

## **OT COMMENTARIES FOR BIBLE EXPOSITORS, 1987-92<sup>1</sup>**

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*Recent years have witnessed the publishing of an abundance of commentaries on OT books of the Bible. A survey of such volumes published from 1987 through 1992 can be quite beneficial to one's study of the Bible for either public presentation or personal use. An annotated bibliography noting the books' purposes and evaluating how well the authors have provided comments to help expositors is a good way to look quickly at a large number of sources. After a survey of the individual works, a classification and ranking of books on Genesis illustrates a good way to compare the volumes with each other by dividing them into categories according to their types of treatment and rating them according to the quality of their explanations.*

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<sup>1</sup>Editor's note: The volumes and annotations in this article have been selected from a larger annotated bibliography compiled by Professor Rosscup. Recently revised, updated, and enlarged (1993 revision of a 1983 ed.), this larger work includes approximately 1,300 individual commentaries or sets of commentaries with annotations on all sixty-six books of the Bible, the volumes deemed to be the most helpful for expositors and teachers of the Word based on the compiler's thirty-five years of seminary involvement and teaching. The unabridged bibliography is available through Grace Book Shack at the same address as *The Master's Seminary Journal*. This article has selected works from the last five years, 1987-92, and pertaining to the OT only. An article in the Fall 1993 issue of *TMSJ* will deal similarly with NT works.

In an era of mushrooming information, publishing of tools for biblical study has not lagged behind literature in other fields. In a seemingly never-ending stream, books dealing with the Bible continue to appear. That has evoked what is perhaps the most frequently asked kind of question by those who thirst for a deeper understanding of the Word: "What is the best commentary on Genesis?" or "What is the best book for studying Old Testament backgrounds?" or "What is the best commentary set on the Old Testament?"

Such a question deserves a knowledgeable answer because the accuracy and consequent effectiveness of someone's sermon or Bible-study lesson may hinge on the advice given. Yet it is not an easy question to answer. One reason it is not easy to answer is the rapidity with which new volumes are appearing.

The following remarks cite recent works that, for some reason, deserve such special attention. This is not intended to be an exhaustive listing of recent works, but the number of study tools cited should furnish a beginning answer to readers' questions such as the ones cited above.

The descriptions are limited to some of the relatively recent volumes and sets, under the assumption that many will already know the merits of many of the older works. Anyone interested in a complete annotated bibliography should consult the information in note 1 above.

## COMMENTARIES ON THE WHOLE BIBLE

Several commentaries on the whole Bible have appeared and can be divided into two groups: those that follow a "synthesis" approach and those that are more analytical.

### *Works That Synthesize*

*The Bible Speaks Today*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986` .

The volumes in this series furnish surveys to Bible books in a lucid manner that explains passages concisely, deals with some problems, and shows the practical import of principles. Writers often draw on considerable scholarly help, resulting in a competent evangelical product. Joyce Baldwin does *The Message of Genesis 12-50* (1986). Derek Kidner contributes *Love to the Loveless* (Hosea) and *A Time to Mourn and a Time to Dance* (Ecclesiastes). Michael Wilcock is fairly helpful on Chronicles, John Stott very good on Galatians and Ephesians, R. C. Lucas vital on Colossians and Philemon. The series has other contributors and is helpful for lay readers and pastor-teachers desiring a readable and refreshing tracing of the progression of thought.

Raymond Brown, *et al*, eds. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990. 1,475 pp.

This updates *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* that appeared twenty-two years ago by incorporating the results of recent scholarship. It represents some of the cream of Roman Catholic scholarship in commentary and special articles on topics such as the Pentateuch, wisdom literature, prophetic books, apocalyptic, Hebrew poetry, apocryphal sources, Dead Sea Scrolls, other Jewish literature, text and versions, modern OT criticism, biblical archaeology, and religious institutions of Israel. About sixty percent of the material is new.

Walter Elwell, ed. *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989. 1,229 pp.

The purpose of this one-volume work is to help those without technical training to understand Scripture, an aim held in common with several other commentaries not written with scholars in mind. Contributors represent a variety of viewpoints, unity of content not being the goal (p. viii). Some of the better portions are on Genesis and Ezekiel (Victor Hamilton), Leviticus and Ezra/Nehemiah (Louis Goldberg), Joshua and Judges (Andrew Bowling), Ruth (R. K. Harrison), 1 and 2 Samuel (Herbert Wolf), Proverbs (R. K. Harrison), James (Douglas Moo), and the Johannine Epistles (James B. DeYoung).

James L. Mays, ed. *Harper's Bible Commentary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. 1,326 pp.

Here, eighty-two scholars from the Society of Biblical Literature provide introductory essays and commentaries. The work's essays deal with such topics as reading and interpreting the Bible, OT context, context of Apocrypha and NT, how the Bible relates to literature of the ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman era, Jewish interpretation, and introductions to sections of the Bible such as Psalms and Wisdom, with a bibliography at the end of each. The work leans toward the JEDP theory about some OT books, Canaanite religious ideas, the view that Genesis 1-2 has two creation accounts, and other liberal theories.

John Phillips. *Bible Explorer's Guide*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1987. 274 pp.

This general introductory work, evangelical in nature, has two sections, Hermeneutics and Helps. Under the first are twenty-two divisions dealing with Words, Figures of Speech, Culture, Context, Types, Parables, Prophecy, Devotional Rule, Application, Christ the Ultimate Key, and others. The second has a quick survey of the Bible, summary of Bible history, symbols, helpful books, and the like.

Phillips, a premillennialist, is well-known for his *Exploring the New Testament*, a series of clear practical expositions of key books like John and Romans.

Lawrence O. Richards. *The Teacher's Commentary*. Wheaton: Victor, 1987. 1,110 pp.

This is an evangelical effort by a Dallas Seminary graduate to survey each book of the Bible and provide special material to help teachers of Sunday Schools, Bible study leaders, and pastors teach on different sections. The special features include illustrations and applications, definitions of biblical and doctrinal terms, background, maps and charts, and teaching suggestions. Coverage of sections is of a very general nature that picks out some key points and skips many others. Richards devotes five and one-half pages to the treatment of Psalms 74-150. Proverbs 10-31 and Ecclesiastes receive about the same. The amount of material that is bypassed will perhaps agitate readers. The page format is in two-columns of very readable type.

#### *Works That Analyze*

Frank E. Gaebelin, gen. ed. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. 12 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979-92.

