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978-0-521-43576-5 - The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew

Ulrich Luz

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Matthew's Gospel is the most significant Jewish–Christian document of the New Testament. For Matthew, the story of Jesus is the underlying tale of his own community, from its initial convocation by the living Jesus to its espousal of the Gentile mission following Israel's rejection. Matthew's Jesus story is as deeply rooted in his community as is the Pentateuch in Israel – hence the profoundly Jewish basis of his theology. Ulrich Luz both outlines and elucidates the contents and structure of Matthew's narrative, emphasizing its focal points: the Sermon on the Mount, the miracles, the parables, the renunciation of possessions, the Eschaton. Particular attention is drawn to Matthew's theology of judgement by works, an idea at once challenging and burdensome to Christians today and a direct outgrowth of the traumatic cleavage between the Matthean community and the Israelite majority.

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NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

**General Editor: James D. G. Dunn,
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This series provides a programmatic survey of the individual writings of the New Testament. It aims to remedy the deficiency of available published material, which has tended to concentrate on historical, textual, grammatical and literary issues at the expense of the theology, or to lose distinctive emphases of individual writings in systematised studies of 'The Theology of Paul' and the like. New Testament specialists here write at greater length than is usually possible in the introductions to commentaries or as part of other New Testament theologies, and explore the theological themes and issues of their chosen books without being tied to a commentary format, or to a thematic structure drawn from elsewhere. When complete, the series will cover all the New Testament writings, and will thus provide an attractive, and timely, range of texts around which courses can be developed.

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THE THEOLOGY OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

ULRICH LUZ

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TRANSLATED BY
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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

Originally published in German as *Die Jesusgeschichte des Matthäus*,
by Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag
and © Ulrich Luz 1993

First published in English by Cambridge University Press 1995 as
The theology of the Gospel of Matthew
English translation © Cambridge University Press 1995
Reprinted 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Luz, Ulrich.

[Jesusgeschichte de Matthäus. English]

The theology of the Gospel of Matthew / Ulrich Luz;
translated by J. Bradford Robinson.

p. cm.

ISBN 0 521 43433 5 (hardback) – ISBN 0 521 43576 5 (paperback)

1. Bible. N. T. Matthew – Theology.

2. Bible. N. T. Matthew – Criticism, interpretation, etc.

I. Title.

BS2575.5.L8813 1995

226.2'06 – dc20

ISBN 0 521 43433 5 (hardback)

ISBN 0 521 43576 5 (paperback)

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Editor's preface

Although the New Testament is usually taught within Departments or Schools or Faculties of Theology/Divinity/Religion, theological study of the individual New Testament writings is often minimal or at best patchy. The reasons for this are not hard to discern.

For one thing, the traditional style of studying a New Testament document is by means of straight exegesis, often verse by verse. Theological concerns jostle with interesting historical, textual, grammatical and literary issues, often at the cost of the theological. Such exegesis is usually very time-consuming, so that only one or two key writings can be treated in any depth within a crowded three-year syllabus.

For another, there is a marked lack of suitable textbooks round which courses could be developed. Commentaries are likely to lose theological comment within a mass of other detail in the same way as exegetical lectures. The section on the theology of a document in the Introduction to a commentary is often very brief and may do little more than pick out elements within the writing under a sequence of headings drawn from systematic theology. Excursuses usually deal with only one or two selected topics. Likewise larger works on New Testament Theology usually treat Paul's letters as a whole and, having devoted the great bulk of their space to Jesus, Paul and John, can spare only a few pages for others.

In consequence, there is little incentive on the part of teacher or student to engage with a particular New Testament document, and students have to be content with a general overview, at best complemented by in-depth study of (parts of)

two or three New Testament writings. A serious corollary to this is the degree to which students are thereby incapacitated in the task of integrating their New Testament study with the rest of their Theology or Religion courses, since often they are capable only of drawing on the general overview or on a sequence of particular verses treated atomistically. The growing importance of a literary-critical approach to individual documents simply highlights the present deficiencies even more. Having been given little experience in handling individual New Testament writings as such at a theological level, most students are very ill-prepared to develop a properly integrated literary and theological response to particular texts. Ordinands too need more help than they currently receive from textbooks, so that their preaching from particular passages may be better informed theologically.

