

BOOK REVIEW

Tricia Gates Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-Scientific Perspective* (JSNTSup, 253; London: T. & T. Clark International, 2003). viii + 307 pp. Hdbk. US\$135.00.

*Spirit in the Writings of John* presents the fruits of Tricia Gates Brown's dissertation written under the supervision of Ronald Piper at the University of St Andrews. Brown's work seeks to interpret Johannine pneumatology, in both the Gospel and 1 John, under the supposition that the theology found here is shaped by its socio-cultural environment.

Brown's primary goal is to 'demonstrate how spirit is used by the Evangelist in the Gospel proper to designate that which is of the realm of God' (p. 22). (Note how Brown usually uses 'spirit' rather than 'Spirit', though the two forms will sometimes appear on the same page without any clear distinction, e.g., p. 102.) Nevertheless, her work also contains insights of importance for Johannine Christology.

In Chapter 1, Brown introduces readers to the model of patron-client relations, which she employs to interpret Johannine pneumatology, as well as the rationale for its use. Recognizing the uncertainty of where the Fourth Gospel and 1 John have been written, Brown convincingly argues that the reciprocal relationships of patrons and clients (patronage) played a significant role in first-century Mediterranean life throughout the Early Roman Empire. Patrons would provide a resource that would otherwise not be available to the client. Within this model, Brown is particularly interested in exploring the idea of brokerage, in which a broker facilitates patronage between a patron who is, within the social system, significantly separated from the client. In this situation, the broker himself would serve as a patron to the client by providing access to another patron's resources.

In Chapter 2, Brown surveys four previous approaches to Johannine pneumatology and offers her response to them. This aspect of her work

might have been integrated into the remainder of the monograph, but it does provide a helpful orientation and aids in highlighting Brown's own position. Against C.H. Dodd's etymological studies of *pneuma*, Brown recognizes that the meaning of the term in Johannine literature must be ascertained by considering its context. She finds that *pneuma* does not refer to deity in general, but to a broker who provides access to Jesus Christ. Brown suggests that George Johnston, who focuses on the Paraclete passages, has misrepresented the social context of Johannine pneumatology in his suggestion that the Paraclete is experienced through the work of Christians. In response to Felix Porsch, who suggests that the role of the Spirit in John is to reveal, Brown again asserts that the Spirit's brokerage is primary. The same issue is of importance with respect to Brown's response to Gary Burge's theological interpretation of the Spirit in John, in which Burge claims that the Paraclete functions as the presence of Christ. Brown also challenges Burge's forensic understanding of the meaning of 'Paraclete'. Many other scholars receive consideration throughout this monograph, but the focus is generally on specifically Johannine scholarship, while more comprehensive works, for example, those of Max Turner and H.B. Swete, surprisingly are absent in all discussions.

In Chapters 3 and 4, Brown exegetes all of the 'Spirit' passages in John's Gospel. Her conclusions are often just as consequential for Johannine Christology as for pneumatology. With respect to Jesus, Brown finds that the Spirit legitimizes Jesus' identity as being the Son of God who is 'from above', that is, who is from the realm of God. Accordingly, Jesus alone is the true broker, serving those who accept him as such. He provides people access to God's patronage, of which the ultimate benefit is eternal life. All earthly brokers to God, including John the Baptist and Moses, are replaced by Jesus, the heavenly broker. Jesus also serves to broker the Spirit from God, which, Brown argues, is made available by Jesus at his death and later, after the resurrection, conferred upon the disciples when Jesus breathes upon them (this is Brown's interpretation of the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to baptize them in the Holy Spirit). Having received the Spirit, people receive a birth of the Spirit that allows them to receive the benefit of eternal life.

With respect to the 'Paraclete' in the farewell discourses, Brown first seeks to clarify the meaning of the term. Contrary to what is often proposed in Johannine scholarship, Brown argues that the term 'Paraclete' is not a forensic term, but one that connotes a relationship of

brokerage and patronage, which includes not a legal bond, but a moral and affective bond. Following this we reach the climax of Brown's study. She suggests that the Spirit is important for the Evangelist and Johannine community primarily because Jesus, the one who provides brokerage to God, is leaving. The Paraclete comes to ensure that access to Jesus' brokerage will continue in his absence, and, thus, the relationship with God will not be broken. That is, the Spirit serves as broker to Jesus (who also, Brown argues, remains a Paraclete), who provides brokerage to God's patronage. All of the tasks of the Spirit, including his witnessing to the disciples about Jesus and regarding the guilt of the world, are subsumed in his role as broker.

Brown's discussion of pneumatology in 1 John comes to the fore in Chapter 5. Brown finds that the approach to the Spirit in the epistle is decidedly different than in the Gospel, while arguing, however, that they arise out of the same context. The social-scientific model of patron-client relations still proves useful as Brown hypothesizes the reason behind the different approaches. She suggests that the author of 1 John is writing in response to opponents who have claimed to have direct access to God through the Spirit's brokerage and who believed that Jesus' earthly life was of little significance. The author of 1 John, on the other hand, wishes to assert that access to God comes only through Jesus' brokerage. Accordingly, 1 John focuses on the life and identity of Jesus and the believers' relationship with him more so than on the Spirit. Rather than discussing the Spirit's brokerage, as found in the Gospel of John, the author of 1 John emphasizes the role of the Spirit as facilitating true confession of Jesus.

Bringing new insights by approaching Johannine pneumatology from a social-scientific perspective, Brown presents a commendable interpretation of Johannine pneumatology that challenges many previous interpretations of the Spirit's function and relation to Jesus in the Gospel of John as well as previous understandings of the 'Paraclete'. Her monograph will obviously be of particular interest to those interested in Johannine pneumatology, but also to those interested in the use of social-scientific criticism in biblical interpretation and, due to this study's discussion of Jesus' brokerage, to those interested in Johannine Christology.

Andrew K. Gabriel

McMaster Divinity College / Emmanuel Bible College