
OLD TESTAMENT TITLES: an update

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The last twelve months has been marked by the publication of a large number of Old Testament commentaries: most of high quality. The preacher has seldom had so many helps to enable him to proclaim faithfully God's word from the Old Testament.

Two new volumes have been added to the **Bible Student's Commentary Series**. As previously noted¹ this series is characterised by faithful, detailed exegesis and explanation of the Bible text. Thus, the work of **J. Ridderbos on Deuteronomy and Isaiah** is most welcome. The former volume will compliment the **NICOT volume by P.C. Craigie** and the latter will slide alongside **E.J. Young** as an excellent conservative companion commentary.²

The Daily Study Bible has also continued to expand in a most prodigious way: seven new titles have been issued! The series continues to be rather uneven and this is vividly illustrated by the most recent volumes. By far the worst is the title by **A.G. Auld on Joshua, Judges and Ruth**.³ This is the modern equivalent of the volume which was reviewed by Spurgeon and was considered suitable only for house maids to light fires with! Making a pretence at greater scholarship than the other volumes in the series it completely ignores all the results of modern conservative criticism on

these books. No mention is made, for example, to **Woudstra, Cundall** or **Morris**.⁴ The 'assured' results of modern criticism are trotted out with arrogant disregard for the considerable number of scholars who depart from such conclusions. Thus the pretence at scholarship is just that since true scholarship arises from the interaction of views and not from shouting loud even when the argument is weak. In sum the title is a remarkable example of bull-necked liberal scholarship. Ignore it.

In complete contrast are the two volumes by **J.G. McConville on Chronicles and Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther**.⁵ In them conservative exposition of these books is found at its best. McConville has a good eye for the theological purpose which lay behind the writing of the Bible books and he uses it fully. His books are worthy of placing alongside **Atkinson on Ruth**⁶ as examples of how Old Testament narrative books should be understood and expounded. Two excellent additions to any OT library are provided in these books.

The evangelical world has lost a considerable scholar in the recent death of **P.C. Craigie** in a car accident. However, before his death he was able to complete two further volumes in the **Daily Study Bible**: a double volume set on the **Minor**

Prophets.⁷ These are characterised by the same thoroughly researched comments as his earlier volume on **Ezekiel.**⁸ A helpful outline of the contents of these books together with an eye for the Christian application is a feature which should commend these titles to many Christian preachers.

The first 32 chapters of **Isaiah** have been expounded in a further volume in the same series by **J.F.A. Sawyer.**⁹ Sawyer is a liberal scholar who doubts that much of Isaiah is authentic to the prophet of Jerusalem. However, he is an excellent Hebrew scholar with a special expertise in biblical semantics. Thus his work is characterised by helpful exegesis and by an attempt to set the ideas of the Book in the wider biblical setting. This idiosyncrasy means that it is not a comprehensive commentary but does include many helpful and stimulating observations.

A further volume on **Deuteronomy** has recently been issued¹⁰ but has not yet been seen by the reviewer.

Any attempt to ascertain the formal elements in biblical writing is to be welcomed in clarifying the structure and meaning of the text. Thus, form criticism is, in and of itself, a valuable tool to Bible study, especially for the more academically inclined preacher. Two commentary series are at present engaged in Old Testament works which are intended to bring the fruits of such research before the Christian public. Examples from both these series have already been mentioned in this journal: the **Word Biblical Commentary** and the **Forms of Old Testament Literature (FOTL)**

series.¹¹ Five new titles have recently been added to the former series.¹² **L.C. Allen's** volume is complementary to the earlier book on **Psalms 1-50** by **P.C. Craigie.**¹³ It shows a responsible use of form criticism and a sensitivity to the Christian application. The three volume work (**M.E. Tate** is writing on **Psalms 51-100**) promises to be a most useful tool for the serious student of the Psalter.

What does become distressing is when form criticism is used by so-called evangelicals with an almost total acceptance of the gratuitous assumptions of liberal form-criticism. In the three titles on historical books this is very apparent. The volume by **Budd** so capitulates to the conclusions of liberalism that conservative options are not even considered. Thus a commentary in a series which heralds itself as 'the best in evangelical critical scholarship' presents the unmodified views of reactionary liberalism. The title by **Butler** is little better, as the introductory page warns. The book of Joshua is dated late after a long period of oral tradition had modified the stories to serve the cult. A similar approach is adopted by **Klein.** Nevertheless, the second two titles do seek to view the theological purpose of the respective books against the canonical context and make a number of helpful observations as to the message of the scriptures under consideration. This feature is lost in **Budd** who seeks to show how Numbers met the needs of the immediate post-exilic community rather than look at the final canonical context for the Book. With the excellent volume by

Wenham available¹⁴, **Budd's** work can be safely ignored. **Butler** may, however, prove a useful supplement to **Woudstra** and **Klein** will provide help until something more satisfactory is produced on **1 Samuel**.