This is the top general work of scholarly evangelicalism by seventy-two writers who are from several countries and hold to divine inspiration of Scripture and premillennialism (for the most part). The NIV is the basis for their comments. The Associate Editor is J. D. Douglas, and consulting editors are Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, James Boice, and Merrill C. Tenney. The work reflects a sensitivity to recent literature, issues, and views on exposition. Some very skilled and established scholars are among the contributors. Writing on introductory matters are Gleason Archer, Jr., G. W. Bromiley, Donald Guthrie, R. K. Harrison, Carl Henry, Harold Hoehner, Walter Kaiser, Bruce Metzger, Roger Nicole, Robert L. Saucy, Andrew Walls, Bruce Waltke, Donald Wiseman, and Edwin Yamauchi. Scholars that write on NT books include M. C. Tenney (John), R. N. Longenecker (Acts), James Boice (Galatians), Homer Kent, Jr. (Philippians), Robert L. Thomas (Thessalonians), D. E. Hiebert (Titus), Leon Morris (Hebrews), Edwin Blum (Peter and Jude), and Alan Johnson (Revelation).

David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, gen. eds. *Word Biblical Commentary*. Waco, TX: Word, 1982` .

This recent series is sometimes liberal and sometimes evangelical. Many of the projected fifty-two volumes that will compose the set are already available. An imposing group of about

fifty scholars, many of them internationally known, are contributing commentaries. John D. W. Watts is editing the OT, and Ralph P. Martin the NT. Each writer does his own translation of the biblical text and accommodates his exegesis to this. The technical scholarly matter is understandable and relevant to seminary students (in some cases, more advanced ones) and pastors as well as professional scholars and teachers. The introductions and commentaries on individual books incorporate a fair amount of detail as well as excurses on major problems and lengthy bibliographies of books and journal literature. In the verse-by-verse comments, Hebrew and Greek words appear and are followed by an explanation of their sense. Different views in a passage often receive detailed discussion, e.g., F. F. Bruce on 1 Thess 4:4 regarding whether *skēuōw* (*skēuos*, "vessel") refers to a man's wife or his body. The following are among the other contributors: Gordon Wenham (Genesis, 2 vols.), Peter C. Craigie (Psalms 1-50), Marvin Tate (Psalms 51-100), Leslie Allen (Psalms 101-150), G. R. Beasley-Murray (John), James D. G. Dunn (Romans), Ralph Martin (2 Corinthians, James), Richard Longenecker (Galatians), Robert Mounce (Pastoral Epistles), and William Lane (Hebrews). This venture, like any other of its kind, varies widely in quality from volume to volume.

#### COMMENTARIES ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

Some commentary sets deal only with the Old Testament.

##### *A Work That Synthesizes*

Paul N. Benware. *Survey of the Old Testament*. Everyman's Bible Commentary; Chicago: Moody, 1988. 267 pp.

The author was a professor of Bible and Theology at Moody Bible Institute and now is on the faculty of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. The surveys are brief and sweeping and furnish a lay person with a quick glimpse that is helpful. Yet they do not deal with as much or provide nearly the help of other surveys such as that of Leon Wood.

##### *A Work That Analyzes*

*Old Testament Library*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985.

This is a scholarly series steeped in critical issues, views, and reasoning that because of their liberal bent are displeasing to staunch evangelicals. The works can provide help in some places, but too often they are of no help. Some volumes are better in explaining passages in ways that conservatives can appreciate. Frequent examples of this occur in Joseph Blenkinsopp's treatment of Ezra-Nehemiah. On the other hand, many parts have their greatest usefulness among readers

of a very liberal orientation. G. von Rad on Genesis and Deuteronomy and Robert P. Carroll on Jeremiah exemplify these.

#### COMMENTARIES ON THE PENTATEUCH

*JPS Torah Commentary*. New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989-93.

Nahum Sarna's commentaries on Genesis and Exodus and Baruch Levine's on Leviticus are surveys, but Jacob Milgrom's treatment of Numbers is massive (520 pp.). Thorough study in a wide range of sources marks this series, especially the work of Milgrom. The commentary provides an explanation of passages that is typical of Jewish scholars. Jeffrey Tigay's volume on Deuteronomy is scheduled for release in 1993 and is not available for this review. The theological orientation of the commentaries is liberal, but the volumes contribute to the understanding of many points where liberal or conservative factors are not in question.

G. H. Livingston. *The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment*. 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987. 322 pp.

A professor of OT at Asbury Theological Seminary since 1953 has produced this readable, comprehensive, well-respected, evangelical work. He discusses peoples of the ancient Near East (Sumerians, Assyrians, Amorites, Egyptians, Hyksos, Hittites, Philistines, Canaanites, and others). Among other things, he describes relevant ancient scripts, literature (compared with the Pentateuch), concepts, practices, schools of thought on Pentateuchal studies, Mosaic authorship, Dead Sea Scroll relevance, the JEDP theory, literary criticism, form criticism, and canonical criticism. The last chapter discusses the canonization of the Pentateuch and factors relevant to it. Subject and Scripture indexes help locate information on various topics and verses.

John H. Sailhamer. *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992. 522 pp.

An associate professor of OT, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, begins his volume with an introduction to the Pentateuch that covers background, authorship, sources, literary form, structure, purpose, theology, basic principles, and other matters (1-79). Then he gives a fairly detailed, well-outlined survey of each book, section by section (e.g. Genesis occupies 81-240 and Exodus 241-322). He concentrates on style and structure in relating details to their context. Besides providing surveys of and connecting thoughts in the text, he treats major problems such as Gen 1:1-2 and 6:2, 4 (the sons of God).

He incorporates the Hebrew text skillfully and is usually lucid. He holds a high evangelical view of the integrity and unity of the biblical accounts. He is thoroughly aware of literature on relevant issues as reflected in his sometimes very substantial documentation. Even though one may not agree with all the conclusions, this is still, on the whole, one of the most competent, informative books on the Pentateuch. It will be very helpful for teachers, pastors, and students. In an appendix Sailhamer lists all the commands of the law in various categories and gives examples where Jesus and NT writers derive principles (482-516). Discussions of many verses are insightful, e.g., the validity of a Messianic reference in Deut 18:18 (456). The same author furnishes more detail on Genesis in his commentary on the book in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*.

Herbert Wolf. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*. Chicago: Moody, 1991. 276 pp.

