

Old Testament Prophecy
Recent Publications
by David W. Baker*

Over the last several years, numerous studies of various elements of the Old Testament prophetic books have appeared. In this essay, a number of these will be reviewed and evaluated. This article is not intended to be comprehensive.¹

Introduction

E.W. Heaton is a British Old Testament scholar whose 1977 introduction to the prophets has recently appeared in a new edition.² The author self-consciously addresses the needs of the lay reader rather than the scholar, so the footnotes rarely cite secondary sources, mainly indicating scriptural passages supporting the claims made in the text. There is a useful bibliography at the end of the book, so those who wish to pursue matters raised further may do so. It has been updated with works as recent as 1993.

Heaton, in a very readable, and very English, style, divides his book into ten chapters. 'Making Sense of the Old Testament' explores the history of OT interpretation from the early period through the middle ages to today. He sees it best understood as the records of a peoples encounter with their God, and the reinterpretation of these stories as time went on. In chapter 2, the writing prophets are briefly introduced in the context of their times, which for Daniel is the second century BC, making him not properly one of the regular prophetic books, and for Isaiah is three distinct periods, since it is seen as a composite rather than a unity. 'The Vocation of the Prophets' explores their societal roles as both individuals and institutional functionaries. Here he overviews various topics such as ancient Near Eastern parallels and the puzzling urim and thummim. 'The Preaching of the Prophets' looks at the prophetic message forms and the righteousness of their person.

In an analysis of individual prophetic books, Heaton divides the chapters into 'judgment without promise' (Amos., Isaiah, Micah). He sees these as lacking hope, so needing to relegate passages of promise such as Amos 9:11-15 to an addition by a later author. This is a more liberal approach to Scripture where what should be found in it based on some interpretive preunderstanding controls what is actually written in it. 'Salvation through judgment' (Hosea,

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Jeremiah), 'Salvation after Judgment' (2nd Isaiah, Ezekiel), and 'Salvation in the Restored Community' (Haggai and Zechariah, anonymous prophecy [mainly 3rd Isaiah, with excerpts from other prophets as well) round out the brief overview of the content of the books. The final two chapters explore the proposed movement from oral sermon to written text, as well as later editing and interpretation, and a look at Daniel against the background of apocalyptic, including that of the Qumran community and the early church. Heaton also touches on the topic of Jesus and prophecy.

The book will properly find a place in college and seminary libraries, where it provides a succinct, readable introduction to the more liberal view of the prophets. Teachers and preachers will be well served by reading it critically, especially noting what the prophets actually said as recorded in Scripture, carefully comparing that with the claims made here.

Another British author, John Eaton, almost simultaneously produced another elementary level introduction.³ He has his eye toward the reader, who would probably be in college or a Bible study, in that he includes various questions for personal research, discussion, consideration (looking for contemporary parallels) which are good stepping stones beyond the book and into the Book. All of the prophets receive at least some mention and discussion, and a 2 page bibliography supplies resources for further reading. His approach to such matters as dating is mainstream, assuming but not arguing for a late Daniel and tripartite Isaiah. For those looking for a readable text from this perspective, Eaton will serve you well.

In a much briefer and more popular format, John Sailhamer of Western Seminary has one of the books in his "Zondervan Quick Reference Library" on Biblical Prophecy.⁴ It provides one page summaries on a number of aspects of prophecy which are designed to be readable in no more than a minute. There are seven sections in the book. "Introduction," "Hermeneutics," "Biblical Theological Foundations" discussing the kingdom of God and the various biblical covenants, "OT," "NT," "Central Themes" of restoration, redemption, messianism, Israel and the church, the tribulation, rapture, millennium, and heaven, and "Theological Systems," i.e. covenant theology and dispensationalism. There is also a concluding glossary defining fifteen terms.

The list of topics shows Sailhamer's dispensational interests, but he does do an admirable job in presenting various positions in such a brief space. The volume, as the entire series, would do well in a church library.

Studies

A. Ronald E. Clements, an British Baptist and emeritus professor in London, has written on aspects of the prophets for a number of years. In a 1996

he collected fifteen of these studies and published them together with an introduction in which he provides an overview of 'The Interpretation of Old Testament Prophecy, 1965-1995.'⁵ Clements' own work provides a useful entrée into the field over this period, since he is one of the major contributors. His introduction focuses on four major issues of the period, from critical studies of the prophets (what kind of literature are their writings?), Isaiah (unity/diversity, historical background), formation of the literary form of the prophets' writings, and interpretation of the prophets.

The essays themselves are collected into six parts. The first concerns the historical and political background of some of the prophecies, as well as the messianic hope, the second explores aspects of the interpretation of Isaiah (7:10-17 and its messianic interpretation, Deutero-Isaiah's development of earlier themes, and the book's unity), the third, Jeremiah (1-25 and the Deuteronomistic History, and hope in the book), the fourth, Ezekiel (prophecy in crisis times, and redactional history of chapters 1-25). The last two parts look at apocalyptic (the reading of Scripture and the canonical process, and apocalyptic's origins) and the prophetic canon (structuring of the prophetic oracles as a literary device, prophecy as literature and theology, and prophetic editing) respectively.

