



Osborne, Grant R.

Matthew

Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

Grant R. Osborne is no stranger to the demands of the pastorate. Pastors have so much work to do and so little time to do it, so sadly, sometimes they're not able to afford themselves as much time to study the text in preparing their sermons or Bible studies as would be ideal. That's where Osborne's *Matthew* in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series comes in. He consciously wrote it with the "busy pastor" in mind. (13-14)

This volume is huge, coming in at just under 1100 pages, not including front and back matter. The commentary follows a standard format according to which the reader is presented with the following for each passage (for full descriptions of each feature see 9-12):

- Literary Context
- Main Idea
- Translation and Graphical Layout
- Structure
- Exegetical Outline
- Explanation of the Text
- Theology in Application

Osborne's introduction gives attention to hermeneutical strategies when he informs the reader about how to study and preach the Gospel of Matthew (so e.g., we're informed about discourse

analysis, redaction criticism, speech act theory, etc.). He also addresses things like genre, authorship, historical trustworthiness, the synoptic problem, and Matthew's use of the OT before turning to the structure of the Gospel itself, at which time he lists various proposals concluding with his own, which most closely resembles D. A. Carson's structure in his contribution to the Expositor's Bible Commentary. An 8 page select bibliography on Matthew follows before moving on to the commentary proper.

At this point I should mention that I have not so much as scratched the surface of all that this commentary has to offer. As I noted above, it's massive, which almost guarantees that I'll never read every page of it. I don't read commentaries from cover to cover anyway; they're more reference tools for me than anything else. So that's exactly how I've approached this commentary for the purposes of this review. I began by looking to the subject index (1138-48) and picking a subject of interest to me: Trinity. I then turned to the relevant pages (126, 278, 1081) to see what Osborne had to say. The first example comes in the "Theology in Application" section of the excursus on Matthew 3:13-17. Osborne says:

3. A Trinitarian Emphasis

For the first time the Trinity acts together on the pages of Scripture. The Spirit comes on the Son, and the Father affirms him for all who were there. Of course this is not the full doctrinal statement of Chalcedon, but nevertheless it is true here. The Godhead is involved in human affairs, and salvation is triply guaranteed. In fact, this is the key to living the Christian life, completed when we allow the triune Godhead to work in us and through us (see 1 Pet 1:2; Rev 1:4-5). (126-27)

Far be it for me to argue with the Trinitarian implications of Matthew 3:16-17 but I was somewhat disappointed with Osborne's comments. It's debatable as to whether or not this is the first time the Trinity acts together on the pages of Scripture but that all hinges on how one reads the OT. I'll leave that alone for now. The reference to Chalcedon kind of threw me a little off balance because Chalcedon worked out a two-natures *Christology* which is what we read about in the Symbol of Chalcedon. The Spirit is conspicuously absent from this creed though. Perhaps a reference to Constantinople would have been more appropriate here. I was also a bit nonplussed by the usage of "Godhead." It seems to first be used as a synonym for "Trinity" but then it seems to be used the second time as in its archaic sense of "deity" (triune Trinity would sound a bit funny, wouldn't it?). Either way, "God" would have worked better. Still, it was nice to see the Trinity invoked for the purpose of practical application, so no complaints there.

The second example comes in a parenthetical remark (again in the "Theology in Application" section of Matt. 7:13-29) where Osborne urges that:

We must at all times be on the watch for deviations from orthodoxy. Yet we must do so carefully, separating the cardinal doctrines (e.g., the Trinity, deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, the return of Christ) from those on which we should agree to disagree and maintain a larger unity (e.g., spiritual gifts, the millennium or rapture, mode of baptism, the Calvinism/Arminianism debate, gender roles). Too often we are fighting the wrong battles while true heretics steal our sheep. (278)

And there's nothing to add but an 'Amen' to these sentiments.

The final example comes in the "Explanation of the Text" (i.e., the commentary proper) section of Matthew 28:19 where Osborne says:

Jesus then adds the meaning of baptism, which brings the believer "into the name" (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα) of the triune Godhead. Some have interpreted "into" (εἰς) in a local sense and made it a formula for baptism ("in the name of") on the basis of the fact that "into" (εἰς) and "in" (ἐν) in the Koine period were sliding together. However, it is generally recognized that in Matthew "into" (εἰς) retains its classical force (see Zerwick §106), and it is better to see this as a baptism "into fellowship with" (Allen, Albright and Mann) or "into the Lordship of" (Carson) the Godhead, expressing a new relationship (Davies and Allison)."

The presence of the triune Godhead is only here in a baptism formula (though it is used also in Did. 7:1, 3). Most doubt the Trinitarian emphasis because of the absence of any such theology in Matthew. For instance, Luz says, "Of course, the triadic baptismal command does not yet imply the much later dogma of the Trinity, although later it was thusly interpreted." Certainly this is not the Nicene Creed, but there is a Trinitarian theology in the NT, seen in I Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 4:4-6; 2 Thess 2:13-14; 1 Pet 1:2; Jude 20-21; Rev 1:4-5; and this is in line with the early beliefs in the deity of each member of the Godhead, the personhood of each member, and the fact that there is one God. We must speak of at least an incipient Trinitarian theology, and that this passage states that conversion and baptism bring us into a unity and community with that threefold Godhead.

