

the monastic reforms inspired in northern France by Jean Mombaer and his colleagues did, of course, reveal influence from the *Devotio*).

In conclusion, Oberman's *Luther* is an excellent volume, exceptionally well conceived and well written. It is packed with accurate, indisputable, and important facts. The text, moreover, is enhanced by the inclusion of numerous illustrations. Some scholars may take issue with various of Oberman's interpretations, but this reviewer concurs with virtually all of the positions enunciated in this challenging volume. Furthermore, in addition to the book's brilliant presentation of content, the English translation is superb. Reading of this publication either in its German original or in its English translation is well-advised, indeed.

Andrews University

KENNETH A. STRAND

Overman, J. Andrew. *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. \$11.95.

Overman's book, based on his Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Boston University (under the chairmanship of Howard Kee), marries the tools of New Testament scholarship to those of sociology to advance the thesis that the Matthean community developed and defined itself over against formative Judaism. This thesis is expounded in three long chapters, dealing respectively with the background of the pre-A.D. 70 sects, formative Judaism, and the formation of the Matthean community.

As Overman reconstructs it, Christianity and formative Judaism were like twin sisters: they both grew up in the post-A.D. 70 environment, when both communities were seeking to redefine themselves. Formative Judaism has the aspect of an elder sister, dominating the environment in which the Matthean community found itself, while the community took the role of a sect. Like many comparable sects in Judaism in the first century before and after Christ, this Christian group regarded the Jewish leadership as corrupt and lawless. It saw itself as righteous, the embodiment of true Judaism. It withdrew from the wider community, both religious and civil—defining its own community leaders, and even running its own court system. It viewed all outsiders, especially those in the Jewish leadership, with great suspicion, withdrawing into itself, and cutting off most contacts with the outside world.

Overman has provided a coherent view of the interface between Matthean Christianity and formative Judaism. He is to be commended for recognizing the central role that the interpretation of the law played in the controversy between formative Judaism and early Christianity and for highlighting the continuing validity which the law retained within the Matthean community, particularly the sabbath and purity laws. He is undoubtedly correct in his basic methodological assumption that the community formed its self-definition in response to its environment. His linkage of the language and attitudes of other near-contemporary sectarian movements is suggestive and helpful. Overman is also to be congratulated for his awareness of the contribution made by sociology and archaeology to the study of the Gospel of Matthew.

Overman generally shows a good grasp of the relevant literature. There are, however, several matters which one would have expected to find represented in his discussion. For example, Overman assumes a Markan priority and the existence of Q. From reading his book, one would remain ignorant of the fact that this assumption has been vigorously challenged, and not just in recent years. One searches in vain for references to the work of Farmer, Orchard, Ballinzoni, Dungan, or Peabody. Another matter which does not appear to be discussed is the assumption that the Matthean community was composed almost exclusively of Christians of the Jewish race. Overman's book does not give his reasons for thinking this; neither does one find counter arguments to those that strongly espouse a Gentile background for the Gospel. The works of Strecker and Meier are referenced, but no mention is made of their arguments for the Gentile background of Matthew. The work of Kenneth Clark and Poul Nepper-Christensen is not mentioned. Further, while I share Overman's acceptance of the validity of the broad picture of the development of formative Judaism as put forward by Jacob Neusner, I also know that Neusner's ideas are vigorously debated by those within his own specialty. One would have expected to meet some references to dissenting viewpoints in the footnotes in the chapter that deals in some depth with the development of formative Judaism.

Overman's work makes much of the fact that the Matthean community was still in heated dispute with formative Judaism and was living in a context dominated by formative Judaism. I do not find this persuasive. It is clear from the bitterness and vehemence of the Gospel that some severe struggle with the Jews, particularly the Pharisees, had taken place in the life of the Matthean community; it is also likely that this was in the past. It is hard to imagine that a community which saw itself as having a special ministry to Gentiles (Matt 28:19) would have formative Judaism as the exclusive horizon of its self-definition. The progress through the Gospel from a mission to the Jews, to their rejection of Jesus, to the subsequent offering of the message to Gentiles is unmistakable. The very formation of internal structures of organization is evidence of clear separation from the synagogue (dominated, as it was, by Pharisees). Overman's portrayal of the community as exclusively inward-looking is also problematic. True, there is a feeling of "us" and "them"; the "world" is clearly differentiated from the community. But the world is the target of the community's endeavor to fulfill the gospel commission. The world, which as a matter of course includes Gentiles, is to be told of Jesus; many of these will be incorporated into the community before the coming of Christ (Matt 24:14). None of this is consistent with either a particularistic Jewishness of the Matthean community or an inward-looking community.

Overman suggests that the Gospel of Matthew came either from Tiberias or Sepphoris. Even granting his assumption that the community developed in an area dominated by formative Judaism (something challenged above) and that Galilee is a likely place for this, there is a great problem in identifying either Sepphoris or Tiberias as the place of writing. Sepphoris—a city less than 6 Km from Nazareth, a city undergoing extensive rebuilding during the time which Jesus was working as a *tekton* (carpenter, builder, architect)—must have

been a place which Jesus visited, one where He most likely worked. Yet it is not mentioned anywhere in Matthew (or the NT, for that matter). Tiberias is only mentioned in the Gospel of John (6:1, 23; 21:1), not in Matthew. It is hard to imagine that if either of these cities were the place from which the Gospel came, no mention of Jesus' activity there would have been made. Instead, the only towns mentioned are small country towns like Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida.

These negative comments should not detract from the overall value of the work. Overman has been much more successful than most in using the tools of sociology and New Testament scholarship to provide a workable model of the formation of the Matthean community. His linking of the themes of lawlessness, righteousness, remnant, and hostility to Jewish leadership as found in near-contemporary sectarian literature with their treatment in the Gospel of Matthew is very helpful. Even if one does not share his assumption that the community is embedded in an exclusively Jewish context, most of his work is helpful. The work provides a coherent and well-argued reconstruction of one way of interpreting the available evidence. As such, it has done Matthean scholarship a service.

Avondale College
Cooranbong, NSW, Australia

ROBERT K. McIVER

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*. Trans. by Philip Clayton. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990. xiv + 170 pp. Originally published as *Metaphysik und Gottesgedanke*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988. \$21.95

Wolfhart Pannenberg writes under the conviction that "Christian theology is dependent upon the conversation with philosophy, especially for the clarification of its discourse about God, but also for its work on the relationship between God and created reality" (p. xiii). Pannenberg clearly states his purpose by pointing to the need, first, of pulling "together into a single context some of my reflections concerning philosophy," and secondly, of bringing "into explicit focus those connections with philosophical themes which in my earlier publications had remained peripheral or had been dealt with only implicitly" (p. xiii). Consequently, the reader should not expect a serious metaphysical analysis of the idea of God. Pannenberg is not interested in presenting his view on the being of God or in providing a clear metaphysical foundation for such an idea. He is interested, rather, in making the necessary philosophical room for his already existent position on God and theology.

In the first part of his book, Pannenberg treats rather general issues dealing with the idea of God in its relation to metaphysics. They are, first, the "end-of-metaphysics" approach, as proposed by Nietzsche, Dilthey, and Heidegger, which is rejected in chap. 1. Second, the classical problem of the One and the many is considered in chap. 2. Third, the idealism and transcendentalism of modern German philosophy are described and rejected in chap. 3. Fourth, the rejection of German Idealism presents the question regarding the