The book is a fitting summary of the work of a leading scholar in this field. It contains useful material for the serious student of the prophets, and should find a place on all seminary and Bible college library shelves. There is material of interest to the pastor, but the more scholarly nature of the work would probably mean that her book funds could better be spent elsewhere. Also, since the articles are all reprints, they all are available from the original sources.

B. The Israeli scholar Uriel Simon has also produced a volume of seven collected essays on the prophets, all but one published previously.⁶ Simon teaches at Bar-Ilan University in Israel and directs the Institute of Jewish Bible Research there. His goal in this volume is to provide a literary reading of the text, paying special attention to what the narrator says and how he says it. This type of study is based on the objective text more than any putative sources, whether literary or historical. Factuality is secondary to literary craft in this type of study.

This series of studies goes beyond others reviewed here in that it involves the 'former prophets,' the historical books which provide the background for the 'latter' or writing prophets. The stories he studies are: Samuel's birth (1 Sam 1:1-28; 2:11a, 18-21) and call (1 Sam 3), Saul and the witch at Endor (1 Sam 28:3-25), David's confrontation by Nathan (2 Sam 10:1-

12:31), the episode of the young prophet and the old man of God (1 Kings 13:1-32a + 2 Kings 23:16-18), Elijah versus Baal (1 Kings 17-19), and Elisha and the Shunemite woman (2 Kings 4:1-8:6). All of these episodes show the importance of prophetic actions, providing a needed foil to the idea that they were just men of words.

This type of study is different from a commentary, in that it looks at a story as story, seeing it in its unity rather than as simply a collection of constituent parts. Plot and character play a larger role than do individual words and historical details, the grist of a commentary. This final form type of analysis is a welcome addition to, and even an advance over, studies which analyze and dissect a text to death. Here its life and vitality are explored. This is a technical study, however, and uses literary jargon and linguistic description which will need some work by the uninitiated in order to be able to understand. An interesting element for most readers of this review is the common reference to Jewish interpretations of the stories, and aspect which is too often neglected in Christian interpretation.

This volume should be in all libraries interested in biblical and literature studies.

C. A 1997 collection “offers an entrée into the methodological pluralism of biblical studies” (back cover).⁷ It contains 7 chapters by as many authors on topics such as: new looks at prophecy in the Mari archives (Herbert Huffmon of Drew University), the nature of prophetic literature (David Petersen of Iliff School of Theology), rhetoric in Jonah (by the editor from the University of Capetown), the prophet’s religious and social role (David Noel Freedman of UC- San Diego), charisma and the prophets (Ronald Clement, emeritus from Kings College, London), the unity of Isaiah (Rolf Rendtorff of the University of Heidelberg), the conclusion of Joel (by James Crenshaw of the University of North Carolina), and prophecy in art (with illustrations; by Zefira Gitay, an art historian also from Capetown). The book shows that an approach to a text or a genre cannot be monolithic, and that insights can be gained from numerous different vantage points. This book will be for more specialist libraries.

D. Three recent works study different aspects of the prophecy of Isaiah. They show the breadth and depth of topics and questions which can and must be addressed in biblical studies.

1. The broadest of these works is a collection of twenty-eight essays by as many scholars from around the world in honor of the sixty-fifth birthday and retirement in 1996 of the Dutch Catholic scholar W. A. M. Beuken.⁸ This

is a useful and important volume in its own right, and well illustrates the various approaches which can helpfully illuminate a text.

The essays are divided into four sections. The first, 'Isaiah and his Book,' looks at aspects of the biblical book as a whole. Of the four essays in this part, two (by Clements and Hermisson, the latter in German) explore the central, and literarily uniting, motif of Zion, one (by Sweeney) explores Isaiah's reworking of the Davidic covenant in Isaiah, and the fourth (by Gitay), explores the act of reading, building on the author's interest in rhetoric and textual function.

Section two, 'Proto-Isaiah,' consists of eight essays. They illustrate different approaches and breadths of study, ranging from a study of historical information in Isaiah 1-39 (by Schoors), through a suggestion regarding literary origins (of 36-39, by Vermeulen), to analyses of much shorter text sections (1:29-31 as an early example on 'inner-biblical interpretation' of 6:13, by Williamson; the literary unity of 8:19-23, in German by van der Woude; whether 11:1-10 is to be seen as universal or particular, in German by Zenger; the linguistic area of domain analysis applied to 12:1-6, assisting in an appreciation of the communicative function of the text, by van Wieringen; an analysis of metaphor in general, and then concentrating on 25:10a, by Doyle; and a close reading of 27:10-11, by van Grol).

