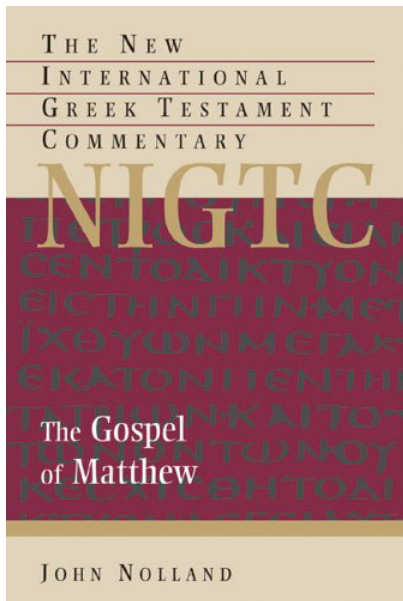


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**Nolland, John**

***The Gospel of Matthew***

New International Greek Testament Commentary

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John Nolland, academic dean and lecturer in New Testament studies at Trinity College, Bristol, England, has contributed previously to the field of Gospel commentaries with a three-volume work on Luke (Word Biblical Commentary, 1989–93). The present, lengthy commentary on the Greek text of Matthew for the New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC) represents a decade of work. Nolland notes in the preface that his central concern in this commentary is with the story Matthew has to tell and how he tells it. Nolland’s approach to Matthew is “broadly speaking” redaction-critical: he views Matthew as a careful and fairly conservative editor of sources, but one who has integrated his material into a well-considered and unified whole.

Following preliminary matters (foreword, prefaces, abbreviations, and general bibliography [vii–xcviii]), Nolland provides readers with an introduction (1–62), a detailed commentary proper (65–1271), a lengthy bibliographical appendix of works prior to 1980 (1273–1468), and various indices (1469–1481): subjects, modern authors, biblical and ancient sources, and key Greek words.

In the introductory portion preceding the commentary proper Nolland addresses a series of common issues: authorship, sources, date, provenance, genre, text, narrative techniques,

use of the Old Testament and other Jewish tradition, theology, and an annotated outline of the text. Nolland notes that he did not consciously focus on introductory matters until after he completed a draft of the copy. Some highlights of Nolland's viewpoints on these introductory issues are as follows. He considers traditional Matthean authorship to be most unlikely. As far as sources, Nolland adheres to the Two-Source theory (Markan priority and Q). He further suggests that Matthew is for the most part a conservative editor of his sources, particularly with regard to the words of Jesus. He places the origin of the text of Matthew prior to A.D. 70. As to provenance, Nolland maintains that Matthew wrote for Jewish Christians, likely in an urban environment, but does not speculate on where they lived. Nolland further believes that original Greek text of Matthew has been reconstructed with very close approximation by text critics. Matthew's use of the Old Testament reflects a man who freshly scrutinized the texts to which he appeals and has done so in Greek, Hebrew (though not always in the form preserved in the MT), and occasionally Aramaic. Matthew draws upon the Old Testament for various applications, including that of retelling the Old Testament story as the context for the coming of Jesus. Matthew's theology reflects a monotheistic faith and a concern for the human situation and portrays the story of Jesus as the fresh and decisive action of God. Nolland divides the text of Matthew into a structural outline of twenty-two segments: 1:1-17; 1:18-2:23; 3:1-12; 3:13-4:12; 4:13-25; 5:1-8:1; 8:[1]2-9:34; 9:35-11:1; 11:[1]2-30; 12:1-50; 13:1-53; 13:53[54]-16:20; 16:21-17:20; 17:22-18:35; 19:1-20:16; 20:17-21:11; 21:12-46; 22:1-46; 23:1-39; 24:1-25:46; 26:1-27:66; and 28:1-20.