Wolf is associate professor of OT, Wheaton Graduate School. He provides an evangelical discussion of introductory aspects such as the fivefold division of the Pentateuch, unity, impact on other OT and NT books, theology (i.e., God, man, salvation, the Messiah, faith, atonement, covenants), the Samaritan Pentateuch, literary characteristics, and Moses' significance. He argues for Moses as the main author and for the unity of the Pentateuch. Then he deals with each of the five books. In Genesis, he discusses key problems in 1:1-2:3, the sons of God in 6:2, 4, the extent of the flood, and other issues. Sometimes when discussing differing views, as on the length of "day" in Genesis 1, it is difficult to discern the preferred view of the author (84-88). The same applies in his lengthy comments on the sons of God (97-100). A conclusion to all the interpretive problems would have improved helpfulness, as is illustrated in Wolf's stated preference for an early date of the exodus (148). Some of the problem discussions are excellent, as in the case of the much-attacked numbers for Israel in Numbers 2 (148-52). Overall, the book is well worth reading, though surveys of Pentateuchal books are shorter than Sailhamer's. It contains a good bibliography (223-61). Indices of subjects, authors, and Scriptures also add value.

#### COMMENTARIES ON GENESIS

The remainder of this commentary survey will focus on individual books or groups of books of the OT. As a general rule, this discussion will omit works already alluded to as parts of sets.

Victor P. Hamilton. *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*. NICOT;

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990. 522 pp.

This first of two volumes on Genesis has a very informative introduction (about one hundred pages), surveying the history of critical theories but without reaching a firm conclusion on authorship. It has twenty-five pages of bibliography. The treatment of some problems is in detail, examining interpretive issues such as the length of the "days" in Genesis 1. It is thorough in giving the meaning of verses, taking into account biblical usage of words, context, and Near Eastern literature. It is a standout commentary along conservative lines, even covering many subjects relevant to Genesis. Only scholars will grasp some of what Hamilton writes. Others will have to keep rereading patiently to figure his meaning out. The author is indecisive in regard to the "sons of God" (6:2, 4) and in choosing between a local and universal flood. His explanations are at times very good, but at others fall short of adding much light as in the case of the ritual ceremony in Genesis 15. Yet he gives so much data that the reader is bound to benefit.

Allen P. Ross. *Creation and Blessing*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988. 744 pp.

This is a major contribution, stemming from an immense study in relevant literature written recently. Ross gives a broad exposition, section by section, not verse by verse, and handles major problems with expert awareness of views and discussion of arguments. It is a valuable scholarly work that surveys issues and the literature dealing with them.

Claus Westermann. *Genesis: A Commentary*. 3 vols.; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984-86.

The three volumes cover chaps. 1-22, 23-36, and 37-50. This form-critical scholar uses more than 1,500 pages to discuss critical matters, word meanings, history, and theology all in immense detail. By careful study a reader can glean much that is profound and helpful from the three volumes, but some statements will still puzzle him. The commentary portion is often helpful to the scholar. The bibliography supplies considerable assistance, though most entries are German works and few are evangelical. Textual comments and summaries on the history of interpretation of portions like Genesis 14, 15, and 16 are informative. Westermann thinks Genesis 37-50 was a later writing, originating during the period of David and Solomon and added to the rest of Genesis to form a unit. The commentary's low view of the authority of Scripture will disturb the conservative. It often argues against conservative views. It does not endorse the teaching of original sin in Genesis 3. The author devotes much space to theorizing

how the text of Genesis arrived in its present form. Incidentally, a one-volume condensation of this large work is also available (*Genesis, A Practical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987] 338 pp.). The briefer work concentrates on Westerman's personal convictions in a much simpler way, without the technical comments.

Ronald Youngblood. *The Book of Genesis. An Introductory Commentary*. 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991.

This broad exposition is an extensive revision of the first edition of this work (chaps. 12-50 in 1976 and chaps. 1-11 in 1980) by a professor of OT at Bethel Theological Seminary, West. A brief introduction (9-18) upholds Mosaic authorship and a date between 1445-1405 B.C. The author sees no gap in 1:2. He interprets the days of chap. 1 partly in literary order and partly in chronological order. He favors the claim of science that manlike creatures were on earth five million years ago (46), but that man in the Adamic race in a covenant relation with God has a more recent date. He chooses the human view of "sons of God" in Genesis 6 and opts for a local flood. This is a fairly good, very readable survey of Genesis, but does not have the overall value of those by Ross and Sailhamer.

#### BOOK COMMENTARIES ON THE REST OF THE PENTATEUCH

Bernard L. Ramm. *God's Way Out. Finding the Road to Personal Freedom through Exodus*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 1984 and 1987. 166 pp.

This is a simple, clear, running commentary not verse by verse that centers on God's attributes and work, types of Christ and His church, NT truth related to Exodus, and application to life today. Ramm has intriguing chapter titles, sweeping surveys rich in connections to life now, notes on word meanings, and refreshment that warms the heart. Chapter 4 on Moses' excuses and God's answers is entitled, "God Can Use Even You." This popular-level survey is effective in simplifying a long book into three very manageable points: Divine Redemption, Divine Morality (the Law), and Divine Worship. Its contribution is in the perspective of the synthesis that encompasses so much detail.

B. Maarsingh. *Numbers*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. 221 pp.

This volume is lucid, brief, and vigorous in explaining words, phrases, and many issues with a learned grasp of text, exegesis, and ancient customs. Yet the author remains practical and has a freshness that encourages application and growth. Lay readers and even

advanced students will profit from this survey.

James Philip. "Numbers," in *The Communicator's Commentary*. Waco, TX: Word, 1987. 364 pp.

Philip has for a long time been a bright light for the evangelical faith in Scotland, pastoring the Holyrood Abbey Church, Edinburgh. Using good sources and explaining the text conservatively, he also shows practical applications for people today.

Patrick D. Miller. *Deuteronomy*. Interpretation Series; Louisville: John Knox, 1990. 253 pp.

This is a sweeping exposition—not a verse-by-verse discussion—with essays on structure, motifs, and sections in the book. This professor of OT Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary follows the line of many in thinking final redaction took place during Josiah's career. He does not, however, devote much space here to this subject. He has many helpful thoughts on the meaning of the text. His well-organized work aims to help teachers, preachers, and students by commenting on the RSV text. Synopses begin each chapter and orientate readers to the setting, Miller's opinion about the unit of structure under consideration, and how the section of Deuteronomy fits the larger structure of the book. Occasionally his ideas are arbitrary: e.g., "It is highly unlikely that we have here an accurate historical report of words and actions by Moses on the plains of Moab" (25). Yet the volume draws spiritual-life lessons that are quite worthwhile (e.g., chaps. 38-40). The problem for conservatives will be the position that the concern for possession of the land in Deuteronomy is expressed because the book was done centuries later than the wilderness era when Israel was in danger of being uprooted from the land (44). Even in the face of this extreme position, Miller summarizes many helpful things regarding the land (44-52).

