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Review: Jeremiah

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ten in a breezy style that makes for delightful reading. Anyone teaching or preaching the Book of Proverbs would benefit from this book.

Roy B. Zuck

Isaiah 1-12. By Hans Wildberger. Translated by Thomas H. Trapp. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. x + 524 pp. \$39.95.

Ever since the publication of the German original of this work in 1980 (*Jesaja, Kapitel 1-12*), it has enjoyed a justified recognition as the leading contemporary commentary on this section of Isaiah. On every page it manifests the prodigious erudition and scholarship of its author, and thanks to the painstaking work of the translator and publisher it is a model of form and clarity. In line with one of the objectives of the series of which it is a part (Continental Commentaries), each unit of the text is treated under six headings: literature, text, form, setting, commentary, and purpose and thrust (the theological intention). This provides a unifying structure and affords easy access to any part of the discussion of special interest to the reader.

A deficiency of this volume is the lack of an introduction. For reasons made clear by the author (p. vii) this will be included in the third and final volume. However, study of each of the units provides cumulative insight into his understanding of such introductory matters as authorship, unity, date, setting, and the like. On the whole Wildberger takes a rather moderate stance on most critical issues.

A brief look at some of the standard points of debate in Isaiah 1-12 reveals the author's overall position and approach. On the question of the authorship and provenance of 2:2-4 as compared to the parallel in Micah 4:1-3, Wildberger holds tenaciously to Isaianic origination and authorship, suggesting a period rather late in the prophet's ministry (p. 87). As for the alleged messianic reference in Isaiah 4:2-6, Wildberger rightly points out that the remnant of Israel is in view in the figure of a sprout whereas the "shoot" and "sprig" of 11:1 clearly are messianic epithets (pp. 165-67, 469-71). In the famous "virgin birth" passage (7:14), Wildberger identifies the $\eta\eta\eta$ as the wife of King Ahaz (pp. 310-11) and the sign as the continuation of the Davidic dynasty despite the wickedness of the king (p. 313). Wildberger comes short of assigning direct messianic significance to the passage because of the element of disaster it contains, but he does view the name "Immanuel" as pointing to "the central message of the OT," a message true to the mission of the Messiah, "God with us" (p. 318).

Though technical in places, this work achieves admirable clarity of thought and expression. Serious students of Isaiah will want to make use of it and will find on every page something informative, stimulating, and eminently practical.

Eugene H. Merrill

Jeremiah. By D. R. Jones. The New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992. 557 pp. Paper, \$22.95.

This commentary on the Book of Jeremiah is one of the most delightful to appear in a long time. The delay in its publication (described in the introduction) turned out to be a felicitous one, for it

allowed Jones to interact with the works of Robert P. Carroll (*Jeremiah: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986]) and William McCall (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, vol. 1 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986]), who are extreme in their treatment of this book. Jones responds cogently to their rejection of much in the book that is historical. His discussion of the prose material is very sensible, and he attributes most of the book to Jeremiah or to a close school of disciples.

Regarding the text he says, "The LXX cannot therefore be called the original or superior text. It is simply an earlier stage in the evolution of the text. . . . It remains true that MT is the fundamental text for the book of Jeremiah" (p. 50).

Reading the commentary through is a delight. It is well written, and Jones has provided the most consistent development of his theory of literary composition of any commentator. Not every reader will agree with all his conclusions, but his work is greatly to be commended as a means of understanding this complex but important book.

Homer Heater, Jr.

Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. By J. J. M. Roberts. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991. 223 pp. \$19.95.

This commentary, written by the William Henry Green Professor of Old Testament Literature at Princeton Theological Seminary, is a welcome addition for students of these three important but often neglected "minor" prophets. The author's combination of technical expertise and exegetical insight makes this one of the best commentaries available on these books. The textual notes, which provide thorough philological and text critical analyses of the many difficult forms in these books, are especially helpful and deserve the attention of any serious translator or interpreter.

The author does not promote any particular historical-critical method. He justifies his approach as follows: "Issues of form criticism, rhetorical criticism, and redaction criticism are occasionally touched upon. Some may feel that the commentary has not been thoroughgoing enough in its devotion to one or another of these approaches, but I am convinced that devotion to 'methods' too often produces a mechanical reading that gets in the way of actual questions a text may raise or that one may wish to address in a text" (p. 12). Though convinced that Nahum and Zephaniah did undergo "secondary redaction," Roberts makes little attempt to identify redactional material, for he has "serious doubts whether the evidence at hand allows us to accurately describe the redactional process, much less divine the rationale at work in its various stages" (p. 12). Roberts should be commended for his commitment to an exegesis that is not restricted by a methodological straitjacket and that frees itself from the arrogant subjectivism that often characterizes redaction criticism.

Roberts views Nahum and Zephaniah as essentially anthologies of relatively brief oracles, comparable to a modern collection of short sermons. Consequently, he is skeptical of the attempts of many literary and canon critics to demonstrate careful arrangement or extensive patterning in them (see, for example, his critique of Paul House's proposal