

Tricia Gates Brown. *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-scientific Perspective*. JSNTSup 253. New York: T & T Clark, 2003. Pp. 307. ISBN 0-5670-8442-6. \$55.00.

Tricia Gates Brown is an independent scholar living in Newberg, OR. The book reviewed here appears to be her doctoral dissertation written at the University of St. Andrews under Ron Piper. She has also written *Free People: A Christian Response to Global Economics* (2004), and she is something of an anti-war activist (see the online essays that come up from a Yahoo search on her name).

Spirit in the Writings of John consists of an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction presents the method of social-scientific criticism prosecuted in the study, and it also reveals some of Brown's assumptions. Chapter 1 continues the introduction by outlining patron-client relations in the ancient world. The logical connection between chapters 1 and 2 is not obvious. Chapter 2 summarizes "Four Approaches to Johannine Pneumatology": C. H. Dodd, George Johnston, Felix Porsch, and Gary Burge. Chapter 3 exegetes the Spirit texts in the Fourth Gospel. Chapter 4 treats the Paraclete in John, and Chapter 5 deals with Spirit in 1 John. The conclusion summarizes the results of the study, and the author ends by expressing "the hope that understanding the socio-cultural contexts of these writings will allow readers [of John and 1 John] to appreciate their value as texts without embracing their tone" (267). We might ask whether the evangelist (or his rabbi) would react favorably to readers who appreciate the Gospel but feel they can improve upon its tone. In my view, such a response reflects a failure to appreciate the import of the text. Adolf Schlatter might go farther and call this "a radical and total polemic against" its message (cf. "The Theology of the New Testament and Dogmatics," in R. Morgan, ed., *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, 122).

The author begins her study with the assertion, “John’s spirit-passages hint at the experiences of the author and his community” (1). Brown never raises the possibility that what the Fourth Gospel reveals about the Spirit originated in the evangelist’s experience with Jesus. No argument is given for the conclusion that the author of John is more concerned with addressing his community than testifying to what Jesus said. However, the study is conducted as though what gave rise to what John says took place *after* rather than *during* the life of Jesus. This fails to recognize that the Fourth Gospel claims to be offering true testimony to what took place during the life of Jesus and alerts readers to post-resurrection insights (2:22; 12:16; 20:9).

Brown writes, “The main social-scientific model used in this study is the model of patron-client relations” (19), but there are several problems with this method. The Gospel of John provides its readers with many metaphors for understanding the relationships between God, Jesus, and the people of God, for example: “logos-creator and creatures,” “Father-children,” “Father-Son,” “Rabbi/teacher-disciples,” “well of living water,” “bridegroom-bride,” “healer,” “judge,” “bread of life,” “light of the world,” “good shepherd,” “Messianic King,” “servant,” “vine-branches,” “friends.” The imposition of a relationship the Gospel does not use, that of patron-client, fails to capture what is communicated by these images that the Gospel does employ, obscures the breadth and width of these realities, and introduces concepts foreign to the Gospel. For instance, Brown develops the idea that by the Spirit Jesus is the best “broker”—her term—between God and his “clients” (cf. 28–30, 56–61). In our language and culture, the financial connotations of the term “broker” are simply too strong for this to be helpful. Brown’s imposition of this alien concept results in a truncated, distorted reading of Gospel of John.

Scholars working on the Spirit in John will benefit from the bibliography (though its most recent items were published in 1999, nothing published in this millennium appears). An index of Scripture, other ancient literature, and modern authors will also make particular discussions quickly accessible.

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