
Book Reviews

The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew. By J. R. C. Cousland. Netherlands: Brill, 2002. ISBN 9004121773. Pp. XII + 361.

This book is an examination of the “crowds” in the Gospel of Matthew, with the intention of defining this group that is frequently employed within the gospel. The work examines ethnic identity, the role of the crowds (either “favourable” or “unfavourable”) within the narrative of the gospel, their role in Jesus’ self-definition, and finally, who these crowds may represent in the broader context of reality (their transparency). This work utilizes redaction and literary critical methods in defining the crowds. It also explores the crowds’ function within Matthean soteriology.

Cousland’s work takes a logical and progressive approach, though several difficulties arise in relation to his examination of the crowd’s ethnic identity. He is willing to allow that Matthean geography is influenced by theology (66-67). However, when addressing Matthew 4:15-16 and the reference to “Galilee of the Gentiles” (78), Cousland attempts to play both sides by claiming that, since the area was, at the time of the Matthean gospel, primarily Jewish, the crowds were not actually composed of Gentiles. If Matthew is able to move, in other areas of the Gospel, from the realm of historical reality in order to emphasize a theological intent, why not in 4:15-16 as well? (See Mark A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee*, Cambridge [2002], 172-173.) Matthew, here, may be including the Gentiles for theological reasons apart from the historical reality.

In discussing the use of “people” in 1:21, there exists a similar identification problem. Cousland purports that, in this verse, “people” cannot include Gentiles for the emphasis of the genealogy is the Davidic descent of Jesus. Yet, this same genealogy also includes four women of Gentile descent (see Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, Eerdmans [2002], 17-46) and also includes Abraham (1:1), who was promised that, through him, the nations of the world would be blessed (Gen 12:3). These verses indicate an underlying theology in Matthew of including the Gentiles in Matthean salvation history.

To say the above, however, is not also to say that Cousland’s main conclusions are compromised by these challenges, though I do believe that the “crowds” are not a close ethnic unity throughout the gospel, nor are the “peo-

ple.” This work could have been more sensitive to underlying Gentile sympathies contained within the gospel.

Cousland’s work, as a whole, provides for the scholar definitions by which to clarify the identity of the crowds and the manner in which they are utilized in the Gospel of Matthew. This includes characterizations, attributions, and the manner in which they are contrasted with the disciples (who are the ideal followers). It is an excellent counterpart to Michael J. Wilkins’ *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew’s Gospel*. Of particular interest in Cousland’s work is the crowd’s portrait of Jesus, as demonstrated through their confessions, which are outlined in chapters 8 and 9. Here, the crowds are granted a more prominent position in Jesus’ self-definition, helping one to understand the manner in which Jesus was to the perceived as the “Son of David” and the “Prophet”. Cousland’s overall conclusions regarding the crowds are positive (i.e. Israel is rejected initially by divine intention but is not excluded within Matthean salvation history and is included in the Matthean mission). The theology of Matthew, in this work, is Pauline (285), which is then of interest to a very broad scope of readers.

The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew begins with very specific definitions of the crowds and moves to larger theological interpretations of the Matthean gospel text; it is a work that forms a Matthean theology while examining Pauline similarities. It is, as it claims, of interest to those involved in the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity, and it leads one down a path both clearly presented and well founded.

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Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism. Edited by David A. Black. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. ISBN 0-8010-2280-0 Pp. 157.

Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism brings together five symposium presentations articulating differing views regarding the theory and praxis of New Testament textual criticism (delivered at a symposium arranged by D. A. Black, held at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in April 2001). As suggested by the title, *Rethinking* is aimed at bringing readers up to date regarding contemporary issues and debates within the field of text criticism as well as challenging conventional views. The advocates of the views represented are well known for their scholarly contributions in this field. This book will profit primarily those already familiar with the issues and intricacies of New Testament textual criticism, albeit beginning students equally will profit from a careful reading.

Eldon J. Epp introduces the discussion with a sixty page synthesis of the past generation of scholars and their text critical work. Rather than presenting