#### JOSHUA, JUDGES, RUTH

Dale R. Davis. *No Falling Words. Expositions of the Book of Joshua*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988. 204 pp.

These twenty-one expositions by a former professor of OT at Reformed Theological Seminary furnish evangelical material to help preachers blend sound exegesis, theological substance, interesting exposition, and practical application. Davis groups his chapters under "Entering the Land" (Joshua 1-4), "Taking It" (chaps. 5-12), "Possessing It" (chaps. 13-21), and "Refining It" (chaps. 22-24). The book title comes from 21:45 (cf. 21:14), and the chapter titles are quite creative. These very readable studies do not deal with every verse, but with key

portions from each chapter. At times footnotes cite good sources and add important help. All told, the book is a good survey of Joshua that preachers or lay people can enjoy. It has many ideas to provoke sermons and point to application.

R. Kent Hughes. *Living on the Cutting Edge: Joshua and the Challenge of Spiritual Leadership*. Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1987. 172 pp.

This broad exposition is warm and popular in treating selected chapters from Joshua. Hughes often has good insights on analogies from Israel's victories for growth and victory today, through God's strength. He shows traits for effective leadership. Most lessons are good, but one that disappoints is, "Rahab's lie was a stupendous act of true faith" (37). Well, yes, she lied, and yes, she did have faith. But who says it is necessary to make the lie a part of the faith or faith a part of the lie? Also, on p. 36, Hughes advances the idea that a Christian musters faith out of a glass. In actuality, when a Christian wrongly persuades himself that he has to clutch at certain means to achieve faith, true faith is not generated by human fallacy, but by the Lord using means He can endorse: His Word. He can use us even though a Christian may fail Him by leaning on false means or tracing his effectiveness to the means the Lord may use rather than to the Lord Himself. On the whole, however, the book is usually quite helpful for preaching or just for devotional aims.

Dale R. Davis. *Such a Great Salvation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990. 227 pp.

This is a flowing and popular conservative exposition that is suggestive for pastors who preach individual messages or a series on Judges. Davis deals with problems in footnotes, so he can keep the vital message foremost and point out relevance for today. The book is frequently refreshing in helping a reader to grow in grace. The author keeps spotlighting the beauty of God.

Cyril J. Barber. *Judges, A Narrative of God's Power*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1990. 293 pp.

This is a well-organized and conservative exposition based on much study and skill in showing present relevance of the text. The Dale Davis book is fairly good, but this one is even better as a whole, though Barber does not see impropriety in some of Samson's episodes with women as he interprets the texts. He uses captivating headlines for sections, a vivid flow, arousing descriptions, analogies, illustrations, and applications. He capably handles many problems through notes that sometimes are rather lengthy and meaty. Like

Davis, he is competent, thought-provoking, and often sharp in exposing the contemporary timeliness of the book.

Cyril J. Barber. *Ruth, A Story of God's Grace*. Revision of a 1983 ed.; Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1989. 198 pp.

As with Judges, this conservative exposition is creatively lucid in a way many pastors, students, and lay people will value. It has nine chapters, including footnotes at the end of the work, some with substantial help drawn from wide reading. A section on critical studies (131-47) discusses authorship, date, unity of the genealogy in chap. 4 with the rest of the book, and themes. Using good illustrations occasionally, Barber usually touches on problems briefly, e.g., defending the chastity of Boaz and Ruth in lying near each other and explaining customs.

Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *The Book of Ruth*. NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988. 317 pp.

This professor of Hebrew at Denver Theological Seminary believes that the book dates from Solomon's era—the point to which the genealogy of Ruth 4 reaches—and is a unity including 4:18-22. Using a detailed verse-by-verse approach, Hubbard is thorough and knowledgeable and documents well. He analyzes issues from several perspectives and is very familiar with customs and literature relevant to Ruth. He writes primarily for pastors and lay people.

#### SAMUEL, KINGS, CHRONICLES

John H. Hayes and Paul K. Hooker. *A New Chronology for the Kings of Israel and Judah and Its Implications for Biblical History and Literature*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1988. 112 pp.

These writers from Emory University reject co-regencies, antedating, and emendations. They say that the regnal years for Israel and Judah were dated from the first fall New Year festival when a king was on the throne this New Year switched from Tishri to Nisan during Josiah's reign. They use only Massoretic text numbers and have their own explanations for numbers being inconsistent. They encounter big chronological problems in dealing with several reigns (e.g., 23, 28, 33, 74).

Russell H. Dilday. "1, 2 Kings," in *The Communicator's Commentary*. Waco, TX: Word, 1987. 512 pp.

This president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has given a thoroughly studied, clear, well-illustrated, and well-applied work. It will be of rich assistance to the expositor in

furnishing different views on issues. He includes many footnotes referring the reader to additional helpful sources.

Simon J. DeVries. *1 and 2 Chronicles*. Forms of the Old Testament Literature Series; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989. 439 pp.

This work will illustrate for serious readers advanced in their theological training how a scholar does a form-critical analysis. It also contains discussion of the history of this kind of study. It probes the structure, genre, setting, and aim of each section according to the opinion of DeVries, which a conservative student may choose to profit from or pass by in favor of what he regards as a more defensible view. This type of study can sometimes provide good insights, but it can also be very arbitrary and subjective.

Michael Wilcock. *The Message of Chronicles*. The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1987. 288 pp.

This evangelical approach defends conservative views on a number of problems by viewing the books of Chronicles as error-free. Wilcock sometimes displays clarity, making delightful applications to present-day life. He shows readers why material occurs where it does and how it fits a need there. He is vicar of St. Nicholas Church, Durham, England. His book is worthwhile in developing the principles and movements within the books.

#### EZRA, NEHEMIAH, ESTHER

Joseph Blenkinsopp. *Ezra-Nehemiah*. A Commentary. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988. 366 pp.

The author supports the view that Ezra-Nehemiah gives a continuation of 1 and 2 Chronicles, being authored by the chronicler, an individual or a school. He also holds traditional views regarding the dating of Ezra in 458 B.C. and Nehemiah in 445 B.C. Often his treatment is in a good verse-by-verse style. He has a bibliography for each section, his own translation, textual notes, and a reasonably thorough commentary. He takes "the chronicles of Nehemiah" (1:1) to refer to Nehemiah as the subject, not the author. The author displays an immense awareness of the literature dealing with this period.

James M. Boice. *Nehemiah: Learning to Lead*. New York: Revell, 1988. 219 pp.

