

in Rome and his eventual martyrdom, which Stevens provides with thoroughness and insight. This aspect in the updated edition of his book adds depth to the understanding of Paul's later life and contributes to a more comprehensive view of the historical and literary contexts of Acts. Thus, I recommend this volume to scholars, pastors, and laypeople, particularly those interested in a narrative approach to the book of Acts. Going through the book will benefit the reader immensely, offering a nuanced understanding of Stevens's interesting observations beyond what can be gleaned solely from the limited lens of this review.

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Brown, Jeannine K., and Kyle Roberts. *Matthew*. The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. xiv + 576 pages. Paperback \$51.99. E-Book, \$51.99.

This volume continues Eerdmans' The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary series, whose distinguishing feature is the accent upon theological exegesis and theological reflection. Written by the experts in their areas (Brown is a biblical scholar and Roberts is a systematic theologian), it is the result of the interdisciplinary dialogue led by them for over five years. The book consists of three main sections, only one of which, the first, represents a commentary in the strict sense of this word. The other two parts deal with the theological interpretation of the First Gospel. Nevertheless, as the authors acknowledge themselves, "The assumption that Matthew's Gospel is thoroughly theological permeates our commentary from beginning to end" (p. 3).

The exegetical section begins with a short consideration of introductory issues (chapter 1). If to summarize their view, the Gospel of Matthew has three main parts (1:1–4:16; 4:17–16:20; 16:20–28:20) and was written in AD 70–90 by a Jew (Matthew, a disciple of Jesus) to Jewish house churches in various locations involved in an intramural debate with other branches of Judaism and being at the initial stage of a mission to gentiles. To present all exegetical observations of the commentary part (chapters 2–8) here is impossible and, in fact, unnecessary. More important is to note the authors' general approach both in this section and throughout the book. Although, as it was said, Brown and Roberts consider Matthew's Gospel first of all as a theological project, they do not ignore its narrative form. On the contrary,

they are deeply interested in Matthew's literary rhetoric and the contours of his story of Jesus. For this reason, they utilize narrative criticism to disclose its beauty and richness. An indubitable advantage of that is the opportunity for the reader to look at the Gospel in its integrity and see the problem texts and themes not in isolation but within the coherent narrative tapestry. At the same time, Brown and Roberts pay serious attention to Matthew's historical context, avoiding thereby a common critique against the narrative approach. For them, the Gospel is a product of the culture. Therefore, socio-historical realities of the first-century Judaism and Greco-Roman world play a crucial role in the proper understanding of Matthew's Gospel.

Approaching the theological interpretation of the First Gospel, Brown and Roberts indicate that their endeavors, shaped by commitments to the biblical canon, the Nicene tradition, and Christian formation and practices, embody two fundamental values: a high view of Scripture's authority and the importance of realizing their own interpretive setting. Based on that, Part 2 focuses on theological engagement with Matthew. The authors admit that this process cannot be solely unidirectional—from text to theology (our assumptions, questions, and reflections still impact our reading). They also acknowledge that the evangelist was not doing systematic theology. Nevertheless, it is possible, they believe, to learn both theology itself and how to do it from him. Consequently, they consider four themes (chapters 10–13), most of which are typical for the discussion of Matthew's theology, and try to understand the import of "the Messiah's deeds" (chapter 14). In all these cases, Brown and Roberts are very careful about the narrative form of the Gospel.

Chapter 10 concerns the concept of the kingdom and shows that the newness of Jesus's message was not the apolitical character of the heavenly rule but its presence in his own kingship. Chapter 11 traces the narrative development of Matthean Christology and summarizes it in four categories: "(1) Davidic Messiah; (2) Torah fulfilled and Wisdom embodied; (3) representative Israel; and (4) embodiment of Yahweh" (p. 303). Chapter 12 on the Holy Spirit exemplifies the movement from theology to text (i.e., from the church's reflections to the exegesis) rather than vice versa. Although, unlike the post-New Testament tradition, Matthew speaks not so much about the person as about the agency of the Spirit, the First Gospel contains explicit Trinitarian intentions and stresses the role of the Holy Spirit in quiet, merciful, and just ministry of Jesus and the subsequent Christian mission.

Chapter 13 explicates what it means to be a Jesus's disciple (following Jesus and demonstrating this in just, merciful, and loving relationships with

others) and how Matthew communicates this understanding (the characterization of the Twelve, Jesus's teachings and deeds, the portrait of other exemplary characters). Finally, chapter 14 demonstrates that "gospel" includes not only Jesus's death and resurrection, but also His ministry and that the idea of corporate representation helps to minimize problems raised by traditional theories of atonement. Such classical approaches to atonement as the satisfaction theory, the substitution theory, and the ransom theory are too individualistic and contain deep ethical (punishing the Son for something he did not do) and theological (the division within Godself and the dichotomy between mercy and justice) problems. Based on Matthew's text, authors state that Jesus can be a "substitute" only in the sense that "he represented the nation of Israel *as a whole* and the gentiles ... *as a whole*" (p. 377).

