

avoid dealing with some of the more difficult issues in the exegesis of Matthew, or to reach predetermined answers, but such is not the case. Take, for example, the treatment of the genealogy of Jesus. While all the different explanations advanced on the subject of the genealogical problems are discussed, Bruner concludes that Matthew changed Asa to Asaph and Amon to Amos for theological reasons, and that Matthew probably just made a mistake in counting the third set of fourteen generations (there are only thirteen listed by Matthew). In Bruner's subsequent meditation on the doctrine of Holy Scripture, he suggests that Matthew did not possess mathematical inspiration. "I like Matthew's thirteen. I like it precisely because it 'de-magics' Scripture, humanizes, and normalizes it" (p. 15). This illustrates the great strengths of the book's methodology in approaching the task of systematic theology. While there are many who would debate with Bruner on the exegesis and the theological implications of this particular passage, as a systematic theologian he is very closely tying his systematic thought to the data of the Scripture itself. Problems are not casually brushed aside, but met honestly.

Many will find that another strength of the work is that it is closer to the needs of a preacher than most commentaries. The way that the wider theological issues and some contemporary issues are integrated into the text makes easier the task of enlivening the text of Matthew for a congregation. The commentary is also replete with telling phrases and practical applications.

In conclusion, while the commentary's methodology has some drawbacks (e.g., those rare occasions in which theological or practical connections are read into the text rather than out of it), Bruner has produced a unique product that should have usefulness and appeal to a wide range of readers. In purchasing the book, they receive a serviceable commentary together with the enriching of theological reflection and practical application. I await with interest the publication of *The Churchbook*, the second volume of the commentary, which will cover Matt 13-28.

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Evans, Louis H., Jr. *Hebrews*. The Communicator's Commentary, vol. 10. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985. 259 pp. \$16.95.

The principal aims of The Communicator's Commentary series are set forth by Lloyd Ogilvie in his editor's preface. He suggests that commentaries on the Bible tend to be either technical, with no application to daily life, or so popular that biblical roots are left unexplained. Thus,

neither type of commentary brings together the elements that communicators of the Bible need—scholarship *and* application. The Communicator's Commentary series endeavors to fill the gap by drawing on writers who are scholar preachers, persons who can make the necessary blend of technical detail and application. The series is based on the New King James version.

Several features of this Hebrews commentary deserve commendation. First of all, it is well written, and Evans is able to communicate difficult ideas in a clear, interesting manner. Also, one of the innovations of the series as a whole that is particularly valuable is the author's introduction of himself to the reader. Thus, the reader learns at the outset some of the significant elements of the writer's experience.

Evans next discusses issues of introduction to the book of Hebrews. The book, he indicates, was written by an unknown writer to a group of Hellenistic Jews who were second-generation Christians, and who had been reared in the Jewish religion and its rules of scriptural interpretation according to the standards of the synagogue. He then devotes several pages to outlining Jewish principles of scriptural interpretation, the *middoth*. He thinks it likely that the epistle was written about A.D. 68.

The actual commentary itself achieves the goals set forth for the commentary series. It is a blend of exegesis and application. There is frequent reference to the original language, the Greek words being transliterated. In addition, there are many illustrations for modern application.

Evans understands Hebrews against a background of Judaism, rather than Hellenism (or even, the Hellenistic Judaism of Philo Judaeus, as has been proposed by Spicq, among others). In commenting on Heb 8:5 he says: "Some argue that the term 'copy' is evidence of the influence of Hellenistic Platonism on our writer. I do not think the admitted similarity is to be taken seriously . . ." (p. 147). He argues that both the problems dealt with and the manner in which these problems are treated are Jewish, not Hellenistic, and he views the Jewish *middoth* as forming the key to understanding the use of the OT by the writer. In discussing the Melchizedek passages, for example, he makes the following general statement: "The relationship between truth and the arguments to convince another of that truth is as important to us today as it was to the Jewish readers of our teacher. . . . The arguments that had validity and weight for the mind of our writer's day were those of the pharisaical *middoth* and the process of oath-making. You and I may not be impressed with the validity of such arguments in the twentieth century, for we have accepted different criteria for validity" (p. 108). And in speaking of the way in which Melchizedek compared with Christ in being without father, mother, or genealogy, Evans declares that this "is definitely an audience-related device" (p. 114).

While the goals of the commentary series have added some strengths to this particular commentary, they have not been helpful in all areas. It is particularly noticeable, for instance, that many of Hebrews' exegetical

difficulties are ignored or receive but scant attention. For example, Evans comments that "our author puts the altar of incense in this Holy of Holies 'the Holiest of All,' vs. 3), as does the *Mishnah*" (p. 154), but makes no further elucidation. Surely, an evangelical who is writing a commentary for a popular audience should have more to say about this apparent anomaly as compared with the OT text. Also, a reader of this commentary would be unaware that there is considerable discussion as to the grammatical constructions and resultant meaning of Heb 9:11-12 (for an outline of the problems and easy access to the relevant literature, see Norman H. Young, "The Gospel According to Hebrews 9," *NTS* 27 [1981]: 202-205). Indeed, it is very rare to find any indication in this commentary that a particular text in Hebrews poses any exegetical problems. As a result, there are even fewer solutions or helpful suggestions for dealing with such problems. Perhaps it can be argued that in a commentary designed to be non-technical such matters should not have a place. On the other hand, if the commentary is designed for "communicators," then it would be helpful at least to make those public "communicators" aware of exegetical concerns in places where varying options have been chosen by different interpreters. Indeed, it would also be helpful to "communicators" to have reasons for choosing one option above another, so as to enable them to strengthen their presentations.

Another element that could well have been added to this commentary is guidance in the selection of further reading on the book of Hebrews. The occasional footnotes reveal that Evans is familiar with the literature on Hebrews, but the bibliography is only of the most general nature. Of course, this may be a lack in the commentary series, rather than simply of this particular volume.

The deficiencies just mentioned should not be allowed to detract from the basic accomplishments of this commentary. The volume achieves rather well the goals which it sets out to accomplish: namely, to comment on the book of Hebrews in a way that combines both exegesis and application. And, as stated earlier, it is well written and interesting to read.

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Lippy, Charles H., and Williams, Peter W., eds. *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience: Studies of Traditions and Movements*. 3 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988. xvi + 1872 pp. \$225.00.

The *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience* is a publishing accomplishment of the first magnitude, providing students of