One of America's foremost expository pastors, who serves the Tenth Street Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, issues a call to pattern life after Nehemiah's style of leadership. He focuses on traits and shows how they can relate to today. He writes lucidly and uses

illustrations occasionally. His work is suggestive for expositors and provokes spiritual growth in usefulness to God.

Howard F. Vos. *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther*. Bible Study Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. 191 pp.

This is a brief exposition from a conservative who is professor of history and archaeology at King's College. Vos surveys reasonably well and provides help for lay readers especially, those who want a simple, quick study, and for pastors or Bible teachers who need a panoramic look as well as some concise help with problems.

#### JOB

John E. Hartley. *Job*. NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988. 591 pp.

It is good to see this firmly evangelical work, a feature that shows itself in many places. Yet Hartley is sometimes subjective and without necessity does such things as transferring Job 27:13-23 to chap. 25. Generally, his careful handling of the text, syntax, views, and reasoning constitute this as one of the best conservative works on Job.

Roy B. Zuck, ed. *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.

Scholars such as R. Laird Harris, Francis Andersen, Norman Habel, and Don Carson contribute thirty-four chapters (or sketches) on key sections or topics. Zuck himself writes on 19:23-29 and on chap 28. The book's comments represent high expertise on subjects that an expositor will find very instructive while preparing for an individual message or a series on the book.

#### PSALMS

Tremper Longman, III. *How to Read the Psalms*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988. 166 pp.

The features of this evangelical work include discussions of such things as the main types of psalms, the aim of the psalm titles, Davidic authorship, lines of covenant thought, Messianic themes, relevance of psalms in the ministry of Jesus, charm of the psalms for readers today, and parallelism. As examples, Longman examines in detail Psalms 30, 69, and 93. This is a good and smooth-reading recent general introduction on some of the main issues connected with the psalms.

John Phillips. *Exploring the Psalms*. 5 vols.; Neptune, NJ:

Loizeaux, 1985-88.

One of America's fine Bible expositors from Moody Bible Institute's extension department supplies another of his lucid works. He has volumes on other books of the Bible. His outline for each psalm is intently alliterated with many of the points appearing to be quite appropriate. The exposition is broad and sweeping, with many statements that seize the reader's mind and heart. Using this along with their Bible text, preachers will find it suggestive and Christians in general will receive refreshment during their daily worship times because of its clarity and flow.

#### PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, SONG OF SOLOMON

Eldon Woodcock. *Proverbs*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988. 237 pp.

A Dallas Theological Seminary graduate and professor of Bible at Nyack College deals with key topics such as wisdom, fear, human relationships (i.e., adulterous woman, wife, family circle, speech), and counsel for a work ethic. Rightly heeded, the principles Woodcock sets forth in this clear presentation can lead to true success. The book is of special benefit to lay people in their devotional times, but it can prime the pump for preachers too.

James L. Crenshaw. *Ecclesiastes*. Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987. 192 pp.

Crenshaw writes this volume from a liberal perspective, furnishing an example of human rationalism at work on Scripture. In many cases the Duke University scholar in OT wisdom material makes a positive contribution in giving views and reasons by other writers on particular issues, but in many other ways he is disappointing. To him, Ecclesiastes has no reasoned structure, but is randomly arranged (cf. 47). Theologically the work is of little help. He understands the book to have a pessimistic outlook according to which life has no meaning (e.g., 25, 34, 53), causing him to downplay the positive side (20). His own merely human rationalism leads to an explaining away of verses about fearing God (102, 184, 190). He rejects the words, "remember your creator" (12:1), because he takes the statement to read correctly "your wife" in order to fit the context (184-85).

R. N. Whybray. *Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989. 179 pp.

Adept in wisdom literature, the writer finds a positive outlook in the book. God bestows meaning to life, and a person's pursuits have a fulfilling quality only from Him (cf. 27). Whybray furnishes

illumination at many points exegetically, but conservative readers will not always think he does this because he holds a third century B.C. date for writing. He also sees no unified flow through the book, but rather thirty-four unconnected subjects. At times his explanations leave matters insufficiently clear (cf. 127 regarding women in 7:28).

Raymond J. Tournay. *Word of God, Song of Love*. New York: Paulist, 1988. 194 pp.

Tournay has the Song written during the Persian era, but his evidence for this dating is not convincing. He combines two themes or levels of meaning, one about Solomon and his Egyptian wife in lovers' intimacy and the other an allegorical idea of Messiah and the daughter of Zion with her city where she dwells. The second is a Messianic yearning to encourage Jews of the Persian era to believe in the Messianic kingdom to come. It is as if the Messiah is asleep, delaying that new era. Here, Tournay labors the notion that the person sleeping in the Song is the many, not the woman. He has steeped himself in rabbinics and the Hebrew language as well as in scholarly literature on the Song.

#### JEREMIAH, LAMENTATIONS

Walter Brueggemann. *To Pluck Up, to Tear Down: A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1-25*. Revised ICC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988. 222 pp.

Much good detail in this work will help students with the text and with principles for today. Yet the commentary is not especially good in comparison with others. Recurring redactional ideas are a further drawback. Often the author takes passages as having been written and redacted at a later date (e.g., 3:14-18; 24:1-10). The bibliography will provide some help for those who wish to do research on Jeremiah, but these sources are mostly liberal.

W. L. Holladay. *Jeremiah I: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25*. Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986. 682 pp., & *Jeremiah II: Chapters 26-52*. 1989. 543 pp.

Like the works by Carroll and McKane, this is highly respected by the scholarly community as a technical and critical commentary. It is quite beneficial on the text, grammar, structure, synthesis of sections, and literature dealing with relevant issues. A 95-page introduction begins Volume II, along with a bibliography that updates the one in Volume I. This is the most massive of the recent detailed works, totaling over 1,200 pages at more than 800 words per page. Holladay theorizes that 1:1 refers not to the year of Jeremiah's call, but to his

birth, 627 B.C., and uses this as a chronological starting point for the rest of the book. He often connects the themes of passages in Jeremiah with NT verses, and is skeptical about redaction that remodels the book in a Deuteronomistic pattern. Some criticize him for a highly individualistic translation in many passages and his pleading that the original text was the way his emendations propose. In a verse-by-verse commentary he explains more than Carroll or McKane, is masterful in grammar and syntax, and skillful in insights drawn from much study. Yet he retains an intelligible flowing style. Many herald this as the definitive work on Jeremiah to date.

Derek Kidner. *The Message of Jeremiah*. The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1987. 176 pp.