Moreover, Jesus is still bringing together his many statements on his Father (5:48; 6:1, 4; 11:25-27; 24:36), himself as the Son (16:27; 24:36), and the Holy Spirit (12:18, 28, 32); and Matthew is once again (as in all the discourses) abbreviating a lengthy teaching of Jesus on the mountain of revelation. The Great Commission is

Matthew's summary of a much longer message, and the church was free to emphasize Jesus' name on other occasions. (1081)

Again, I agree with Osborne's judgments here, my distaste for his use of "Godhead" withstanding. While my topically influenced examination was fun I will admit that this is not how most readers will use this commentary. Most, I suspect, will turn to relevant passages that they're studying. It's no unimaginable that someone would be interested in Matthew 16:13-20 given the crucial role it has played in Catholic-Protestant debates. So all one would have to do is flip over to chapter 71 (622-31) and get right to it. Osborne identifies the Literary Context and says that this is the "climactic moment" to which the narrative before had built up to. The Main Idea is Christology and the messiahship of Jesus. He offers his translation and graphical layout as follows:

Translation

Matthew 16:13-20		
13a	Setting (Temporal and Spatial)	After Jesus arrived in the region of Caesarea Philippi,
b	Question	he asked his disciples,
c		<i>"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"</i>
14a		They replied,
b	Answer #1	[1] <i>"Some say John the Baptist,</i>
c	Answer #2	<i>[2] others Elijah,</i>
d	Answer #3	<i>[3] still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."</i>
15a	Question	Jesus asked,
b		<i>"But who do you say that I am?"</i>
16a	Answer	Simon Peter answered,
b		<i>"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"</i>
17a	Response/Blessing	Jesus responded,
b		<i>"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah!</i>
c	Basis for 17b	<i>Because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you,</i>
d		<i>but my Father who is in heaven.</i>
18a	Assertion #1/ Prophecy	[1] <i>So I am telling you,</i>
b		<i>You are Peter,</i>
c		<i>and on this rock I will build my church.</i>
d	Assertion #2/ Prophecy	[2] <i>And the gates of Hades will not overpower it.</i>
19a	Assertion #3/ Prophecy	[3] <i>And I will give you the keys</i>
b	Assertion #4/ Prophecy	<i>of the kingdom of heaven.</i>
c		[4] <i>Whatever you bind on earth will have been</i> ☩ <i>bound in heaven,</i>
		<i>and whatever you loose on earth will have been</i>
		<i>loosed in heaven."</i>
20a	Exhortation/Command	Then he ordered the disciples to tell no one that he was the Messiah.

The Structure and Literary form are identified as "a combination of a paradigm even and a pronouncement story." (623) The Exegetical Outline is as follows:

- I. The Dialogue about Jesus' Identity (16:13-16)**
 - A. The Setting: area of Caesarea Philippi (v. 13a)
 - B. First dialogue: public perception (vv. 13b-14)
 - 1. Jesus' question (v. 13b)
 - 2. Disciple's response: eschatological prophet (v. 14)
 - C. Second dialogue: the disciple's perception (vv. 15-16)
 - 1. Jesus' question (v. 15)
 - 2. Peter's response: Messiah, Son of God (v. 16)
- II. The Beatitude Given Peter (16:17-19)**
 - A. The beatitude pronounced (v. 17a)
 - B. The source of Peter's revelation (v. 17b)
 - C. The new authority granted (vv. 18-19)
 - 1. Peter the rock (v. 18a)
 - 2. Authority over the power of death (v. 18b)
 - 3. The keys of the kingdom (v. 19a)
 - 4. Authority to bind and loose (v. 19b)
- III. The Injunction of Silence (16:20)**

The Explanation of the Text prints the verses as they appear in the Translation and then the Greek text follows in parentheses. Each clause/verse receives brief commentary (generally one to three paragraphs). Most people looking at this passage will be interested to see how Osborne handles 16:18 and the reference to "this rock" (ταύτη τῆ πέτρα). He (rightly) recognizes Peter as the "rock" and Jesus as the "builder."

This commentary obviously has much more to offer than I've been able to highlight here (such as the "The Theology of Matthew" article at the end of the volume [1086-1107]). As it stands I can see this as a useful resource for any pastor or teacher working in Matthew. I haven't come across many shortcomings in my limited examination of this volume but one thing I think would have made it even better would have been to have a graphical layout of the Greek text precede the graphical layout of the English translation. This is not a commentary that shies away from Greek so it's somewhat surprising that this wasn't an included feature. Nonetheless, the value of this commentary and presumably this series, should not be underestimated. I look forward to working more with this volume and the others in the series in the future.