Section three, 'Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah,' includes seven articles. Their interest spans the identity of Deutero-Isaiah (by McEvenue, suggesting a woman, the female identified as the herald in 40:9), history and eschatology in Deutero-Isaiah (where Leene suggests that he 'borrowed the basic structure of his view of ...[these] from the Enthronement Psalms'); a form-critical analysis, using a discourse analysis of 40:12-42:13 to explore lawsuit, debate, and wisdom connections (by Dijkstra); a phrase in 40:20 (van Leeuwen); a close reading of 42:10-12 (by Prinsloo); the Cyrus oracle (44:24-45:7) illuminated by syntax, versification and structure (by Fokkelman); and the structure and redaction of 60:1-63:6 (by de Moor).

Section four, 'Intertextuality and Wirkungsgeschichte,' contains nine articles dealing with aspects of Isaiah being a user of texts produced by others (Gen 1-3 in 65:16b-25, by Steck, and a producer of texts and motifs used by, or at least found in, others (Ezekiel 20:32-44, by Lust; LXX 49:1-6 by van der Kooij; Habakkuk, by van Ruiten; Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-4:19, by Beentjes; Job 16-19, by Bastiaens; the rabbinic Pesiqta de Rav Kahana 16, by Teugels; Matthew's christology [Matt 1:23; 4:15-16], by Weren), and finally, the phrase 'knowing Yahweh' as it occurs throughout the Old Testament, by Vervenne).

While the articles are scholarly, and some quite technical, the breadth of topic should provide material of interest to all readers. Even those without

technical or literary competence in some of the areas will find useful and stimulating information here. Though probably only appearing in academic libraries, the volume does deserve a look by all interested in this, one of the key Old Testament books.

2. A more narrowly defined work by Hugh Williamson of Oxford University investigates the composition and transmission of Deutero-Isaiah.⁹ He opens with a chapter on recent Isaiah study, showing evidence suggesting multiple authorship of the book and categorizing scholarship during the last century into six approaches to the authorship question, in particular as regards First and Second Isaiah. His particular interest for the volume is the “the extent to which, if at all, chapters 40-55 of Isaiah were directly influenced at the point of composition by the form which chapters 1-39 had assumed by that time” (27). In other words, were they originally separate works, or was Deutero-Isaiah (D-I) aware of and influenced in any way by Isaiah of Jerusalem, who he assumes to be two different people. He concludes that not only did D-I know the earlier work which he saw as being prophecy anticipating his own time, so felt free to use and edit earlier material to show the close connection between the periods and the two parts of the literary work. This useful, technical work will need to be consulted by all who are working on Isaiah and the history and development of OT prophecy.

3. The third, and most technical and topically narrow volume explores the subject of word-order, and variations within it, in Deutero-Isaiah.¹⁰ Setting himself within the field, Rosenbaum states that “this study will utilize a functional approach to language, in particular Functional Grammar, as well as insights and terminology from Russian Formalism, Prague School linguistics and Discourse Analysis” (1). The functional approach explores how language serves as a medium of communication, an inductive approach to language study, in contrast to a formal approach which is more deductive. The original language citations, of which there are many, are presented in transliterated Hebrew with accompanying abbreviations designating the syntax of the clause, literal interlinear translations into English, and a more flowing, idiomatic English translation. Linguists will find the work valuable, though the lay reader, and even most specialist biblical scholars will value the work, but probably only after it has been divested of technical jargon. This kind of primary research and analysis is vital, but so is its ‘translation’ into a form usable to others outside the field of technical linguistics. For technical libraries.

E. While studies of the verbal rhetoric have been appearing for some time, analyses of non-verbal rhetoric, such as that undertaken by Kelvin G.

Friebel, are much rarer.¹¹ His is a revised 1989 PhD thesis completed under Michael Fox at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. The author’s choice of Jeremiah and Ezekiel is good, since there are so many sign-acts used in the books. He asks whether the acts were actually performed, or whether they were just a symbolic literary construct, how they communicate, how they fit into rhetorical theory, and how they compared with other, extrabiblical examples of nonverbal communication. He looks at what he reckons is a unique such prophetic act at Mari, as well as numerous non-prophetic acts in the area of the Near East. A further area of exploration which would be fruitful is the iconographic evidence. Since there is much extant material from Mesopotamia during the time when the two prophets were active, a comparison of literary and representational instance of the sign-acts should be mutually illuminating.

F. The minor prophets and their use in the pulpit is the subject of a study by Elizabeth Achtemeier.¹² She is a good choice for writing such a volume due to her academic and practical experience in classroom and pulpit. She recently retired from teaching Bible and homiletics at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. For each prophet, Achtemeier lists 2-3 recommended commentaries, usually including her own, brief historical and theological overviews. She then has several selected passages for which she provides comment regarding their place in the lectionary reading cycle, features to note in the text, and possibilities for preaching. It is a well thought out volume, though each reader would probably think other texts should have been highlighted. Also, it will seem too sparse to most readers, which could also be a goal for the book, to drive the reader back to the text and to the study in order to delve even further into the major themes and truths held in these ‘minor’ prophets.

