

Benedict T. Viviano. *Matthew and His World: The Gospel of the Open Jewish Christians: Studies in Biblical Theology*. NTOA 61. Freiburg: Academic Press / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007. Pp. 309. ISBN 978-3-7278-1584-3. \$82.00 cloth.

This second volume of Viviano's essays includes 13 formerly published contributions and 6 unpublished entries. Although most essays in both groups treat matters Matthean, the expression *and His World* in the title allows Viviano to include one essay on the use of "the kingdom of God" in the Qumran literature, two or three essays on John's use of Matthew, an archaeological study of the Beth Alfa synagogue, and essays on Mark 14:47, Gal 2:11–14, and Jas 1:25, respectively. In each case, Viviano ingeniously manages to construct a link, however tenuous, to Matthew: e.g., Gal 2:11–14 reports a conflict with Peter, and Peter "plays a significant subsidiary role in Matthew."

Viviano's work has always struck me as a strange mix of interesting wrestling with the Jewish background of the NT documents, a growing focus on the NT use of the Old (Viviano was influenced by M.-E. Boismard during the 17 years he worked in Jerusalem), and, on occasion, a rather unreconstructed and old-fashioned liberalism that does not wear well. For example, in his third essay, "The Genres of Matt 1–2: Light from 1 Timothy 2:4" (first published in *Revue Biblique* in 1990), Viviano offers three theses, only the first of which interests us here. He argues that Matt 1–2 was perceived by the author of 1 Tim 1:3–7 as "a combination of genealogy, myth and midrash." In other words, the "attack" of the author of 1 Tim 1:3–7 is "directed against the innovations of Matthew, who reports the virginal conception and genealogy of Jesus and offers the Sermon on the Mount as a law." Viviano thinks 1 Timothy was written ca. A.D. 100, shortly after the publication of Matthew and Luke, and it "would have shocked old-time Paulinists who had not felt the need for such detailed presentations of the life and teaching of Jesus. As 2 Cor 5:16 says, 'Even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer.'" Of all the question marks I am tempted to place beside Viviano's argument, the biggest must be parked beside this use of 2 Cor 5:16. Bultmann made this reading popular, of course, but it has been shown so many times to rest on deep misunderstanding that it is a bit disconcerting to stumble across this attempt, not to revive it, but to assume it.

The six new essays in this volume are as follows: (1) "Introduction: Matthew Studies Today" (chap. 1; pp. 3–8). The essay is mistitled. It is mostly a visitation of the debate as to whether Matthew and his community stand comfortably inside early Christianity and outside Judaism or see themselves as intellectually within Judaism—indeed, the true Israel. Viviano sides with the

latter position, but far from thinking of this community as beleaguered, he insists that Matthew and his community display "cheerful confidence." (2) "Revelation in Stages (Matthew 11:25–30 and Numbers 12:3, 6–8)" (chap. 9; pp. 95–101)—an interesting and at least plausible intertextual study. (3) "The Historical Jesus and the Biblical and Pharisaic Sabbath (Mark 2:23–28; 3:1–6 and Parallels): The Problem of Capital Punishment" (chap. 10; pp. 102–33). This essay deserves careful reading. Viviano stands against majority scholarship today that argues the death penalty was never imposed on Sabbath violators in the first century. He argues that this popular denial is the conclusion of urbane, Western, tolerant, politically correct scholars who fail to sympathize with the way the Sabbath *was* a flash point for violence in the first century (as it still is among ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel today). In this light, Jesus' saying, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," means that Jesus revokes the death penalty prescribed in Exod 31:14–15, 35:2; Num 15:32–36. (4) "The Sin of Peter and Paul's Correction: Gal 2:11–14 as an Ecumenical Problem" (chap. 13; pp. 171–92). Here Viviano is very much the Catholic scholar, taking Luther to task for his reading of Gal 2; he is very much the Catholic scholar in a more liberal tradition by accepting that "there is a pluralism of soteriologies within the New Testament canon." When Viviano lays out, ably and economically, the two dominant interpretations of Gal 2:11–14 as to the nature of Peter's failure (in Paul's eyes), I find neither reconstruction *historically* convincing. Yet the essay is fascinating as a piece of *Wirkungsgeschichte*. (5) "Unity and Symphonic Diversity in the Church: The Dialectic between John 17:20–23 (Matt 16:17–19) and Matthew 18:18–20" (chap. 14; pp. 193–219). The essay suffers somewhat from making the biblical texts address contemporary ecumenical concerns that neither Matthew nor John had in view. (6) "Matthew's Place in the New Testament Canon and in the Lectionary of the Church Year" (chap. 19; pp. 270–89).

Viviano's work is quirky, sometimes dated, always stimulating. If it is a "must" for scholars, it is not because Viviano is utterly dependable—sometimes he is demonstrably mistaken—but because he cuts his own swathe, forcing his readers to wonder if they've got things quite right themselves.

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