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## ESV Expository Commentary: Matthew-Luke

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## ESV Expository Commentary: Matthew-Luke

### Abstract

A book review of *ESV Expository Commentary: Matthew-Luke* by Daniel M. Doriani, Hans F. Bayer, and Thomas R. Schreiner.

### Cover Page Footnote

Donald C. McIntyre is a PhD student in Old Testament at Baptist Bible Seminary at Clarks Summit PA as well as a PhD student in Theology and Apologetics at Liberty University of Lynchburg VA.

***ESV Expository Commentary: Matthew-Luke***, By Daniel M. Doriani, Hans F. Bayer, and Thomas R. Schreiner, Wheaton: Crossway, 2021. 1156 pp. Hardcover \$39.31.

As the other editions of the ESV Commentary series, this book seeks to be Christ-centered while directing the contributors to be “exegetically sound,” “biblically theological,” “globally aware,” “broadly informed,” “doctrinally conversant,” “pastorally useful,” “application-minded” and “efficient in expression” (10-11). With this section of the commentary being on the Gospels, the issues of a Christocentric hermeneutic are less problematic, only needing attention in those sections where intertextuality could cause concern. Scrutinous interaction for hermeneutical presuppositions is warranted in those sections as one assesses various arguments.

The section on Matthew was written by Dan Doriani, PhD Westminster and Professor Biblical and Systematic Theology at Covenant Theological Seminary. Doriani has written another commentary on Matthew (Reformed Expository Commentary, 2008) and a work on the Sermon on the Mount (2006) both produced by P&R Publishing. Doriani rightfully challenges the synoptic problem stating that Markan priority “has not been, and probably cannot be established” (28). However, Doriani does seem to believe that the synoptic writers shared a common source or that one had access to the other’s work (28). Doriani is sympathetic to a Syrian Antioch provenance, though he believes Caesarea and Alexandria could fit the same criterion (29). Doriani includes a section on reliability, something that has been integral to gospel studies since the inception of The Jesus Seminar, and he seeks to defend memorization for the apostles as eyewitnesses and that Matthew’s culture had recognized standards for historiography (30) and lastly, that the apostles were willing to die for their testimony (32). Doriani’s Matthean outline is based upon a birth account, an annunciation and testing account, and then the five main discourses, and the passion narrative (33-34). Others have challenged the fivefold division based on the discourses, preferring a grammatical division based on the phrase “from that time Jesus began to preach,” but Doriani’s argument is convincing. Doriani believes that Matthew wrote for Jews and Gentiles with the goal of taking the Gospel throughout the world (37-43). The sections on interpreting parables and miracles (49-59) were extremely useful. In that section, Doriani notes the need for restraint in interpreting parables (50) and, when dealing with miracles, rejects the works of Erhman and Hume through an excursus on 55-58, citing Keener’s work. Doriani is forced to deal with issues of intertextuality and does so admirably. In Matt. 2:15, where some are inclined to accept *sensus plenior*, Doriani rejects this (97) and instead affirms a typological use of the Scripture by which Jesus passes

Israel's failed tests (96). A reformed objection to *sensus plenior* is to be applauded and is a welcome assessment.

The section on Mark was written by Hans F. Bayer (PhD University of Aberdeen), who is the Chair of the New Testament department at Covenant Theological Seminary. Bayer notes Mark is akin to bios, and that this established the claim of historical representation (793). Bayer accepts John Mark as Peter's associate based on the church fathers, with Peter as his primary source due to internal evidence and the witness of the fathers (794). Bayer notes that Mark's intention was to "present and legitimize Jesus' universal call to discipleship" (800). This is something novel, which is not often mentioned in Markan studies, and somehow is difficult to reconcile with the short ending of Mark. Bayer, however, does not take a firm stance on the ending, instead noting that "Regardless of whether the text of Mark 16:9-20 is considered original to the Gospel of Mark on the basis of manuscript evidence, there is no doubt that most of the content of what is narrated in this section is found elsewhere in various uncontested sections of the NT" (1219). While this is a true assessment, it has serious implications for trying to decipher Mark's purpose for writing. Where some would state Mark's purpose for writing was to encourage those Christians in the midst of suffering to persevere (based on the shorter ending), the acceptance of the longer ending would lead one to find a purpose like the one Bayer suggests. Punting on such an issue is problematic if one is dealing only with Mark's text. While the purpose statement provided by Bayer could be a legitimate theological concern, its centrality cannot be substantiated without the longer ending's validity. Bayer seeks to develop his outline of Mark based on stages of literary tension between Jesus and the Disciples through five stages, whereas most other commentaries have traced the geographical settings throughout Mark. For these reasons, the section on Mark was the least convincing of the three sections of this work. Too many novel ideas were found, which failed to persuade in light of other works on the book.

The section on Luke was written by Thomas R. Schreiner of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who earned his PhD from Fuller Theological Seminary. Schreiner deals with the synoptic problem, noting that Luke and Matthew may have had a common source, but asserts that a Q source may have never existed (1236). For those elements considered "L" sources, Schreiner notes the possibility of information from Mary the mother of Jesus, the Baptist's disciples, Manaen and Cleopas, or any other living persons about interactions with Jesus, and that this use of sources leads to credible historicity (1237). The normal outline of Luke, whereby 9:51 serves as a dividing line between the early ministry of Christ and the road to Jerusalem, was followed and concluded with the passion narrative (1239). The theology of Luke which Schreiner suggests was rare, starting with the idea of covenant which he finds in the fulfillment pattern (1241). Many would

agree with the idea of kingdom and Christology (1242-1243), though beginning with covenant as the predominant theme was novel (defensible, however). As is expected, the frequent mention of the Holy Spirit was a major theme in Luke-Acts, and Schreiner notes Luke's mention of the Spirit seventeen times in the gospel (1247), introducing the second major character of Luke's gospel, and the primary character of Acts. Schreiner mentions problems of chronology and genealogical differences as well as interpreting parables but works through those issues meticulously in the work when these issues arise (1255-1256).

The ESV Expository Commentary on Matthew-Luke was a great, succinct introduction to Gospel issues. All of the authors wrestled with the synoptic problem while failing to concede to form critical presuppositions. Major issues, whether text-critical, chronological, or theological, were dealt with fairly and succinctly. The frequent buttressing of the historical reliability of the Gospels was useful to those who are studying at any level. Issues of intertextuality were handled well, and *sensus plenior* was rejected. The defense of miracles and the demon possession accounts was worthy of applause and needs to be done in today's gospel studies milieu. This book can be recommended without reservation.