G. A different kind of study was undertaken by Else Holt for her doctoral research at the University of Aarhus in Denmark.¹³ Due to the tardiness of this review, and the short print runs of such works, it is unfortunately already out of print. The volume is a revision of a thesis finished in 1990 under Knud Jeppesen at the University of Aarhus in Denmark. Its purpose is ‘to make a traditio-historical examination of the traditions about Israel’s past as they appear in the book of Hosea: what is their background, and how does Hosea use them?’ (14). She is thus asking a literary question rather than a historical one. Historical veracity is not a prerequisite of literary use- they are two different categories. She does make the refreshing observation, however, that the burden of proof does lie with those denying the authenticity of one passage or another, in contrast to a strictly minimalist approach which can deny anything not externally verifiable.

The two main historical elements Holt explores are Jacob (Hos 12) and Israel as God's covenant elect. Since she does not hold that the final form of the Pentateuch yet existed until later, she feels that Hosea worked with more fluid traditions in his reinterpretation of the character of Jacob. She determines the following scenario: Hosea uses and interprets traditions known to him; editors (his disciples?) gather these traditions; these editors place them in a framework of exhortation to Judah, showing the nation's history in a positive light and urging the new hearers to learn from it. She also shows that Hosea's discussion of the elect people of the covenant is also based on historical traditions. As part of this study she includes a comparison of the cult of Yahweh with that of Baal, and a study of the word *sidq*.

Holt's work is an important reminder of the separation between historical veracity of statements made in a work and a study of the composition of a work. From a more 'maximalist' position, I would like the affirmation of the former along with a study of the latter, but they are separate issues. The book is suitable for academic collections.

H. The changing person and role of the prophets is the subject of the revised doctoral research which William Schniedewind undertook at Brandeis University.¹⁴ The author traces the shift between the prophet who received and delivered the living 'word of God' during the pre-exilic period to the post-exilic prophet who was charged with receiving and interpreting the word. They moved from oracle to hermeneut. While Schniedewind does not note them, there seem to be parallels to the same shift with the scribes, who also were originally channels of divine revelation but took upon themselves the interpretative role. It is the latter which is condemned in the NT, since they seemed to have held their interpretations to be on a similar level of authority as that of the original divine revelation. His approach is to start with the portrait of prophecy reflected by the Chronicler, whose post-exilic viewpoint upon pre-exilic prophecy proves enlightening.

Schniedewind opens with a detailed analysis of titles used of the prophets, and the inspiration formulae (e.g. 'Thus said the Lord') which they used. Based on these elements, he groups prophetic speeches in order to determine the roles of the prophets and their words. It is here he sees the movement toward inspired interpreter of traditional texts, a role similar to that suggested above by Williamson for the author of Deutero-Isaiah. There are chapters looking at the levitical singers (1 Chron 25:1-6) and their role as 'teaching priests' as relates to the concept of inspiration (concluding that their music was inspired, according to the Chronicler, but that they were not prophets), the relationship between the king, especially David, and prophecy,

and the prophets as historians in their acknowledged use of sources.

The volume is well-written and accessible. It uses unvocalized and untransliterated Hebrew, but translations allow the non-Hebraist access to the discussion. The work will need to be consulted for all those interested in prophecy and the history of the religion of Israel.

I. Larry McQueen published a Pentecostal interpretation of Joel in 1995.¹⁵ He seeks to set the classical Pentecostal text of Joel 3:1-5 (English, 2:28-32) into its OT context before taking the usual hermeneutical step of looking at it through Acts 2. The author first introduces Pentecostal hermeneutics, with emphases on an experiential pre-understanding, Scripture as living, and the place of the community in interpretation. He then sets out his understanding of Joel as a literary unity composed in the early fifth century BC.

One chapter looks to Joel's literary structure and the place in it of the promise of the Spirit's outpouring. It then notes the varied genres of lament, salvation, and judgment, and themes of the day of the Lord and Zion. It then looks at the Spirit promise in light and context of these elements. A second chapter looks at the themes of Joel, particularly that of the Spirit, in the NT (Luke-Acts, Paul, John, Hebrews and Peter). McQueen then traces the use of these themes through the history of Pentecostalism up to the mid-1990's. The book is a useful exercise in textual analysis from one denominational perspective, a task which has many applications for different texts as well as different traditions. The volume will be of interest to Pentecostals, those interested in hermeneutics, and students of both Joel and the Holy Spirit.

J. Richard Schultz explored to important topic of the use of verbal parallels (or quotations) in the prophets in a revision of his 1989 Yale thesis.¹⁶ There are so many apparent quotes in the corpus, and there has never been an adequate method developed to study them, so this is an important endeavor. Following good thesis form, Schultz starts by looking at the history of research. He points out various issues which make the problem especially difficult: dating, textual transmission, prophetic 'schools,' the growth of exegesis, the text and its 'authority,' and canon. In order to develop his own methodology, Schultz looks at 4 non-prophetic literatures: ancient Near Eastern early Jewish, proverbial sayings and others quotations in the OT, and western literature.