In part 3, Brown and Roberts move to constructive theological engagement with Matthew. As they themselves explain, "Drawing upon contemporary interests, methods, and concerns, we engage Matthew from a variety of perspectives and with a variety of voices" (p. 381). First of all, the authors note Matthew's contribution to a New Testament theology (Wisdom Christology, the hiddenness of the heavenly kingdom, an egalitarian view of the Christian community, and Trinitarian understanding of God; chapter 16). In chapter 17, "Reading Matthew with Feminist Perspectives," Brown and Roberts demonstrate the important (though sometimes implicit) role women play in the First Gospel, rejecting at the same time radical feminist approaches to Scripture with their intrinsic hermeneutics of suspicion. Global and Liberation theology perspectives are the focus of chapter 18 highlighting Matthew's accent on the value of the oppressed, a human Jesus, and the transformation of human beings and social institutions. Chapter 19 gives a guide for reading Matthew pastorally, which should be Christological and holistic, and provides a few valuable examples (the "antitheses," Jesus's healings and exorcisms, and Church discipline). In chapter 20, the authors persuade the reader that "God's saving work in the First Gospel cannot be confined to a spiritual plane" (p. 505) but includes social and political realities. At last, chapter 21, "Reading Judaism Ethically in the Post-Holocaust Era," assigns responsibility for Jesus's death not only to the Jewish leaders but also to Pilate (Rome's representative) and states that Matthew's final word about the Jewish people is Matt 27:64 rather than 27:25.

In general, the commentary creates an impression of a well-integrated work, where different parts, despite their specific interests, ultimately complement each other and advance the reader's understanding of Matthew's

Gospel and its contemporary theological significance. To a great degree, it has become possible, as it seems, due to few themes running throughout the book and uniting it. One of them is the idea of solidarity. It plays a significant role both in the presentation of Jesus, who fully identified himself with Israel and humanity, and in depicting the disciples' response to the Gospel's message, which should include solidarity with the "last" and "least." Therefore, Brown and Roberts constantly turn to this topic, and it will not be an exaggeration to say that solidarity is the dominant concept in the commentary. This fact clearly demonstrates their sensitivity not only to the Gospel's text but also to modern-day realities.

Despite all these advantages and many valuable thoughts found in the book, there are some questions. The first one concerns the idea of divine sonship in Matthew's Gospel. The authors acknowledge that the description of Jesus as the Son of God implies his divine identity (p. 49). However, their primary focus is on the representative and royal interpretation of this title (Jesus as a true Israelite and the King). Such an approach appears to underestimate the significance of Matthew 1:18–25 forming a framework for the proper understanding of the phrase "the Son of God." That the evangelist does not lose this perspective throughout his Gospel is seen in a somewhat enigmatic pericope from Matthew 22:41–46 and Matthew 28:18–20. Thus, however important Jesus's humanity may be, one needs *constantly* to keep in mind Matthew's Christological dialectic in discussing his concept of divine sonship.

The second question relates to the interpretation of the eschatological discourse. The commentary considers Matthew 24:4–35 as referring exclusively to the fall of Jerusalem. It allows solving the problem created by Matthew 24:34. But the price, as it seems, is quite high because this reading leads to the less than convincing exegesis of Matthew 24:14, 30–31.

A final remark should be made about the attempts to level the idea of substitution, especially in its individualistic form, and emphasize the representative role of Jesus. Undoubtedly, the corporate understanding and the representation theme take a significant role in Matthew's narrative. However, Isaiah 53, a text that Brown and Roberts so often appeal to and that, as they state, was crucial for the evangelist's view of Jesus's ministry, speaks of not just representation but substitutionary representation. Therefore, in the First Gospel, Jesus represents human beings both as a priest and *as a sacrifice* (see, e.g., Matt 20:28; 26:27–28). Furthermore, it affects not only abstract humanity but also concrete individuals that receive healing (e.g., Matt 8:16–17) and forgiveness of their sins (e.g., Matt 9:1–8).

In any event, the present volume is a valuable tool for the understanding, theological appropriation, and practical application of Matthew's Gospel. Students and pastors will certainly benefit from this commentary. But even professors may find something that will enrich and deepen their approach to this New Testament book.

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