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Review: The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah

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of the Holy Spirit, one as carefully superintended as that of the original work of the prophet himself.

In a brief review it is impossible to do more than cite one or two passages as illustrative of the author's critical and exegetical method. In the first place, he correctly understands the phrase *ראשית ממלכות*, like the exact Akkadian parallel *res sarruti*, to refer to the accession-year of Jehoiakim (Jer. 26:1; cf. p. 103), but he fails to understand its use in Jeremiah 28:1 where the accession-year is said to be the fourth year of Zedekiah according to the Masoretic text. With the Septuagint he deletes the words "in the same year, in the accession-year," leaving only "in the fourth year" (p. 124). H. Tadmor especially has drawn attention to the fact that the accession-year can refer more generally to all the early years of a king so that the Masoretic text of Jeremiah 28:1 can stand as is (see Tadmor, "The Inscriptions of Nabunaid: Historical Arrangement," in *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger*, [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965], pp. 351-63; and Eugene H. Merrill, "The 'Accession Year' and Davidic Chronology," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 19 [1989]: 105-6).

A second and final example must suffice, one that gives access to Holladay's understanding of the New Testament use of Jeremiah. In his introduction (pp. 94-95) he outlines the New Testament references to the New Covenant and shows how Jesus and the apostles utilized Jeremiah 31:31-34 in developing that profound theological idea. In his exegesis, however (pp. 197-99), he gives scant attention to the New Covenant in the New Testament, suggesting only that "the NT sets forth its own fresh clues on the question" of the reconciliation of human freedom and divine sovereignty (p. 198). Surely there is more to the matter than that. One would expect an exegetical treatment to be more theologically sensitive than to overlook the greater ramifications of Jeremiah's prediction concerning the New Covenant. That message is the very foundation of what the New Testament is all about.

Regardless of such qualms and qualifications, Holladay has produced a monumental work, one destined to become a standard against which subsequent scholarship on Jeremiah must be measured.

Eugene H. Merrill

Jonah: A Study in Compassion. By O. Palmer Robertson. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990. 64 pp. Paper, \$3.95.

The remarkable story of God's mercy to an insightful, though disobedient prophet, to a people without the Abrahamic Covenant, and to a self-indulgent nation, whose prosperity had blinded them to obedience, has often been repeated. This commentary is uniquely helpful to believers because as a small work it is a readily usable compendium to Bible reading. It was written by an Old Testament scholar-turned pastor who writes in a lively fashion. Its readable style is the vehicle of keen insights from the text of Scripture into man's folly and God's enormous mercies to His prophet, His people, and all mankind.

John D. Hannah

The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. By O. Palmer Robertson. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990. 384 pp. \$28.95.

Robertson's commentary on Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah is a

welcome addition to the NICOT series. Robertson's introduction to these books is helpful, particularly for a popular audience. His historical reconstruction is important for an understanding of these prophets. His speculation regarding Josiah's marriage and children is just that, but it is nonetheless interesting and may indeed explain some of the machinations in the critical year of 609 B.C. His omission of Zerubbabel in connection with his discussion on David's descendants is surprising (p. 16).

Robertson's presentation of the theology of these books is headed in the right direction. He may be overstating the case in arguing that messianism is absent from the seventh-century prophets. He says Jeremiah's "Book of Comfort" is a collage of material from different periods, and though Robertson may be correct in dating Jeremiah 23:5-6 in the sixth century, it could also be earlier.

Perhaps more attention could have been devoted to the issue of the text. Robertson's discussion appears secondary and, particularly on the Septuagint, inadequate (though the presentation in the commentary section is better).

Robertson is probably correct in rejecting the theory that Nahum 1 is a remnant of an old acrostic poem (based on the unified literary structure in the present form), but it is not unusual for prophets to reuse older material. His effort to link 1:15 with the New Testament gospel is general enough to be accepted, but is still a bit strained. He draws attention to Assyrian records to illumine the text and to provide information on the historical context of the book.

Robertson gives an extended and helpful discussion on Habakkuk 2:4, but it is presented more from a dogmatic perspective than as an exegesis of the Hebrew.

Robertson argues that Zephaniah should be dated after Josiah's reform because of the many similarities between the prophecy and the Book of Deuteronomy. In his discussion of the day of the Lord, Robertson links Zephaniah's description to three covenants (Noahic Covenant and the reversal of creation, the Abrahamic Covenant and the sacrificial feast of Gen. 15, and the Mosaic Covenant and the frightful theophany). His exposition is helpful, although it would have been enhanced by relating it to Amos's seminal presentation (Amos 5:18-20).

Overall Robertson's commentary will be of much value to pastors and students. At several points he makes an original contribution.

Homer Heater, Jr.

Understanding the Arab World. By Louis Bahjat Hamada. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990. xvi + 216 pp. Paper, \$12.95.

In a day when Arabs are stereotyped as terrorists and even Christian Arabs are branded as somewhat suspect at best and "anti-Semitic" at worst, it is refreshing and informative to be reminded occasionally that Arabs are like all other people in need of Christ. They have the same human concerns and desires, the same frustrations and foibles, and the same capacity for evil and potential for good that exists in all mankind. The answer to their dilemmas is the answer to that of the human race as a whole—the redeeming and life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ.

Louis Hamada goes a long way toward achieving the objective of presenting a clear, unbiased, and factual view of the Arab people and their