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Hosea - Jonah

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comprehensible and easily understood by someone with little or no background in this field. A glossary further enhances the discussion's clarity. Add to this fine work the sympathy and fairness of presentation mentioned above, as well as the need for such an introductory book, and the result is a text which ought to be used in the classroom extensively. There is always the possibility, of course, that it could fall between the cracks of general New Testament introductory and advanced work on the gospels. If this happens, it will be a tragedy, especially for the student, who stands to learn a great deal from this book.

William Arnal
Toronto, Ontario

Word Biblical Commentary: Hosea-Jonah

Douglas Stuart

Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1987

xliv + 537 pp. \$36.20

"There are all sorts of biblical commentaries" (preface). In the long odyssey of biblical exegesis a variety of commentaries has been written ranging from highly technical works to more broadly oriented theological compositions. The *Word Biblical Commentary* represents another contribution in this discipline. When completed it will be comprised of 52 volumes covering the canonical books of the Old and New Testament. Twenty-four volumes are complete while two are being printed. The work under review, no. 31, is a comprehensive study of 5 prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah.

More than 8 pages of abbreviations for periodicals and reference works occur at the beginning of the volume after the Table of Contents, followed by a listing of biblical and apocryphal books consulted. A general bibliography and introduction bring us to the prophets each of which are headed by their own bibliographies and introductions. The latter includes such features as message, form, structure, style, historical setting, provenance, and date of composition. Of these form, structure, setting plus translation, appear for the respective pericopes analyzed. The exegesis, carefully done based on a keen study of the Hebrew, fills out the format for each prophetic book allowing for variations found in the writings themselves.

While theological content is interwoven in the commentary (as it appears to this reviewer) Stuart has a section entitled "Explanation" as a finale to a given lesson in which he develops the theological aspects further. The reviewer could have wished for more in the "Explanations" but as Stuart notes there is a limitation allowed for space and selectivity governed by

vast backgrounds in fields related to biblical studies. This leaves a scholar "to choose what should be said from what could be said" (preface).

This volume has several features in its favour. The bibliographies at the front of the book and each prophetic treatment are handy references. So are the abbreviations for periodicals and references. One need not flip pages for a quick look at sources which are generous and rich in their quantity. The reader is left to select, but the lists are there for the choosing.

The commentary gives space and content for each verse and pericope. One cannot say this is a "skin and bones" treatment as one finds in some commentaries of past times. Preachers require some "beef-steak" in the works they consult for sermons since busy parishes scarcely allow a luxury of time for such preparation. Hebrew occurs in the exegesis but not to a point of hindrance to English readers. It is done carefully and conscientiously with attention to theological values emanating from the respective texts.

Some of Stuart's interpretations disagree with usual understandings. E.g. in Hosea 1:2 he proposes that Gomer was not a prostitute. The Hebrew in translation "woman/wife of prostitution" or "prostituting woman" is in Stuart's statement, "idiomatic syntactically and sufficiently pejorative without firmly conveying the idea, contrary to fact, that Yahweh commanded Hosea to marry a professional prostitute." The point is fine line. One can as easily accept the traditional viewpoint as Stuart's explanation. The Hebrew, for this reviewer, contains an ambivalence here. Why deny the difficulty? Perhaps Hosea is meeting Canaanite fertility tradition with love language and filling it with Yahwistic content. The prophet is a bold interpreter with a profound mind—as Stuart is aware.

About Jonah: Stuart accepts this rather unusual prophet as historical and finds the three-day's journey more as a third day time-point in which to speak his message. If Jonah is taken historically, i.e. when Assyria was an Empire the situation seems incredible. Jonah is a series of stories post-factum to actual pre-exilic history. As for Chapter 2, the prayer of thanksgiving, the reviewer agrees with Bernard Anderson's appraisal that the psalm Chapter 2 is "out of place in its present context" (cf. Stuart, 472; Anderson, *Out of the Depths*, 84). The rapid change in images from the fish of Chapter 1 to the She'ol depths Chapter 2 suggests that the psalm has been combined with the anecdotes of Chapters 1-3 and 4 as an intensification of Jonah's predicament.

These debatable areas must not be allowed to detract from the acute arguments Stuart advances on the bases of the original language and wide research and the volume as a whole.

The *Word Biblical Commentary Series* ought to be a part of university and theological seminary libraries. I would commend the commentary under review for student appraisals and will add it to the listing of class bibliographies.