Form criticism proves a more useful and less contentious tool in the study of the prophets. Thus the book by **R.L. Smith** will be more widely useful, providing some detailed exegetical work on **Micah-Malachi**.

However, the most recent volume in the **Expositors Bible Commentary**¹⁵ is probably a better buy. Covering **Daniel-Malachi** it provides thorough conservative evangelical exegesis and exposition from a mildly pre-millennial perspective. A volume such as this is bound to be uneven. Thus, **Zephaniah (Larry Walker)** is weak and **Hosea (Leon Wood)** is flawed by an intrusive pre-millennialism. However the work by **Gleason Archer (Daniel)**, **Thomas McComiskey (Amos and Micah)** and **Carl Armerding (Obadiah, Nahum and Habakkuk)** is of the highest standard. **Archer, H.L. Ellison (Jonah)** and **Robert Alden (Haggai)** show an eye for application although the work as a whole is more concerned with explaining the meaning of the text in its original context.

This is an excellent all-round volume on the **Minor Prophets**. However, if specific books are being tackled on this part of the Bible it would probably be better to consult **Baldwin** on **Daniel**, **Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (Tyndale O.T. Commentaries)**; **Allen** on **Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah (New International O.T. Commentary)**

and **Kidner** on **Hosea** and **Motyer** on **Amos (The Bible Speaks Today Series)**.

The **FOTL** series has recently added a commentary on **Daniel** by **J.J. Collins**.¹⁶ A late date for **Daniel** is assumed and since the series does not set out to be a comprehensive exposition of the book it will be of less value to the preacher. However, for the student of apocalyptic in general and **Daniel** in particular it will prove useful, though criminally expensive!

Evangelical Press are really getting to work on their **Welwyn Commentary Series** and have recently added three titles on OT books.¹⁷ They are all high quality expositions of the respective books and are well worth purchasing. **J. Benton's** work on **Malachi** is exemplary in showing how the prophets are to be preached today. It should supplement **Baldwin** and **Kaiser**.¹⁸ The preacher furnished with each of these titles will have little excuse if he fail to minister adequately from **Malachi**, in particular. Similarly, **Keddie's** volume on **Amos** should be used together with **Motyer**.¹⁹

The studies on **Judges** and **Ruth** are even more welcome and provide a generally unspeculative Christian exposition of the two books. Occasionally **Keddie** seems guilty of unwarranted spiritualisation and he does not seem to have given sufficient thought to the structure of **Judges** and how that structure is to influence interpretation of the Book. Nevertheless, with this minor proviso, the volume is highly recommended and we look forward to other titles in the OT from both the publishers and these two men.

We conclude these reviews with the mention of three titles of more general usefulness. The first is the recently reissued work 'A survey of Old Testament Introduction' by G.L. Archer.²⁰ Archer is a conservative evangelical with especial expertise in the biblical languages, textual studies and the answers such studies give to liberal criticism of the Bible. This is a particularly readable introduction which exposes the bankruptcy of liberal criticism of the OT. No book is more effective in establishing the case for a scholarly conservative evangelical approach to the OT. Archer is pre-millennial and adopts the 'day-age' theory for Genesis 1, thus being forced to recognise that death was in the world prior to the Fall. Some will regard these as blemishes: but they are small and overall this book is highly recommended.

A satisfying introduction to the wisdom literature by an evangelical has been long awaited. It has now arrived with the work of Kidner.²¹ Serving a double purpose of outline exposition of **Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes** and technical discussion of critical issues the book succeeds admirably. This work is fully up to Kidner's usual high standard: except the material on Proverbs which exceeds it! Buy it.

Finally, W.C. Kaiser has produced another book: this time on the use of the OT by the NT writers.²² He attempts to show that this usage was based upon a serious and proper attempt to exegete and expound the OT text. It is not rabbinic exegesis (as even many evangelicals tend to assume). Rather the NT writers use the OT in a number of different but

legitimate ways. Consequently, Kaiser argues, dominical and apostolic exegesis is the key to developing a truly Christian OT theology. The key relationship upon which the NT writers built was that of promise. Promises were made in the OT which formed the basis of its structure and pointed forward to the NT.

