testament writers (1050). Consequently, it may be argued that Mark's use of the word "gospel" is suggestive also of an emerging genre, a documentary development evolving around the life of Jesus and discernible in the Evangelist's likely use of sources. For example, compare the nearly contemporaneous use of the term "gospel" in a possible redaction of proto-

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.