

NT text, and to the theory of textual criticism, including the criteria used to establish the original reading. The author leads the readers through the steps involved in the evaluation of variant readings by analyzing several difficult texts. The book is well documented and provides appendixes containing 4 graphs, 17 plates of manuscripts, papyrus, and NT editions.

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Saldarini, Anthony J. *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*. Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. 326 pp. \$42.00.

Stanton, Graham N. *A Gospel for A New People: Studies in Matthew*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993. xiv + 424 pp. \$21.00.

Saldarini presents here the fullest application yet of sociological methods to the Gospel of Matthew. Other notable forays using this approach in Matthean studies include J. Andrew Overman's *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, and the essays coming out of the conference on "The Social History of the Matthean Community in Roman Syria" held at Southern Methodist University and reported in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches*, edited by David Balch and including an essay by Saldarini. In Matthew's Christian-Jewish community, as well as that earlier essay, Saldarini applies sociological studies of deviance, particularly those of Nachman Ben-Yehuda in *Deviance and Moral Boundaries*, and Kai Erikson (which he consistently misspells as Ericson) in *Wayward Puritans*.

It is on this point that Saldarini's thesis stands or falls. While his use of a sociological approach is clearly the most appealing and intriguing feature of Saldarini's work, it also represents its greatest weakness. Saldarini does not quite avoid the danger of importing something from the twentieth century into his reading of this first-century document. His approach invalidates the native's (in this case, Matthew's) self-description. For surely the implication of passages such as 1:21; 16:18-19; 21:43; and 23:13 is that the Matthean community is a distinct entity.

Saldarini's insistence on deviant groups being an essential and integral part of a society raises some interesting questions. First of all, which society? Roman? Jewish? This aspect of deviance theory depends on the notion of society as a closed group. That may be the case for seventeenth-century Puritans, but it cannot be so for Matthew's relation to Jewish groups in Roman Antioch. While Jewish groups must play some role in the larger Roman society, did Jewish society constitute a closed environment? Then there is the further problem of determining when a group would become a distinct sociological entity. Saldarini doesn't give any clear criteria for determining this. If Matthew's group is no longer associated with the synagogue (Saldarini doesn't specify whether they withdrew or were expelled) and has its own leadership and structure (including discipline), in what way is it not a separate and distinct entity? Saldarini has a point when he argues that it acts like a deviant group in recruiting members, but it is not clear that Matthew's group

recruits solely, or even primarily, from the synagogue of its former membership. Rather, 28:18-20 gives evidence that their focus has long moved beyond that.

Related to this last point is Saldarini's failure to provide any definition of the terms "Christian" or "Jewish." He simply argues that our reading of the Gospel is colored by second-century divisions. But if the characteristics that distinguish a group as Christian as opposed to Jewish are present in Matthew's community then what sense does Saldarini's argument make? Many studies point to Christology as a decisive factor in the "partings of the ways." Saldarini claims that Matthew's Jesus fits within the range of debate in contemporary Judaism. But here I think Graham Stanton has the better argument.

Saldarini's discussion of the variety of groups present in first-century Judaism cannot be faulted. But if Judaism is so diverse with no clear dominant group, in what way does it make sense to call Matthew's group deviant? Deviance only applies when you have a firmly entrenched power structure, but from Saldarini's account no such structure was yet in place. "The rabbis gained influence and then power in Palestinian society only gradually over several centuries. . . . Various groups maneuvered for power" (13). Even if Matthew's is one of these groups in competition for dominance, deviance theory would still not seem applicable.

Stanton's volume is a collection of fifteen studies with an introduction and conclusion. Nine of them have been published or presented previously (the list in the introduction is in error; chap. 7, "Christology and the Parting of the Ways," was delivered at the Second Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium on Earliest Christianity and Judaism, in September 1989 at the University of Durham and published with the other papers in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1992]). The essays are divided into three sections. "Part I: Methods New and Old" includes three studies using in turn, redaction criticism, literary criticism, and sociological perspective. "Part II: The Parting of the Ways" contains seven chapters dealing "directly or indirectly" with the separation between Matthew's Christian community and Judaism. Stanton, as opposed to Saldarini, is convinced (I believe correctly) that "church" and "synagogue" had parted company. "Part III: Studies in Matthew" is a miscellaneous collection of other studies on the Gospel ranging from two essays on the Sermon on the Mount (including a critique of Betz's theory), a discussion of passages where Stanton feels the author has created sayings of Jesus, and Matthew's use of the Old Testament, to a study of the use of Matthew 11:28-30 in liturgies and its relation to Sir 51. In the latter, Stanton takes on Suggs' identification of Jesus with Sophia. Stanton groups these studies together to argue his thesis that "Matthew wrote his Gospel as a 'foundation document' for a cluster of Christian communities" in Syria. Matthew and his readers saw themselves as a "new people." While Stanton does not argue his thesis in full, as Saldarini does in his monograph, he does present a convincing argument.

Stanton's coverage of a wide range of issues and themes is particularly helpful as a general introduction to Matthew. Saldarini, with his consistent argument of a thesis and narrower focus, would be more useful for an advanced course. But either of these works would be troubling for a conservative audience. This is seen in their use of the Gospel of Matthew as a window on a particular community at a particular point of time. This approach is universally accepted in historical-

critical scholarship, even by evangelicals. Thus the Gospels are rarely read anymore as treatments of the life of Jesus, but as collections of stories about and sayings of Jesus (often viewed as freely created by the evangelists, a view of which Stanton's essay "Matthew as a Creative Interpreter of the Sayings of Jesus" is a classical example) used to address issues facing the particular "church" for which the author writes. It is certainly true that each of the evangelists writes from within a particular community situation and that this would naturally influence the selection of their material and even how they present that material. But I think it is a mistake to say that the Gospel reflects merely (or even primarily) the situation of the Matthean community. Matthew is telling the story of Jesus. He may indeed be telling it to a particular group, but he is primarily referring to the life of Jesus, not the life of the community. So we would not expect a perfect fit to the community situation; the traditions are chosen to meet their needs, not to describe the community or its history. Despite this, both books are mines of information and will make profitable study.

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Shenk, Wilbert R. *Write the Vision: The Church Renewed*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995. 119 pp. \$10.00.

Write the Vision is the second in a series of books dealing with Christian mission and modern culture that seeks to (1) examine modern culture from a mission perspective, (2) develop a theological agenda that the church must address in order to recover its integrity, and (3) test new conceptualizations of the nature and mission of the church as it engages modern culture.

Shenk's thesis for this book is that as the church has engaged modern Western culture the Christian faith has been seriously marginalized. To be renewed and to regain its integrity the church in the West must relate to its own culture as it has already related to cultures in so-called mission lands.

Write the Vision developed out of a series of lectures Shenk gave at the Emmanuel School of Religion in the fall of 1993 on the theme "Why Mission to Western Culture." The book is divided into four chapters that look at "Integrity," "Mission," "Evangelization," and "Church" from the perspective of how the church should relate to culture.

In Chapter 1 Shenk argues that the credibility of the church in Western culture has been seriously undermined by the church's lack of integrity. The church has become controlled by its culture, has forfeited its prophetic role in society, and has ceased to faithfully witness to the reign and rule of God. This lack of integrity has discredited the church both in the eyes of its own members and in the eyes of the general public. If the church is to be what God intends it to be the first step is to recover its integrity.

The thesis for the second chapter is that the church was instituted for the service of the *missio Dei*. But Shenk charges that the church in the West has largely forgotten that mission and has settled down in happy compromise with modern culture. That compromise expresses itself in the all-too-common distinction