Schultz sets out his own method as having three elements: the use of both verbal and syntactic correspondence in order to first identify a quotation, a combination of synchronic and diachronic analysis looking to both historical and literary contexts, and an awareness that a quotation can have varied functions. As a test of his method, Schultz analyses 5 passages from Isaiah

which are either quoted in Isaiah or in other prophetic books. The book is foundational for future study of the OT prophets, and even beyond, since parallels exist beyond their boundaries. The volume needs to be in all theological libraries.

Commentaries

The Twelve

A. A recently inaugurated series, “Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry” recently released a two volume work on the Minor Prophets.¹⁷ Sweeney opens with a currently ‘hot’ topic, the formation of the 12, ably surveying suggestions that it came into being diachronically, over a lengthy time period, or synchronically, all in one period. He admits the importance of the question, but his commentary format proscribes detailed and definitive analysis. Each book is given a lengthy treatment in the commentary proper. This consists of: an overview discussing canonical location, historical background, themes, critical and theological issues; the commentary proper, and a section of further readings, both other commentaries and more detailed studies.

Accessibility to a wide range of readers is kept in mind through transliteration of Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. All should benefit from the careful, readable presentation of suggested interpretations. Sweeney keeps his eye firmly on the OT, not showing interest in latter development of interpretation or use in the NT or the contemporary church. An element of this serviceable set which will distinguish it from many such is its discussion of the interpretational ramifications of the canonical setting of the various books.

B. While not technically a commentary series, an addition to the “Westminster Bible Companion” should be made here.¹⁸ Brown very briefly seeks “to explain the biblical book in its original historical context and explore its significance for faithful living today” (back cover). Aimed at lay readers, it very briefly introduces each book, provides each section of the text in the NRSV, and comments on each section, looking at motifs and themes within the section and their development elsewhere. This is a useful starting point for those wishing to encounter the prophets for the first time, but most will soon want to delve deeper into some of the riches which are available. This volume, and the series, could find a place in church and academic libraries

C. The series “The Forms of the Old Testament Literature” is also not technically a commentary, but rather an introduction to the form critical study

of each biblical book. The first on the minor prophets appeared in 2000.¹⁹ While not a complete commentary, students of the text will find useful information on Nahum through Malachi. Each prophetic book starts with a bibliography covering the entire book, a structural outline and discussion of the content of entire book, as well as discussions of genre, historical and literary setting, and intention, with another briefer bibliography concerning these latter matters. Smaller sections are also analyzed from each of these perspectives, as well as a look at text criticism. The book concludes with a well-annotated glossary of genres and formulas.

There is no actual exegesis or application. The series should be in all academic theological libraries, but most preachers and church teachers would find other resources much more productive for their needs.

Hosea

Two commentaries have recently appeared from T&T Clark in Edinburgh, and show well the British excellence in exegetical work.²⁰ One, an addition to the International Critical Commentary series, explores Hosea.²¹ In it A.A. Macintosh of St John's College, University of Cambridge, provides a careful and extremely detailed analysis of this important prophecy, concentrating especially upon text critical issues, which is one of the strengths of the series. The introduction, covering almost one hundred pages, spends thirteen of these on text critical sources. Comment on these is also included in the discussion of every passage in the commentary itself.

The series itself started almost a hundred years ago, but only produced volumes on some the biblical books. The last few years have seen its rebirth, with some of the gaps being filled, and replacements written for previous volumes. In the Old Testament series, Jeremiah has been covered in two volumes by William McKane.²²

The volume starts with a brief overview of the book's contents, and an extensive bibliography of twenty-seven pages. An introduction covers canonical location, language (reflecting the northern prophet's own idiolect), form and style, composition (a literary work, transmitted and effected by Judean redactors), historical background (reflecting the period 750-720 BC), Hosea's thought/theology, and has a time-table of the period.

The commentary proper consists of the author's own translation of a verse at a time. Notes on the translation, generally Hebrew usage and grammar, uses untransliterated and untranslated Hebrew. The following comment section is more accessible, however, using transliteration and translation. The comment is sensible and thorough in matters linguistic and historical, though those seeking theological application will need to look elsewhere. Each section

concludes with the evidence from other texts and versions.

This is an excellent and useful representative of this kind of technical commentary. While mainly directed toward the scholarly community, interested students and pastors will also find material of use, even though this would not be the first commentary on the book to which they would most naturally refer. The price will most probably limit its use in other than libraries, but all serious seminaries and Bible colleges should have it, and the entire series.

Joel

A. A resuscitation of the venerable “New Century Commentary” is being undertaken by Sheffield Academic Press. A new volume on the series is on Joel and Amos by Richard Coggins, formerly of King’s College, London.²³ Coggins begins by discussing the concept of ‘the twelve,’ and then briefly explores issues of dating. He proposes that both the prophecies were only brought together in the second century BC, though some of their elements may have circulated earlier, even, for Amos ‘possibly from a time when Israel had its own king’ (7). For each prophet there is a specific introduction concerning issues of date, authorship, unity, genre, etc., followed by the commentary proper. It proceeds verse by verse expounding on matters historical, textual, lexical, and literary. Any Hebrew used is in transliteration so all should find it usable. For those seeking a competent, mainline approach to these two books in a manageable size, Coggins will serve well.

