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Review: Jeremiah: Believers Church Bible Commentary

Homer Heater

Liberty University, hheater@liberty.edu

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text of Scripture better without having to wade through pages of scholarly debate. The author, lecturer in Old Testament Studies at Trinity College, Bristol, England, accepts traditional conservative views regarding the authorship and dating of these books and he regards the biblical text as historically accurate.

Thomas L. Constable

The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes. By Derek Kidner. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985. 175 pp. Paper, \$5.95.

This is a welcome addition to the growing spate of literature on the Bible's wisdom literature. In a tersely written volume with keen insight, Old Testament British scholar Kidner summarizes the contents of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, discusses how they are related, and then surveys the results of recent scholarship on each of these books. He refers to the "thought-out godliness which has the steadiness of Proverbs, the resilience of Job, and the sharp realism of Ecclesiastes" (p. 7).

In his winsome way with words, Kidner writes that to Job's friends the issue he should be facing is "What have I done?" but to Job the question is "What has God done?" (p. 63). Whereas Proverbs deals with "a life well managed" (p. 10), Job raises the question "Is the world well managed?" (p. 56), and Ecclesiastes asks, "Is life worth living?" (p. 90).

Kidner points out that some view Ecclesiastes as a book in which Qoheleth is debating with himself, whereas others, including himself see the book as a challenge to the secularist. While viewing life and death "strictly from ground level" (p. 94), Qoheleth honestly faces life's injustices, disappointments, and vanities, but at the same time recognizes the "mitigations" of simple joys, common sense, and enterprise, and the fact that every act and every person "matters to the eternal God" (p. 103) and that "God's work alone endures" (p. 115).

Kidner holds to a non-Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes, and suggests a late date for the book's composition (viz., between 350 and 250 B.C.).

Kidner's surveys of recent scholarship on these three books are helpful in presenting varying views on each book's purposes, date of authorship, composition, and contents. The appendix includes a survey of what wisdom writings in nations around Israel taught, and how those writings compare and contrast with the Bible's wisdom literature. This work is an excellent introduction to three of the most intriguing books in the Old Testament.

Roy B. Zuck

Jeremiah. Believers Church Bible Commentary. By Elmer A. Martens. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986. 328 pp. Paper, \$17.95.

The target audience for this series is "lay people" in the sense that it does not major on technical material. It is also directed toward all those who accept the authority of Scripture and of Jesus Christ. At the same

time it is written from the Mennonite perspective, and the ethical, social, and political agendas of that group are reflected in the sections called "The Text in the Life of the Church."

Martens has divided the Book of Jeremiah into eight parts. For each part he has four units: Preview, Explanatory Notes, The Text in Biblical Context, and The Text in the Life of the Church.

Martens is well equipped to handle the critical issues of the book. However, one could wish for a clearer response to some of those issues. Cases in point are the relationship of the Septuagint text to the Hebrew text in Jeremiah, the issue of composition and arrangement, and doublets.

According to Martens, the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are both conditional and have nothing to do with Israel returning to the land. The critical thirty-first chapter gets rather light treatment, particularly the eschatological implications that are clearly set forth in the chapter. Martens skirts the eschatological teaching of the book throughout his commentary, usually treating it in a very general way.

This commentary is readable and insightful. The structural analysis of a number of chapters is very helpful. The application of the teaching to the contemporary scene is stimulating, even though it reflects the confessional perspective of the series.

Martens has included an excellent glossary of 25 pages on key terms and ideas in the Book of Jeremiah. This may be the best part of the commentary. The historical, cultural/social, and religious background necessary for a complete understanding of this wonderful prophecy is elucidated considerably by this glossary.

On the one hand this commentary provides much insight into the book. On the other hand there is so much generalization that one comes away with a feeling of imprecision. Jeremiah was dealing with God's people, Israel—their past, present, and future. Martens has done a good job dealing with the first two aspects, but he has not dealt adequately with the future of Israel in God's plan.

Homer Heater, Jr.

New Gospel Parallels. Edited by Robert W. Funk. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985-1986. Vol. 1, 492 pp. \$29.95. Vol. 2, 396 pp. \$24.95.

The production of *New Gospel Parallels* represents the ultimate achievement in comparing the Gospels to one another and to parallel materials in noncanonical sources. Funk's goal was to combine the value of a harmony with the value of a traditional synopsis. A harmony attempts to show how the Gospels agree with one another and compare with each other. A synopsis is generally used to compare individual units in the Gospels. Funk has successfully combined these in his tool.

His work opens with a short introduction explaining his approach. This is followed by sections in which each Gospel is laid out in literary sequence. For example after an initial structural outline of the Gospel of Matthew there follows the Gospel of Matthew in sequence from chapters 1-28 with the parallels of the other Gospels and other materials lined up