This is a broad exposition of the book that is quite refreshing. Kidner displays his usual high standard of readability, conservatism, conciseness, and directness regarding many issues. Yet he is amillennial on the main prophetic section (chaps 30-33), expecting a spiritual rather than a literal realization.

Iain Provan. *Lamentations*. New Century Bible; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991. 142 pp.

Provan is lecturer in Hebrew and OT studies at the university of Edinburgh. His introduction is informative and up-to-date on views of authorship, date and place, but because he is liberal, he is unable to arrive at a view except that the book was written between the sixth and second centuries B.C. (19). His information is valuable in spite of the fact that he does not believe that a commentary should give the text's meaning. Rather it should be "a catalyst for the reader's own imaginative interaction with it" (29). So usually he does not state his own view and seems unsure the book refers to the fall of Jerusalem or what its setting is (11, 29). Still, one can find much information on verses as to the text and meaning of words. He is of the opinion that Lam 3:21-27 focuses on humble repentance and trust in God's love, yet that chap 5 swings to an attitude opposed to this, reproaching God for unfairness (23). So he feels that the theology of the book is left "ending in a question mark" (24). Many will disagree with him here.

## EZEKIEL

W. A. Criswell. *Expository Sermons on the Book of Ezekiel*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. 269 pp.

This author is a great man and preacher, but this work on Ezekiel is not good in too many places. It is warm and compassionate, and has much practical comment by way of applications for lay people

and pastors. This worthwhile part is helpful, for example, on "Why Study Prophecy?" and "The Preaching of Ezekiel." Another good feature is his appeal based on 18:31 to readers to lay hold of hope in God, casting away transgressions, "for why will ye die?" (22). He embraces premillennialism, but does not defend it well here. He lightly asserts the origin of Satan in chap. 28 and Isaiah 14, but without basing it on evidence. He assumes that chap. 37 teaches bodily resurrection as well as restoration to Palestine and that the northern invader of chap 38 is Russia (215). His strange mixture of views regarding the temple in chaps. 40 ff. is disturbing. It is a literal one with a literal river in Palestine, yet blessings flow from the church, and the river somehow flows throughout the world today, "blessing the deserts of the nations of the world" (227-58). The book is a disappointment.

#### DANIEL

John F. MacArthur, Jr. *The Future of Israel (Daniel 9:20-12:13)*. Chicago: Moody, 1991.

This is a brief premillennial dispensational series on the verses indicated by one of America's most able expository pastors.

John Phillips and Jerry Vines. *Exploring the Book of Daniel*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1990. 279 pp.

This work is a dispensational exposition with clarity of interpretation and practical application to stimulate thought about relevance for today. It does not wrestle deeply with interpretive issues.

#### MINOR PROPHETS

James M. Boice. *The Minor Prophets. An Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983-86. 542 pp.

Boice assigns a catchy title to each chapter or section of the prophets. The large, two-column pages contain much good material on the relevance of the words for then and for now, dealing with such topics as love, repentance, and sincerity (Hosea 6). A prolonged contemplation of these pages and an application of their principles will produce substantial Christian growth. The author could improve the work by being more definite sometimes in specifying in what framework God will bless Israel in the future (e.g., Hosea 14). Vagueness such as in Joel 2:1-11, where he says the invader is neither locusts nor a human army, is a drawback. Wordiness and wandering in his discussions is another shortcoming, as in using Joel 2:28 to take

off into a long discussion of clericalism. He finds fulfillment of Joel 2:28 at Pentecost, yet it would help to point out some aspects that were not fulfilled on that occasion. He is more to the point on Zechariah 14.

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *Interpreting the Minor Prophets*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990. 317 pp.

This well-informed survey by an associate professor of OT studies, Dallas Theological Seminary, looks broadly at each prophet's structure, message, doctrinal themes, and literary and rhetorical features. After a brief survey of overall themes`i.e., sin, judgment, salvation`the work examines each prophet in succession from Hosea to Malachi. Regarding long-range prophecy, Chisholm is presumably premillennial, but in several instances where he would` expectedly commit himself, he maintains such a vagueness that no distinct word as to when fulfillment will come is discoverable (e.g., Hosea 3, 14; Joel 3:9 ff.; Zechariah 14). He surveys each book, section by section, with helpful comments and brief treatments of the main problems. At the end of each book survey, he sums up points of theology. He views Joel 2:1-11 as meaning a human army, but is not explicit in naming which army and what the time is. This volume is good, but general. The reader who consults the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* in this area will find more premillennial specificity in many cases.

H. D. Beeby. *Hosea: Grace Abounding*. International Theological Commentary, F. C. Holgren and G. A. F. Knight, eds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989. 189 pp.

Beeby's work is rich in helpful analysis of the text and has much to offer on word studies, exegesis, historical background, theological comment, and devotional principles. Beeby's assumptions on critical theories must temper its reading, however, because the assumptions at times lead to excising verses as redactional additions. These excisions derive from subjective opinion, not convincing evidence. In many respects, the work is not bad, neither is it truly great.

David A. Hubbard. *Hosea: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentary; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989. 245 pp.

This is a highly readable conservative effort that is often refreshing in its discussion of passages. It has sections treating the broad perspective and some good verse-by-verse comment. The introduction, among other things, is an orientation regarding the message of Hosea. In predictive prophecies where many premillennialists would feel he could be definite, however, Hubbard is not clear-cut as to a long-reaching millennial fulfillment.

Thomas McComiskey, Raymond Dillard, and Jeffrey Niehaus. *Hosea, Joel, Amos. An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992. 509 pp.

This volume is part of a new series on the Minor Prophets with McComiskey as its editor. It is evangelical and shows expertise in exegesis, background, and sensitivity to hermeneutics, plus evidencing a good grasp of recent scholarship. Its bibliography is splendid. The format of the work puts a textual section first, followed by an expository part.

Ronald B. Allen. *Joel. Bible Study Commentary*; Zondervan, 1988. 120 pp.

Allen is skilled in Hebrew and interpretation, and writes in an appealing manner. He is conservative and premillennial. In his view the locusts are literal in chaps 1 and 2, yet supernatural in the latter case. He never seems to clear up what the supernatural locusts are in the future time of Armageddon, but stays general and vague. They sound like angelic hosts when Allen links them with Rev 9:11-16. The volume has good emphases on God's grace, compassion, anger, and love in 2:12-17. Apparently the author sees the "northern army" of 2:20 as a human one, not identified with the locusts of 2:1-11. He has a long and helpful discussion of whether Acts 2 fulfills the outpouring of the Spirit, and concludes it is a partial fulfillment (95). In 3:9 ff., he believes the blessing is in the millennium after the second advent, yet he identifies the fountain of v. 18 as the river in the ultimate state, the New Jerusalem (116), and is not clear on why or how he leaps from the millennium to the ultimate bliss.