B. A more theological and applicational approach from an evangelical perspective is provided by David Prior in “The Bible Speaks Today” series.²⁴ The series sets itself the task of falling between the sermon (contemporary and accessible but light on exegesis) and the commentary (exegetical but without an eye to practicality and readability). It well fills a needed niche, while not denying the critical importance of both of the other genres. While not a traditional commentary, Prior does keep one eye firmly on the ‘first horizon’ of the biblical text, seeking to determine, as far as possible, date, author and setting. He also keeps his other eye on the ‘second horizon’ of contemporary application. He is quite comfortable looking to the NT in a much fuller way than most OT commentators, and also few there are who refer to *Schindler’s List* and UNICEF figures on atrocities to children in Rwanda. Preacher and teacher will greatly appreciate Prior’s efforts, and it should serve as a reminder to even the most serious scholar that there should be at least some practical relevance to even the most esoteric of study. These prophets do indeed have much to say to us in our own lives of uncertainty and atrocity.

Amos

A new edition of a commentary by Gary Smith, professor of OT at Midwestern Baptist Seminary in Kansas City.²⁵ This edition brings the bibliography up to date, and incorporates it more fully into the discussion by greatly expanding the number of footnotes, especially in the introduction. Smith does an excellent job in interpreting this very important book against its historical, geographical and religious background. Pastors and students would be well served in having this as a primary resource for studying the book, and it would find a useful place in seminary, college, and even some church libraries. The new publishers are to be commended, as are the original publishers, for establishing such an occasional series for commentaries of excellence which have not been commissioned for some established, ongoing series.

Jonah

The Anchor Bible series provides biblical commentary from across the theological spectrum, from conservative to liberal, Protestant, Jew and Catholic. Jonah, belatedly noted here, appeared in 1990 from the pen of the department chair in religion at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.²⁶ He, as one with interest in the language and history of Mesopotamia, is a good choice for this prophet. He views the book as a composite with unifying features. As regards dating, he surveys 4 different kinds of evidence which have been brought to bear, coming tentatively down to a post-exilic date. He also has brief sections on the use of Jonah in Jewish and Christian liturgy. Sasson sprinkles the commentary with special discussions of such matters as ancient storms, animals in narratives, and Hebrew poetry. He then concludes the body of the book with a discussions of genre or literary classification, and also of Hebrew narrative art, very useful questions to ask of all writing, but particularly of Jonah.

The book contains much transliterated Hebrew, not all with proximate translation, some will find it heavy going. There is much here to justify the care and diligence needed in reading, so this book should not be ignored by any interested in Jonah. It, and the its series, needs to be in every serious theological library.

Micah

Also from Britain is the commentary on Micah by William McKane, Scottish emeritus professor at St Andrew's University.²⁷ The volume seems to be self-standing, not part of a series, even though the publisher is home for the esteemed "International Critical Commentary" series. It is an odd book, starting

in without preamble on suggested textual additions. The author states his compositional thesis to be “that only Micah 1-3... is to be assigned to the eighth century prophet Micah, that the book of Micah bridges the centuries and that its history spans the pre-exilic, the exilic and the post-exilic periods” (7). He suggests a redaction history for the collection, and gives it several different *Sitze-im-Leben*, from the original 8th century prophecies to their use by exilic and post-exilic writers as a source for liturgical laments at the fall of the nation.

The commentary proper is accessible mainly to scholars, since Hebrew and Greek scripts are used, as are untranslated foreign quotes. The work is especially strong on text criticism, one of the special interests of the author, as well as the history of interpretation. Specialist libraries will find a place for this volume.

An established team of commentators, Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, have co-authored the Anchor Bible Commentary on Micah.²⁸ Like their other joint works (commentaries on Hosea and Amos in the same series) it is thorough and exhaustive in its coverage. This is illustrated by its 12 page index of authors cited, and its 67 page bibliography which, while claiming not to be exhaustive, is a goldmine of resources for those studying the book.

The frontal material includes a time line of kings and events from the period reflected in Micah (mid-eighth to late sixth centuries BC), a synoptic date chart of five kings (Uzziah/Azariah, Jeroboam, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah) mentioned by 4 prophets (Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah) as determined by 7 contemporary experts on the time period, and two maps. The introduction proper looks at text, canonical placement, contents of the constituent parts of the book, the traditional divisions of the book as found in early manuscripts in Greek and Hebrew, the book’s organization, previous studies and research methodologies, the relationship between Micah and Jeremiah (which share numerous items of vocabulary and theme), the book’s literary integrity (“the book as a whole shows some signs of overall integration,” 27), and scribal transmission.

