

Carson, D. A. *When Jesus Confronts the World: An Exposition of Matthew 8-10*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987. 154 pp. Paperback, \$7.95.

When Jesus Confronts the World is an outgrowth of a series of sermons that D. A. Carson, Professor of NT at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, preached at the Eden Baptist Church in Cambridge, England, during the academic year 1986-87. The material has here been put into appropriate form for publication and, I suspect, expanded considerably beyond what was included in the original oral messages.

Carson has distinguished himself through a number of major publications, among them his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew in the Expositor's Bible Commentary series. That commentary treats many technical matters that appropriately have been skipped over in the present publication; but this book of sermons incorporates, likewise appropriately, illustrative material, hymn poetry, homiletical and hortatory thrusts, etc., which would have been out of place in an exegetical commentary—even one with an expository emphasis.

In his preface, Carson has aptly pointed out his deep conviction that "those of us whose privilege and responsibility it is to study the Scriptures owe the church whatever help we can give at the popular level, quite apart from the responsibility of producing work that attempts to influence teachers and scholars" (p. 9). I would, however, go a step beyond Carson's important observation, for in my view the six sermons comprising the volume here under review provide for the seminarian, for the parish pastor, and for the teacher of prospective gospel ministers an outstanding illustration of what sermons should be like. Thus, aside from its manifest inspirational value, it also can serve well as a pedagogical tool. It can do so both for the crafting of individual sermons and for the construction of a meaningful series or sequence of homilies.

Carson's six sermons cover a relatively brief section in Matthew—chapters 8-10. The choice of this section for sermonic material is itself intriguing, for most expositors and homileticians would undoubtedly have preferred rather to provide a series on the preceding section, the more familiar Sermon on the Mount.

The book's chapter titles (also the sermon titles) are as follows: "The Authority of Jesus (8:1-17)," "The Authentic Jesus (8:18-34)," "The Mission of Jesus (9:1-17)," "The Trustworthiness of Jesus (9:18-34)," "The Compassion of Jesus (9:35-10:15)," and "The Divisiveness of Jesus (10:16-42)." The scripture passages included with these titles indicate how the text has been subdivided, but each of these subdivisions also contains multiple scenes or incidents.

For each sermon, Carson first gives the text in full, next sets forth a general introduction, then treats the scripture passage under either three or four subtopic headings, and finally draws the conclusion. The several subtopics under which the scripture passage of a sermon is treated may fol-

low a subsectioning of the passage, as in "The Mission of Jesus"—9:1-8, healing of the paralytic; 9:9-13, Jesus' call of tax collector Matthew to discipleship; and 9:14-17, Jesus' statements about not sewing unshrunk cloth on an old garment and not pouring new wine into old wineskins. These three vignettes answer the basic question of "Why Did Jesus Come?" (p. 68) by pointing out, respectively, that Jesus' coming to forgive sin and transform sinners was "foundational to the rest of his ministry" (p. 68), that this "central ministry" meant that Jesus "came to call the despised and disgusting elements of society" (p. 74), and that as "part of his effective dealing with sinners, Jesus came to set up a new structure that could embrace the profound reality he was introducing" (p. 81). On the other hand, the sermon subtopics may deal with the scripture passage as a whole, as in the case of "The Trustworthiness of Jesus," wherein four facets of this trustworthiness are set forth. Or there may be a combination of the two types of approach, as in "The Authentic Jesus."

Space forbids calling attention to the vast number of valuable insights presented in this volume. Not only does Carson's series of sermons represent an important organizational acumen that is vital to good communicative style, but also this sermonic material provides an excellent demonstration of how to make homiletical applications of biblical material in a meaningful way to contemporary society and in a manner which also is inspirational and practical on an individual basis.

One point wherein I would disagree with Carson (among hundreds where I would agree with him!) is his suggestion that Jesus' statement about coming to fulfill the law "does not mean to intensify it, or to show its deeper legal and moral significance, or the like, but quite literally to fulfill it" (p. 24). Was not the whole tenor of Jesus' ministry such as to enhance the moral concerns revealed in the OT, while at the same time removing the ceremonialism and accretions that had become characteristic within Judaism by the beginning of the Christian era? The "crucial conclusion" which Carson derives is that "Jesus is presented in the Bible not as an auxiliary figure who complements other notables such as Moses and David and Jeremiah, but as the focal point of God's revelation." This is a statement with which I heartily agree, but which does not require Carson's premise concerning Jesus' manner of fulfilling the law. Indeed, according to scripture, the Decalogue was not given by Moses but by God himself (Exod 19-20; cf. Deut 5:22).

The present volume has a paucity of footnotes, no bibliography, and no index; but in a work of this type, such helps need not be expected. In any case, this book is indeed a helpful one and can be recommended to seminarians, pastors, active laypersons, and all who would like a penetrating approach to the topic of what happens when Jesus confronts the world and when he confronts each of us individually.