Thomas J. Finley. *Joel, Amos, Obadiah. Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary*; Chicago: Moody, 1990. 417 pp.

This conservative and premillennial work by a professor of OT at Talbot School of Theology has a good bibliography of five pages and a very full discussion of many issues, a rich use of other studies, help in Hebrew exegesis, and a good effort on word meanings. Hebrew words are transliterated into English. Finley sees literal locusts in chaps. 1 and 2 of Joel. One wishes that he had listed and given arguments, yet he does give some when he arrives at individual verses. It sounds as though he believes rich blessing will come to Israel (not the church in this case) in 2:18-27, but it also sounds like he sees it realized in past history. He is not wholly clear. He sees a partial fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2 and the fulfillment of details of 3:9 ff. in the future tribulation period and Messianic Kingdom after the second advent, not in the church or the ultimate state. The

treatment of Amos 9:11-15 could be stronger in support for a premillennial view. The discussion about when the fulfillment will come to Israel is seemingly vague.

Gerhard F. Hasel. *Understanding the Book of Amos*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991. 171 pp.

This is not a commentary per se but a lucid and excellent survey that combines into a rich tapestry some of the helpful lines of thought in research on the book. Hasel sees Amos as the first of the writing prophets, ca. 780-760 B.C., and as a "microcosm for the study of all prophetic writings on the Old Testament" (11). He articulates issues in such a way as to point to the unity of the book.

Shalom M. Paul. *Amos*. Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991. 409 pp.

Paul has produced a magisterial work that ranks above everything else. It is impressively thorough, well-written, and shows an awareness of many issues, possible interpretations, and much relevant literature`cf. nearly eighty pages of lists of sources (xix-xxvi, 299-367). Included is a very full discussion on the situation in which Amos ministered, his kind of ministry, features of it, views about when oracles occur, and literary traits of oracles. The author defends the authenticity of the oracles against arguments of interpolation. The verse-by-verse commentary is on large double-column pages and quite full of details about the text, word meanings, geography, customs, relation to other Scriptures, and views on problems. Footnotes crammed with further help are abundant and are often long. Summary remarks at the outset of sections help readers see connections, overall ideas, and movements of the book. Paul defends 9:11-15 against arguments from the majority who take it as unauthentic, i.e., from an exilic or post-exilic theological-redactor. He shows how well it fits with the book. He also does much to recognize the prophecy of a future glorious state for Israel and ties it with other passages. But he does not relate 9:11-15 to James' use of it in Acts 15:13-15. His bibliography lists two works under "Early Christian Interpretation" (316-17). In his section on Indices (354-406) where he lists literature consulted, the "New Testament" entry includes only seven passages and 7:43 is the only Acts reference.

Gary V. Smith. *Amos, A Commentary*. Library of Biblical Interpretation; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989. 307 pp.

This is a thorough conservative commentary that leaves few key stones unturned in an exposition based on Hebrew exegesis. Smith is helpful on the book's unity, verse-by-verse interpretation, and

theological relevance then and now. Expositors and lay readers will find substantial help.

D. W. Baker, Desmond Alexander, and Bruce K. Waltke. *Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentary; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988. 207 pp.

Baker on Obadiah, Alexander on Jonah, and Waltke on Micah combine to write a good, concise conservative commentary. It is quite competent and carefully thought through. Baker sees Obadiah 21 fulfilled in a king on earth after the second advent (43) and defends the unity of vv. 17-21 with the earlier part of the book. Alexander defends an early date of Jonah (8th century) against several arguments (51-63). He also argues for authorship by one writer (63-69), apparently the Jonah of 2 Kgs 14:25. He favors actual, historical events, not a parable or a form of fiction, and capably sums up answers to problems, but appears thin in regard to how to explain a great fish swallowing Jonah, though he believes it was a miracle (110-11). Waltke provides a good verse-by-verse study, enriched by expertise in exegesis, history, and customs.

Bryan Beyer and John H. Walton. *Obadiah/Jonah*. Bible Study Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988. 122 pp.

Bryan teaches at Columbia Bible College and Walton at Moody Bible Institute. Bryan dates Obadiah after the 586 B.C. fall of Jerusalem, because vv. 10-14 describe Edom's gloating at that fall. He understands vv. 17-21 to teach a premillennial view with a future millennial kingdom after the second advent. Yet he never says it is millennial, only that it is God's kingdom. He finds a future resettling of Israel in its land. Walton supplies much good information (e.g., the lots of Jonah 1). But since God's preparation of the great sea creature was a miracle, he sees no need to cite accounts of marine creatures swallowing men (29). He apparently does not view Nineveh's repentance as being a conversion to the Lord, to Judaism, or even to monotheism (51). It was not to spiritual salvation (53). Some will not find persuasive his explanation for why Jonah was angry (chap. 4).

Jack R. Riggs. *Micah*. Bible Study Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. 92 pp.

A Dallas Theological Seminary graduate and professor at Cedarville College follows a clear, simple, overall outline for the book: judgment (1:2-2:13), Messiah (chaps 3-5), and pardon (chaps 6-7). He fills in subpoints helpfully, commenting competently on the main details. His view of the kingdom is premillennial (49). His work is helpful for pastors, Sunday School or Bible class teachers, and lay

people in general.

Hans W. Wolff. *Micah, A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990. 258 pp.

This volume, highly regarded in critical circles, embraces the idea that Micah was written in post-exilic times and was the product of centuries of composition, with only some passages coming originally from Micah (cf. list on 8-9). His redaction segments are subjective and lack hard evidence that they are necessary. One can glean much that helps on Micah, but will often meet Wolff's theories about composition, which are obtrusive and interruptive for the person viewing the text as a unit by one writer.

D. W. Baker. *Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentary; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988. 121 pp.

Baker presents a brief introduction and a well-studied survey of each book, providing a good outline, handling most things rather carefully and from a conservative stance. He sees "Day" of Zephaniah 3 as one of wrath and also one of hope and help (116), but is very general and vague about when, where, and in what form the blessed state will be realized. He is typical of many who do not nail things down in any framework so as to clarify just where he stands.

Richard Patterson. *Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*. Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary; Chicago: Moody, 1991, 416 pp.