The commentary proper follows a format characteristic of other entries in the NIGTC series. Nolland begins each section with a topical heading, an English translation of the given portion, notes on textual variants, detailed bibliographies (sometimes covering several sections and sometimes further subcategorized), and a verse-by-verse commentary of the particular section of focus. Nolland's translation is typically based on a text largely identical to that of Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th edition. His translation, while generally unadorned and idiomatic, at times reflects interpretive expansions in accompanying brackets. Examples of such renderings are as follows:

Matthew 1:18: "The birth of Jesus Christ took place like this. After his mother, Mary, had become engaged to Joseph, [but] before they came together [in sexual union], she was found to be pregnant ([a pregnancy which resulted] from [the intervention of] the Holy Spirit)."

Matthew 3:8: "[If you are serious about this], then bear fruit [that is] worthy of repentance."

Matthew 5:17: “Do not make the judgment [when you find me critical of what you have heard it was said to the people of old] that I came to annul the Law or the Prophets; I came not to annul but to fulfill.”

Nolland’s treatment of the text is primarily descriptive in orientation, moderately critical, and generally concise. At points, however, particularly with respect to passages that are historically and exegetically controversial, Nolland offers more expanded treatment, as with Matt 16:13–20, which receives proportionately greater attention (654–83) than Matthean passages of comparable length.

Some sample interpretations of positions adopted in the commentary are as follows. In 3:15 the statement “fulfill all righteousness” expresses “the concern to prepare for and see it in the kingdom of God as anticipated in Scripture and the Jewish faith” (154). The exception clause of 5:32 (*parektos logou porneias*), which Nolland translates as “*except [in relation to] a matter of sexual purity*” (240), is best taken as an evocation of the language of Deut 24:1 (244–45). Nolland further suggests that this clause has been incorporated into the tradition precisely in relation to the formation of the antithesis it forms with the preceding verse (5:31), which “presses the necessity of establishing concord between that verse and the dominical criticism of divorce” (245 n. 186). Matthew 10:23b (“*Amen, I say to you, you will not have finished [with] the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes*”) points to an eschatological coming of the Son of Man, which, along with 28:19, implies a continuing mission to Israel on the part of the church (428–29). Nolland views Jesus’ temple clearing in Matt 21:13 as a symbolic shutting down of the sacrificial activity of the temple (844); it, like the cited Jer 7:11, issues a forceful call for repentance. The reference in 23:15 to scribes and Pharisees “*cover[ing] sea and land to make one proselyte*” does not imply Jewish efforts on an extensive scale to convert Gentiles (933) but is rather “dramatic language” and “is probably best accounted for by reference to a specific event that had gained some notoriety (934).

Despite the length of the commentary, Nolland does not always provide introductory comments to major subsections, the Sermon on the Mount (5:1–8:1) being a principal example. At points, too, Nolland adopts contextually implausible interpretations. “Rock” in Jesus’ declaration to Peter in 16:18a (“*You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church*”) is interpreted as a reference to Peter’s confession of verse 16. Nolland further observes with respect to the triadic formula in Matt 28:19 (“*baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*”), “I think it unlikely that Matthew is reflecting the language of baptismal practice” (1268).

As is typical in a work of this length, some further editorial work will prove necessary in subsequent reprints. On page 54, for instance, section XIII is wrongly labeled as 16:1–

17:20 rather than 16:21–17:20. In discussing the two scriptural passages cited in Matt 21:13 on page 845 (last sentence relative to 23:13), Nolland mistakenly cites Jer 7:11 as Isa 7:11, which introduces confusion into his summary.

A principal contribution of Nolland's new commentary on Matthew is the detailed and largely unrivaled bibliographical data he brings together. As a commentary on the Greek text, however, it is doubtful that Nolland's work will displace the lengthier and more detailed work of the late W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–97), or the remarkable three-volume work of Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary* (trans. Wilhelm C. Linss; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989); idem, *Matthew 8–20: A Commentary* (trans. James E. Crouch; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001); idem, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (trans. James E. Crouch; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005). Nolland's work nonetheless takes its place, along with the slightly less recent but comparably detailed commentaries of Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew* (2 vols.; WBC; Dallas: Word, 1993, 1995), and Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), as a solid and serviceable commentary on this Gospel.