

Matthew. By H. N. Ridderbos. Bible Student's Commentary series. Translated by Ray Togtman from the 1950-51 Dutch original. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987, 556 pp., n.p. *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*. By Barclay M. Newman and Philip C. Steine. London/New York/Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1988, 939 pp., \$13.00.

In its own time the commentary by Ridderbos was considered a minor classic at the upper end of the semipopular scale. It focuses on the straightforward exegesis and exposition of the text, with relatively little interaction with secondary literature (though there is certainly an awareness of the issues up to 1950). It is still worth reading almost forty years later. On the other hand, not only in terms of issues but also in terms of contemporaneity and rigor this work is now seriously dated. Better volumes are available in German, French and English, no less faithful to Scripture and more current (and more complete as well). In short, this is a good buy for those who are collecting a lot of commentaries on Matthew, since here and there one finds insights not readily available elsewhere. For the person who is buying only one or two commentaries on this gospel, however, Ridderbos should not be considered.

The volume by Newman and Steine is one of the latest to be added to the *Helps for Translators* series and is a remarkable value for the price. In each section the RSV and TEV are set out, and a number of exegetical notes follow, with numerous references to other translations and many insightful reflections on how difficult expressions could be rendered in various language/cultural settings. The sheer bounty of such material makes the work somewhat tedious for the pastor or theological student except in small doses, where such exposure breeds a healthy respect for the translator's task.

Although this particular volume of the series goes to special lengths to link the various kinds of discourse in Matthew's gospel together, what is disappointing is that the work too frequently betrays serious ignorance of current exegetical and theological literature relative to the task of translating Matthew and consequently

advocates translations and renderings that are extremely implausible while not even considering some important options. Matthew 5:17-20 is of course extremely difficult, but in any case their treatment of this pericope will not do. Compare Jeremias (*New Testament Theology*) on the meaning of 23:3. The treatment of the parable in 25:31-46 (see especially on 25:40) is linguistically and theologically irresponsible.

In the bibliography, no commentary published after 1977 appears and only three after 1971. Only one out of fifteen listed commentaries could remotely be labeled "evangelical." Why R. Pregeant's 1978 thesis *Christology Beyond Dogma* should be included, but not the study by Robert Banks, is beyond comprehension. I draw attention to these problems not because they constitute an exhaustive list or are the most serious difficulties in the work but because they represent weaknesses that are endemic to it.

In short, this is a work that the theological student may usefully dip into, that the translator must have but should not rely on without consulting three or four major commentaries, and that the expert need only consult from time to time.

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