There is need therefore for a series to bridge the gap between too brief an introduction and too full a commentary where theological discussion is lost among too many other concerns. It is our aim to provide such a series. That is, a series where New Testament specialists are able to write at a greater length on the theology of individual writings than is usually possible in the introductions to commentaries or as part of New Testament Theologies, and to explore the theological themes and issues of these writings without being tied to a commentary format or to a thematic structure provided from elsewhere. The volumes seek both to describe each document's theology, and to engage theologically with it, noting also its canonical context and any specific influence it may have had on the history of Christian faith and life. They are directed at those who already have one or two years of full-time New Testament and theological study behind them.

University of Durham

JAMES D. G. DUNN

Cambridge University Press

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Author's preface

Like anyone else who wishes to write a theology of Matthew, I am faced with a fundamental decision: should I present the theology of Matthew systematically, organized by topic, as has been attempted for example by J. Ernst and R. T. France? Or should I follow the Matthean account and write a 'Matthew's Story of Jesus' in the manner of R. A. Edwards and J. D. Kingsbury?¹ I have chosen the second option, not because I am well versed in matters of literary criticism, but because I am convinced that the Gospel of Matthew is a *story* of Jesus that can only be understood when one retraces it and tries to grasp what it wished to convey to its intended readers. I have tried to interpolate several broader and more systematic sections at points in the story where it seemed most fitting to do so, just as Matthew inserted his discourses in the form of direct address from Jesus to the readers of his narrative. My own readers may decide for themselves whether this procedure is appropriate.

Hundreds of experts have written about Matthew's Gospel. The few I have mentioned in the notes (sometimes quite critically!) should know that I cited them because their writings have become especially important to me. I would like to thank them for all they have taught me. Others from whom I also learnt could not be cited; for a detailed explanation of each of my exegetical decisions I must refer the reader to the volumes of my commentary, whether completed or still in

¹ See J. Ernst, *Matthäus: ein theologisches Portrait* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1989); R. T. France, *Matthew – Evangelist and Teacher* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1989); R. A. Edwards, *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); J. D. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

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Preface

preparation. But many other people also merit my gratitude. I would like to mention two in particular: Pascal Möсли, who painstakingly corrected the manuscript and compiled the index, and Isabelle Noth, who read the proofs.

This book is dedicated to Traugott Holtz, a great scholar and true friend from the former state of East Germany. During all the difficult years of socialism he never ceased to take up the cause of mankind. In the reunited country of Germany he is now among the ranks of the unemployed. It is my feeling that he (and not only he!) has been dealt an injustice. For the English edition the subchapter 'Matthew and Church History' in chapter 9 has been newly added. My German text has been translated into readable and fluent English by J. Bradford Robinson. The editor, James Dunn, has gone through the translation and made valuable suggestions. My thanks are extended to both of them for their excellent work.

Laupen, Switzerland, April 1993 ULRICH LUZ

Abbreviations

<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Biblica</i>
<i>AThD</i>	<i>Acta Theologica Danica</i>
<i>BEvTh</i>	<i>Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie</i>
<i>BGBE</i>	<i>Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese</i>
<i>BHTh</i>	<i>Beiträge zur historischen Theologie</i>
<i>BZfNW</i>	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>CChr.SL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina</i>
<i>EKK</i>	<i>Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>EThSt</i>	<i>Erfurter Theologische Studien</i>
<i>FRLANT</i>	<i>Forschungen zur Religion und Literature des Alten und Neuen Testaments</i>
<i>HThK</i>	<i>Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>HThK.S</i>	<i>Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Supplementband</i>
<i>ICC</i>	<i>An International and Critical Commentary</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNT.S</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series</i>
<i>MSSNTS</i>	<i>Monograph Series, Society for New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NEB</i>	<i>Neue Echter Bibel</i>
<i>NT.S</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum, Supplements</i>
<i>NTA.NF</i>	<i>Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen, Neue Folge</i>
<i>NTD</i>	<i>Das Neue Testament Deutsch</i>
<i>NTOA</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>

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<i>SBS</i>	<i>Stuttgarter Bibelstudien</i>
<i>TEH</i>	<i>Theologische Existenz heute</i>
<i>TNTC</i>	<i>Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</i>
<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
<i>WA</i>	Martin Luther, <i>Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> (Weimar edition)
<i>WA.DB</i>	Martin Luther, <i>Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> (Weimar edition: German Bible)
<i>WMANT</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament</i>
<i>WUNT</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZThK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>