The commentary itself is exhaustive in matters linguistic, historical, sociological, and philological. Poetics is also an interest of both authors, so it receives attention as well. Hebrew is almost always transliterated, as is Greek, usually with a translation close enough to allow even non-linguists to follow the argument, though some of the linguistic points themselves are esoteric enough to be beyond most lay readers. One of the strengths of the authors is placing the interpretation of the text within the context of the history of scholarship, so their references to others are numerous. This volume, and the series to which it belongs, needs to be in every serious biblical studies library.

Nahum

The *Historical Commentary on the Old Testament* is a good series, judging by the previous volume reviewed in this journal,²⁹ and the volume on Nahum does honor to the series.³⁰ The author teaches at the Theological University in Kampen and at the Free University in Amsterdam, continuing the Dutch tradition of the preceding volume and of the series editors. The series projections show wider scope than this, with a wide range of recognized scholars taking part. The author takes Nahum to be a pseudonym of a writer in Jerusalem about 660 BC, using earlier writings of Isaiah and the Psalms as well as Mesopotamian literature. Based on strophic analysis, he sees the entire book as 'a well-structured unity' (5). Spronk looks briefly at the book's theological context and the history of its interpretation before moving to the commentary proper.

The latter contains the author's translation, a section entitled 'essentials and perspectives' which discusses genre, historical setting, and theology. The 'scholarly exposition' which follows includes a bibliography with a history of exegesis and the author's own exegesis proceeding from canto (e.g. 1:1-11) through canticle (e.g. 1:1-3a) through strophe (e.g. 1:1) to word. Individual Hebrew words and phrases are given in Hebrew script which is usually unvocalized and untransliterated, so some of the argument will be beyond those without some linguistic fluency. The volume is especially strong in literary and philological material, though all with a serious interest in Nahum will need to consult it.

Habakkuk

Francis I. Andersen also recently published an Anchor Bible commentary on Habakkuk (see Micah above).³¹ It follows the form of the series, and exhibits the same strengths as have already been mentioned. He does provide useful excursions on aspects of Hebrew poetry, including its language, use of verbs, chiasmus, scansion, and items which occur once in a passage but have double-duty grammatical functions, as well as a useful look at the categories of grammatical gender, specifically as it relates to *ruahi*, 'wind, spirit.' This volume is necessary for all serious students of Habakkuk.

Zephaniah

Another Anchor Bible volume has recently been published by Adele Berlin, who teaches Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern literature at the University of Maryland, College Park.³² Her contribution is much more modest in scope than other of this series mentioned here. In addition to the usual format of the series, she is cognizant of, and cites from, Jewish commentary on the

book. She also has useful sections on intertextuality, author and date (an implied or fictive author to whom the book was ascribed in the post-monarchy period) and historical setting (the 7th century reign of Josiah). She does helpfully point out that those who date the author and events as portrayed in the text itself do not have to ask the same questions as those who put post-exilic words into a pre-exilic setting. The comments are useful, though their relative brevity (covering less than 90 pages) might lead some to other commentators for a fuller treatment, or they might be seen as a refreshing breeze after going through all of the detail of some of the previously mentioned works.

Zechariah and Malachi

The well-established, mainline commentary series 'The Old Testament Library,' is represented by a volume covering Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi written by David Petersen, professor at Iliff School of Theology in Denver.³³ It concludes a work published in its first part over a decade ago, and represents the more liberal end of the theological spectrum.³⁴ The latter does not come through too strongly here, since on any reckoning, the prophecies are relatively late. Petersen dates them to the Persian period (late sixth-early fifth centuries BC). He does a very good job in providing a historical, religious and social picture of that period, drawing on recent scholarship based on textual and artifactual resources. He brings out such points as the multiple Yahweh temples of the period, indicating that God was worshiped in places other than the Jerusalem Temple. There also seems to be evidence of religious syncretism at these shrines as well.

Petersen also analyzes the literary structure and form of the prophecies. He sees Zechariah 9-14 as a separate work than 1-8, consisting of a collection of 'originally diverse material.' Malachi he sees as an example of the diatribe genre, similar to a dialogue, using only the words of one party, with quotes from the other party. The analysis helps in understanding the book.

Following his own translation with notes on textual and grammatical matters, Petersen presents an interpretation of the text itself. Hebrew is transliterated and usually also translated. The commentary is a good look at the book as it fits into the Old Testament, with generous citations of illustrative OT passages. Those who look for comment on later, New Testament referents will be disappointed, however. All academic biblical studies libraries should have this book, and it will repay consultation by those interested in these two passages.

From a completely different theological tradition comes the Malachi volume in the Anchor Bible by Andrew E. Hill, who teaches at Wheaton College.³⁵ It is good to see increasing evangelical involvement in such high-

profile commentary series. His preliminary material is much lengthier than is regular, with a useful glossary and extended discussions of literary (authorship, unity, genre, structure, form, literary features [with 25 different ones identified], message, and theology) and historical aspects relevant to the book, dating the prophetic oracles (near 500 BC; the discussion is supplemented by an appendix indicating the range of 7 different dating positions held by some 75 scholars), Malachi in the NT and in subsequent liturgy. Hill also includes very useful appendixes on: an analysis of the postexilic prophets based on a typological linguistic model initially developed by Robert Polzin and refined by Hill, a discussion of intertextuality or textual interrelationships between Malachi and other books, and the vocabulary of Malachi. This especially rich literary analysis, accompanied by good historical and linguistics analysis, makes it a worthy addition to this series, and a necessity in all theological libraries.

