

Hayes, John H., and Holladay, Carl R. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1982. 132 pp. Paperback, \$6.95.

As the title suggests, Hayes and Holladay in this short volume intend to introduce students and nonspecialists to the art/science (p. 27) of interpreting the biblical text. Unlike some other similar introductions to exegesis (e.g., Otto Kaiser and Werner G. Kümmel, *Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook*, new rev. ed. [New York: Seabury Press, 1981]), Hayes and Holladay integrate their treatment of the OT and NT throughout. Their approach is to discuss the task and application of exegesis and the various critical tools in general, with examples and illustrations from each Testament, rather than to introduce the exegesis of the two Testaments separately. They have attached to each chapter of their volume an excellent bibliography of related English-language publications.

The first chapter of the book provides a general introduction to exegesis, which the authors define as "a systematic way of interpreting a text" (p. 23). They move from the universal need to interpret all types of communication to the specific challenges associated with, and the history of, interpreting the biblical text. The task of biblical exegesis is said to be the search for *an* interpretation of a given text, rather than *the* interpretation. Here I would raise this query: Would it not be better for each exegete to aim for *the* interpretation of the text at his particular point in time and space and in his particular community?

The authors devote the next seven chapters to specific critical tools available to the exegete. These tools include textual, historical, grammatical, literary, form, tradition, and redaction criticism. Generally, these chapters provide a good overview of the various types of analysis.

The discussion of textual criticism would have been enhanced, especially for beginners, by the inclusion of more examples of types of variants and by illustrations of how to apply the criteria for determining preferred readings. The bibliography for this chapter should not have included as critical editions of the NT the several volumes of gospel parallels it lists.

The chapter devoted to grammatical criticism (defined as concern "with the meaning of the words in their combination in sense units" [p. 54]) is strong on the lexical elements of texts (words and phrases), but is somewhat weak on the strictly grammatical elements (grammar and syntax). The expression of caution concerning word studies (pp. 59-60) is commendable.

The treatment of literary criticism is weak on the various literary phenomena that may be associated with a text. Little or nothing is said on

the kinds of texts represented in the Bible or on how such kinds of texts function as texts (e.g., narrative, parable, hymn, etc.). Some good examples would have been helpful.

It may seem that the issue of kinds of texts is taken up in the chapter on form criticism. However, in this discussion, genres are treated only in terms of classification and *Sitz im Leben*, as one would expect, and are not considered as "kinds of texts" from a literary perspective. The authors make no mention of alternatives to form criticism, such as the approach of the Scandinavian school.

The final two chapters of this volume deal with the integration of exegetical techniques and the application of biblical exegesis to history, theology, preaching, and personal edification. The authors would have greatly improved their treatment of integration by exegeting a sample biblical text. They also state that the preacher is one who must look at the text from the outside in an objective manner, as opposed to one who reads the text from within for spiritual edification. However, this perspective ignores the fact that the one who proclaims the message of the text to others will be most effective if he himself has been edified by it.

Among the many positive characteristics of this book are its good organization of material, its balanced consideration of the Old and New Testaments, its use of common language, and its definition and explanation of technical terms.

The book suffers somewhat from its lack of an index of topics and terms, from the absence of documentation and references (e.g., pp. 21, 33), and from its failure to consider the roles of the Spirit and personal prayer in the exegetical process. The most serious problem with the book is the unfulfilled expectation created by the title. The word "Handbook" in this case suggests a manual for the beginner to use in doing his own exegesis. However, while beginners would encounter here a good survey of the need for, and techniques involved in, biblical exegesis, they would not find a step-by-step method of approaching the text through the application of the various tools.

Nevertheless, Hayes and Holladay have produced a helpful volume. Their publication is a useful elementary introduction to biblical exegesis for beginners and a commendable review for veteran scholars in the field of biblical studies.

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