

PETER FIEDLER, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 1; Stuttgart/Berlin/Cologne: Kohlhammer, 2006). Pp. 440. Paper €35.

Even though in the English-speaking world a growing number of publications have recently emphasized the strongly Jewish character of Matthew's Gospel, this development has only slowly found acknowledgment in German scholarship. Peter Fiedler, professor at the Pädagogische Hochschule in Freiburg, has now presented a commentary that emphasizes Matthew's Jewishness. He wishes to read Matthew as much as possible without the encumbrance of its later reception history, which appropriated the Gospel for a Gentile Christian world. Instead, he proposes to read the Gospel from an entirely Jewish perspective (pp. 35-36). For F., the Gospel represents a "snapshot" (p. 20) of inner-Jewish conflicts and debates.

The commentary follows customary conventions. The introduction contains systematic thoughts about the origin, date, and place of the Gospel. F. suggests Antioch after the Jewish War as the place for a community living according to Jewish standards but also starting to reach out to Gentiles. He leaves open whether such Gentiles became God-fearers or had to convert completely to Judaism, but he tends to favor complete conversion since the Gospel does not mention circumcision and thus takes it for granted. F. dispels notions of any sort of formal association of synagogues at the time and suggests that Matthew's community was one among many local players vying for the definition of a Jewish way of life after the war. The christological conflict with Pharisees and scribes is to be placed within this competition. Matthew needs to defend the messianic claim for Jesus against the charge that this Messiah did not appear again and did not defend Israel from catastrophe. In this context Matthew develops a christology around confessions of Jesus as the eschatological Emmanuel representing God himself. The identification of the community in 16:18-19 as the "church of Christ" distinct from Judaism refers to the community as the faithful remnant inviting all of Israel to conversion. It represents the faithfulness of God and God's promises to Israel despite the fact that a greater part of Israel did not accept Jesus. The anti-Jewish polemic is a strategy to convert Israel before the final judgment.

In the commentary, F. proceeds to expound the text. He divides the material into the authentication of Jesus Christ through God (1:1-4:11); the public ministry and teaching (4:12-25:46); and the passion and Easter revelation of Jesus Christ, Son of God (26:1-28:20). In each part F. translates individual pericopae before embarking on a verse-by-verse commentary. Frequent short excursuses give background information. A partial index of passages concludes the volume.

It is good to see a commentary arguing the thoroughly Jewish character of Matthew's Gospel. F. brings to this task a wide range of knowledge of primary and secondary sources. Still, minor quibbles remain, three of which are representative. First, it is not plausible to claim that the only real conflict with Jewish opponents rests on christological claims, when so many of the controversy stories revolve around the interpretation of the law and tone down Marcan claims for the superiority of christology. A dispute over the interpretation of

the law would also explain the repeated references to the "Law and the Prophets" (5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40). If, however, the Matthean community was at odds with Pharisees and scribes over at least some interpretative issues of the law, Matthew's relationship to Judaism becomes complicated. Here the omission of the mention of circumcision becomes more significant than F. allows. This leads to a second area where clarification is needed: the inclusion of Gentiles and their specific status in a Jewish community. Despite the claims in the introduction, in the commentary itself F. refers the specific status of the Gentiles in the community to the decision of the Jerusalem council (pp. 431-32). The Gospel, however, does not give a hint of knowing or following the rules enjoined there. Third, if christology really is to bear the whole weight of the conflict with the Gospel's opponents, it remains curiously bland. Commenting on 1:21-23 and 28:16-20, F. speaks of a preliminary mediation of God's presence in Jesus, who accompanies his community on its way (p. 53), and entertains the notion that in 1:21 *αὐτός* refers to God. F. weakens Matthew's salvific and sacrificial interpretation of the death of Jesus to a considerable extent. It is questionable whether such a weak christology can bear the full weight of the Pharisaic opposition.

At many points F.'s commentary is stimulating and challenging, and at points it is provocative. As such it can be recommended. Despite its brevity and appealing layout, however, it is not, and probably does not claim to be, a first entry into the world of Matthew.

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