Endnotes

1. For a more detailed overview of the state of play of prophetic studies over the last quarter century, see David W. Baker, "Pondering the Prophets," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies*, ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House/Leicester: Apollos, 1999, 266-294.
2. E. W. Heaton, *A Short Introduction to the Old Testament*. Oxford/Rockport, MA, 1977, 1996. xi + 202 pp., paper, \$13.99.
3. *Mysterious Messengers: A Course on Hebrew Prophecy from Amos Onwards*. London: SPCK, 1997/ Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998. 214 pp., paper, \$18.00.
4. John H. Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998. 93 pp., paper, \$6.99.
5. Ronald E. Clements, *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracle to Canon*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996. x + 278 pp. hardcover, \$29.00. The introduction is found on pp. 1-19.
6. Uriel Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, trans. Lenn J. Schramm. Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. xx + 363 pp, hardcover, \$49.95.

Old Testament Prophecy Recent Publications

7. Yehoshua Gitay, ed., *Prohecy and Prophets: The Diversity of Contemporary Issues in Scholarship*. Semeia Studies. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997. viii + 174 pp., paper, \$24.95.
8. J. van Ruiten and M. Vervenne, ed., *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A.M. Beuken*. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium CXXXII; Leuven: University Press/Peeters, 1997. xx + 540 + 7 pp., paper, np.
9. H.G.M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), xviii + 306 pp., cloth, \$65.00.
10. Michael Rosenbaum, *Word-Order Variation in Isaiah 40-55: A Functional Perspective*. Studia Semitica Neerlandica; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1997. xii + 259 pp., paper, \$63.00.
11. Kelvin G. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign Acts: Rhetorical Nonverbal Communication*. JSOTSup 283. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999. 535 pp., cloth, \$95.00.
12. Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Preaching from the Minor Prophets*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. xii + 143 pp., paper, \$14.00.
13. Else Kragelund Holt, *Prophesying the Past: The Use of Israel's History in the Book of Hosea*. JSOTS 194; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995. 160 pp., cloth, \$41.00.
14. William M. Schniedewind, *The Word of the Lord in Transition: From Prophet to Exegete in the Second Temple Period*. JSOTS 197; Sheffield Academic Press, 1995. 275 pp., cloth, \$41.00.
15. Larry R. McQueen, *Joel and The Spirit: The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneut*. Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 8. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995. 125 pp., paper, \$14.95.
16. Richard L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotations: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets*. JSOTSup 180. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999. 395 pp., cloth, \$88.00.

17. Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000. xlii + 802 pp., cloth, \$89.90.
18. William P. Brown, *Obadiah through Malachi*. WBC. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. xii + 209 pp, paper, \$17.00.
19. Michael H. Floyd, *The Minor Prophets*, Part 2. FOTL XXII. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. xviii + 651 pp., paper, \$49.00.
20. The second is McKane's work on Micah discussed below.
21. A.A. Macintosh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of Hosea*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997. xcix + 600 pp., cloth, \$69.95.
22. W. McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2 vol. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986, 1996.
23. Richard James Coggins, *Joel and Amos*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000. xii + 170 pp., paper, \$14.95.
24. David Prior, *The Message of Joel, Micah & Habakkuk: Listening to the Voice of God*. Leicester/Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998. 279 pp., paper, \$14.99.
25. Gary V. Smith, *Amos, A Mentor Commentary*. Gaenies House, Fearn, Ross-shire IV20 1TW, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1998; originally Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989. 398 pp., hardcover, \$29.99.
26. Jack M. Sasson, *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation*. AB 24B; New York: Doubleday, 1990. xvi +368 pp, cloth, \$32.50.
27. William McKane, *The Book of Micah: Introduction and Commentary*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998. xiv + 242 pp., cloth, \$49.95.
28. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible 24E. New York: Doubleday, 2000. xxv + 637 pp., cloth, \$42.50.
29. Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus I*. HCOT; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993, reviewed in *ATJ XXVIII* (1996) 100 .

Old Testament Prophecy Recent Publications

30. Klaas Spronk, *Nahum*. HCOT; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1997. xxii + 153 pp., paper, np .
31. Francis I. Andersen, *Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible 25. New York: Doubleday, 2001. xxii + 387 pp., cloth, \$45.00.
32. Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 25A; New York: Doubleday, 1994. xxii + 165 pp., cloth, \$29.00.
33. David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*. OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995. xxii + 233 pp., cloth, \$29.00.
34. David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8: A Commentary*. OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.
35. Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 25D; New York: Doubleday, 1998. xlv + 436 pp., cloth, \$37.95.