

Lane, William L. *Hebrews 1-8 and Hebrews 9-13*. WBC 47A, 47B. Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991. clvii + 617. \$28.99 each.

Lane is noted for his commentary on Mark in the NICNT series. One would then expect his contribution on Hebrews to the WBC series to be of equally high quality. The reader will not be disappointed. Lane ranks well among the recent outstanding commentaries on Hebrews that have appeared in the last half dozen years or so (Attridge in *Hermeneia*, Bruce's 2d ed. in NICNT, Weiss in *Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament*, Grässer in *Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, and Ellingworth in NIGTC to mention a few).

Lane (xlix) echoes Attridge (5) in denying "positive identification of the writer," but carries on a discussion of what can be known about the author: from the reference to Timothy in 13:23 he is likely from the Pauline circle but not Paul, since his Greek is "far superior to the Pauline standard" (xlix). Given the refined style and rhetorical acumen, the writer has received an Hellenistic education; from the intimate knowledge of the Jewish cultus and the Scriptures (albeit in Greek), the author is clearly Jewish. Hence Lane identifies him as a Hellenistic Jewish-Christian.

On the basis of the reference to "a permanent city" in 13:14, Lane locates the readers in an urban setting. As plausible a reading as this is, it does seem to push the evidence a bit far. Certainly the reference to city in this verse is metaphorical (note the reference to going outside the camp in v. 12—do the readers live in a camp as well?), as Lane acknowledges in his treatment of the passage in the commentary proper. The question, however, is whether the metaphor is chosen because the audience, living in an urban setting, can readily identify with it (as Lane suggests), or because of the prominence which the city of Jerusalem (and the heavenly or New Jerusalem) plays in early Jewish-Christian thought. The latter seems more likely given the polemic against the Jewish cultus.

Lane situates the group in a house church whose roots are in the Hellenistic synagogue. His discussion of the readers' background is more detailed than that of the author. Most of the arguments Lane uses to describe the readers seem more appropriate to the author: the use of the categories of the Hellenistic-Jewish wisdom tradition, the mediatorial role of angels in the transmission of the law, and the centrality of Moses. When he points out that the author can refer to Biblical stories without elaboration, Lane is on safe methodological ground. But the readers could be Gentiles well-indoctrinated in the Jewish scriptures (godfearers or thoroughly disciplined converts as 5:11-14 implies) just as well as Jewish-Christians. More care needs to be taken in distinguishing elements of the text that reflect the author's situation and those that reflect the background of the readers.

Lane places these readers in Rome and, by associating the crisis they experience with Nero's persecution, dates the address to between A.D. 64 and June, 68. This is admittedly speculative, though he makes as good a case as can be made for associating the letter with Rome; he certainly reads 13:24b

correctly. In his discussion of the date he discounts the traditional argument that the references to the Jewish cultus in the present tense imply a date before A.D. 70. He follows the current trend that this argument is not valid because the references to the cult are based on the tabernacle and not on the temple. But I find it hard to see Jewish-Christians being tempted to return to the Jewish cultus if that cultus is not in fact active. The author focuses on the wilderness tabernacle simply because he bases his discussion on the biblical account of the cultus. The same procedure can be seen in Philo.

Lane follows the trend to identify the genre of Hebrews as a sermon or homily. The "homiletic" character of the letter is undeniable, though some caution should be noted here, because many of the features designated as sermonic are better described as rhetorical and can be found in works not designated as homiletic. Lane's own discussion of the rhetorical features shows that it can be associated with both deliberative and epideictic rhetoric. Lane rather too readily dismisses the notion of "epistle." The evidence in chap. 13 and elsewhere in the letter points to an intimate association between author and readers, and that he is addressing them from afar. Thus it is easy to see Hebrews as a written address to be read before the congregation as a whole.

A noteworthy feature of Lane's commentary is the attention he pays to newer trends in biblical studies. In his introduction he includes a section on "Discourse Analysis," in which he notes the contributions of this relative newcomer on the scene of biblical scholarship. Here he discusses the work of Neely and Guthrie. This makes his probably the first English commentary to incorporate the insights of this discipline. Very little, however, makes its way into the commentary proper.

In his treatment of 6:19 Lane translates εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπέτασματος, as "the inner sanctuary behind the curtain" (147). In his comments he asserts that the language here is used in the LXX to refer to signify "the inner curtain that separated the sanctuary of God from the holy place in the tabernacle" (154). Lane here fails to note that the syntax differs from that in Lev 16 where ἐσώτερον is a preposition and not a noun. Nor does he indicate that καταπέτασμα is the overwhelming choice in the LXX for all three veils (inner, outer, and courtyard) of the wilderness tabernacle. He makes reference to the "Throne of God" in his comment, where there is none in the text. He does not demonstrate sufficient exegetical rigor here as he does elsewhere in the commentary.

Lane's commentary is a major contribution to NT scholarship and will long be a standard reference for the study of the book of Hebrews. While this reviewer has focused on weaknesses (as reviews tend to do), this should in no way detract from the usefulness and serviceability of Lane's accomplishment. It deserves to be on the bookshelf of every student of the New Testament.