This is an outstanding conservative, detailed work backed by scholarly awareness and expertise. Comments reflect fine-tuned ability in the Hebrew text, philology, exegesis, history, and literature. Patterson has premillennial convictions in the final verses of Zephaniah. He shows the shaky reasoning of critical arguments against the unity of Nahum, and defends the unity of Nahum and Habakkuk. In a long excursus he defends NT uses of Hab 2:4 (21-23). But some will doubt that he captures the significance of the picture of a hind in Hab 3:19 when he sees only swiftness ascending and gracefully gliding (262-63). Yet in most details he is excellent. The work is well worth the cost and time spent on it.

O. Palmer Robertson. *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*. NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990. 357 pp.

This is a very good conservative work, both perceptive on issues and lucid in style. The writer provides a good translation and commentary that is often graphic. He looks at Hab 2:4 from many angles (173-83) and clearly catches the picture of living by faith in 3:19

that ties in with 2:4b. To a great extent the explanations of verses are full enough and satisfying, but at times questions occurring to serious minds do not find treatment. For example, why make a sweeping statement about no deceit in a future remnant if this is in a state of imperfection and believers still have some deceit when less than absolutely perfect?

Maria Eszenyei Szeles. *Wrath and Mercy: A Commentary on the Books of Habakkuk and Zephaniah*. International Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. 118 pp.

This work by a professor of OT, United Protestant Theological Seminary, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, has many thorough and good exegetical comments on the Hebrew text drawn from much study, but is mixed with some thin and cursory statements. Often the book helps with theological meaning, but the authoress at times reflects higher critical loyalties as when she claims arbitrarily that certain difficult statements must be a redactor's later insertion. She is flimsy or non-existent in convincing proof on Hab 2:6-20 (36; cf. also 41). A pastor or student using the work with good discernment can profit from it by exercising his own judgment.

Richard L. Coggins. *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*. Old Testament Guides; Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1987. 90 pp.

This work, available through Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana, offers brief assistance on critical issues, historical matters, and exegesis. Coggins is not a particularly interesting writer, but he offers quite a bit of expertise that can be helpful as one reads and discerns carefully in choosing what is usable and bypassing the rest.

Pieter A. Verhoef. *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*. NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. 364 pp.

This volume by a professor of OT, Emeritus, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, is conservative in its coverage of much current literature, introductory matters, and verse-by-verse content. Explanations of the text and the tracing of the flow of thought are competent. Verhoef takes issue with W. Rudolph who says that Haggai has no relevance for those of the Christian faith (vii), and strives to show the significance of both Haggai and Malachi for today. He has interacted with much scholarship within the text and in his footnotes. He believes that someone close to Haggai wrote the book with authentic material from Haggai. He upholds the unity of the book and traces the movement through the verses carefully in relation to its background. He seems to be premillennial in understanding the fulfillment of prophetic aspects about the temple beyond the second

advent. He deals at length with many of the problems by giving different views and factors to weigh`e.g., on God's love and hate (Mal 1:2-3), "one" (2:15), and "Elijah" (4:4-6).

Hans W. Wolff. *Haggai, A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988. 128 pp.

This work by an expert in exegesis, history, and critical study is a translation from the German *Biblischer Kommentar* series. Wolff sees three layers of composition from Haggai to the final writer. The chronicler, he feels, added interpolations at 2:5, 9, 14, 17-19, 21-22. The helpfulness of the large amount of information and expertise on exegesis is reduced by what some will consider arbitrary opinions about composition and rearrangement.

Homer J. Heater, Jr. *Zechariah*. Bible Study Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. 122 pp.

Here is a good survey by a premillennialist that is well-organized and aware of the main issues, with contributions to make on most of them. Heater understands the four horns of 1:18-19 not to be the four empires of Daniel 2 and 7 or any other specific four, but a coming from the four quarters of the earth, a worldwide context (21). The four craftsmen are likewise. He sees the future for Jerusalem in chap. 2 as millennial, after the second advent. He is vague on the circumstances of God's taking evil from Israel and "setting it up among those who reject Him" in Shinar in Zechariah 5 (43). The explanations of details in chap. 14 as fitting into a premillennial view are helpful, but brief.

Beth Glazier-McDonald. *Malachi, The Divine Messenger*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1987. 288 pp.

This 1983 dissertation at the University of Chicago does several things. It stands against the tide that holds the book to be prose and contends for the poetic character of the larger part. It explains the text, often in as much detail as many verse-by-verse commentaries. It is against emendations and argues for every verse fitting the flow of the context and being cogent to the situation of Malachi's day (ca. 450 B.C.). The writer shows a wide knowledge of scholarly literature, but often reasons against commonly accepted critical theory. For example, the "messenger of the covenant" in 3:1 is to her the Lord, not an addition to the text. Conservatives will appreciate much of the work, but textual and redaction-critical scholars frown on her upholding the text as it is, though she has done her homework.

#### CLASSIFICATION AND RATING OF COMMENTARIES

Space does not permit a thoroughgoing classification and rating of commentaries on individual books of the OT, but an appraisal of the works on Genesis provides an example of how commentaries may divide themselves into categories and how they compare with one another.<sup>2</sup>

Three distinctive categories of commentaries are (1) detailed exegetical works that may include more technical material, (2) competent expositional surveys, and (3) more predominantly devotional efforts that may include exposition and, at times, a handling of interpretive problems. A careful observation of the descriptions of commentaries earlier in this article will usually reveal in which category each book belongs.

This reviewer has also attempted to rank the commentaries in each category in accordance with his estimate of how well the writers explain the text. In this ranking, works that delve into speculative theories to the extent that they furnish no real explanation of the text may be omitted, no matter how painstaking their scholarship is.

In the sample charting of Genesis below, some of the ranked books do not appear in the annotations earlier in this article. The reason for this is that they were written prior to 1987. In cases where the books do appear in the above discussion, an asterisk (\*) follows the author's name.

Table 1 showing the rating of commentaries on Genesis appears on the next page.

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<sup>2</sup>A comprehensive categorization and rating of commentaries on all sixty-six books is available in the unabridged annotated bibliography referred to in note 1 above.

RATING OF COMMENTARIES ON GENESIS

Table 1

<i>Detailed Exegetical</i>	<i>Expositional Survey</i>	<i>Devotional Flavor</i>
1. H. C. Leupold 2. V. Hamilton* (only chaps. 1-17, so far) 3. G. Wenham* 4. J. Sailhamer* 5. H. Stigers	1. J. J. Davis 2. A. P. Ross ( <i>CAB</i> )* 3. R. Youngblood* 4. D. Kidner	1. W. H. Griffith-Thomas 2. J. Phillips* 3. D. Barnhouse 4. A. W. Pink