Kaiser's basic thesis is timely. Its basic principles lie at the heart of OT interpretation and his work lays out the ground for further studies and elaboration. However, because of his pre-millennialism, he fails to see how the whole of the NT finds its focus and fulfilment in Jesus. Insisting, as he does, on literal fulfilment of prophecy, he fails to observe adequately the symbolic nature of much OT prophecy and, accordingly, continues to see the Jewish race as the object of many prophecies. The reviewer thinks that Hoekema has a more satisfactory eschatology which enables Christ to be seen as the end of all the OT scriptures.²³

Nevertheless, this is an important book with much of very great value within its pages. It should be the basic textbook on the subject among evangelicals for some time to come.

References

- 1 See *Foundations* No.12
- 2 J. Ridderbos, DEUTERONOMY, Zondervan, 318pp, £13.60
ISAIAH, Zondervan, 580pp, £17.50
- P.C. Craigie, DEUTERONOMY, Eerdmans, 424pp, £16.95
E.J. Young, ISAIAH, 3 vols., Eerdmans, 534, 604 & 579 pp, £55.85
- 3 A.G. Auld, JOSHUA, JUDGES & RUTH, St. Andrews Press, 282pp, £3.50
- 4 M.H. Woudstra, JOSHUA, Eerdmans, 396pp, £21.95
A.E. Cundall & L. Morris, JUDGES &

- RUTH, IVP, 318pp, £5.95
- 5 J.G. McConville, CHRONICLES, St. Andrews Press, 271pp, £3.50
EZRA, NEHEMIAH & ESTHER, St. Andrews Press, 199pp, £3.50
- 6 D. Atkinson, THE WINGS OF REFUGE, IVP, 128pp, £3.95
- 7 P.C. Craigie, TWELVE PROPHETS, 2 vols., St. Andrews Press, 239 & 249pp, £3.50 each
- 8 See *Foundations* No.13
- 9 J.F.A. Sawyer, ISAIAH 1, St. Andrews Press, 268pp, £3.50
- 10 D.F. Payne, DEUTERONOMY, St. Andrews Press, 196pp, £3.95
- 11 See *Foundations* Nos. 12 & 14
- 12 P.J. Budd, NUMBERS, Word, 409pp
T.C. Butler, JOSHUA, Word, 304pp
R.W. Klein, 1 SAMUEL, Word, 307pp
L.C. Allen, PSALMS 101-150, Word, 342pp
R.L. Smith, MICAH-MALACHI, Word, 358pp
All in hardback £17.95 or paperback £7.95
- 13 See *Foundations* No.12
- 14 G.W. Wenham, NUMBERS, IVP, 240pp, £4.95
- 15 F.E. Gaebelin (Ed), THE EXPOSITORS BIBLE COMMENTARY, VOL.7, DANIEL & MINOR PROPHETS, Zondervan, 725pp, £20.00
We hope to review this volume in a subsequent *Foundations*.
- 16 J.J. Collins, DANIEL WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE, Eerdmans, 120pp, £12.95
- 17 J. Benton, LOSING TOUCH WITH THE LIVING GOD: THE MESSAGE OF MALACHI, Evangelical Press, 140pp, £3.50
G.J. Keddie, EVEN IN DARKNESS: STUDIES IN JUDGES & RUTH, Evangelical Press, 126pp, £3.50
THE LORD IS HIS NAME: STUDIES IN AMOS, Evangelical Press, 137pp, £3.95
- 18 J.G. Baldwin, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, MALACHI, IVP, 253pp, £4.95
W.C. Kaiser, MALACHI, Baker, 171pp, £5.15
- 19 J.A. Motyer, THE DAY OF THE LION: THE MESSAGE OF AMOS, IVP, 208pp, £4.50
- 20 G.L. Archer, A SURVEY OF OLD TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION, Moody, 537pp, £13.95
- 21 D. Kidner, WISDOM TO LIVE BY, IVP, 175pp, £4.95
- 22 W.C. Kaiser, THE USES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW, Moody, 270pp, £10.50
- 23 A.A. Hoekema, THE BIBLE AND THE FUTURE, Paternoster, 343pp, £10.60

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As Brother Lawrence had found such comfort and blessing in walking in the Presence of God, it was natural for him to recommend it earnestly to others; but his example was a stronger inducement than any arguments he could propose. His very countenance was edifying; such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it, as could not but affect all beholders. And it was observed, that in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen, he still preserved his recollection and his heavenly-mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season, with an even, uninterrupted composure and tranquillity of spirit. "The time of business," said he, "does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity, as if I were upon my knees."

The Practice of the Presence of God, 1906, pp. 25-6