

REVIEWS

A COMMENTARY ON MARK THIRTEEN. By G. R. Beasley-Murray. (Macmillan; 18s.)

Students of New Testament eschatology will not fail to appreciate the significance of the title Dr Beasley-Murray has chosen for his book. What may be one of the oldest, and what certainly is one of the most difficult, presentations of our Lord's eschatological teaching is to be found in Mark Thirteen. Here, if anywhere in the New Testament, a commentary which concentrates on a single chapter is justified and welcome. This book consists of an unusually full and penetrating verse-by-verse exegesis. Though it can be read as an independent commentary, its value is considerably more than doubled when it is used as a supplement to the author's earlier and longer work, *Jesus and the Future*. Here, after an exhaustive survey of earlier work on the subject, he concluded that Mark Thirteen describes the fall of the temple, together with that of the city, and that it establishes a connection between these disasters and the parousia of the Son of Man. What lies between the two events is not described because, such is the contention, our Lord did not know, and because he did not realize the extent of the intervening period. However this may be, Dr Beasley-Murray feels convinced that 'the contents of the discourse have high claims to authenticity', and 'that the report that Jesus gave instructions of this kind on the Mount of Olives during his last week in Jerusalem, is worthy of serious consideration' (p. 11, footnote).

This then is the general position from which the present work was written. Perhaps only specialists in the field will realize what a bold departure it involves from the usually accepted theories. Few commentators today would regard this discourse as a unity, or as having come from our Lord's own lips (at least directly), and almost every commentator regards it as having at least strong Apocalyptic elements. Dr Beasley-Murray, on the contrary, vigorously defends the first two of these theories, and no less vigorously attacks the third. Having examined every conceivable variation of all three theories in his previous work, he is in the strongest possible position in the present one for suggesting his own finely-argued interpretations as an alternative. In effect he shows that it is possible to arrive at a far more convincing exegesis of this particular chapter by abandoning once and for all the long-fashionable extravagances of form-criticism, and by accepting Mark's narrative as substantially historical.

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