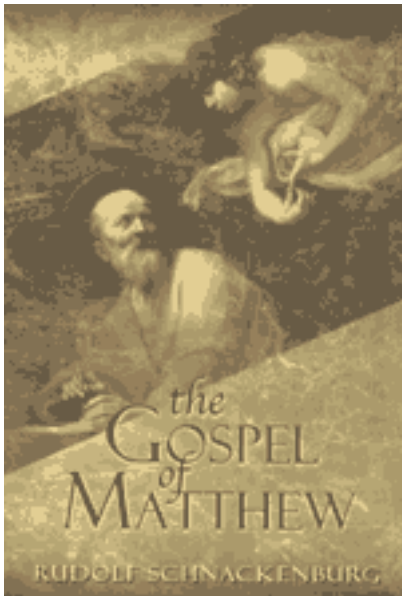


RBL 09/2003



Schnackenburg, Rudolf

The Gospel of Matthew

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. 336. Paper. \$24.00.
ISBN 0802844383.

Mouschos Goutzioudis
Thessaloniki, Greece

The book is not a new commentary on the Gospel of Matthew but a translation from the older German edition, *Matthäusevangelium 1,1–16,20* and *Matthäusevangelium 16,21–28,20* (NEchtB; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1985 and 1987). The English edition is presented in one volume, and the translation was made by Robert R. Barr. The book is divided in two parts: a brief introduction (1–13), with the rest commentary. In the last pages the reader can find two indexes. The first is an index of subjects, followed by another index with passages of Scripture and other ancient literature. Unfortunately, there is no bibliography, and the second thing that hurts the image of the commentary is the total absence of footnotes.

In the introduction Schnackenburg deals with the most important problems of the Gospel that still exist in modern research and that scholars debate. The Matthean community was probably established in Antioch of Syria and, according to Schnackenburg, was made up of Jews, Greeks, and other groups of people. Schnackenburg believes that no influence of Pauline theology is visible in the text of the Gospel. The composition is to be dated around 85–90 C.E. We find again in this book the view that the relationship between Judaism and the church remains a matter of dispute. The rest of the introductory survey deals with Christology, the meaning of righteousness, eschatology, and salvation history as presented in the Gospel of Matthew.

Schnackenburg divides the content of the Gospel into twelve parts. In each of them he first offers a translation of the text and then follows with comments on the verses. His division with the titles of each part is the following: (1) "The Pre-Gospel (Matt 1–2); (2) "Beginnings: John the Baptizer, Jesus' Baptism, Temptation and Emergence in Galilee" (3:1–4:16); (3) "Jesus' Proclamation and Works of Healing" (4:17–9:34); (4) "The Disciples As Jesus' Messengers: The Discourse at the Sending of the Disciples" (9:35–11:1); (5) "Conversations and Confrontations" (11:2–12:50); (6) "The Parabolic Discourse" (13:1–53); (7) "Jesus' Further Activity, amid Mounting Opposition" (13:54–14:36); (8) "Confrontation with Jewish Governing Circles on the Occasion of Further Activity among the People" (15:1–16:12); (9) "The Confession of Peter: The Critical Point for the Faith-Understanding of the Community" (16:13–20); (10) "The Way to Jerusalem" (16:21–20:34); (11) "The Days in Jerusalem" (21–25); and, finally, (12) "Jesus and Passion and Resurrection" (26:1–28:20).

My first comment is that is particularly pleasant to see scientific books that are addressed to university students and scholars translated from German into English. On the other hand, the book contains no illustrations or photographs, figures, tables, and charts that could help readers to understand basic meanings and theological ideas. Although we are used to seeing two- or three-volume commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew, despite the briefness of the English edition of Schnackenburg's commentary the book covers most of the subjects found in the text. The book is a valuable general resource book.

Schnackenburg's writing ability makes his work not boring. Furthermore, Barr's translation is excellent. The presentation of the spread of Christianity presents a lot of great material on the social, cultural, and political context into which Christianity spread. Although one can disagree with Schnackenburg's dates and theories and where some of the texts are placed in relation to others, it is extraordinarily useful as a place to start.